

How to make a plaited paper RAINBOW basket



One of the simplest ways of making a basket is by interlacing long, flat strips of a pliable material, like paper

This set of worksheets will take you through the basic process of making a plaited paper basket, with some suggestions on how you can prepare your paper to get a rainbow flag effect

The instructions are quite long because I've tried to give as much detail as I can so that each step of the process is as clear as possible

I hope you find this fun and not too frustrating*

* If you get really fed up you can stop at step 8 and weave yourself some flat squares. I do this a lot to make greetings cards!

What you'll need

There are a few things you'll need before you start:

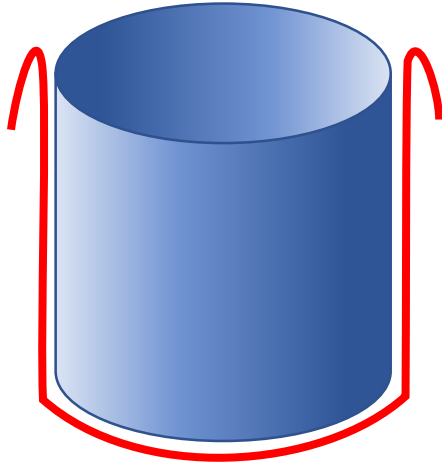
Materials:

- I'm starting out with a sheet of A2 cartridge paper but any kind of relatively sturdy paper would do
 - You don't want anything too flimsy (like tissue paper) or too thick and inflexible (like heavy card) – at least, not for your first attempt.
- If you'd prefer to use pre-printed paper, go for it! Loads of basketry artists use recycled material and you can get some amazing results
 - Try to avoid things with really smooth, slippery surfaces – they can be very difficult to work with (I've tried using satin ribbon and vowed never to do it again!!!)
- Paint, crayons, coloured pens or pencils – anything that you can use to colour your paper basically (don't worry about being too neat – you won't notice small blemishes once it's turned into a basket)

Tools:

- Scissors for cutting your paper into strips and trimming off dangling pieces of paper at the end
 - You can use anything suitable to cut your strips. I'll be using a scalpel, steel ruler and cutting mat.
 - Whatever you use – MIND YOUR FINGERS!!!
- Pegs or something similar to hold your weaving together at key points
 - I have lots of really small pegs but regular clothes pegs should work too. Paper clips are OK as long as your paper or card isn't too thick
 - You can use tape but make sure it's something that will pull away easily once you're done with it
- If you're using paint, you'll need brushes or something to apply it with

Cutting your strips



Before you start colouring your paper, it's good to understand how the basket will be constructed.

The basket is made out of paper strips which have to be long enough to go across the base and up both sides and to thread back for a neat border like the red line on the diagram *left*

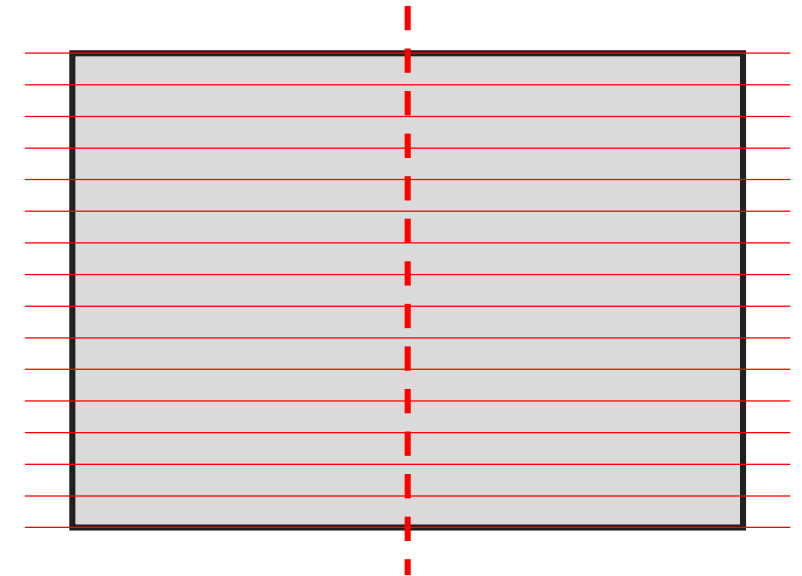
Actually, the strips need to be even longer than the width of the base plus twice the height because they travel around the sides of the basket at a 45° angle

To get the longest possible strips, it's best to cut parallel to the long edge of your paper. In the diagram *right*, the dotted line shows the centre of the strip, which will be underneath the basket

