

Make a desk tidy

Recycle Christmas paper and packaging to keep your pens and pencils in order.

What you need

- 1 mug of plain flour
- Sieve
- Mixing bowl
- 1 mug of warm water
- Spoon
- Used wrapping paper, torn into strips
- Different-sized packaging (we used an empty soup pot, three toilet rolls and some toy packaging)
- Shoebox lid
- Paintbrush
- Varnish

How does it work?

Flour contains gluten. When the warm water is added to the flour, the gluten cross-links (sticks together) and forms a paste. The water allows the gluten to move freely and the heat provides the energy for the reaction to take place. This paste is what glues the strips of paper to the object. When the paper-covered objects are drying, the water in the paste evaporates, leaving behind the cross-linked gluten that holds everything together.

DID YOU KNOW?

Gluten is Latin for glue. Gluten is sometimes used on the part of the envelope that you lick.



TOP TIP

This activity might be messy so lay newspaper or a bin bag on your work surface before starting.



1 Sift the flour into the mixing bowl, then add the warm water. Stir thoroughly until the mixture has combined and all the lumps have gone.



2 The mixture needs to be smooth, like a batter. If needed, add a few drops of water to loosen it up and stir it well.



3 Dip a strip of paper into the mixture, then press the strip between your thumb and finger to squeeze away the excess mixture.



4 Carefully place the paper strip on to the packaging, smoothing away any air bubbles so that it sticks to the surface.



5 Repeat steps 3 and 4 until the item is completely covered. Continue with the rest of the desk-tidy pieces, including the shoebox lid.



6 When each piece is completely dry, paint with varnish to protect it. Arrange the items in the shoebox lid and fill them with pens and pencils.