

Paper was once a precious item. It was rare and was used with respect. People did not waste the little they had. Paper is often taken for granted now. More than 300 million tons of paper are made each year. In the United States alone, four million tons of copy paper, two billion books, 350 million magazines, and 25 billion newspapers are produced. Paper makes up almost half of the trash we throw out each year.

What impact can reusing one sheet of paper really have? A big impact, actually. One piece of paper can be made up of the fibers from hundreds of different trees from around the world. Millions of acres of trees are cut down every year. Many are ground into pulp and turned into paper. Reusing one sheet can save some of these trees.

There are many ways that we can reduce the number of trees that are used for paper. Tissues, cardboard, envelopes, and other products like this can be ground down into pulp. This recycled paper can take the place of new paper. Paper can also be made out of other things such as flax. People can make an effort to use less paper. They can bring cloth bags to the grocery store instead of using paper bags, reduce the amount of things they print from the computer, and recycle used paper instead of throwing it out.



Project

Make your own recycled paper.

Materials

- junk mail, newspapers, scrap paper, dryer lint,
- any other fibers you want to include in your paper—be creative!
- bucket, pan, or plastic dishpan
- water
- blender
- small piece of screen (8 x 8 or 10 x 10 inches)
- towels
- small board
- cotton or felt sheets

Directions

1. Tear your papers, scraps, lint, etc. into small pieces and soak them overnight in a bucket or pan of water.
2. The next day, add more warm water to the paper mixture.
3. Break the mixture up further by hand.
4. Put small amounts of the mixture in the blender and blend using the pulse feature. (Ask an adult volunteer or teacher to help you with this.)
5. Continue blending your pulp in small batches and put it back in the bucket or dishpan. You could also put it in a different bucket to keep the newly blended pulp separate.
6. Spread your pulp evenly over the screen.
7. Put your screen on your towel and use the board to press the water out of the pulp. The towel will soak it up. (Note: If the towel gets too wet, re-place it with a dry one.)
8. Get as much of the water out as soon as you can.
9. Place pieces of cotton or felt in a dry, flat location. Turn the screen over onto the cotton or felt to peel off the paper. Let the paper dry.