

The Story of Paper- Experiment!

Background: Most people have heard the saying, “Don’t waste paper, because paper comes from trees.” It’s true! Most paper comes from wood chips, and wood chips come from trees. Watch the short video, [How Do They Turn Wood Into Paper?](#) to find out about the tree to paper process.

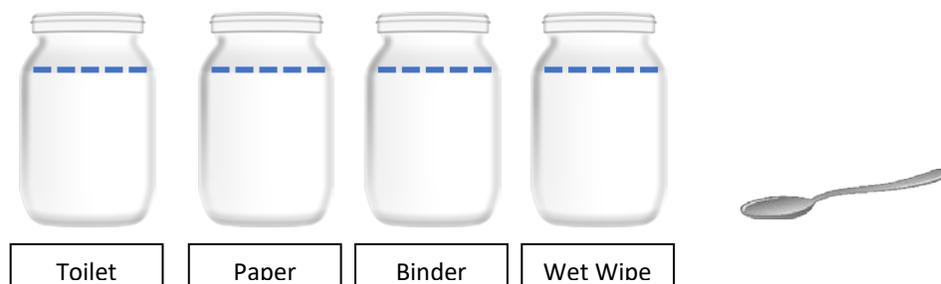
Lesson: By doing the experiment below, you will learn about the different properties of paper, observe the process of paper breaking down in water, and why paper products are made in different ways for different purposes.

For the experiment you will need to gather:

- 4 glass containers about the size of a spaghetti jar but smaller than that is ok too! Lids are not necessary
- Water
- A spoon for stirring
- A clock or timer
- 3 squares of toilet paper
- 3 more different types of paper:
 - Paper Towel
 - Binder or Copy Paper
 - Wet Wipe

Directions:

1. Measure and cut your different papers to be about the same size as your 3 squares of toilet paper.
2. Make a label for each type of paper you will be dissolving.
3. Fill you jars with equal amounts of water. Fill almost to the top but leave about an inch of room from the top of the jar so the water doesn’t spill over. Before you start, your setup should look like this:



4. Now place each paper into its jar. Stir the contents of each jar with the spoon for 10 seconds. Set a timer for 5 minutes.
5. After 5 minutes, stir the contents of each jar again and record your observations in the boxes below:

Toilet paper (5 minutes)	Paper towel (5 minutes)	Binder Paper (5 minutes)	Wet Wipe(5 minutes)

6. Set a timer for 5 more minutes. Repeat Step 5.

Toilet paper (10 minutes)	Paper towel (10 minutes)	Binder Paper (10 minutes)	Wet Wipe (10 minutes)

Answer the following questions:

1. Which paper broke down the most? Why do you think it broke down the most?

2. Which paper broke down the least? Why do you think it broke down the least?

3. Why is it important that only toilet paper go into our sewer system?

4. How much did wet wipes break down, if at all?

5. Wet wipes and cleaning wipes are often made with plastic fibers and should never be flushed down the toilet. Where should you put them instead?

6. Stormwater drains carry water from our homes, neighborhoods and streets directly to the nearest body of water. Why is it important that we pick up all litter, even if it is made from paper?

7. When you broke the paper fibers apart in the jar of water you made paper slurry, the main ingredient when making recycled paper. In this way, we make new paper out of discarded paper waste placed in recycling bins. How then do your paper and cardboard recycling actions directly help to conserve trees and forests?