

# The Write Paper

PART 1 - PAPER

A finished piece of lettering directly reflects the materials used. Fine art paper should be used for all work designed to withstand the test of time. Becoming acquainted with paper characteristics will help in selecting the correct substrate for your project. Note: This is a general overview of fine art and layout papers, and some current available brands.

## PAPER TERMINOLOGY

**Acid Free** – papers having a pH of not less than 6.5. **Neutral pH** – cotton is naturally acid free; wood pulp is naturally acidic.

**Rag** – fibers of non-wood origin: cotton rags, cotton linters, cotton or linen pulp, manila hemp. Rag papers tend to contain long fibers.

Sulphite Pulp – pulp made from wood, sometimes acidic but also at times very neutral. Modern technology has yielded sulphite pulp paper as permanent as rag paper in some cases. Asian Papers – often categorized as rice paper (misnomer), these papers are made from Japanese plants of the mulberry family or from vegetable fibers such as Gampi or Kozo. As a general rule, these papers are not sized and are thus very soft and not suitable for penwork, unless stablized in some form. They work better with brush lettering or as decorative papers unless treated.

**Deckle** – ragged edge, the result of the natural way handmade and mouldmade paper is formed. Also, the result of sheets being torn in their wet state along water lines.

**Grain** – the direction in which the paper fibers align themselves during the process of making machine-made paper. The Japanese handmade paper-making process will not yield the grain of western made papers due to the sifting of the paper pulp in all directions in the mould and deckle.

**Sizing** – the incorporation of a glue-like substance added to the pulp slurry or after the sheet is dry, hardening the paper and retarding any ink 'feathering' on the paper surface.

**Watermark** – manufacturer's mark (for handmade and commercially made paper) created by sewing thin wire in a design to the mould, yielding a thinner spot in that portion of the paper. Some scribes avoid this mark when they design; others make it work to their advantage in the design process.

**Rough** – the surface texture resulting in the minimal pressing procedure after the sheet of paper is made.

**Cold Press** (CP) – the intermediate surface texture between rough and hot pressed; paper is pressed between cold cylinders. This paper is commonly used for watercolor painting. **Hot Press** (HP) – paper that is pressed at high pressure between smooth heated rollers. Surface accepts pen work well.

**Wove** – machine made paper showing no fine lines running through the sheet of paper when held up to the light. Most commercial papers produced today are wove papers.

## TYPES OF PAPER

## Handmade Paper:

This paper is often the most satisfying surface to work on. The pen responds well to good quality paper; corrections are more easily made and the final piece shows a quality all its own. Handmade paper is made by using a wooden frame with a brass mesh wire attached. This mould and the deckle frame is dipped into a pulp slurry (cotton or vegetable fibers suspended in water). When the mould is shaken in both directions to distribute the fibers and work out excess water, the fibers "lock" together. The paper is transferred to a felt blanket. A stack of several pulp/felt sets are pressed to eliminate more water, then left to dry thoroughly. The pulp that oozes outside the wire mesh and the deckle frame causes an irregular edge, yielding a "deckle". Handmade paper will have four deckles.

## Mouldmade Paper:

Originally invented to look like handmade paper, this paper is produced with the use of a cylinder which picks up the pulp as it rotates, and transfers it to a felt blanket. This paper has two natural deckles and 2 inner deckles.

## **Machine Made Paper:**

This method of making paper is used for virtually all commerical paper. Using a Fourdrinier machine, paper is made on an endless wire woven cloth. The fibers align themselves in one direction as they travel through the process, creating a grain in the paper. It is important to consider the grain of paper when folding and creasing any type of paper, regardless of the paper thickness, especially in bookmaking.

## HINTS ON CHOOSING / TESTING PAPER

- 1. Paper sample packets are available from various vendors. Purchase some and give your packet a workout:
  - a. Test inks, paints, brushes and markers that you like on all of the papers; make notations as to the pros and cons of each medium.
  - b. Test all brands of chisel edge nibs (large & small), automatic pens, ruling pens and pointed nibs that you normally use, again, with notations as you go. Update the information when you acquire new media and tools.

