

In the United States more solid waste is picked up the first "trash day" after Christmas than on any other day. This is due, of course, to all the wrapping paper, corrugated boxes, and other packaging that people discard after the holiday. You can help save natural resources and landfill space by wrapping gifts in fabric, and the people who receive your presents can reuse the cloth in some way.

The Japanese have wrapped and covered articles with fabric for centuries. Squares of cloth called furoshiki are folded, wrapped, and tied over all kinds of objects. Made of any fabric, a furoshiki ranges in size from a foot square to ten feet square. There are several ways to wrap articles using this environmentally-friendly covering. See [How to Use Furoshiki](#) to learn how to wrap gifts using a furoshiki.

In the Japanese culture, close attention is paid to how a gift is presented, so the wrapping is very important. Marbling, an ancient craft which results in beautiful and unique patterns, is a fun and relatively easy way to decorate fabric. The basic marbling technique can be mastered by a child, while the more involved patterns can challenge even a professional artist. You can marble cloth to wrap gifts for Christmas, Chanukah, and other occasions.

No one is sure where marbling began. Some scholars think it originated in China, and there is evidence that the Japanese were practicing a type of marbling called "suminagashi" as early as the 12th century. Japanese artists decorated handmade paper and silk by floating inks on water and making patterns using resists. The resulting design could be printed by laying a sheet of paper or cloth on the water's surface and then lifting it off.

Another marbling technique known as "Ebru" or "cloud art" was practiced in 15th century Turkey and Persia. This method, which is most like the technique used by Western marblers today, makes use of a thickened liquid called size. Water and a material called carrageenan are combined to make the marbling bath which is poured into a shallow vat or pan. Paint is floated on the surface and moved about with marbling tools such as rakes, combs, and styluses. This thicker liquid allows the marbler to have greater control over the resulting patterns.

The Turks were very secretive about the marbling process, because they used it to protect against forgery. Important state documents were recorded on marbled paper, and since every design was an original, altering the papers was easily

detected. As knowledge of the mysterious process spread westward, master craftsmen closely guarded their marbling secrets, sometimes working behind partitions. In 1853, an English marbler named Charles Woolnough outraged other marblers by revealing the entire process in his book entitled *The Art of Marbling*. Now you can learn the secrets of marbling, too!

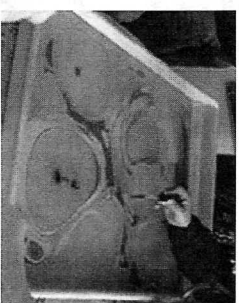
#### MATERIALS:

- Large, white handkerchief
- Carrageenan
- Alum
- Water
- Newspapers
- Paper towels
- Rubber bands
- Acrylic paints
- Funnel
- Blender
- Waste basket
- Tablespoon
- Measuring cup
- Plastic bucket
- Gallon milk jug
- Paint containers
- Sticks for stirring
- Marbling vat or pan
- Rubber or latex gloves
- Broom corn or whisk broom
- String for a clothesline
- Iron and ironing board

#### How to:

Marbling fabric is a great way to recycle old hankies, and men's handkerchiefs are a good size for making a furoshiki. In order for the paint to adhere permanently to the fabric, it's necessary to soak the cloth in a mixture of alum and water before marbling. Alum can cause a skin rash, so have an adult do this step for you. In a bucket, dissolve 2 tablespoons of alum (potassium aluminum sulfate) in 1 quart of warm tap water. Stir until the alum crystals have dissolved. Drop the cloth into the alum mixture. Wearing rubber or latex gloves, stir the cloth around to be sure it's thoroughly soaked. Wring the fabric and hang it to dry. Press the cloth using the cool to medium setting on your iron.

To make the basic "marbling recipe," fill a blender with one quart of water. Add one level tablespoon of carrageenan and blend for 30 seconds on medium speed. Pour the mixture through a funnel into a clean, plastic milk jug, and add another



quart of water. Stir the size. Work near a sink, and cover the area with a layer of newspapers. Place the marbling pan on a table which is waist high. Empty the marbling size into the pan. Repeat these mixing steps until the pan contains about two inches of medium. In order for the size to mature, it must rest undisturbed for twelve to fourteen hours. Cover the pan to keep it free of dust and other particles. In addition, the size, paints, marbling pan, and other tools used should all be warmed to room temperature.

