

Basic Paper Conservation Workshop

Handout

Contact: Laura K. N. Jones lauraknjones@gmail.com

Supplies:

- Wheat starch paste
 - Typically comes in a powder
 - The ones that require cooking are the highest quality
- Container with lid
 - To keep left-over paste in the fridge
 - It is usually good for about 2 weeks before it starts to go bad and get moldy
- Micro spatula
- Small paintbrush
- White vinyl eraser
- Hot plate/mug warmer
- Water brush
 - The kind that you put water inside of
- Tweezers
- Japanese tissue
 - Make sure it is made for conservation
 - Choose color and weight according to needs
- Surface for applying paste
 - Granite, or another stone, with a slightly rough surface is what many people prefer, because it helps keep the feathering in the tissue.
 - If this is too expensive, you can use any flat surface as long as you mind the feathering and choose a surface that the pasted paper will not stick to.
- Scrap paper
- Pencil
- Small scissors
- Blotting paper
- Weight
 - Can be anything that you can put on top of the drying paper
- Unflavored floss or string covered in beeswax
- Tracing paper

Surface Cleaning:

1. Rub eraser to make crumbs.
 - a. Alternatively, bags of crumbs can be purchased (these are more expensive).
 - b. You can also use a cheese grater.
2. Take a few pinches of crumbs.

3. Roll them over the grimy spot on the paper.
 - a. Be careful not to use them on spots with pencil or graphite that are part of the artifact.
4. Once the crumbs are black, refresh them with new ones.
5. Repeat until paper is at desired level of cleanliness.
6. Brush the extra crumbs onto scrap paper to transport to a container for storage.

Unsticking Pages:

1. Get your unflavored floss or beeswax string.
2. Wrap it around your fingers like you are flossing.
3. Slip the middle of the floss or string between the pages that are stuck.
4. Hold down the bottom page with one fist.
5. Carefully and slowly slide the floss or string between the pages while keeping the floss or string as close to the bottom page as possible.
6. If it gets stuck, wiggle it slightly.
7. If you still can't get through or the paper is beginning to delaminate, try a different angle.
8. If your floss or string becomes frayed, replace it.

Things to Consider:

- If this is not done carefully and slowly, it can damage the object.
- Be aware of if you are buckling or wrinkling the paper as you work.
- If you cannot get it or the work is too valuable, consult a conservator.
- It is awkward to do, so practice the movement and how you hold your hands and the paper before attempting it on real artifacts.

Tape Removal:

Level 1 (best for new tape and stable documents)

1. If possible, use a fingernail or micro spatula to lift a corner.
2. Then slowly pull the tape back away from the paper so it is folded back on itself.
3. Carefully peel the tape away.
4. If any paper clings to the tape as you lift it or if it does not peel easily, move to the next level.

Level 2:

1. Use a micro spatula to lift a corner.
2. Slide the micro spatula under the tape. Make sure it is between the tape and the paper, not in between the layers of paper.
3. Wiggle the micro spatula back and forth slowly, focusing on a centimeter of space at a time.
4. As you lift tape, cut it away to make it easier to access the rest of the tape. Put the tape on your scrap paper.

5. Make sure to watch for delamination (when the layers of the paper become separated from each other) and spots that are difficult to lift easily and gently. On those spots, try going from a different angle.
6. If that doesn't work, go to the next level.

Level 3:

1. Follow Level 2 instructions, but this time heat your micro spatula up on a hot plate/mug warmer.
2. Keep reheating the micro spatula as necessary.
3. If this does not work, consult someone with more experience, such as a conservator. There are other techniques that can be tried, but they require more skill, tools, and training than is covered in this workshop.

