



# Making paper cranes



Quaker Peace & Social Witness  
Peace & Disarmament Programme



Paper cranes have become a symbol of nuclear disarmament. This sheet for all ages introduces paper cranes, including why we make them, how we make them, and what we can do with them. We begin with the story of Sadako Sasaki.

## The story of Sadako Sasaki

Sadako Sasaki (January 7, 1943 – October 25, 1955) was a girl who lived near Hiroshima, Japan. She was only two years old when the United States dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, killing 90,000 people in one day. The bomb fell on a district where there were many schools and thousands of children perished.

Sadako was far enough away to survive and grew up as a strong, courageous and athletic girl, but in 1954, at age eleven, she became dizzy and fell to the ground. Like many others, Sadako was diagnosed with leukaemia, the disease that can be caused by radiation from atom bombs.



Sadako's best friend Chizuko came to visit her. Chizuko had brought some origami (special paper for folding into shapes) and she told her friend an old legend about paper cranes: that anyone who makes a thousand paper cranes so pleases the gods that the folder is granted a wish. Sadako wished to get well, so she decided to fold one thousand cranes.

After she folded 500 cranes she felt better and the doctors said she could go home for a short time, but soon the dizziness and tiredness returned and she had to go back to hospital.

There, Sadako continued to fold cranes. Even though she was in great pain, she tried to be

cheerful and hopeful. Not long afterwards, with her family standing by her bed, Sadako went to sleep peacefully, never to wake up again. She had folded a total of 644 paper cranes.

Sadako's story had a big impact on her friends and classmates. They completed her thousand cranes and continued to raise money from children all over Japan to build a statue to honour Sadako and all the children affected by the atom bomb. The statue, also known as The Children's Monument, was built in 1958 in the Hiroshima Peace Park and is now surrounded by millions of paper cranes.

## Tips for making paper cranes

Folding paper cranes is not difficult for most people aged about nine or over, as long as you are patient and careful. Your first crane will be quite difficult to make and might look more like a pigeon or a dodo than a crane, but once you have the hang of it, you'll wonder why you ever struggled. Use the instructions on the back of this sheet to make your cranes. Here are some extra tips:

1. Make sure your piece of paper is perfectly square to begin with. It is best to use special origami paper but any paper will do as long as it's not too thick.
2. Fold very carefully and accurately and make your creases sharp – use your thumbnail.
3. Make cranes in different colours or decorate them.
4. The larger the piece of paper you start with, the easier it is to make your crane. Have a go with a 15cm square first. Sadako was an expert, and could use sweet wrappers to make cranes no bigger than a grain of rice, using a toothpick to fold them – wow!

## What to do with your cranes

1. Put a crane by your desk, bed, television... to remind yourself about Sadako, why she had to fold the cranes, and her prayer for peace. Give a crane to a friend and talk with them about what they mean.
2. Did you know that Britain has nuclear weapons ready to fire within a few days? Why not enclose a paper crane in a letter to your MP about nuclear disarmament; the crane will draw attention to your concern, show your commitment and might make your MP reflect on the deeper issues involved with nuclear weapons. Tell your MP the story of Sadako and why you think

Britain should not have nuclear weapons. Try to keep your letter simple and to one side of A4. Ask your MP for his/her own view and also ask him/her to raise your concern with the Prime Minister. *Note: It is more effective to write to your MP than the Prime Minister, who is too busy to read letters from the public.* To find out who your MP is using your postcode, ask at your library or visit [www.locata.co.uk/commons](http://www.locata.co.uk/commons)

3. String your cranes together in garlands of 100. Attach a string to a long needle, push it through the hole in the bottom of each crane, and bring it out through the point in the center of the crane's back. Be sure to tie a knot at the end of the string. To separate the cranes on the string, add a very short piece of a plastic straw between each crane.
4. Hang the garlands in a school or public library and ask the librarian to make a display of books related to Sadako, Japan, World War II, leukaemia, and nuclear disarmament.
5. Take your cranes to a nursing home or hospital along with instructions for folding the cranes; it's a wonderful activity to share with others.
6. If you fold a lot of cranes, ask your local newspaper to publish a story about why you folded the cranes along with a picture of all the people who participated. Local newspapers love stories like that.
7. Send your cranes to the Children's Monument in Hiroshima's Peace Park, where millions of cranes have already been collected. You might like to string the cranes on garlands of 100 cranes each. Otherwise, pack them flat and mail them to: Office of the Mayor, City of Hiroshima, 6-34 Kokutaiji-Machi, 1 Chome Naka-ku, Hiroshima 730 Japan.

