

# Origami: Get Into the Fold



Have you ever made a cootie catcher? Cootie catchers are used in many ways: as toys, for learning, and as art. They are an example of origami, the art of paper folding. In fact, the word *origami* comes from the Japanese words *ori*, meaning “folding,” and *kami* meaning “paper.”

Origami was invented thousands of years ago in Asia. Because paper can be destroyed easily,

historians do not know when people first began folding paper to create art. Many believe that origami could have been invented in China soon after paper was invented. That was in 105 AD. Wherever it was invented, origami became very important in Japanese culture. Today, it is popular around the world.

For hundreds of years, origami designs were taught by one generation to another. Because they were not written down, it is not possible to know who created the patterns. They simply became part of the culture.

The art of origami involves folding paper in

complicated ways. There is no cutting or pasting. The crane is a well-known example of origami. It is often used as a symbol of peace.

Modern origami is different from origami made in the ancient tradition. Today’s designers use new methods and patterns, and they want others to know that they created the design. These artists create instructions that allow others to copy their designs exactly.

Both the ancient and the modern traditions of origami are great for exercising the brain. By combining creativity and math, and such skills as concentration and problem solving, origami keeps the brain active.

Many origami designs are both fun and useful. Origami boats can float on water. Cootie catchers, also called fortune tellers, can be used in games. Cups can be made for drinking. Party decorations can also be made from origami.

Whatever shapes origami takes, people enjoy creating new patterns and uses for this ancient art form.

