

Vanguard Presents:



Paper use at PHS

Claire Sek, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Saanvi Shekatkar, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

How do teachers use paper in class?

"I print out all the handouts in my unit — around 5-10 pages double sided — so my students can take notes on paper."

- English teacher Scott Cameron

"I use about 300 pages per student each year. They get about five packets — one for each unit — in place of a textbook. Tests and quizzes are also on paper."

- History teacher Dr. Katie Dineen

Would going paperless save the school money, or would it cost more?

While extremely unlikely, going paperless would save the school a lot of money. To begin with, the \$42,500 spent yearly on paper itself could be put toward other motives. On top of that, this would allow the district to save extra money previously spent on materials such as ink, printing equipment, and mailing fees.

The decline of paper use at PHS

Throughout recent years, Princeton Public Schools have been steadily implementing technology in the classroom. Largely jumpstarted with virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, the district has continued its initiative to reinforce technology-supported learning. Teachers have largely switched many assignments from paper handouts to online modules through the Canvas platform.

The district has further carried out its one-to-one student device program with the distribution of new MacBooks this year at the high school. The continuation of the digitization of learning materials has resulted in less need for paper in classrooms — but that trend may be coming to an end.

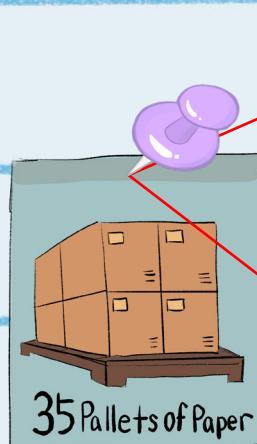
With AI becoming a further concern in classrooms, teachers may soon be switching back to traditional paper and pencil as an easy method to minimize AI use.

"I do think you're going to see a shift to more pencil and paper [because] in May, when you sit for your AP tests, you will [most often] have to be able generate and write without the use of AI," said history teacher David Roberts.

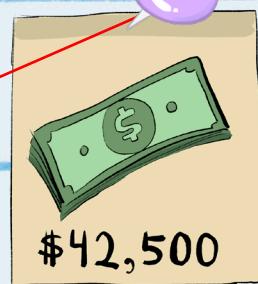


Dr. Katie Dineen grades student work completed on paper handouts.

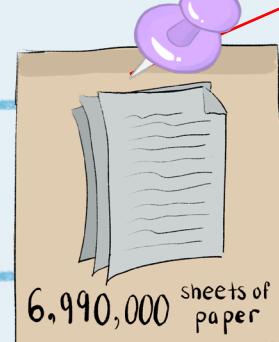
How much money is spent on paper yearly throughout the district?



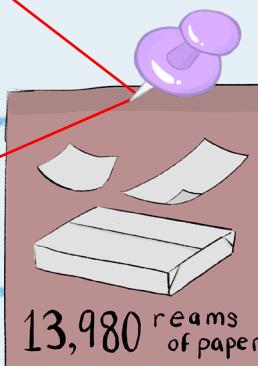
35 Pallets of Paper



\$42,500



6,990,000 sheets of paper



13,980 reams of paper



Printer paper recently dropped off at PHS for copy machines across the building.

"I tend to lose my notes a lot, and when the school year is over, especially for subjects that carry over, like Chem or Calc, I look back on the notes a lot, so [a tablet is] more convenient for me."

- Cynthia Shi '26



"[A tablet] takes up less resources and I don't have to lug around a bunch of papers. If I make a mistake, I can undo, move stuff around without having to erase ... if you want to save trees, use an iPad if you can."

- Akshaj Sama '26



"I prefer taking paper notes because I find that I retain information better when I'm writing it down ... and it's helpful because I don't need to buy an iPad ... it [also] shows that I'm not using any outside help."

- Emma Dweck '27



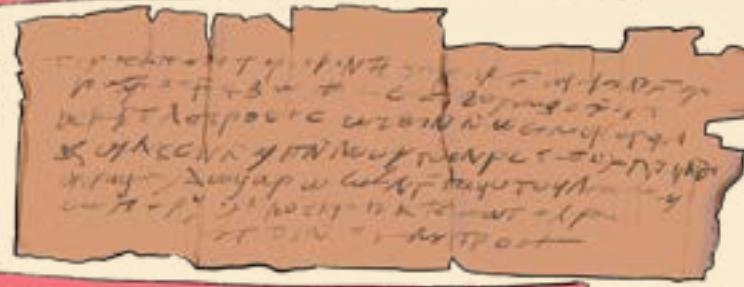
Paper through the ages

Vanessa He and Anaya Sinha, CONTRIBUTING WRITERS



Ancient Egypt (3000 B.C.)