## About real cranes

Possibly the oldest bird on earth, real cranes — the kind that come from eggs — are known for being especially long: long-legged, long-necked, long-billed, and long-lived. In Japanese legend, cranes are said to live for a thousand years. There is fossil evidence that cranes inhabited the earth 60 million years ago. The Sandhill Crane is the oldest living species of bird and has been virtually unchanged for 9 million years.



Most cranes breed in wetlands, building nests in remote marshes. They mate for life and are devoted to their partners in all seasons. Female and male work together to build their nest and share equally in caring for their young. Throughout Asia, the crane is a symbol of eternal youth and happiness and has inspired poets and artists for centuries.

There are fifteen species of cranes on five continents. The Japanese crane (above) is among the most majestic, standing nearly five feet tall with its red crown, large white body, and wingspan of more than six feet!

## About nuclear weapons

Nuclear weapons are the most destructive type of weapon ever created. Just one bomb could destroy a city and kill hundreds of thousands of people.

The United States is the only country to have used a nuclear weapon against cities, which it did against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 in the Second World War. The Hiroshima bomb killed about 90,000 people in one day; 40,000 died at Nagasaki.

Those who survived the blasts are called the *Hibakusha*, which is a Japanese word meaning survivor of an explosion. The few still alive today are saddened that some countries still believe in keeping nuclear weapons.

There are between 20,000 and 30,000 nuclear weapons in the world today. Russia and the United States have the largest numbers. The others are in the hands of China, France, Great Britain, India, Israel and Pakistan. None of



these intends to abolish its nuclear weapons.

Britain's nuclear weapons, called Trident, can be ready to fire in a few days from any of four submarines. At least one submarine is on active duty at sea 24 hours a day.

The British Government will soon decide whether to keep nuclear weapons far into the future. It is important that those who would disagree with this speak up now.

## Questions to think about

Do you think that a world without nuclear weapons is possible? Why? How would it come about?

Do you think that nuclear weapons make Britain a safer or less safe place to live? Why?

If someone told you that Britain's nuclear weapons help to keep us safe from terrorists and dictators, would you agree or disagree, and what would you say to them?

Do you think that the Government should continue to have nuclear weapons or abolish them?

## Find out more on the web

[www.sadako.com](http://www.sadako.com) — all about Sadako Sasaki and making paper cranes.

[www.cnduk.org](http://www.cnduk.org) — the national Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

[www.peaceexchange.org.uk](http://www.peaceexchange.org.uk) — ideas and activities for children and young people.

[www.comeclean.org.uk](http://www.comeclean.org.uk) — a great interactive web site about Weapons of Mass Destruction

[www.peacepays.org](http://www.peacepays.org) — another great interactive web site that promotes peace and challenges war.

[www.locata.co.uk/commons](http://www.locata.co.uk/commons) — find out who your MP is, based on your postcode.

## About this sheet

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*Sadako story text based on information at [www.sadako.com](http://www.sadako.com) and [www.pacificfriend.ca](http://www.pacificfriend.ca) Images © [www.sadako.com](http://www.sadako.com), [www.pacificfriend.ca](http://www.pacificfriend.ca), Hokkaido Tourist Association.*

# HOW TO FOLD A PAPER CRANE

Begin with a square piece of paper — ideally one side colored and the other plain. Place the colored side face up on the table. In all diagrams, the shaded part represents the colored side.



**1** Fold diagonally to form a triangle. Be sure the points line up. Make all creases very sharp. You can even use your thumbnail.



Unfold the paper. (important!)

**2** Now fold the paper diagonally in the opposite direction, forming a new triangle.



Unfold the paper and turn it over so the white side is up. The dotted lines in the diagram are creases you have already made.

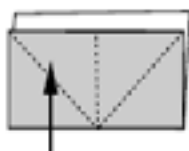


**3** Fold the paper in half to the "east" to form a rectangle.

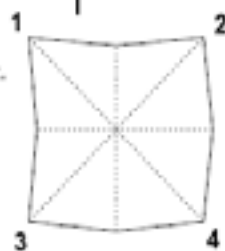


Unfold the paper.

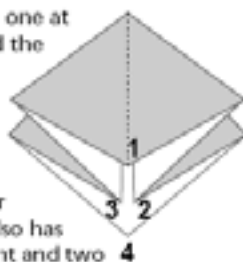
**4** Fold the paper in half to the "north" to form a new rectangle.



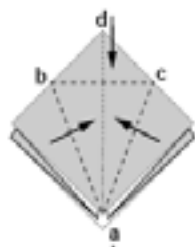
Unfold the rectangle, but don't flatten it out. Your paper will have the creases shown by the dotted lines in the figure on the right.



