

Woven Paper Baskets

Project 9

Supplies and Tools

burnishing tools (1 for each participant)
masking-tape
packing-tape dispensers
place mats (plastic or vinyl)
scissors (1 for each participant)

Materials

packing tape (thicker gauge, at least 2 inches wide)
paper scrap

Step 1: Choosing Your Pages

Leaf through the paper scrap, pulling out pages with images that jump out at you. Keep an eye out for color, texture, and small details. Because the pages are going to be cut in half, then folded, then woven, full images won't be preserved, so you're looking for images that will be interesting in pieces. Keep in mind that it's possible to plan out themes of color or texture. It's fine if you end up with raw edges along the ripped side of the page.

The number of pages you'll need will depend on how narrowly you fold the strips and how big you want your basket. Baskets with large bottoms are not as sturdy as baskets with smaller bottoms and should therefore be shorter. Baskets with small bottoms can go higher with less structural difficulty, but they allow a smaller space to weave as they get taller.

For our example, we are going to use strips that are about ½ inch wide and will make a smallish basket with a bottom of 5 strips by 6 strips. For this basket, we used about 30 strips.

Step 2: Folding

Fold and crease the page in half lengthwise. Tear or cut along the fold so you end up with two pieces of about equal size.

Taking one of the halves, fold at the edge lengthwise about ½ inch. Crease tightly with your burnishing tool. Fold and crease again and again until you have a ½-inch strip of folded paper. Use your burnishing tool to make sure the folds are as tight as they can be.

Repeat this process with all your pages.

Note: Although we're using ½-inch strips here, you can fold the pages into wider or thinner strips. If you choose wider strips, you may need to use an entire page rather than a half, and your finished basket may be less sturdy.

Step 3: Laminating with Packing Tape

Laminating the strips with packing tape is easy. Start by laying a strip out in front of you horizontally. It's a good idea to use a vinyl or plastic place mat to tape on. You can easily pick up the tape if you need to move it around

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or if it sticks to the mat, and you'll be able to move your work around at different angles. If there is a seam on one side of the strip, face that up. Pull a length of tape from the dispenser that is slightly longer than the paper strip (about ¼ inch should do). Holding the tape horizontally by the edges, lay it as straight as you can onto the strip. Press the tape down firmly, then fold it over the sides until the strip is entirely covered in tape. Snip the tape ends closer to the paper. Now use the burnishing tool to flatten out any air bubbles and seal the tape securely.

Repeat this for each of the paper strips.

If you are using wider strips, you may need to use more than one strip of tape. Make sure to overlap the edges of the strips to get full coverage.

Note: If you have a laminating machine at your library, you can use it for this project, but be warned: you'll go through a lot of supplies.

Step 4: Weaving

BOTTOM/BASE

Laying strips out next to each other will help you determine how wide your basket will be. When you have the size of your basket in mind, you're ready to lay out your strips and prep them for weaving. To begin, assemble the strips that will form the bottom and frame of your basket. The frame and the bottom need strips that are twice as long as the ones you'll weave the sides with, so tape two strips together for every strip you need. These strips should be about the same length and width, so keep this in mind when you choose which strips to use.

For our example, the bottom is 6 strips by 5 strips, so including doubling their length, we'll need to start with 22 strips.

When you have all your strips taped together, lay 6 out vertically on your vinyl place mat. They should all be lined up evenly from top to bottom, and placed right next to each other edge to edge. Use a strip of masking tape to tape the strips to the place mat along the top ends.

Weave your first strip, over and under, across the center of the vertical strips. (You should be able to easily spot the center at the point where you taped the two strips together.) Once you have the center strip in place and with

even tails on either side, complete the bottom by adding the rest of the strips evenly on either side. For ours, we're adding two more strips above the center and two below.

When all the bottom strips are in place, check that the center strip is still in the center. If it isn't, get it back to where it needs to be. Push and adjust the rest of the strips so your weave is tight with no gaps.

When you're satisfied with the weave, use a small piece of tape to secure each corner.

SIDES

With the bottom secured, begin the sides by folding up the tail edges all along the bottom. Crease the folds well, using the burnishing tool if you need to.

These tails are going to be the frame for your sides. When all of them are folded up, take another strip and tuck its end under the middle frame strip on one side at the bottom. Use a small piece of tape to secure it. Weave the strip in through the rest of the side. When you get to the corner, crease the weaving strip so it will turn the corner more smoothly, and then continue around the corner. When you have the strip completely woven through, go back and push it down, making sure the weaving is tight. Then secure it with tape at the corner and at the end. Begin the next strip where the previous one left off and continue with the same technique.

When you have woven all the way around and come back to the beginning of your first strip, tuck the tail for a neater look or clip it away if you have a lot of excess. Weave the subsequent rows in the same way, building your basket to the desired height.

FINISHING THE TOP

When you finish the sides, the tails of the frame strips will still be sticking out from the tops. These should be about 2 inches long. With the side strips secured with tape and the weaving tight, you can now secure the top edge. To do this, fold the top tail over the top strip and tuck it under the strip second from the top. Some of the top tails will fold out and some will fold in. You may need to use your burnishing tool to tuck the ends under. If a tail seems loose, use a small piece of tape to secure it.

Once all the tails are tucked in, your basket is finished!