

Make Your Own Jumping Springtail Toy!

Have you ever heard of a “snow flea?” Before the snow melts you may be able to spy tiny dark “snow fleas”—or springtails—on the snow’s surface. Springtails are insects that have adapted to live in cold temperatures. In late winter and early spring, springtails emerge from the ground and climb to the surface of the snow to feed. They look like bits of pepper sprinkled across the snow, and if you approach, they will hop into the air with the help of their specialized tails. But don’t worry: “snow fleas” won’t bite you or your pets. They are not true fleas!

With only a piece of paper and scissors you can make a springtail toy that really jumps!

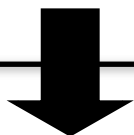
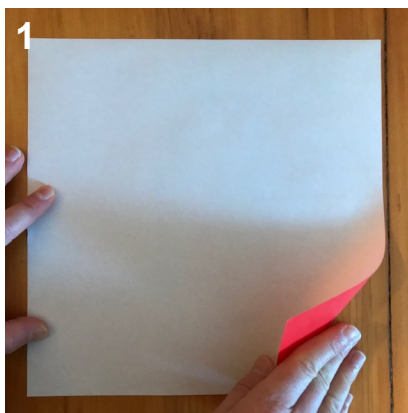


Photo: [Per Verdonk](#), licensed under [CC BY-NC 2.0](#)



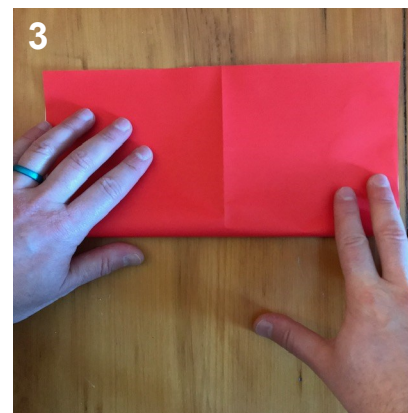
Left: a group of springtails gathered on the surface of the snow; above: a closeup of a springtail.



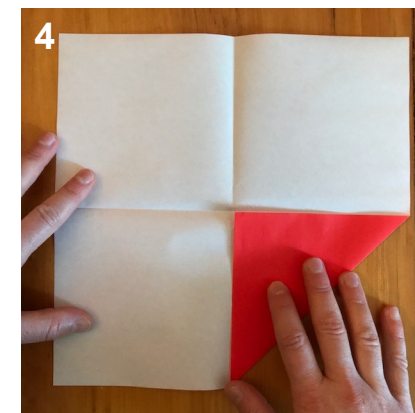
1 Start with a square piece of paper. The piece shown is 10 inches by 10 inches, but you can use a smaller size too.



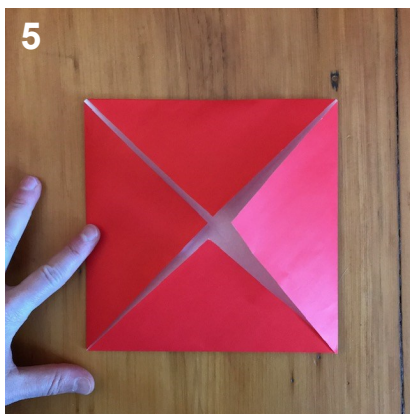
2 Fold the paper in half, so the right edge meets the left edge.



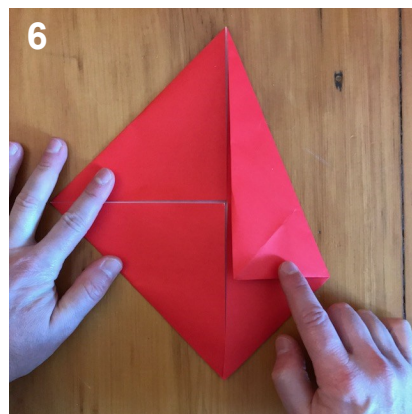
3 Unfold the paper, and fold it in half again, so that the bottom edge meets the top edge.