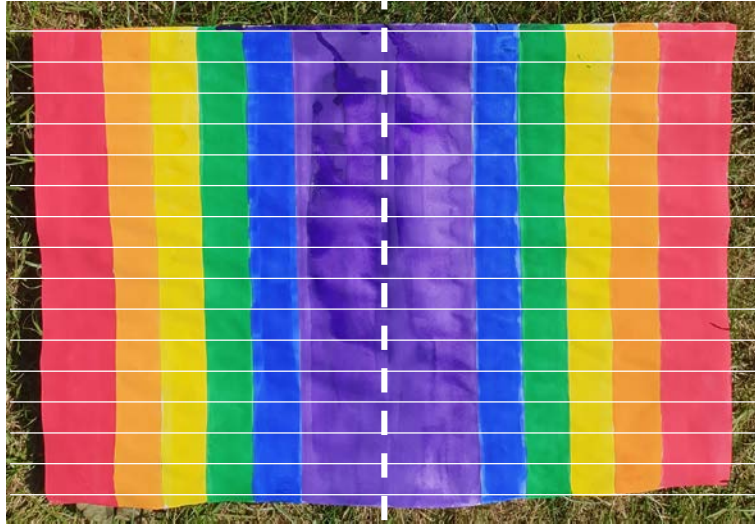
The base will actually be a woven square, with one set of long strips running at 90° to each other

It's a good idea to cut your strips as narrow as you can manage – for an A2 sheet, I suggest cutting strips 1.0 cm wide and a base of 8 x 8 strips

CUT MORE STRIPS THAN YOU NEED! It's good to have spares in case of breakages



Colouring your paper



- There isn't a right or wrong way of colouring your paper but to get the impression of bands of colour around the basket I've painted a sheet so that the rainbow is mirrored on either side
- Remember, the middle of the strips will be underneath the basket so when this is woven, the violet will be at the bottom and the red will be at the top
- The violet and the red are wider than the other stripes so that there is enough violet to show on the sides the red isn't all lost in the border



- I've also painted up a whole sheet in the colours of the rainbow flag, just to show what happens when it's woven
- Again, I've made the central and outer bands a bit wider to account for the underneath of the basket and the edge
- It's a good idea to colour both sides of the sheet – that way they inside and outside of the basket will be coloured and you won't have the paper colour showing when you fold down for the border

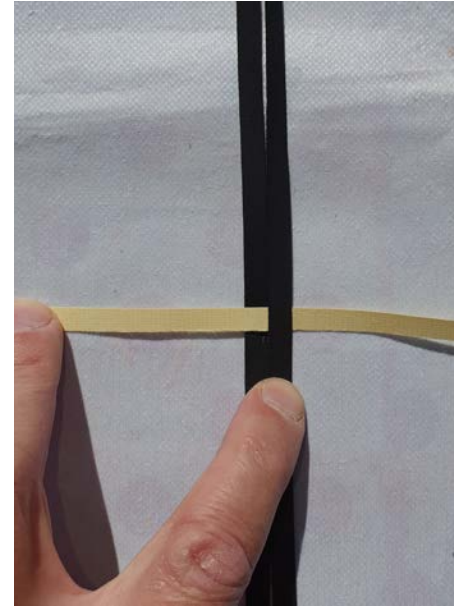
How to make your basket (1)



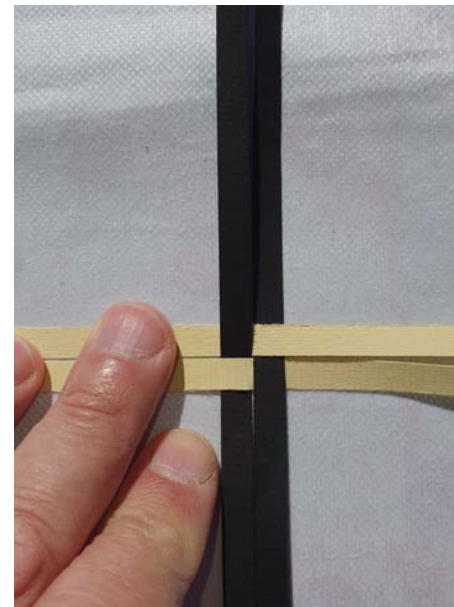
1.
 - To make things easy, I'm going to demonstrate this with high contrast strips in just two colours so you can see what's going on
 - Start by finding the centre of the paper strip you will be starting with
 - The easiest way to do this is to fold it in half



2.
 - Take your second strip
 - Find the centre of the strip
 - Place the strip at a right angle across the first strip so that it is BELOW the centre crease of the first strip and its own centre crease is TO THE RIGHT of the first strip