Ancient Egyptians used papyrus, harvested from reeds along the Nile, to create paper-like material. The pith was stripped and laid in layers, and then glued together with the natural sap. It was one of the earliest writing surfaces and was used for keeping records, administration, and literature. These thin sheets were able to carry the words of merchants, pharaohs, and storytellers.



China (105 A.D.)

The paper that we are familiar with today was invented by Cai Lun during the Han Dynasty, which was composed of mulberry bark, hemp, and rags macerated and dried. The mass production of paper allowed for widespread literacy and documentation, making it accessible and practical for many in China.



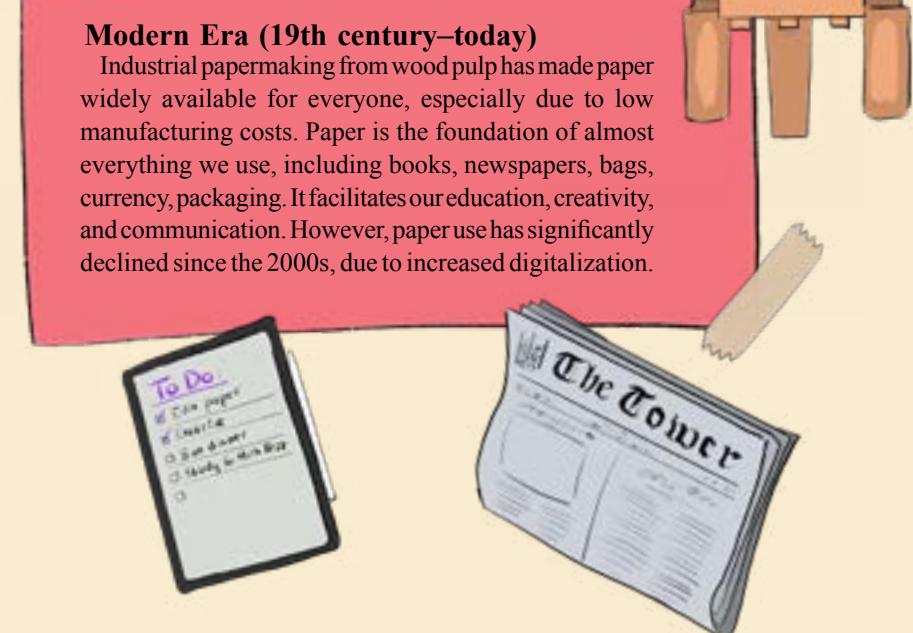
Islamic Golden Age (8th-11th centuries)

The Battle of Talas, fought between the Chinese and Arabs, revealed the secret of papermaking to the Islamic world. This led to a revolution of knowledge: it promoted the trade economy and flourished in literature, philosophy, and record-keeping.



Europe (13th-15th centuries)

Paper finally arrived in Europe through trade and exchange. Paper mills flourished and replaced costly parchment. The movable-type printing press, invented by Johannes Gutenberg from the 1450s transformed paper into the foundation of mass communication.



Modern Era (19th century–today)

Industrial papermaking from wood pulp has made paper widely available for everyone, especially due to low manufacturing costs. Paper is the foundation of almost everything we use, including books, newspapers, bags, currency, packaging. It facilitates our education, creativity, and communication. However, paper use has significantly declined since the 2000s, due to increased digitalization.

From pages to pixels

Aritra Ray, MANAGING EDITOR

Nishika Singh, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

You sit down and open your computer, log into Bluebook, and get ready to stare at a computer screen for the next two, three, maybe four hours. It wasn't always like this. For nearly 100 years, starting in 1926, the SAT has been a paper-and-pencil ritual as a Standard Aptitude Test to students across the country. The Digital SAT has only become the norm starting in March 2024 and the move to digital AP exams is still an ongoing process, with 16 exams becoming fully digital just last year.

The transition from paper to screens in education was accelerated by the pandemic. This year, the NJ Department of Education announced it would be field testing an adaptive version of the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment.

While these changes have been widely lauded by students and teachers alike, some have been quick to point out drawbacks to a digital medium. For one, a 2025 Oxford Learning study found that reading comprehension is stronger for physical books than to screens—and that reading on a screen can lead readers to skim and often miss key details. This outcome could be extremely detrimental for test-takers on standardized tests, which often emphasize close reading and recalling minute details.

