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THE SOURCE FOR THE PAPER ARTS

Making Paper

To make paper you will need a mould and deckle, pulp, water, a rehydrater, a vat, felts, and a way to dry your handmade paper. It's that simple to start.

Paper is made from cellulose fiber and water. Cotton linters, abaca, hemp, sisal, and flax are available as sheet pulp and are easily rehydrated (broken down) with a blender or Whiz Mixer. They do not need to be beaten in a Hollander Beater unless you want to change the length of the fibers to make very thin sheets or to do pulp painting.

For beginners, we recommend a 2nd cut linter for a soft, bright white sheet; you can add any of the other sheet pulps for strength or color or you can mix in any other recyclable papers and make your own recycled paper.

Tear the dry pulp into 1 or 2 inch squares and soak overnight. Using a home blender (don't use the one you cook with - pulp is not especially good to eat), pour in two cups of warm water, slowly add one cup of wet pulp and then blend for a few minutes until you have a slurry that has the consistency of oatmeal.

For larger amounts, use a *Whiz Mixer* which produces pulp quickly, allows you to mix in pigments and chemicals evenly, and will not burn out as a blender eventually will.

Put your blenderful of pulp into a vat, add another quart of water and mix. This is your first batch of ready to use pulp. You may want to add more pulp or more water depending on the thickness you want to achieve in your handmade paper.

Next, while holding the deckle on top of the mould, dip your mould and deckle into the the far side of the vat, pull it towards yourself and lift. Gently shake the mould from side to side as you bring it out of the water, letting the extra water drain out. A layer of pulp will be formed on the top of the mould; now you can carefully remove the deckle and put it aside.

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To remove the pulp from the mould, turn it over onto a wet felt - don't worry, the pulp won't slide off. This is called *couching* - pronounced "kooching."

Press the mould down on the side farthest from you and working towards yourself, smoothly lay the pulp down on a dampened felt. Lay another wet felt on top of the pulp sheet, pull your next sheet from the vat and couch, and repeat the process. You will have to replenish the amount of pulp in the vat every few sheets or so.

It is good to press excess water from you newly made stack of sheets using a rolling pin. Then transfer the wet sheets onto dry felts or blotters, or brush a wet sheet onto a wall or window - any flat surface will do - and leave it to dry.

Congratulations! You have just made your first sheets of handmade paper. From here the fun really starts. You can color, collage, laminate, recycle, cast, embed, vacuum form - the list goes on and on. The best way to make paper is to experiment; use your imagination and have fun.

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