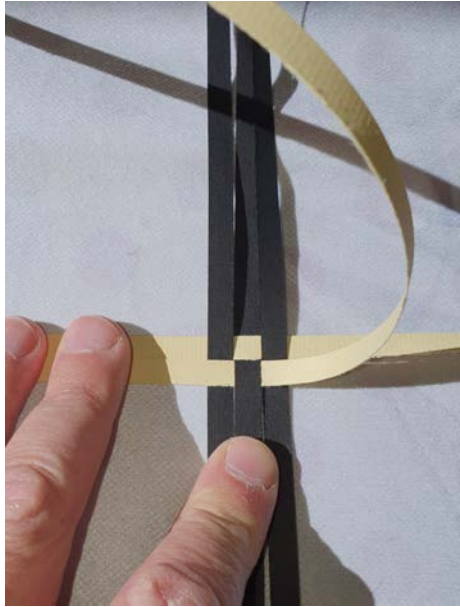


3.
 - Take your third strip
 - Find the centre
 - Place it to the right of the first strip and ON TOP of the second strip



4.
 - Take your fourth strip
 - Place this so that it is parallel to the second strip, ON TOP of the third strip and UNDERNEATH the first strip
 - Gently push all of the strips together so that they meet closely in the middle
 - This cross will form the centre of your basket base

How to make your basket (2)



5.

- You will now add in a new set of strips around the cross you have created
- I've started by adding a new one to the right, going OVER the fourth strip and UNDER the second strip
- You may find it easiest to lift up any strips which your new strip will be going under, as shown



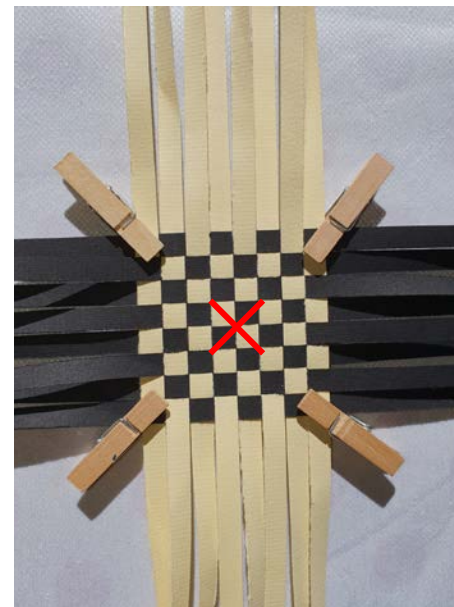
7.

- Keep adding in strips around your centre
- Use the previous row as a reference – if that went OVER a perpendicular strip then UNDER one, your new strip will need to go UNDER and then OVER



6.

- Add in new strips around your original centre until you have a square in the centre
- You may find it helpful to mark your original centre (red X) so you can use that as a reference as you build up your base
- You may also find it easier to insert new pieces if you rotate your work, as I have done here



8.

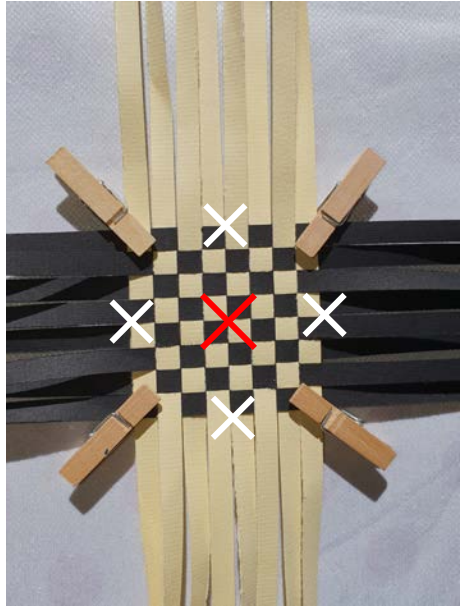
- Once you have a square which is 8 strips by 8 strips, you have completed your base
- You can secure the corners at this point ready for the next step
- Each side of your base should have an EVEN NUMBER OF STRIPS – you can do odd numbers or have off centre corners but that is much more complicated to work with

Interlude

If you have started with your rainbow patterned strips of paper, you should have something that looks a bit like this



How to make your basket (3)



9.

- The corners are formed by bending up the strips at the centre of the sides (shown by the white X marks) and continuing to weave over and under
- It is REALLY important to make sure you are weaving from the centre of the sides – if you don't your basket will be irregular and things will get very complicated!



11.

- When you tighten up your weaving, you should have a neat square
- It's a good idea to secure this square with a peg (indicated by the magenta arrow – I forgot to take a photo of this, sorry)
- Notice that the base has curved up to accommodate this change of direction in the weaving



10.

- Imagine the horizontal strips are the floor. Take the strip which is above the floor and thread it under the one coming from beneath the floor
- It then goes over the next strip coming from above the floor
- Similarly, the first strip from beneath the floor goes over the first from above and below the second from beneath



12.

