Paper Weavings

Background:

The craft of weaving originated in West Asia around 8,000 years ago, about the time that people settled down in homes and had the space to erect looms. Looms were used both inside and outside the house.

Looms consist of frames over which a series of tightly strung threads are looped (the warp). Interfacing long threads are woven under and over these at right angles (the weft) to create cloth. The long threads are passed through the warp first in one direction, say an under/over pattern, and then in the reverse direction at the beginning of the next row. The alternating of the threads gives the fabric strength and resilience. Note that if the pattern did not alternate, the fabric would fall apart.

Woven fabric is both strong and attractive. It is used in clothing, linens, sails etc. People from cultures all over the world create beautiful weavings both in fashion and fine art.

Did you know that you can “weave” with paper to create beautiful artwork? Paper weavings are easy and fun to make. Both the warp (paper loom) and weft (strips of paper to be woven through) can be decorated or embellished. In addition, colorful yarn, threads, ribbons, dried grasses, and other materials can be woven through. Other decorative items can be glued on top of finished weavings.

Weaving can be a family affair, with different people decorating their own strips of paper and taking turns at interlacing them. Read on for simple instructions.
Paper Weavings

Supplies:

- 2 Rectangular pieces of construction paper OR 2 manila folders, trimmed into even rectangles
- Pencil
- Ruler
- 2 or 3 Paper clips or small binder clips
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- Markers, Sharpies and/or crayons

Optional: yarn, embroidery thread or ribbon; decorative punches; dried grasses; sequins or flat “jewels” etc.

Directions:

1) Decorate your paper or folders using markers, Sharpies and/or crayons. Note: if you are using both crayons and markers, make sure to use the crayons last, so the markers won’t get clogged by the wax. If you are using manila folders, open them out so that you can decorate the entire pieces. For best results, decorate the insides of the folders.

2) Fold one piece of your decorated paper by making a hamburger fold. If you are using a manila folder, fold it on its natural fold. In either case, keep the decorated area on the inside.

3) Keeping the folded edge towards you, place a ruler against the top of the paper and draw a straight line across. Remove the ruler and write “STOP” in the top margin. This will be a useful reminder when you cut so that you won’t cut your loom apart.

4) Turn your paper so that the folded edge is on your right. (Lefties can reverse these directions :-) Line up the ruler along the top edge of the paper. Take the time to line it up carefully so that you’ll get horizontal lines rather than slanted ones! Use the width of the ruler as a measurement tool, and draw a line from the folded edge across to the “STOP” line. Continue your way down the paper with this method until you have reached the bottom. You can trim the bottom-most band if it is noticeably bigger or smaller than the others.

5) Place a few small clips at the top (open edge) of the folded paper so that it doesn’t shift when you are cutting. MAKE SURE THE FOLDED EDGE IS TOWARDS YOU or
you will cut your loom apart! Cut along each line, being careful not to go past the “STOP” line.

6) Cut your second paper into horizontal strips that match the WIDTH of the loom.
7) Open up the loom and weave these width-wide strips under and over, alternating the direction of each row, so that you have a weaving. Continue with this pattern until you have finished. From time to time you can push your strips gently toward the top of the weaving to tighten the weave. Note that you probably will not need all of your strips.
8) Use a glue stick to glue down the outside edges of each strip to the loom. Trim edges if you wish.
9) You can decorate your weaving using one or more of the following techniques:
   
   • Use decorative punches to make shapes and glue them down
   • Weave lengths of ribbon, yarn or dried grasses through your loom in either or both directions
   • Glue sequins, flat “jewels” or other items to your weaving.