The Process of Paper Making

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The making of paper goes beyond the actual process. It involves carefully choosing the fibers that will eventually determine the quality of the paper. The fibers ghat are commonly used include bark, hemp, rattan, different grasses-reeds, rice straw, wheat, sugar cane-,and bamboo.

Making the Pulp: The first step is beating the fiber into a pulp. Plant fibers are mixed with pure water, and the pounding action of the beater crushes and abrades the fibers. This part of the process works to put water inside the structure of the fiber. This step is critical in determining the physical characteristics of the finished paper. The more water that is beaten and pounded into the plant fibers, the more translucent the paper is after it has dried. At this stage, the printability, abrasion resistance, folding strength and translucency are determined.

A mold is a rectangular wooden frame with wooden ribs that the pulp is poured into. The size of the mold depends on the dimensions of the paper that are produced.

Paper Formation: One sheet of paper is formed at a time by dipping the mold into a vat of pulp, scooping up a thin layer of pulp, throwing off any excess and then, while holding the mold level, shaking it from side-to-side and front-and-back as the water drains. This movement interlocks the fibers into a smooth, even mat.

Pressing Excess Water: The freshly formed sheet is laid down one on top of the other, with a fine thread that sets on top of the sheet and allows the dryer to separate each sheet. The paper is placed in a hydraulic presser under tons of pressure and the bulk of the water is squeezed out.

Drying the paper: The paper is moved to the drying area where single sheets are lifted off the stack and placed onto a steaming table. The paper is smoothed onto the surface of the table with a brush, and steamed to dryness. Once dried, the paper is stacked into lots of hundreds.