- Carry out the same procedure at the centre of each side of your base

How to make your basket (4)



13.

- Once you have all your corners established and secured, weave the remaining strips in so that you have a 4 x 4 squares at each corner



15.

- Again, it's a good idea to secure the corner of each piece of weaving when you complete it (I remembered the peg this time!)



14.

- These squares should be made up of the 4 strips either side of the centre of the base



16.

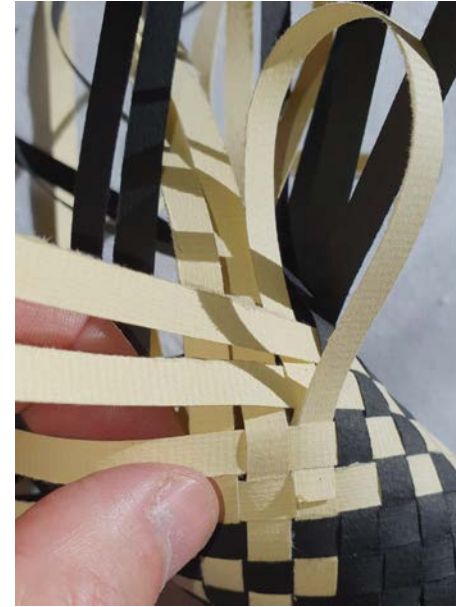
- Once all of the strips from the base are woven into the new corner pieces, weave together the pieces coming diagonally out of adjacent squares
- I prefer to complete a triangular half-square so that all my weaving is now at the same level

How to make your basket (5)



17.

- You may find that your weaving has become loose – you can pull on strips to tighten up your weaving
- Hold onto the strip outside the strip you are going to pull (marked with the white X) and gently pull away from the base (in the direction of the magenta arrow)



19.

- Once your basket is high enough and you have a reasonable length of your paper strips left, you can make your border
- Find two crossing strips, take the one coming from underneath and without twisting it, loop it back and thread it through on top of itself in the last position where it was underneath another strip



18.

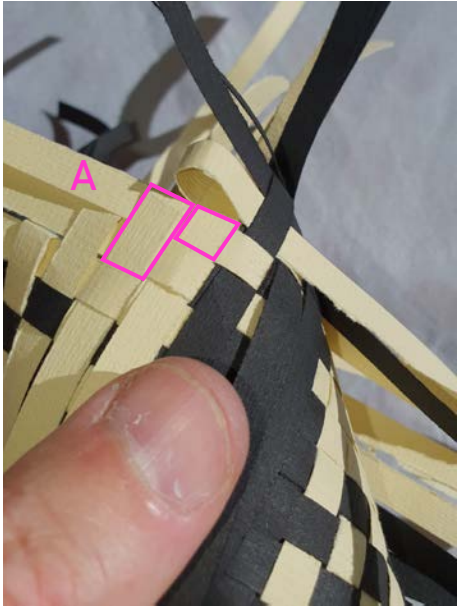
- You may need to tighten up your weaving all the way around and to do this several times as you weave
- It's a good idea to tighten weavers going to the left and the right – if you only tighten in one direction it may affect the shape of your basket
- Keep working until your basket is the height you want



20.

- Pull your strip so the loop becomes smaller
- Avoid folding the strip at this point as you may need to adjust later
- Work around the top of your basket threading away all the strips pointing in the same direction

How to make ~~make~~ FINISH your basket (7)



21.

- Each of the remaining strips will now be coming out from underneath a double block formed by a threaded away strip and a single block of the previous row of “true” weaving (highlighted in magenta for strip A)
- Take one of the strips, bend it back over itself, without twisting, and thread it under the previous row of “true” weaving



22.

- Pull your strip tight but, again, don't fold until you are confident that everything is in the right place
- Work systematically around the basket threading away



23.

- You should now have something that looks a bit like this!!!
- To really see your work, you'll need to trim away all those shaggy edges (you've all been cutting your own hair in lockdown – this should be a cinch!)



24.

- Take the protruding end of one of the strips and gently pull it until it is taut
- Slide one blade of your open scissors underneath this strip and move it as close to the body of your basket as you can then SNIP!!!
- Work around the basket doing this
- It's best to do all the strips going one way first then all the others

YOUR COMPLETED BASKET!!!



If you have been working with two colours, you should have something that looks like this

You'll have already noticed that even though you started out with a square base, you now have a circular basket!



COMPLETE DISCLOSURE

My strips were slightly too wide, so they were too short to reach the top

I cut some of my extra strips in half and threaded them in over the top of the short strips to give me extra length



This is what you get if you start with paper coloured like the rainbow flag and cut across the stripes of the flag
All of the colours but not necessarily where you expect to have them!!!