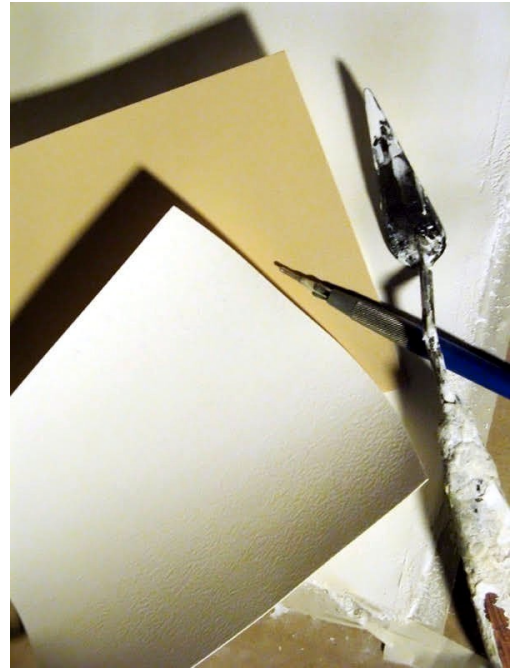


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ASK THE EXPERTS

Studio Craft: Scrap Paper



Ask the Experts: “I’ve accumulated a box of odds-and-ends, trimmings and torn pieces of paper, thinking I will use them someday. Some of them are really good, others are junk. Any suggestions for how I should use them, in a way that’s useful and necessary?”

A: Scrap paper is one of the most useful materials in the studio! Almost every little bit, even pieces too small for drawing, could potentially be good for something.

Sorting: Before starting a project, sort your scraps. Consider important criteria like fiber content, color, and size, and (if you know for sure), brand and type. In particular, separate 100% rag and acid-free from lower quality, wood pulp material. Also, keep toned, patterned and dyed papers together, and if some have proven more lightfast (fade resistant) than others, group those together.



Paper Pulp



Pulp for Papermaking: Paper scraps can easily be converted into pulp for making handmade paper. The best scraps for this purpose are ones that have 100% rag (cotton and linen) content, because they have longer, more durable fibers.

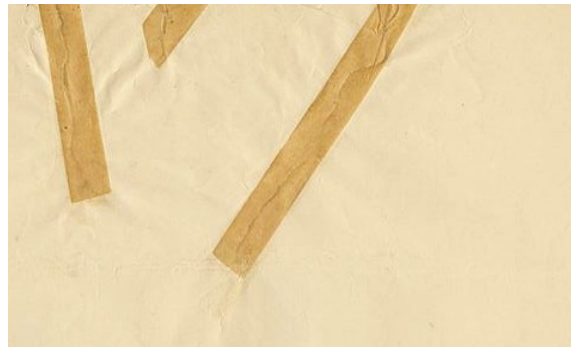
Small art: Larger scraps can be used for small-scale paintings and drawings, particularly for precision mediums like pen and ink and colored pencil. For silverpoint drawing, coat small pieces of paper with white gouache or acrylic gesso.



Shredded paper scrap

To make pulp, tear or shred scraps into small pieces, removing any tape, stickers or staples. Soak overnight in water. Place in a blender and process with enough water for the material to move freely. Store pulp in a lidded plastic bucket with a capful of bleach to retard mold. Add small bits of colorful scrap as decorative inclusions.

Mending and Patching:



Paper repaired with tape which has yellowed badly
High quality, thin paper scraps can be used for mending torn drawings, instead of unsightly tape. Use rice starch or archival PVA adhesive to apply strong patches that are nearly invisible.

Mounting Tabs and Hinges

Use acid-free and 100% rag scraps that are free from dyes and pigments for hanging works on paper in matting. Long, narrow scraps can be used to create hinges.



Kurt Schwitters, Collage, 1930s

Collage:

Assorted bits of paper can be used to make collages, or to add collage elements to paintings. Pair scraps with unusual patterns and textures to create interesting contrasts and harmonies.

Finger tabs for handling papers: Small pieces of scrap paper can be cut to 1x2" strips, which can be folded in half and placed at the corners of larger sheets to protect them from stains and smudges while handling. This is especially useful in printmaking, where papers are prone to staining.

Lower quality papers

Scraps of newsprint and anything which shows signs of yellowing should be kept separate from better scrap, to avoid migration of acids or decomposition residue. Likewise, oil-stained papers or those with tape or gum should be separated from good scrap.

Save scraps of lower quality paper for tasks like blotting oil from paint, wiping drawing tools, testing paints, and, of course, jotting notes

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