After all this preparation, you're finally ready to marble! While you can apply paint to the size in a number of ways, including using an eye-dropper, the most satisfactory way is by "throwing the color" on with a whisk. The advantage of using a whisk is that the bristles allow you to apply the color in tiny droplets over a large area. The most successful marbling has a good distribution of color over the entire bath, and using a whisk is an efficient way to do this. To make a marbling whisk, cut the bristles from a broom. Gather a bunch of the bristles together, and bind each applicator at the top with a rubber band. You'll need one whisk for each color, of course. If you prefer, you can order broom corn from a marbling supplier. The material comes in a large bunch, so there will be enough to make many whisks.

Reuse plastic, wide mouthed pill bottles with snap or screw-type lids to hold the paint. For your first attempt at marbling, limit yourself to four or five colors. Squeeze about one-half inch of liquid acrylic paints into each bottle, and add an equal amount of water. Mixing in the right amount of water is important, because if the paint is too thick, it will sink to the bottom. On the other hand, if it's too thin, the color will be pale. Stir each color before using.

Tear some newspaper into long strips, and use them to skim off any bubbles on the surface before you apply the first drops of paint. Stir the first color, and dip a whisk into the bottle. Apply the paint by holding the whisk in one hand and tapping the top with your index finger. Continue tapping as you pass the whisk over the pan from the top to the bottom in an "S" motion, so that the color will be evenly distributed. Throw on the next color in the same way, and continue until all the colors have been applied. You'll notice that some colors will dominate, and the first colors you applied will be pushed into veins. If you wish, apply these colors again. The resulting design is called a stone pattern, and it's the first one marblers make before any other design can be achieved.

While it's possible to print fabric by yourself, it's much easier and more fun if you have some help. When you're pleased with your design, stand on the opposite side of the marbling vat facing your partner. Holding the corners, one in each hand, carefully lower the fabric onto the surface, letting the middle touch first and then the sides. Now, working alone, hold the top corners and peel the cloth off the size. Gently rinse in cool, running water. Hang the fabric to dry on a simple clothesline made of string. Be sure to protect the floor under the line with a layer

of newspapers. Remove the cloth when dry, and let it "rest" for at least two days. Set the color by ironing on the wrong side.



If you wish to continue marbling after the first printing, it's necessary to "clean" the vat or tank to remove any color remaining on the surface from the previous application. Again, tear some newspapers into long strips. Starting at the top of the vat, skim the surface by pulling the strip toward you. Throw away each strip, and continue until there is no more color showing on the newspaper. Since acrylics are water-based paints, cleaning up after marbling with them is a fairly simple process. Whisks should be rinsed and allowed to air dry, and pans and other tools and utensils can be rinsed and dried. Avoid using soap in cleaning up, as residue can affect future marbling.

#### Tips and Tricks:

If you'd like to marble paper instead of fabric, just lightly sponge on the alum. Place the paper, alum-side down, between sheets of blotter paper, and weight with something heavy such as particle board. Only the side which has been treated will print successfully, so this is an important step.

The marbling pan should be large enough to hold about two inches of the size or medium. In addition, it needs to be a little wider than the handkerchief or other cloth you're marbling. If you don't have access to a professional marbling vat, substitute another receptacle such as a very large roasting pan.

Marbling is both an easy and difficult craft! Don't be discouraged if your first attempts at marbling aren't as successful as you'd like. There are many variables, including temperature and humidity, which can affect the outcome of a marbling session.

Colophon Book Arts Supply, 3046 Hogum Bay Road SE, Olympia, WA 98506, (206) 459-2940, [Colophon](http://Colophon.com)

There are many marbling patterns that can be accomplished with the use of rakes, combs, and other tools, and we'll learn about some of them in future activities. In the meantime, here are some good marbling books which you can consult if you want to learn more about this fascinating craft: *Marbling on Fabric* by Daniel and Paula Cohen, *Marbling Paper and Fabric* by Carol Taylor, and *Marbling* by Diane Vogel Maurer and Paul Maurer. For more advanced marblers, see *Marbled Designs* by Patty and Mimi Schleicher.

