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A brief description of making handmade paper

1. Possible ways of making the pulp

- a) Tear up small pieces of old paper and leave them immersed in water for two to three days to soften, finally shred them in a mixer.
- b) Cut small pieces of fresh plant material (stem, leaves, grass etc) and boil them for 1-2 hours with soda, add some water and then shred them in a mixer.
The addition of cellulose will thicken the paper.
- c) Add cellulose to water and leave it until it froths, eventually add a little wallpaper paste and textile colour.
- d) Cut 2cm wide strips of cloth (cotton, linen) into small pieces and leave them to soak for a week, add some soda and then boil for 2 hours. Place a small portion at a time into a mixer. Do not overdo the mixing as the longer the fibres, the more tearproof the paper becomes. The addition of cellulose will add to the thickness of the paper.

2. The water bath

It is recommended to use a container which will take a 30cm depth of water, the length and width depends on the size of the frame, however you should have at 10 cm free all round.

Empty the pre-made pulp into the bath, add water and stir thoroughly. The amount you use will depend upon the thickness of paper that you wish to make.

For a middle quality paper the rule of thumb is to add 1/3 the thickness of the pulp as water.

3. Stage 1:

Place the cover frame on the sieve side, holding the end of the frame dip it at an angle into the solution and then slowly remove it from the bath. Allow the excess water to run back into the bath and then remove the cover. The collected pulp should be able to fall evenly out of the frame.

4. Stage 2:

Lay the wet pulp sheet on an underlay of felt. If the pulp sticks turn the frame over and tap it. If the paper still does not release, press a wet sponge on the back of the sieve. Once the paper is laid out on the felt add another layer of felt on top.

5. Stage 3:

If you only want to produce a single sheet of paper, roll over the felt with wooden rolling pin. More sheets will need to be put in a press and tightened until all the water is removed. Leave them under pressure for about 10 minutes and then tighten the press once more.

6. Stage 4.:

The felts can now be removed and the individual sheets of paper left to dry by hanging on a line or laying flat under a weight.