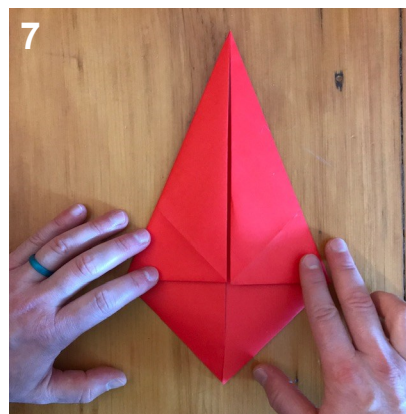
4 Unfold the paper. Now, fold each of the four corners into the center.



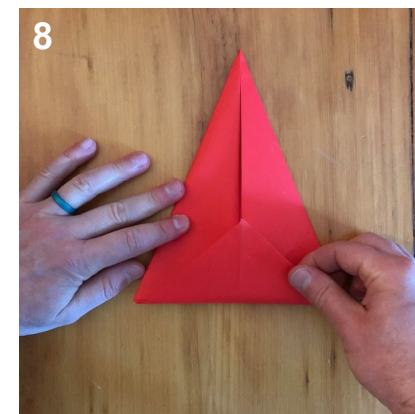
This is how your paper should look after you have folded all four corners into the center.



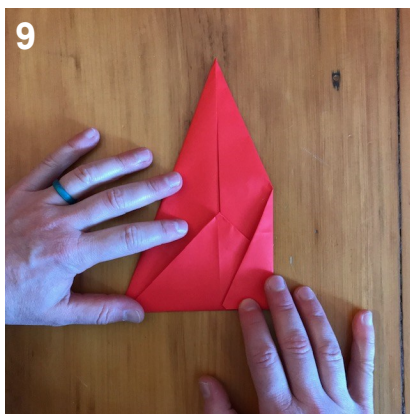
Orient your paper so that one corner is at the top. Now, fold the right-hand corner in towards the middle until the upper right edge meets the middle fold line. Use the photo above as a guide.



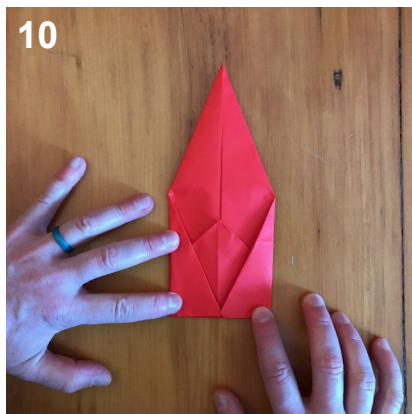
Repeat this fold with the left side. Your paper should now look like an upside-down kite.



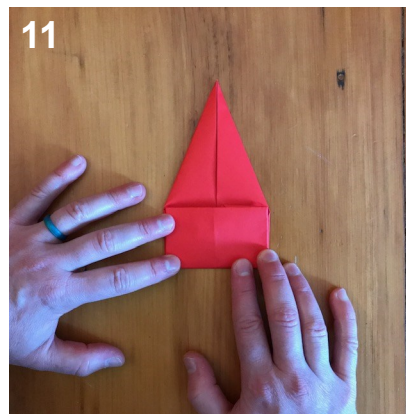
Fold the bottom corner up until you make a triangle.



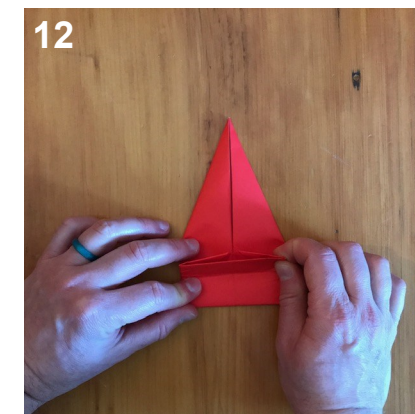
Now, fold the bottom right-hand corner in until it meets the center line.



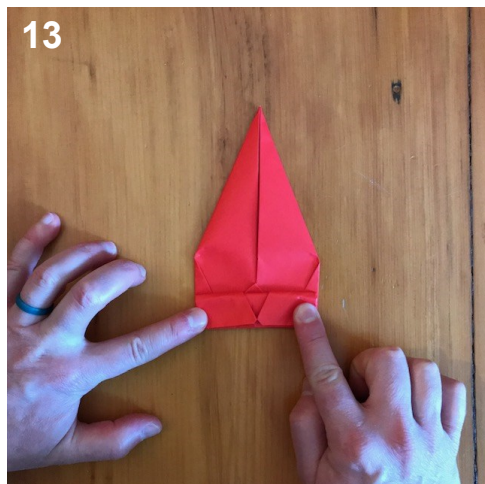
Repeat this fold with the bottom left-hand corner.