## Recycle Art Project: Recycled Magazine Bowl

**DESCRIPTION:** Students can create a bowl from magazine pages and discover that using recycled materials is fun, beautiful and useful. This magazine bowl is made from old magazine pages that are folded and wrapped around each other to form a round bowl.

**GRADES:** 4 - 8

### MATERIALS:

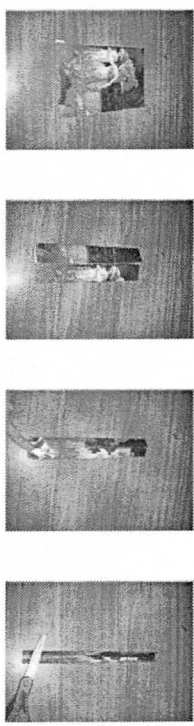
Magazines, clear scotch tape, glue stick, and clear sealer spray

#### Step 1 - Preparing the Center

Using a magazine page that has been neatly cut out of the magazine, fold it in half, lengthwise. Then open it again. Fold the outer edges to the inside fold. This is the first fold. This will be folded to the inside 2 more times. The width of the paper will be approx. ½ inch. Using this strip, fold it in half from top to bottom. Use the glue stick to glue the inside folds so that it holds together. Roll this strip up tightly. Use tape to hold it together. This forms the center of the bowl.

#### Step 2 - Folding the paper

Using the same size of magazine pages. Fold as in step 1. Fold in half lengthwise. Open it again. Fold the outer edges to the inside fold. This is the first fold. Fold the outer edges to the inside edges again. Fold the edges to the inside a third time. Tape this strip to the center roll of paper. Wrap this strip tightly around the first roll. Tape the end of this strip to the roll.  
Images



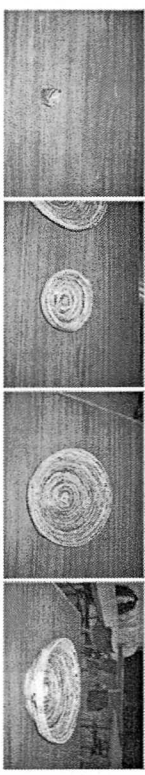
#### Step 3 - Wrapping the paper strips

Continue making strips of paper using the folding method in step 2. Continue taping the end of the strips to the roll, wrapping it tightly around the roll, then taping the end again. Continue wrapping until the roll measures approx. 25 cm across.

#### Step 4 - Shaping the bowl

Gently pull up the bowl until a bowl shape is formed. Or you can shape the bowl over another bowl and gently pull up the strips so that a bowl shape is formed. This bowl can

now be sprayed with a clear polyurethane or clear varnish sealer spray to make it shiny and protect it.  
Images



#### Hints and Tips

- Use National Geographic magazine pages with colorful side on the outside to create a more colorful bowl.
- Make the folds tight by folding against the table surface. Help students to fold neatly to center line and roll tightly when taping it together.
- Use a glue that dries clear to help hold the bowl together when it has been shaped into the bowl shape. Magazine pages are slippery and as spiral gets larger, it gets harder to keep together.
- Use the lesson to teach students the benefits of recycling. Ask them how the project may help the environment by recycling or re-using paper in a new way. Demonstrate paper recycling when doing this project by recycling pages of the magazines that are not cut straight or needed.
- Use the lesson to teach about how paper is made. Create bowls from other types of glossy paper or other types of paper such as old calendars to be used "time and time again".
- Use the lesson to demonstrate or display other cultures that create art and crafts from recycled materials. Some of this art may be sold in stores or online. Discuss what fair market value or fair trade is. An example of a website for recycled art from other cultures may be found at: [www.lenthousandvillages.ca](http://www.lenthousandvillages.ca). Vietnamese artisans make a recycled paper square bowl to provide work for poor and marginalized groups in Vietnam.
- This easy recycling art project is versatile to create the size of bowl you need. Students will find it easy to create a useful and beautiful art from recycled materials found in the classroom.