The physical test booklet was also a workspace. Students were taught to mark it up, underlining key parts of a passage, crossing out incorrect answers, or writing down formulas and calculations directly next to a question, making it easier to spot silly mistakes. While markup tools do exist on digital assessments, they are often more time-consuming and less intuitive to use.

Digital assessments have been long heralded for their ability to deliver results with less test questions due to their adaptive nature. While shorter test times are undoubtedly a benefit, digital

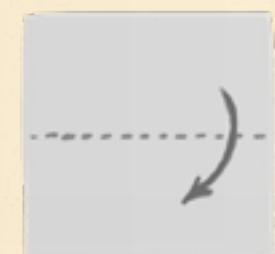
Do-it-yourself: paper

Maxime DeVico, STAFF WRITER

Origami hat trick

Emily Kim, VISUALS CO-EDITOR

1. Fold your paper in half.



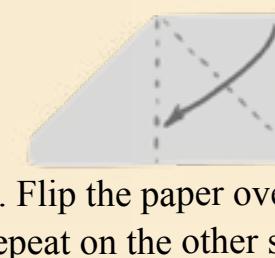
2. Fold in half again, then unfold.



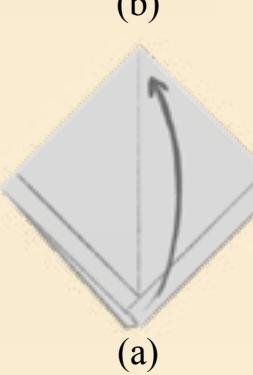
3. Fold inwards to the crease line.



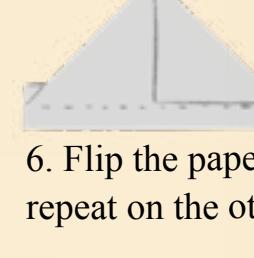
4. Flip the paper over, repeat on the other side.



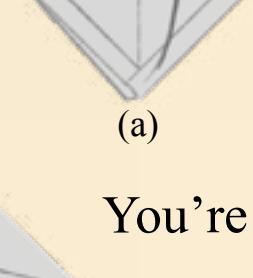
5. Fold the stabilizing flap upwards.



6. Flip the paper over, repeat on the other side.



7. 8. Fold (a) to (b). Flip the paper over, repeat on the other side.



You're done!

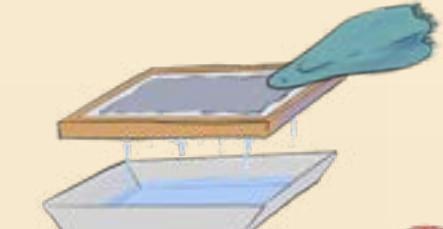
Step 1: Grab sheets of scrap paper and rip it into small pieces. Then, soak these pieces in water for one to two hours. Make sure to use enough water to completely submerge every piece of paper. Blend the mixture until smooth.



Step 2: Grab a shallow tub, fill it with water, and then add the mixture gradually and stir. Make sure that there are no big chunks of paper remaining.



Step 3: Take a screen (window screen or anything with a fine grid) and submerge it into the mixture. Raise it up and out of the tub, allowing a layer of pulp to form. Use a towel to gently press down on the screen and absorb any excess water.



Step 4: Gently begin to unroll your paper and remove it from your screen. If the paper doesn't come out easily, it might still be too wet. In this case, repeat step 3. Once your paper is removed, place it on an absorbent towel and allow it to air dry.



graphics:
Emily Kim



test-taking can exacerbate inequalities and hurt low-income students without access to stable internet connectivity or a computer at home. Lack of access means that these students may not be familiarized with the digital testing format or have experience in a similar environment. This digital divide, therefore, systematically creates an uneven playing field for students based on socioeconomic status.

The issue of access also extends beyond homes. Schools may lack the necessary infrastructure to support a seamless transition to all-digital testing, including a sufficient number of functional computers or a strong enough Wi-Fi network for a large mass of students testing simultaneously. This often leads to technical difficulties, frequently evident even at PHS, that interrupt testing, adding more stress and frustration to both students and educators.

The transition to digital mediums is seen by many as inevitable, especially in an increasingly fast-paced 21st-century world. However, this format is much less tested than paper, which has stood strong over centuries of use. So while the era of paper & pencil learning may be in its waning stages, the benefits of this tangible medium prove that paper never folds.