

# My Pretty Punkin

ghilie, July 2010

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These instructions are geared toward a beginning doll maker. As such, there are a lot of instructions. Feel free to read or not read as your level requires.

## List of supplies:

- ¼ yard of alovasuede, doesuede, buttersuede or the costume suede you find around halloween
- thread to match
- sewing machine with ball point needles (ball point needles are good for knits)
- freezer paper (waxy on one side, paper on the other)
- 4 metal shank buttons (I use Dritz half ball cover buttons in size 30 for arms and 36 for legs)
- safety pins
- safety eyes
- doll jointing needle (8 inches long, usually found in the upholstery section)
- waxed dental floss
- embroidery floss (for nose)
- felt (for ears, optional, for you can also cut the ears out of the suede)
- stuffing (Poly-fil brand is the best, hands down)
- screwdriver (or favorite stuffing tool)

A note about fabrics: You may not be able to find any of the listed fabrics where you live. If you cannot find any of the brand names listed above, what you are looking for is a firm, one-way knit. Some knits are really stretchy – you don't want this, as it will deform the paws and jaws of your Punkin. Minimal stretch is best. In a pinch, you could use polar fleece (even though it has more stretch than you're looking for) or felt (which has no stretch). If you see a lovely piece of suede, check the cut end. If there are strings hanging off the cut edge, it's a woven, and it's a pain to use. Run away!

**Printing the pattern:** This pattern uses the freezer paper method of doll making. **Cut out an 8.5 x 11 or A4 sized rectangle off of your freezer paper to feed into your printer and print the pattern onto the matte side.** You could also print onto normal paper and trace the pieces onto the freezer paper. Whatever the method you use, you want to have all the pieces transferred onto freezer paper.

**Why freezer paper:** There are many crafty uses to freezer paper, and this is because you can iron the waxy side to fabric and then remove it without damage to the fabric. Freezer paper is great for stencils, for quilting, and doll making. Instead of cutting out a pattern and then sewing it, freezer paper allows you to

first sew, then cut, making your sewing lines much more accurate. It is especially good for fine details like fingers and noses. It also stabilizes the fabric that you are working with. Now, you might say, “why can’t I just trace the lines directly onto the fabric?” I did this. Once. I traced a pattern onto the fabric with pen, then sewed it up. Trouble was, those pen marks showed on my finished doll, and it wasn’t so pretty having a green blob in the middle of the face. Disappearing pen doesn’t always disappear, and it’s just difficult for me to mark anything with fabric pencil in a way that is useful.

**Step 1 – The Arm:** This is the easiest piece, so we’ll start with the arm. Cut a square of fabric  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch larger than the pattern piece on all sides. You’ll want the right sides of the fabric together so when you turn it, it will be right side out. **Iron the arm onto your square**, taking care to follow the grain lines. Now that it’s ironed on, **sew around the pattern piece, leaving an opening at the back of the arm. Cut the piece out**, leaving a  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch seam allowance. Clip the curves, including in between the fingers and thumb. **Turn right side out and stuff.** You will want to stuff it very firmly, because stuffing is like potato chips. When manufacturers put potato chips in a bag, they fill it. But the chips settle to the bottom, leaving big, empty spaces. Usually, in a doll arm, this means the stuffing comes out of the thumb, eventually leaving an empty thumb. **When you’ve stuffed the arm halfway, insert a shank button so that you can feel the shank through the fabric.** You are going to be jointing through the hole in this button, so you don’t want to put any stuffing in between the fabric and the shank. Hold it in place with a safety pin as you stuff the rest of the arm. Once it’s stuffed, **sew the back of the arm with a ladder stitch.** Voila! One arm is done, now do it again!



**Step 2 – The Leg:** Like the arm, cut a square larger than the leg, then **iron it to your square**, taking care to follow the grain lines. Again, you will want to have the right sides together. **Sew around the leg**, leaving the toe open as well as an opening in the back of the leg. Cut out the leg, cutting on the curved line for the toe. **Clip the curves**, including the acute angle in-between the leg and the foot. Now we are going to sew the toe. **Align the seams in the**

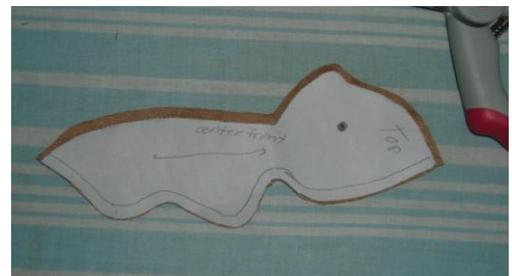
**toe so it looks like the second picture.**



