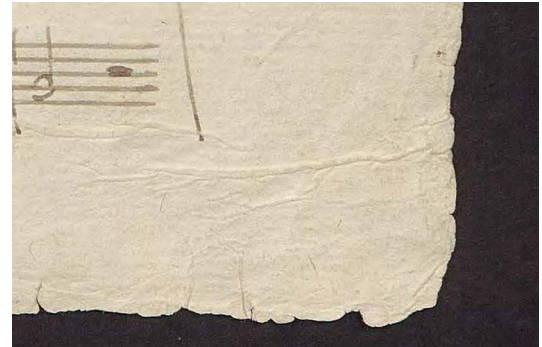
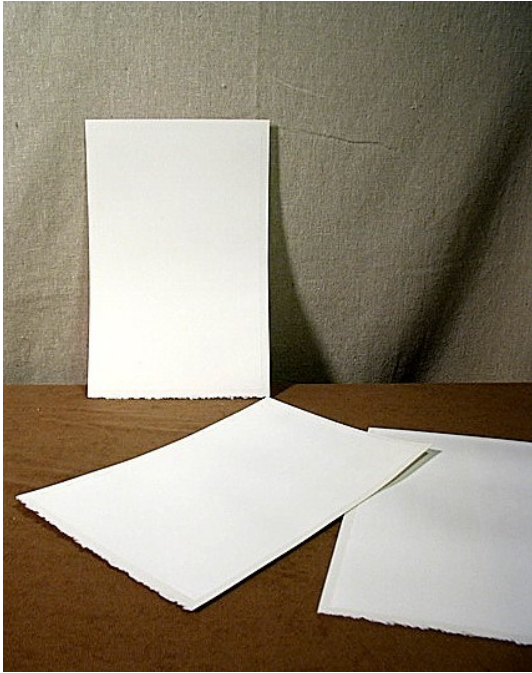


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ASK THE EXPERTS



Ask the Expert: "When dividing up full sheets of printmaking paper, should I cut or tear them? What about the 2 natural "feathered" edges?"

A: Papers that are handmade in a mold and deckle (screen with frame to catch wet pulp) and mill-made on equipment based on the Fourdrinier Machine often displays natural edges called "deckle edges". Factory-made papers with this feature typically have two deckle edges, and handmade sheets may have four natural edges. These edges are produced on the deckle where the permeable screen ends and the frame begins; on modern paper machines, the deckle edge is produced with a water jet.

Paper that has deckle edges is traditionally torn against a long blade or metal straightedge, and one deckle edge is positioned at the bottom horizontal side. While there is no technical reason to do so rather than cutting with a sharp blade, most artists and collectors consider the deckle edge aesthetically pleasing, indicative of a high quality paper, and also evidence of the hand of the craftsman. The practice of tearing paper reduces the discordance between mechanically cut sides and natural edges, giving a more harmonious appearance to the small sheets.

It's also possible to hand-craft an imitation deckle edge by grooming the torn side of the sheet with water and rubbing the wet fibers with an agate burnisher or spoon against a glass plate.