

A cut above

Explore cultures from across the globe and design your own in this paper-cutting craft activity.

[Back to Activities](#)

Activity Outcomes


Be a citizen


Know that you’re a local, national, and international citizen, and understand your responsibilities.


Persevere more


Learn to work hard, stay focused, and refuse to let setbacks stop you achieving your goals.

Activity Details

 1 hr

 £

 At home / Indoors

 Individuals

☐ Beavers

☐ Cubs

☒ Scouts

☒ Explorers

You will need

- Craft materials (for example, tissue paper, pipe cleaners, stickers)
- Pens or pencils
- Scissors
- Cutting mats
- Craft knives
- Mirrors (optional)



Before you begin

- Choose craft paper for the group to use. Bear in mind that thinner paper will be easier to cut and delicate, while thicker paper or card will be harder to cut but less flimsy.

Run the activity

- Split everyone into small groups. Give each person some coloured craft paper and pens or pencils.
- Each person should fold their paper in half once or twice.

For complex designs, you may wish to fold the paper three or four times. Bear in mind that this will make the paper harder to cut.

- On the folded paper, each person should sketch out a design. Have a look at the attached examples for inspiration. Remind everyone that traditional paper-cuttings feature everything from geometric patterns to plants and animals. Everyone should be creative and try to think of something they might display at a celebration.

If anyone has any symbols that mean a lot to them, encourage them to include these. Jewish paper-cuttings, for example, will often feature symbols like the lion (symbolising strength and bravery), fish (symbolising fertility) and a snake eating its own tail (symbolising infinity).

- When someone thinks they've finished sketching their design, encourage them to use a mirror to see what their design will look like when cut and unfolded. They should hold the mirror along the fold-line and look at the reflection.

Recommend that those cutting out shapes shade these areas in, so that they know which bits to cut.

- Give out scissors, craft knives and cutting mats. Those using knives should work on a secure, flat surface, cutting slowly and carefully with the cutting mat beneath their paper. Scissors can be used to cut at the edges. Make sure everyone takes their time and cuts with care.
- When finished, unfold the paper. The design should be replicated on the folded-over side.
- Collect up all the scrap pieces of paper that were cut out. These can be recycled in other art projects or used as fire-lighters.

Reflection

Many different cultures from different corners of the world practice paper-cutting as an art form. During the activity, everyone should have seen examples of papel picado, which is thought to have originated with the Aztecs, while Chinese jinzh dates all the way back to the 6th century. What might have attracted people from all over the world to this activity? Remember: they had no way of sharing their work with one another – they all discovered paper-cutting on their own. In Jewish culture, paper-cutting has been used for religious decorations and marriage contracts since around the 14th century. What might other cultures use paper-cutting to make?

Safety

Sharp objects

Teach young people how to use sharp objects safely. Supervise them appropriately throughout. Store all sharp objects securely, out of the reach of young people.

Scissors

Supervise young people appropriately when they're using scissors. Store all sharp objects securely, out of the reach of young people

All activities must be safely managed. Do a [risk assessment](#) and take appropriate steps to reduce risk. Always get approval for the activity and have suitable [supervision](#) and an [InTouch](#) process.

Change the level of challenge

Expert cutters may wish to create an asymmetrical design on an unfolded sheet of paper. They might also like to try designs that involve more complicated folds.

Make it accessible

Scale the complexity of designs in this activity with the confidence of those taking part. This may mean using thinner or thicker paper, fewer folds, template designs and no knives.

All Scout activities should be [inclusive and accessible](#).

This activity counts towards



Scouts Creative Challenge Award



Scouts Craft Activity



Scouts International Activity

Take it further

Come up with paper-cutting designs that have a function. You may wish to look at other examples of paper-cutting from around the world for inspiration.

A popular use of paper-cutting is to create shapes for light shows. Make a small hole in your design, large enough to thread some string through. Hang your design over a window or a lamp and switch off any other lights. The outline of your cut-outs should appear on the opposite wall.

Youth shaped guidance

Everyone should be allowed to use their creativity and make something meaningful to them. Cultural symbols, such as those that maybe seen at religious ceremonies or special occasions, are perfect for this.