



March, 2005

TIPS

Making a damp Pack

A damp pack is necessary to properly moisten *Washi* (handmade paper) for printing. Moist paper improves the fibers ability to absorb pigment.

There are many ways to make a damp pack; this is the way that works for us.

Cut a sheet of plastic big enough to wrap around the *Washi* once plus a little more to tuck in along the sides. Trash bags work great for paper small enough to fit inside. You'll need at least 3-4 sheets of newsprint per one sheet of *Washi*. Some printmakers use old flattened newspapers instead of newsprint. This is great for recycling but newspaper ink can offset onto your beautiful *Washi*. The older the newspaper the less likely this will happen.

Now, evenly moisten the newsprint. If using a spray bottle mist every sheet. If using a *Mizu Bake*, (Japanese water brush) dampen every other sheet. The newsprint should NOT be dripping wet, just moist.

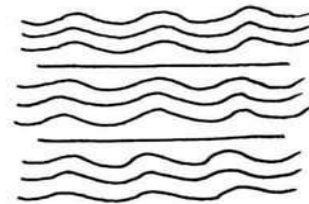
Leave three damp sheets of newsprint on the bottom of the stack. Place one sheet of dry *Washi* between 2 - 3 moist sheets of newsprint. End with three damp sheets of newsprint on top. Wrap the entire stack of papers in plastic to ensure that the paper stays moist.

Put the stack under flat weights (not too heavy, one or two plywood boards work fine). Allow the paper to sit for 2 to 5 hours. Some sources recommend leaving the paper in the damp pack overnight if there are many sheets. As a general rule of thumb, the paper should feel cool to the touch, not wet.

When you are ready to print, take the damp pack out of the plastic bag and spread a moistened towel on top and underneath to prevent further evaporation.

It must be said that there is no magic formula for determining the correct degree of moisture. This will change according to paper fiber structure, thickness, the strength of the paper's sizing (if present), and the temperature and humidity of the workshop.

WARNING! Soaking handmade papers in a bath or tray instead of a damp pack will over saturate and ruin the paper.



wavy line = newsprint
straight line = print paper