- c. Draw guidelines, then erase them; some papers respond well to a pen, but do not erase easily.
- d. Make corrections on paper by erasing and scraping to see how the paper responds. Heavier papers, especially those with a high rag content, will usually correct better.
- 2. Purchase more than one sheet of paper for a project:
  - a. Practice on the good paper; the pen will react quite differently on a textured rag paper than on 20# copy paper.
  - b. Cut your good paper oversize; if you haven't positioned your lettering exactly where you want it, you still have cropping options.
  - c. Rule two or three sheets before you start; if you make a mistake on the first sheet, you are ready to

- immediately go to the second sheet while you are "in the rhythm zone".
- 3. If one side of the paper tends to bleed, turn it over. Machine made papers usually have a smooth side and a felt side (or a smoother side and a textured side).
- 4. Questionable paper surfaces can sometimes be salvaged if treated: pounce to fill in crevices, gum sandarac to create a tooth on slicker paper, workable fixative spray for ink feathering, matte medium for sealing, etc.
- 5. ALWAYS use a cover sheet or some buffer between your hand and the paper surface. Skin oils easily transfer from the hand to the paper (or any surface that you work on).

NAME	SIZE	FIBER	COMMENTS
PAPERS FOR GOOD WOR	<b>K</b> * = good o	choices for beginners	
* Arches 90# or 140# HP	22" x 30"	100% cotton	smooth surface for writing; accepts moisture
Arches Text Wove (Velin)	26 x 40	100% cotton	good tooth; favorite for paste paper, bookbinding
Arches MBM	26 x 39	25% cotton,75% sulphite	preferred lettering surface by some well-known scribes
* Canson Mi Tientes	19½ x 25½	66% cotton, neutral pH	50+ colors; medium weight; work on smoother side
Fabriano Artistico 90# HP	22 x 30	100% cotton	internally & externally sized
Frankfurt Cream	21 x 30	cotton/high alpha cellulose	one side smooth, one side textured
* Ingres - It, Ger, Fr (diff. manuf)	sheets/pads	sulphite pulp	several colors; laid lines
Niddegen	22 x 30	cotton/high alpha cellulose	sand color; irregular wavy laid finish
Pergamenata	27 x 39	100% sulphite	translucent, mottled appearance
Rives BFK	19 x 25	100% cottom	a soft paper, often better suited for printmaking
Stonehenge	22 x 30	100% cotton	white, creams, greys, black - one side rougher
Strathmore 500 Series Charcoal	sheets/pads	100% cotton - in colors	traditional laid finish, use smooth side
GOOD LAYOUT / PRACTICE PAPERS			TRACING PAPERS
- most are thin enough to see over line guides; some w/rag, some not			- available in pads - for project layouts
Bienfang Graphic 360	var. size pads		Borden & Riley Vellum Sheer Trace
Borden & Riley #37 Marker	var. size pads		Canson Tracing
Borden & Riley #125 Marker	var. size pads		Canson Vidalon Vellum
Canson Pro Layout Market	var. size pads		Strathmore Tracing
Gilbert Bond - 25% bond	var. sizes (JNB)		
Graph Paper - good quality	11 x 17 (JNB)		Tracing paper allows one to adjust lettering, retrace,
HP 32# Choice Laserjet Rhodia Pads	8½ x 11 - sm 8½ x 11 - vei	ooth for pointed pen ry smooth for pointed pen	correct spacing, etc., saving time in the layout process

### **RESOURCES -**

As soon as a paper list is published, new options appear, and some are no longer manufactured. Here are some local and mail order resources:

## **LOCAL - Houston Area:**

Hobby Lobby Michael's Texas Art Supply - 3 locations Art Supply - Main Street Jerry's Artarama - Taylor Street

## Calligraphy Mail Order Suppliers:

- \*John Neal Bookseller (JNB) johnnealbooks.com
- \*Paper & Ink Arts paperinkarts.com
- \* Daniel Smith watercolors danielsmith.com

#### **Other Art Sources:**

- \* Cheap Joe's cheapjoes.com
- \* Dick Blick dickblick.com
- \* Nasco enasco.com
- \* Talas talasonline.com
- \* Utrecht utrechtart.com
- \* Amazon amazon.com

### **Some Custon Handmade Paper Mills**

- \* Twinrocker Handmade Paper twinrockerhandmadepaper.com
- \* Cave Paper cavepaper.com
- \* Morgan Conservatory morganconservatory.org
- \* Hook Potter Paper hookpotterypaper.com