How to Make Paper Look Old

Creating paper that looks old is not as difficult as you may think. All it takes is some common household items and a little time and practice.

Soaking with Coffee Method

1. Make a really strong cup of black coffee. Use about eight times as much instant coffee powder as you would to drink.
2. Get a container that is a little bigger than the piece of paper you are using, like a 9x13" (22 cm x 33 cm) baking pan. It can be shallow. Paper is thin, so you don’t need a very deep bath.
3. Pour about 1/4 inch (6.3 mm) of coffee into the bottom of the container.
4. Put your piece of paper into the liquid. Let it float on top, so that the coffee seeps through the back.
5. Using a spoon, spoon the coffee over the paper until it has a thin covering. Leave it for about a minute so that it absorbs the tannins.
6. Carefully, so as not to rip the damp paper, transfer it to another tray that has no coffee in it. You may want to hold it up for a second to let any excess coffee drain away.
7. Using your finger-nail or a spoon, tear little holes in the paper. Wad up the paper you remove and drop it in little lumps across the surface of the paper. When baked, these will merge back into the surface, creating lumps. These lumps make it look and feel more like parchment, the writing material used in the medieval ages.
8. Make sure there are no pools of liquid on the paper. Bake in an oven at 200 degrees until the paper has dried.
9. Take it out and let it cool. You now have a sheet of aged paper!

Smearing Method

1. Prepare a normal pot of tea, saving the tea bag
2. Lay your paper onto a flat surface.
3. Smear your teabag onto the piece of paper. This will give it the desired yellow look.
4. Keep your cup of tea handy, in case the teabag dries out, so that you can dip it again.
5. Let your paper sit on a flat surface to dry, or dry your paper with your hair dryer.

Crumpling and Dampening Method

1. Crumple the paper.
2. Spritz paper with water. The water makes the crumples smaller and creates a more distressed look.
3. Shape as wished. The dampness will make it easier for you to shape the paper.
4. Put the damp paper onto a paper towel and leave to dry. If you don’t want to wait around for it to dry, it can be microwaved for 30 seconds but no longer. Keep an eye on it if you microwave it.

Crumpling in a Bowl Method

1. Crumple the paper.
2. Fill a bowl with tea (You can use a cup instead if you’re using a small piece of paper.
3. Put the crumpled paper into the tea and make sure that it is completely under the tea and wait for a while. Experiment with how long you put it in to get a different amount of darkness.
4. Carefully remove the paper and leave it to dry.
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WARNING! PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE!!!!!! BE CAREFUL
WITH ANY OPEN FLAME METHOD! PLEASE GET PERMISSION FROM YOUR PARENT OR GUARDIAN BEFORE USING ANY OPEN FLAME FOR THIS PROJECT!!!!!!!

Flame Method

1. Hold the paper between 1/2 inch (1.2 cm) and 1 inch (2.5 cm) above a candle flame and move it back and forth. This will create the darkened look of paper that's been around for a very long time and with a little practice you'll be able to give the paper the look of having been a little damaged by time and circumstance.

2. Burn the edges with a lighter or a candle but make sure it doesn't catch fire. Wetting the edges before burning them offers a more ripped look.

(You may want to do this in or by the sink, just in case it catches on fire.)

TIPS

• Use coffee if you want a darker look. Or, while the paper is still wet, scatter a little instant coffee on the page to make it look like foxing.

• Experiment with different quantities of tea in water. More tea leaves will make its color darker. Adding milk makes a different shade.

• Add turmeric to the tea to get some grainy texture on the paper.

• If you want to fold the parts of the paper do it, and then dip it, the folded parts will be darker. Don't use straight folds.

• This is also a good method to use if your goal is to make Egyptian papyrus

• Crush a paper with your hands and then straighten it again. Then applying tea solution will give interesting results.

• If you use coffee to make the paper look old, add a few glasses of red wine to the coffee. Because the substance is different, the coffee will be on the "large" spaces while the wine will be in the "little wrinkles". This gives a very old effect.

• Spray with transparent lacquer upon complete drying for extra finish.

• You can use a piece of soft cloth instead of brush to apply the tea to the paper.

• If you want a faster drying process, iron the paper on a low setting. Be careful not to do it immediately.

• While in the pan, if you press down on the paper with a fork or another object, it will leave a cool imprint.
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- Plan what to write on your aged paper on a separate sheet of paper first. Write on the aged paper in pencil first, as to avoid permanent mistakes in pen. Begin writing in pencil lightly, then outline your writing in pen. Black ink is best.

- Try a fountain pen or even a dip pen for authentic-looking writing. Look at old-style handwriting, too, and try to emulate it.

WARNINGS

Don’t put your paper too close to your candle flame or it will be set on fire.

- Avoid using watercolor painting strokes (with less amount of liquid on brush) or else the brush strokes will be visible on paper and it won’t give a smooth impression.

- Don’t set the paper on fire unless you dip the paper in water.

- If using the Soaking Method, do not attempt to soak several pieces of paper at one time! The pages will stick together. Instead, soak your pages individually, using the same tea.

- Don’t let the paper soak for too long, or it will begin to degrade.

- Practice the flame method on a different sheet of paper before you try it with your good sheet.

- Putting the paper in the microwave may permanently damage your microwave and it will never work again and that would not be good.

- To give writing the look of age, write using lemon juice. When the juice dries, hold the paper over a toaster and it will show up as a faded brown instead of fresh black.