GENERAL

how to make a origami animals

Published: September 3, 2026 | Index ID: #-

How to Make Origami Animals: A Complete Beginner's Guide

Origami, the ancient Japanese art of paper folding, has evolved into a universal pastime that delights people of all ages. While the classic crane and the elegant lotus are staples of the craft, one of the most playful and rewarding categories is **origami animals**. From graceful birds to fierce dragons, these paper creatures bring imagination to life and make for wonderful gifts, classroom projects, or desk decorations.

In this guide, you'll learn everything you need to know about **how to make origami animals**: the essential materials, foundational folds, step by step tutorials for popular creatures, and tips to elevate your creations. Whether you're a complete novice or a seasoned paper folding enthusiast, this article will help you master the art of folding paper into charming animal forms.

What You'll Need: Materials and Tools

Before you dive into the world of paper animals, gather the right supplies. The best part? Most of them are inexpensive and easy to find.

- Origami paper – Choose square sheets. Standard sizes are 6 /× /6 /cm (2 /in) or 10 /× /10 /cm (4 /in). For beginners, the larger size is more forgiving.
- Colored paper – If you want vibrant animals, use colored squares or cut a colored sheet into a square.
- Sharp scissors – For trimming edges or creating a base if you're using a non square sheet.
- Ruler and pencil – Helpful for measuring and marking folding lines, especially when you're learning.
- Optional: Glue or tape – Some designs require a small amount of adhesive to secure parts.

Fundamental Folding Techniques

Every origami animal starts with a few basic folds. Master these foundational steps, and you'll find that the rest of the process feels almost intuitive.

1. The Square Base (Valley Fold)

1. Place the square paper on a flat surface.
2. Fold the paper in half diagonally, crease, and unfold.
3. Repeat with the opposite diagonal.
4. Fold the paper in half horizontally and vertically, crease, and unfold. The result is a grid of creases that will guide all subsequent folds.

2. Valley and Mountain Folds

A **valley fold** brings the paper toward you, while a **mountain fold**pushes it away. Mastering both allows you to shape the paper into curves and angles needed for animal features.

3. The Squash Fold

Start with a valley fold, then open it slightly and press the flap down to flatten it. This technique is essential for creating mouths, ears, and other protrusions.

4. The Reverse Fold

Open a flap, then fold it back along the opposite crease. Reverse folds are great for forming tails and tails of wings.

Step by Step Tutorials for Popular Origami Animals

Below are detailed instructions for some of the most beloved paper animals. Each tutorial includes a list of required folds, tips for precision, and a brief explanation of why each step matters.

1. Classic Origami Crane

The crane is the most iconic origami animal and a symbol of peace. It's also a great starter project.

1. Begin with a square of white paper. Fold into the square base.
2. Fold the top layer of the right side to the center crease, crease, and unfold.
3. Repeat on the left side. The paper now has a symmetrical "roof" shape.
4. Fold the top layer of the front and back edges to the center crease, crease, and unfold. You now have a "diamond" shape.
5. Open the top layer of the right side, fold it along the diagonal, and press down to create a long, narrow triangle.
6. Repeat on the left side. The paper will look like a kite.
7. Fold the kite's tip upward, then fold the sides inward to form the head and tail.
8. Open the tail flap and perform a reverse fold to create the tail's tail.
9. Finally, perform a squash fold on the head flap to shape the crane's beak.

2. Paper Elephant

The elephant's gentle shape makes it a favorite for kids.

1. Start with a square of green or gray paper.
2. Fold the square into a base, then perform a valley fold along one diagonal to create a triangle.
3. Fold the two corners of the triangle toward the center line. These will form the ears.
4. Fold the top flap down to create the trunk's base.
5. Perform a reverse fold on the trunk's tip to give it a subtle curve.
6. Fold the bottom corners inward to form the legs.
7. Finally, squash the back flap to give the elephant a rounded back.

3. Origami Cat

With a few folds, you can create a cute cat ready for playtime.

