Paper Sculpture Techniques

Fringing: Make successive cuts all across a piece of paper. The size and shape of the paper is determined by what purpose it will serve. Layer or roll fringed pieces to add interest.

Curling: Wrap a long strip of paper around a pencil, or curl the paper by winding it around your finger. If you are careful, you can curl paper by using scissors.

Pleating: Fold a piece of paper back and forth in an accordion pleat until you come to the end of the paper. Make a fan shape by gluing one end.

Spiral: Starting on the outside edge of a circle, make a small cut into the shape. Then cut around and around slowly moving into the center. This may be done with other shapes, such as rectangles and triangles, too. Just be sure the direction of the cutting lines follows the shape of the object.

Chains: Glue a short strip of paper into a circle. Put another strip through the circle and glue it to itself. Continue adding strips and gluing till you make the chain as long as needed.

Interlocking: Glue two strips of paper together at a right angle. Fold one strip over the other, keeping a right angle. Fold the other the same way. Repeat until finished. Glue. Weaving is also a form of interlocking.

Making Forms

Cylinder: Start with a square or rectangular scrap of paper. Roll it into a cylinder and glue it shut. Square, rectangular and triangular prisms can start with a cylinder.

Cone: Use a compass to draw a half circle on a scrap of paper. Cut it out, and, holding the shape with the straight side up, curve the ends toward yourself and over each other to form the cone. Make the cone smaller by wrapping it tighter. When you decide how big you want the shape to be, glue it shut. Square pyramids can start with a cone.

Ball: At the start, the pattern formed from this method will look like spokes on a wheel. Start with four strips of paper, all the same size. Lay a strip of paper in front of you, and glue another strip in the center at a right angle to it. Glue another strip in the center in between these. Glue the last strip in the center in the remaining space. Turn the whole shape over, and bring the bottom strip up, gluing it to itself. Continue the process till all the strips are glued to form a ball.

Scoring: Since paper has a grain, scoring helps to make the paper bend easier.

Most of these paper techniques, such as fringing and curling, can be glued flat against a base. Gluing a scored piece, a cylinder or a cone will be more of a challenge, however. Just be patient, and hold the paper until the glue is dry. Tabs can be used to close up a form, such as a cylinder, or to attach a form to a base.