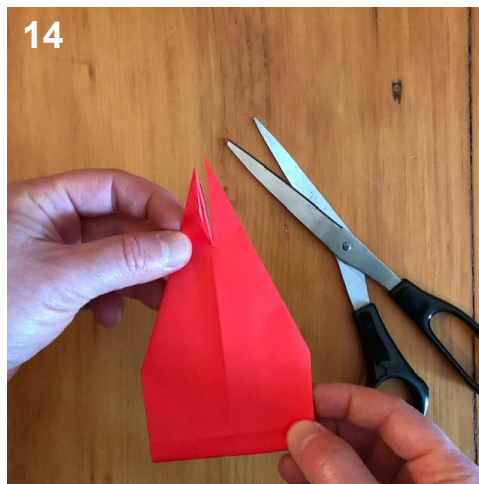
Fold the bottom edge up until it reaches the top corners of the two folds you just made. Your paper should look like a triangle atop a rectangle.



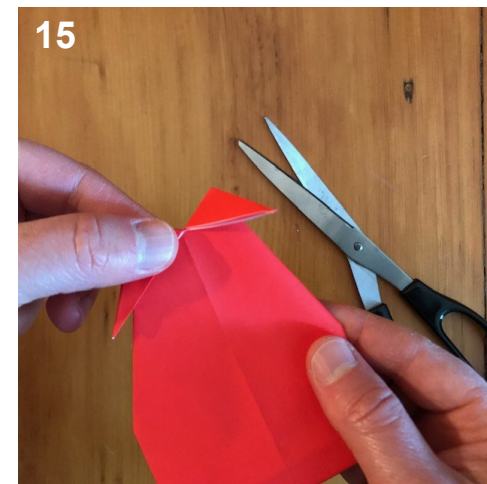
Take the edge you just folded up, and fold it back on itself until it meets the bottom edge. This can be hard to do—take your time!



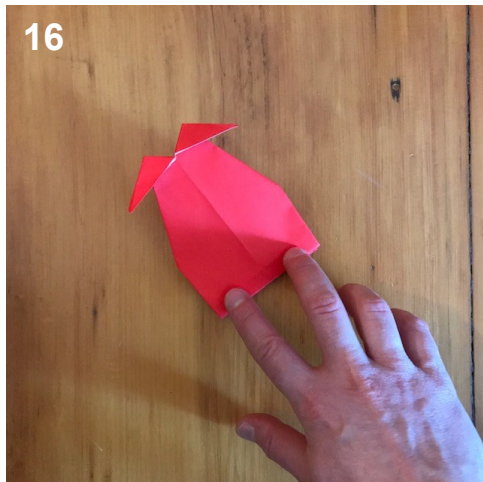
This is how your paper should look now.



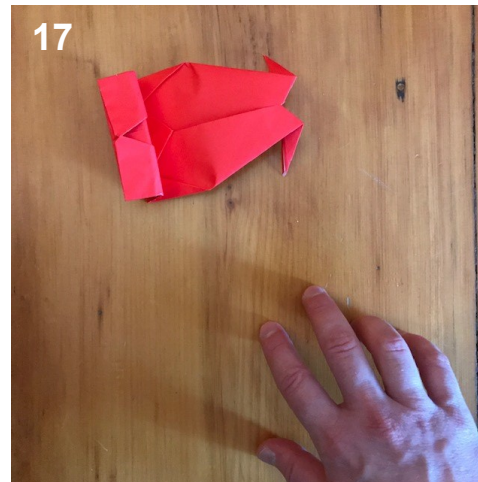
Turn your paper over, and with scissors make a small cut from the pointed end of the paper a short way down the center line.



Bend back the paper on either side of the small cut to make the antennae of your springtail.



To make your springtail jump, press two fingers down on the side opposite the antennae, and release quickly.



Your springtail will jump away! With some practice, you can make it jump high and far.