1. Use a square of orange or gray paper.
2. Fold the paper into a square base.
3. Fold the top layer of the right side to the center crease, crease, and unfold.
4. Repeat on the left side.
5. Perform a reverse fold on the top flap to create the cat's head.
6. Fold the ears by bringing the top corners inward.
7. Squash the bottom flap to form the tail.
8. Adjust the ears and tail to give the cat a playful stance.

4. Dragonfly

For a more advanced design, try the dragonfly. Its wings and slender body make it a striking display piece.

1. Start with a square of translucent paper for realistic wings.

2. Fold into a base, then perform a valley fold along one diagonal.
3. Fold the top corner to the center to form a flap that will become the head.
4. Fold the bottom corners inward to create the wings.
5. Perform a reverse fold on the head flap to give the dragonfly a subtle curve.
6. Use a small piece of colored paper to create the eyes.
7. Glue the eyes onto the head flap.
8. Adjust the wings to achieve a balanced, aerodynamic look.

Tips for Beginners: How to Make Origami Animals Easier

Even with simple designs, folding paper animals can be challenging. These tips will help you improve your technique and confidence.

- Use a good quality paper – Avoid thick or heavy stock; it can be difficult to crease. Lightweight paper like origami or cardstock works best.
- Mark the creases lightly – A pencil or a light touch with a fingernail can help you see the fold lines before you crease them fully.
- Practice the basic folds – Mastering valley, mountain, squash, and reverse folds will reduce frustration when you tackle more complex animals.
- Start with larger paper – Larger squares give you more room for error and are easier for small hands.
- Take your time – Rushing can lead to misaligned folds and a crooked animal.
- Use a reference diagram – Many origami tutorials include diagrams that illustrate each step. Follow them closely.
- Keep your workspace flat – A clean, flat surface ensures precise folds.

Advanced Origami Animals for the Experienced Folder

Once you're comfortable with basic designs, you can experiment with more intricate animals that require multiple layers, intricate folds, and sometimes glue or tape.

- Paper Lion – Combines multiple layers for a realistic mane.
- Paper Fox – Requires precise ear folds and a curved tail.
- Paper Turtle – Features a shell made from interlocking pieces.
- Paper Peacock – Uses translucent paper to create iridescent feathers.

How to Make a Paper Turtle (Advanced)

1. Cut a square of green paper and fold into a base.
2. Perform a valley fold along the diagonal to create a triangle.
3. Fold the triangle's corners to the center to form the shell's ribs.
4. Use a small piece of paper to create the head and attach it with glue.
5. Fold the legs by bringing the bottom corners upward.
6. Use a reverse fold to shape the shell's underside.
7. Finish by adding a small tail and a few decorative details.

Creative Ideas: Using Origami Animals in Real Life

Origami animals are more than just craft projects. They can be integrated into various activities and settings.

- Classroom decorations – Use them to illustrate animal facts or as part of a science project.
- Party favors – Hand out small paper animals as party favors or gifts.

- Desk ornaments – Keep a small origami animal on your desk for a touch of whimsy.
- Storytime props – Use paper animals as visual aids during storytelling.
- Gifts for children – Create personalized animals for birthdays or holidays.

Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

Even experienced folders can fall into common pitfalls. Knowing these will save time and frustration.

- Uneven creases – Use a bone folder or a flat edge to press creases firmly.
- Over folding the paper – Be mindful of the paper's thickness; too many folds can cause distortion.
- Misaligned corners – Keep an eye on the square's edges; small misalignments can ripple through the design.
- Forgetting to flatten – Always flatten each fold before moving to the next step.
- Using the wrong paper size – Some designs require a specific size; check the instructions.

SEO Tips for Your Origami Animal Blog

If you're writing a blog post about **how to make origami animals**, keep these SEO practices in mind to improve visibility:

- Include the keyword naturally in headings and body text.
- Use related terms: "paper animal origami," "folding animal paper," "origami craft animals."
- Add alt text to any images: e.g., alt="Step-by-step guide to folding a paper crane".
- Provide a short, engaging meta description (under 160 characters).

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