



## Studio Art School Sample Lesson

### STRETCHING PAPER

During this course you will apply ink, paint and dyes and other wet media to paper. As paper becomes wet it stretches. As the paper dries, it shrinks and buckles, and ripples form on the surface. In order to avoid this you can prepare your paper in advance by "stretching" it.

Essentially stretching paper involves thoroughly soaking it with water all over and fixing it to a board until it is dry. When you wet paper it absorbs the water and expands. As it dries, it contracts, so by fixing it to the board you restrict this contraction and effectively stretch the paper so that it dries flat.

You can buy paper that has been pre-stretched, such as watercolour paper, but this can be expensive. You can achieve good results when you stretch your own paper. Besides, the process is simple, quick and fun so why not try it!

Before beginning this exercise it is important that you prepare your working area and have easy access to the materials and equipment you will need.

As stretching paper is potentially messy process involving water, it is a good idea to set your equipment out on a large working surface such as the kitchen table.

To stretch paper you will need:

- Cartridge paper. Think ahead ....make sure that this is the correct size for the drawing you intend to do. Also make sure that the paper will fit comfortably into the water container you will be using for soaking.
- A wooden drawing board. Make sure the surface of this is clean, smooth and free from grease and oil. There is no point in correctly preparing your paper only to discover an

unwelcome “blob” when it has dried!

- “Gum Strip” This inexpensive, adhesive tape is available from art stores and hardware shops.
- A sink or tray. These should be large enough to soak your paper without folding or crushing. If you are using very large paper, you could use the bath or a shower tray.
- A clean cloth or sponge suitable for absorbing excess moisture.
- A bowl of water.
- A hand towel.



Place your bowl of water and towel near you. Rub your hands with the towel to make sure they are dry. Gauge the width of your cartridge paper. Tear off 4 lengths of gum strip that are slightly wider than your paper. Gauge the length of your cartridge paper. Tear off 4 strips slightly longer than your cartridge paper.

Place these strips to the side of your drawing board with the “width” strips along the top and the “length” strips to one side away from the sink or tray of water. Remember you do not want water to drip onto the gum strips at this stage.

Fill the sink or tray with cold water. Place your cartridge paper flat in the water, gently pulling it through several times, making sure it is thoroughly soaked. Take care not to soak the paper to the point of disintegration!



Carefully remove the paper from the sink or tray and place it on your drawing board. Using your sponge or cloth and working from the centre of the paper, smooth it out so there are no ripples or bubbles on the surface.



Take one length of gum strip and pull it through the bowl of water using your fingers to remove excess moisture.



Attach the top edge of the paper to the drawing board by placing half the width of the gum strip on the paper, half on the board.

Using your sponge gently brushes downwards and outwards from this strip to ensure maximum smoothness on the surface of you paper.

Taking another "width" of gum strip, repeat the wetting and sticking down process along the opposite edge, that is, the bottom of the paper.



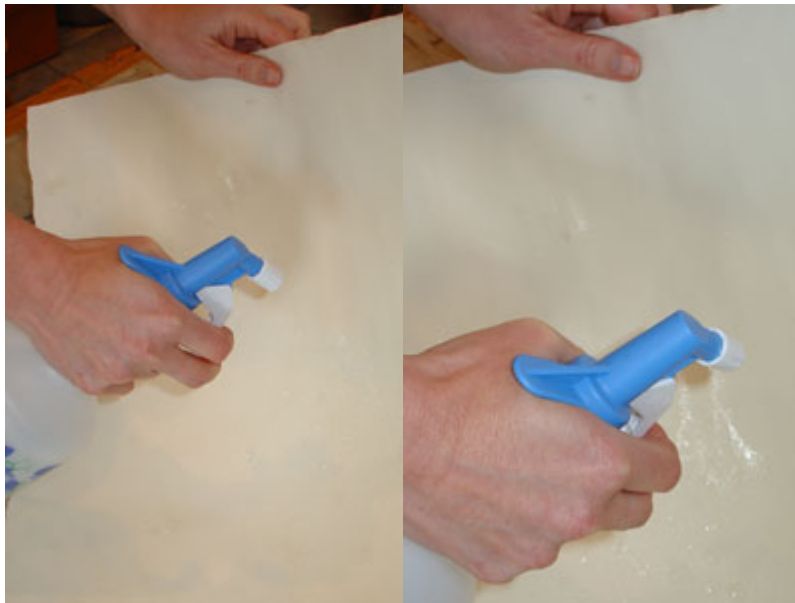


If there is any rippling or bubbling at this stage, use your sponge to brush from the centre outwards to remove it.

Taking the “length” strips wet them and apply them to each of the remaining edges with half their width on the paper, half on the board.



Your paper should now be secured to the board. Well done! You have successfully stretched your first piece of paper. If you don't have easy access to a sink, you can wet your cartridge paper with a plant spray filled with water and supplement that with a wet sponge. Spray on both sides and add water with the sponge if necessary to ensure that the paper is really saturated. Use the sponge to wet the sticky side of the gumstrip.





Don't worry if once you have stuck the paper to the board it is still a bit buckled. If the gumstrip is securely attached it should dry nice and flat.