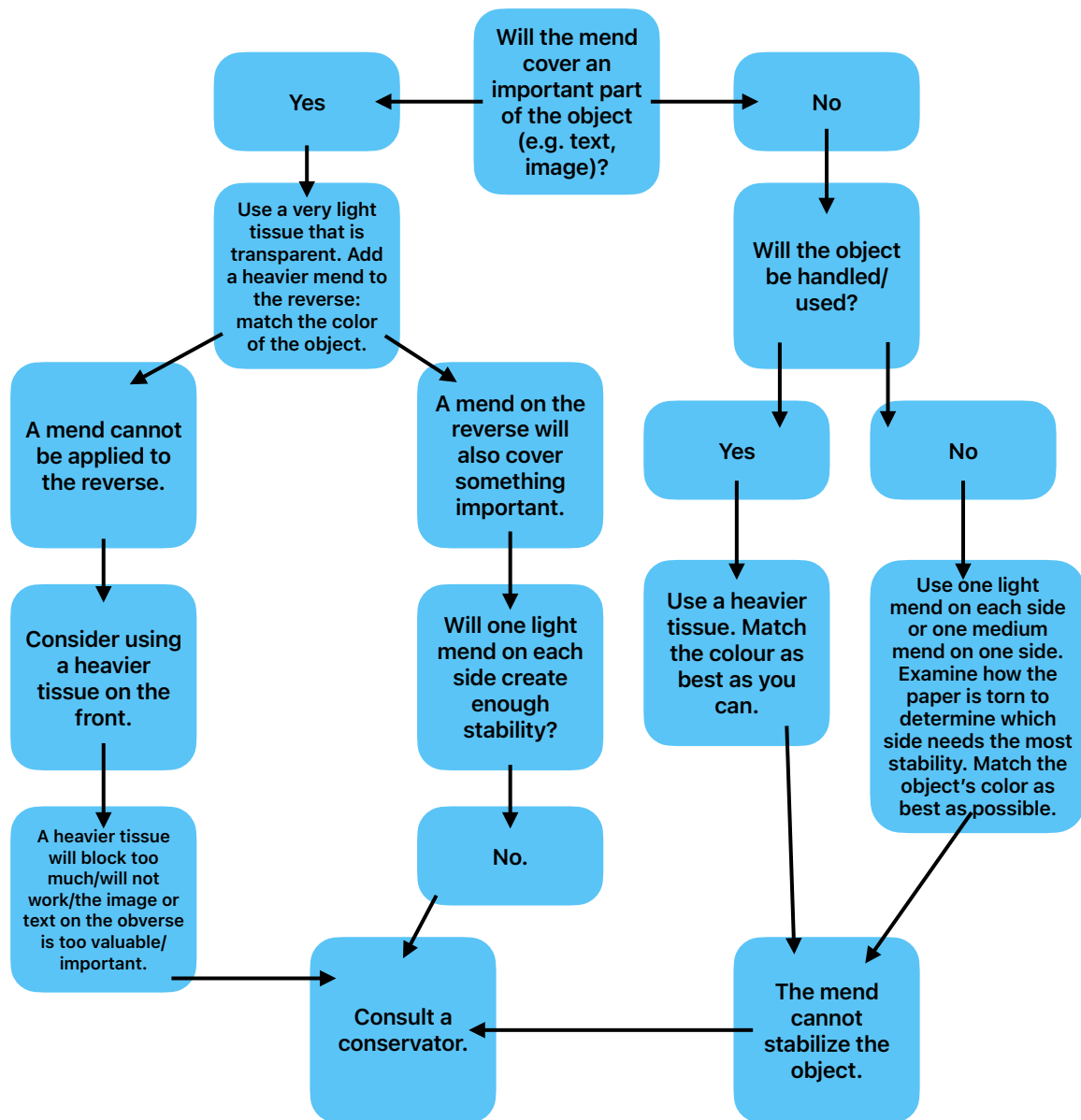
Things to Consider:

- Sometimes, tape residue will be left on the paper. If this occurs, rub eraser crumbs on the residue until it is coated, then use your micro spatula to carefully scrape the crumbs off the paper. Wipe them off on the scrap paper. You may need to repeat this several times.
- Approach adhesive removal cautiously. Consider these points before starting:
 - Always be honest with your skill level and comfort; never try anything you feel is above your level. When in doubt, consult a conservator.
 - You must be delicate and careful as you can damage the paper easily or irreversibly. The damage may be greater than the damage from the adhesive and be expensive or time consuming to fix.
 - You must be slow. This means it could take hours to remove the adhesive. Do not rush.
 - This is a repetitive process and requires repetitive movements. Please take breaks to prevent strain on your wrists and eyes.
 - I find tape removal easiest to do when the paper is as close to eye-level as possible and while I'm seated on the floor. Experiment with different position using practice materials to find your most comfortable position.

Paper Mending:

Tears:

1. Choose your Japanese tissue. There are three main considerations:
 - a. Will the mend be visible? Will it obscure text or an image?
 - b. What color is the paper?
 - c. How strong does the mend need to be?
 - d. Use the flow chart below to help you decide. The sample book from Talas will give you an idea of the different options available.



2. Measure the tear. The tissue will need to go over the edge of the tear to secure it. You can measure it by sight or by tracing a light outline on the tissue.
3. Fill your water-brush with water. Then draw /trace the outline of your mend strip with the brush. Go slowly and squeeze out a little water as you go so that the tissue is wet and darkened where you want the edges of your mend strip to be.
4. Slowly and carefully pull the tissue apart so it splits where the water line was drawn. Make sure you do this slowly to get the maximum amount of feathering. If your strip does not have good feathering, or if they are clinging to each other, place the strip on a flat surface then tease out the feathering with tweezers, a toothpick, or another similar item.
5. Carefully lay your strip on your paste surface. Be mindful of the feathering.

6. After making your paste according to the directions, use your paintbrush to apply and even coat to the strip. Apply a little at a time by brushing from the inside out to cover the feathering. Make sure you brush in a way that prevents the feathering from sticking to itself.
7. After the entire strip is covered, use the tweezers to carefully lift the strip off the pasting surface and place it over the tear. Make sure to mind the feathering.
8. Press down on the strip so it adheres to the object. Use a soft and clean cloth to rub over the whole strip or use a bone folder or popsicle stick to rub over it. Then cover the area with something to protect the site, such as blotting paper or wax paper, then place a weight on the spot (get creative here). If the surface of your weight is not flat, place a piece of smooth glass, plastic, or wood under the weight.
9. Let it dry for 24 hours.

Fills:

1. Follow the same instructions for tears.
2. Use tracing paper or a lightbox/table to trace the shape of the loss onto the tissue. Make sure you leave enough of a margin of overlap for the paste.
3. Paint your fill (called inpainting) before pasting it to the object. Let the paint fully dry first.
4. When applying the paste, only cover the edges of the shape (where the tissue will overlap with the object not the loss).

Things to Note:

- Makeup/camera lights (the flat ones) can be used as lightboxes. These can be found in places like Walmart, Target, Amazon, and Aldi. They are cheaper and smaller than the lightboxes but work just as well.
- A tablet may also work if you set it up to a white screen, turn the brightness up all the way, and change the settings so it doesn't turn off.