

Teaching Tips

This handout has been prepared to encourage members to share through teaching. We have brought together the ideas of several experienced teachers. Their techniques, phrases, and simple tips may be helpful to our members during an origami class in their homes or at the Convention. It is our aim to build confidence in teachers, thus helping them enjoy their teaching experience.

The goal of origami teaching is to enable the student to construct a model with pleasure in the execution and satisfaction with the result. Whatever the means of communications, when the pupils are happy with their achievements, the teaching has been successful.

Before the Class

1. Listen to your teachers, and try to understand what it is that makes one teacher's instructions clearer than another's.
2. Familiarize yourself with origami vocabulary and try to use these terms when teaching. Always define an origami term the first time you use it. Include shapes as part of the description, such as colored triangles, kite or roof top.
3. Understand the skills of novice, intermediate, and advanced students. Begin with simple models, and learn to fold the model you are teaching very well. Try to match the model being taught to the students' level of competence, with enough difficulty to maintain interest, but not enough to raise frustration.
4. Practice, practice, practice. As you learn to fold the model, also try to predict which moves or folds will be difficult for your students, and have several precise explanations for them.
5. Teach several people the model in advance and learn by their reactions where the instructions need to be improved. It may take three times as long to teach the model as it does to fold it.
6. Make step folds if you feel the need of reassurance during the teaching.
7. Decide on the size and type of paper needed. Your sample should be large enough to be seen from the back row, but not too large for comfortable manipulation. From a distance, the contrast between the white side and light colors or foil cannot always be distinguished.
8. Diagrams are always a plus. If you can draw diagrams or gain permission for use of diagrams in print, your class will be overjoyed.
9. Prepare suggestions for the type of paper suitable for exhibition models. Make a model for exhibition.

During The Class

1. Introduce yourself, the model, the model's creator, and any background information on folding this specific model that would be helpful to the students. Place yourself where all the students can see your hands and the sample. If not everyone can see you at once, repeat each step as many times as necessary for each side of the room. Enjoy yourself throughout the class. If you have some jokes or stories to share, use them while you wait for the students to finish a move. This will help to create a pleasant atmosphere.
2. Begin at the beginning unless you are sure that your pupils will all know what you mean if you ask for a specific base.
3. Always use origami vocabulary to describe each fold or base. Remember pronouns like "it," "this," or words like "over here" are not precise enough to be part of origami vocabulary.
4. When describing a fold, use its name, the place where the fold begins and ends, or other "landmarks" to locate it exactly. Make certain that you orient your sample the same way your students are folding - learn to fold the model upside down if necessary. Treat each step as one unit; first identify the present condition and orientation of the model, then perform the step, and confirm the new condition and orientation of the model. Don't continue until you have confirmed that each of your students has performed this step correctly.
5. Encourage the students to observe your demonstration of a move before they attempt it. Demonstrate each move twice.
6. Watch your students carefully, and not just their hands. Look for blank or quizzical expressions and if you sense any hesitation or uncertainty, repeat your instructions in a slightly different (hopefully clearer) way.
7. Be supportive and non-threatening in your instruction and corrections - not everyone learns at the same pace. Give the class as much assurance and positive encouragement as you can.
8. Try to ensure that your students are quiet and attentive. A noisy room is not the most comfortable learning environment.
9. Suggest that folders compare their models with their neighbors' models. Encourage them to help each other if possible.
10. Help individual students who have particular difficulty. Avoid folding the student's model for them. If you have to perform the move on the student's model, unfold the step and let the student try. If the student is still unable to perform the move, you may need to fold the model, if that is necessary to enable the student to proceed to a satisfactory end. The student's self satisfaction is the one great essential. They must succeed. Frustration and failure will alienate them from origami altogether. Do, however, encourage students to avoid models well beyond their present skill levels.
11. Keep aware of the time.

Origami Vocabulary

These are some of the more common words used to “speak origami.” The list includes names of landmarks, folds, and bases. It will be helpful to be familiar with the words.

Landmarks

White Side	Corner	Landmark	Long Side(s)
Colored Side	Center (middle)	Valley Fold	Double raw/folded edge
Raw Edge	Center Line	Mountain Fold	Point
Folded Edge	Diagonal	Short Side(s)	

Folds

Crease vs. Fold	Kite Fold	Squash	Swivel Fold
Pre-creasing	Locking	Lover’s Knot Move	Sink
Preparation Folds	Cupboard Door Fold	Inside Reverse Fold	Pinch
Diagonal or Diaper Fold	Wing Fold	Outside Reverse Fold	Minor Miracle
Ice-cream Cone Fold	Petal Fold	Rabbit Ear	Book Fold
Pleat	Crimp		

Bases

Preliminary Base	Fish Base	Bird Base	Blintz Base
Waterbomb Base	Windmill Base	Frog (or lily) Base	Stretching a Base

MODEL: the finished product of your efforts

DOUBLE RAW/FOLDED EDGE: where two raw or folded edges lie on top of each other

CREASE vs. FOLD: a crease is the line in the paper when you unfold a particular move; whereas a fold is a completed move.

POINT: the intersection of creases or folds or a location (i.e., center). The corners of the paper and the free ends of flaps may also be referred to as points.

LANDMARK: a point, crease, edge, or fold which locates the area or move precisely.

PRE-CREASING (preparation folds): a series of folds and unfolds which creates landmarks or prepares the paper for subsequent moves (i.e., pre-creasing in reverse folding).

LOCKING: a move that helps to hold in shape, often the insertion of a flap into a pocket.

FUDGE FACTOR: a small gap or space which allows for the thickness of the paper when folded layers are brought together. Fudge factors prevent the buckling of thick folds.