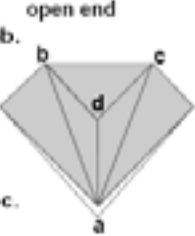
**5** Bring all four corners of the paper together, one at a time. This will fold the paper into the flat square shown on the right. This square has an open end where all four corners of the paper come together. It also has two flaps on the right and two flaps on the left.



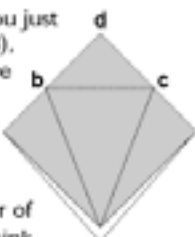
**6** Lift the upper right flap, and fold in the direction of the arrow. Crease along line a-c.



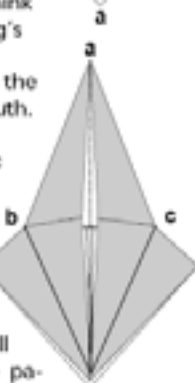
**7** Lift the upper left flap and fold in the direction of the arrow. Crease along the line a-b.



**8** Lift the paper at point d (in the upper right diagram) and fold down the triangle bdc. Crease along the line b-c.

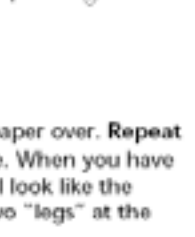


Undo the three folds you just made (steps 6, 7, and 8), and your paper will have the crease lines shown on the right.



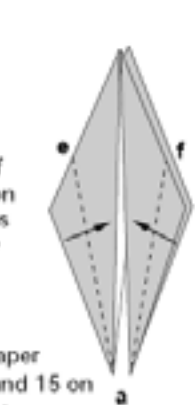
**9** Lift just the top layer of the paper at point a. Think of this as opening a frog's mouth. Open it up and back to line b-c. Crease the line b-c inside frog's mouth.

Press on points b and c to reverse the folds along lines a-b and a-c. The trick is to get the paper to lie flat in the long diamond shape shown on the right. At first it will seem impossible. Have patience.



**10 to 13** Turn the paper over. Repeat Steps 6 to 9 on this side. When you have finished, your paper will look like the diamond below with two "legs" at the bottom.

**14 & 15** Taper the diamond at its legs by folding the top layer of each side in the direction of the arrows along lines a-f and a-e so that they meet at the center line.



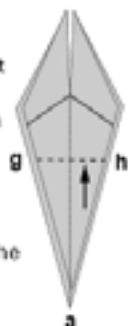
**16 & 17** Flip the paper over. Repeat steps 14 and 15 on this side to complete the tapering of the two legs.

**18** The figure on the right has two skinny legs. Lift the upper flap at point f (be sure it's just the upper flap), and fold it over in the direction of the arrow — as if turning the page of a book. This is called a "book fold".



Flip the entire figure over.

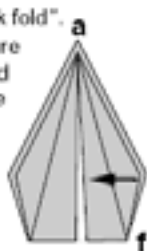
**19** Repeat this "book fold" (step 18) on this side. Be sure to fold over only the top "page".



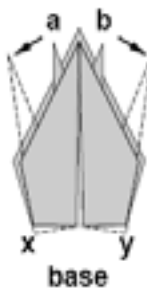
**20** The figure on the right looks like a fox with two pointy ears at the top and a pointy nose at the bottom. Open the upper layer of the fox's mouth at point a, and crease it along line g-h so that fox's nose touches the top of the fox's ears.

**21** Turn the figure over. Repeat step 20 on this side so that all four points touch.

**22** Now for another "book fold". Lift the top layer of the figure on the right (at point f), and fold it in the direction of the arrow.



**23** Flip the entire figure over. Repeat the "book fold" (step 22) on this side.

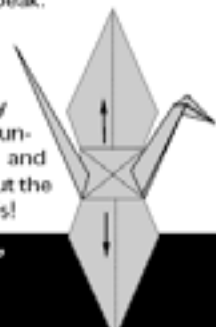


**24 & 25** There are two points, a and b, below the upper flap. Pull out each one, in the direction of the arrows, as far as the dotted lines. Press down along the base (at points x and y) to make them stay in place.

**26** Take the end of one of the points, and bend it down to make the head of the crane. Using your thumbnail, reverse the crease in the head, and pinch it to form the beak. The other point becomes the tail.



Open the body by blowing into the hole underneath the crane, and then gently pulling out the wings. And there it is!



*"I will write 'peace' on your wings, and you will fly all over the world."*

SADAKO SASAKI