

Making Your Own Recycled Paper

Overview:

People and countries around the world celebrate Earth Day every year on April 22. This is the day we show our good citizenship by supporting our collective commitment to protect the environment. Celebrate this Earth Day with this fun lesson on making recycled paper. It's an interactive way to show students that conserving natural resources and reducing waste diverted to landfills helps protect our environment.

Materials:

- 8-by-10-inch pieces of window screen
- Duct tape
- Scissors
- 2-gallon plastic dishpans
- Large slotted spoons
- One or two blenders
- Scraps of white and colored paper
- Water
- Newspaper
- Towels or sponges
- Liquid fabric starch
- Optional: flowers, leaves, tissue paper, berries
- "Making Recycled Paper" worksheet (see above)

Handouts:

- [Making Recycled Paper worksheet](#)

Procedure:

1. Briefly discuss the history and significance of Earth Day. Tell students that one practical way they can observe Earth Day at school every day is to recycle paper products. Lunch bags, milk cartons,

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scratch paper, paper scraps from crafts, etc. can all be recycled. Share these facts with your students about paper:

- Paper can be recycled and made into new, reusable paper without cutting down and processing new trees. Did you know that paper fibers can be recycled five to seven times? Newspapers, greeting cards, notebook paper, paper plates, paper bags, diaries, and many more products can be made from recycled paper.
 - Make sure to set aside used paper in paper recycling bins whenever possible. This helps save trees and conserve on money and energy spent on creating brand new paper. Remember, reuse, reduce, and recycle.
2. Say: You don't have to rely on recycling centers to recycle your paper. You can recycle paper yourself! Announce to the class that they will practice making their own recycled paper to celebrate Earth Day.
 3. Assign each student a partner and distribute duct tape, screen, slotted spoon, scissors, and dishpan to each pair. Have one student hold the screen taut over the empty dishpan while another student secures the screen with duct tape.
 4. Set up the blender in front of the class. Place torn up paper in a blender until the blender is half full. Cover the paper with water. The ratio is usually one part paper to two parts water. Add liquid fabric starch. If the paper is not blending easily, you may need to add more water.
 5. Blend until the paper has been ground into a slightly runny oatmeal-like consistency. Make sure it is not too thick. This mixture is called pulp slurry.
 6. Take the blender pitcher containing pulp slurry to each student pair and instruct the pairs to pour some of the pulp slurry over the screen. The water should drain through the screen, into the dishpan. Have the pairs spread and pat the pulp on the screen using the slotted spoon.
 7. Repeat Steps 3-6 until each student pair receives pulp slurry. Place a couple of pieces of newspaper in the working area and place the screen and pulp on top of them. Students will need to cut the duct tape off of the dishpan to move the screen and pulp. Optional: Press items, such as flowers, leaves, tissue paper, berries, into the paper for decoration.
 8. Use a towel or sponge to gently press down on the paper to soak in excess water. Note: If the paper is pressed too hard, the pulp will separate. You can patch up the holes or remove the pulp, roll it into a ball, place it back on the screen, cover it with newspaper, and gently press the pulp out again. If the pulp has become too dry, re-soak and press the pulp out again.

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9. Lay down a few new sheets of newspaper. Flip everything over and place it on top of the sheets of newspaper. Remove the newspaper from the top and gently lift off the screen.
10. Place the recycled paper in an area to dry (it will dry quickly in the sunlight). If drying overnight, place a heavy object, such as a book, on the paper to keep it from curling. The recycled paper should lift off easily from the newspaper when it is dry.
11. Have students complete the Making Recycled Paper worksheet in pairs. Have students share their answers with the class.
12. Instruct students to cut the dried recycled paper in half. Fold each piece of paper in half to create a card. Have students write an encouragement or thank you letter to the biggest environmental champion in their lives (e.g., father who recycles diligently, school cafeteria staff that makes sure waste is disposed of properly, mother who uses reusable totes for grocery shopping, etc.).

Adapted from Closing the Loop, K-3 Module, Unit 2: Reducing, Reusing, and Recycling Classroom Waste, Lesson 4: Making Recycled Paper by Hand.

McREL standards

N/A