

Suzy's World

Paper - Why use toilet paper and not other kinds of paper?

Fact

- If you used other sorts of paper-like newspaper or sandpaper - they just wouldn't do the job properly and you could end up with a sore bottom!
- Manufacturers – the people who make toilet paper spend a lot of time and money finding the right combinations of things like softness, strength and ease of tearing to make the best product possible.

Do you know

- Toilet paper was first made in 1880 about 380 years after the first flush toilet was invented!
- If you were around about two hundred of years ago and you lived in a Western Country like England you would have wiped your bottom with a leaf (if you lived in the country) or with something like an empty mussel shell (if you lived in the city).
- In the Second World War people had to use newspaper when stocks of toilet paper ran out.
- Over 26 tonnes of toilet paper is produced in New Zealand a year.

Experiments you can do

Do your own strength and tear tests with different papers. Compare how the toilet paper you family uses tears with old newspaper, old magazines, old lunch paper, etc. Find out which paper is the strongest using weights. You can add water like I did or just stretch some paper out between two school tables using books to hold each end in place then use items from your pencil case or stones from outside as weights. Which paper can hold the most weight before it tears?

You can even do the softness test without the paper having to touch your bottom! Scrunch the different papers up and gently rub them against the inside of your arm where the skin is soft and tender. Which of the papers are scratchy or soft?

Other Investigations

Why do they make newspapers out of newsprint? Discuss with your family or class some of the reasons the newspaper industry chose newsprint instead of toilet paper, sandpaper, or glossy magazine paper.