

Paper

What is paper?

Modern paper is a thin material of wood fibres pressed together. People write on paper with a pencil or pen, and books are made of paper. There are many types of paper.

Where does paper come from?

Modern paper is normally made from wood pulp. Wood is ground up and mixed with water and other chemicals. This is then pressed into sheets of paper. Many centuries ago people in Egypt made a kind of paper from the papyrus plant. This is where the word 'paper' comes from. The oldest existing paper with writing on it was found in the ruins of a watchtower in the Great Wall of China. It is about 1900 years old.

What is paper used for?

Paper is used for writing and printing. Books, magazines and newspapers are printed on paper. Paper is often used for money. Some types of paper can be used for cleaning, such as paper towels, tissues or toilet paper. Paper can be used to wrap gifts.

Can paper be recycled?

Recyclable materials include many kinds of glass, paper, cardboard, metal and plastic. Not all paper can be recycled. Any paper that's coated in a material like wax, plastic or foil can't be recycled. However, some paper can be recycled, such as, brown parcel paper, catalogues, photocopier paper, envelopes and newspaper.

What does paper get recycled into?

Recycled paper can be transformed into a range of new paper products, including:
brown parcel paper

Christmas or birthday cards and wrapping paper

egg boxes

napkins and kitchen roll

paper bags

Is paper biodegradable?

Paper is biodegradable because it is made from plant materials and most plant materials are biodegradable. Paper breaks down overtime. This usually takes 2-3 weeks but it can take longer if the temperature drops.