Once you have the toe front aligned, **sew around the curve**, leaving approximately a  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch seam allowance. It is best to start as parallel to the foot side as possible. Sewing straight across can result in points at the ends of the seam once stuffed. Now that you have everything sewn, **turn the leg right side out**. **Stuff it firmly**, like you did the arm, about halfway way. At this point, you will **insert a shank button**, one that is larger than the one you used for the arms. You use a larger button because the curve can accept a larger button and the stress of jointing is distributed to a larger area. Once again, you may use a safety pin to keep the button in place while you stuff the rest of the leg. **Close the opening with a ladder stitch**. As you can see in the picture, I have a right and left leg. Pay attention to the positioning of the shank button inside the leg so that you also have a right and left leg.

**Step 3 – The Body:** There are two body pieces, a body front, and a body back. We're going to start with the front. **Iron your body front pattern piece onto a square of fabric**, taking care to follow the grain line. You'll notice that only one side has a seam allowance. This is because you are going to **sew along the edge of the center front, NOT THE EDGE WITH THE SEAM ALLOWANCE, using the pattern piece as a guide**. After you sew the center front, you will **cut the piece out**. On the side that has a seam allowance, you will just follow the edge of the pattern. On the side with the seam, you will add about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch seam allowance. Don't forget to **clip the curves**. Mark the eye position and remove the pattern piece. Now is the time to **add safety eyes**, should you choose to use them. **Cut ears out of felt and baste them in position on the head**, so that the ears are basted on the right side and point toward the front.

**Do the same for the body back**, leaving an opening between the marks on the center back. You are going to turn the body right side out through this hole. Now that you have a piece for the



front and the back, **open them up and place them right sides together so that the sides align**. Match up the seams on the top and bottom, the curves in the cheeks and neck, the curves in the shoulders and the hips. Pin, pin, pin! **Sew all the way around, ¼ inch away from the edge of the fabric**, beginning somewhere in the hip area. Why the hip? Sometimes the feed dogs of a sewing machine will put the bottom fabric through faster than the top fabric, which results in a slight wrinkle when you meet up with the stitching at the beginning. You don't want this wrinkle in the head – you want it to be where it's easy to hide. **Sew slowly**, and **reposition the fabric often** when going around the curves. You will want the **needle in the down position when you turn the fabric** so it doesn't interrupt the line of stitching. Once you have stitched all the way around, turn your body right side out through the opening you left in the back. **Start stuffing the head. Stuff it very firmly** – I use my flat head screwdriver to do this. Make sure you stuff the nose and the cheeks firmly. You will use more stuffing than you think is necessary, but trust me, it is necessary. Make sure the cheeks are even and the head is stuffed into a pleasing shape before you go on to stuff the shoulders, as you can't go back and insert more stuffing into the head after you have stuffed the body. If you are unsure if the cheeks are stuffed equally, try looking at it in the mirror or taking a picture of it before going on. These are tricks you can use to make sure the face is symmetrical.

**Stuff the neck, shoulders and hips very firmly.** The shoulders and hips are the base for the jointing, and for nice, tight jointing, you need nice, tight stuffing. Once you have shoved more stuffing into this tiny body than you ever thought possible, **close the back with a ladder stitch**.



**Step 4 – Jointing:** Gather your supplies. You need waxed dental floss (minty freshness is up to you), an 8" jointing needle (also known as an upholstery needle), the body and all your limbs. Take four yards off the dental floss and double it up, poking the folded end through the needle and pulling it even with the tail end.



Thread the needle through the shank button in one of the arms. Tie a square knot. Thread ALL the pieces of floss through the eye of the needle.



Stab your Punkin. Ow! Make sure your needle is straight so your arms will be level. You will only be going through the body ONCE, because all of your floss is threaded through the eye of the needle. Once you pull the needle through, there should be no floss left on the side that you entered.



Separate your strands of floss after you pulled them through. Now, draw the floss through the shank of the other arm and trim off the needle. Thread the other group of floss strands onto the needle and thread them through the shank in the opposite direction. Pull tight, tie half a square knot and pull even tighter. Tie the other half of the square knot to hold the jointing in place.



You will be left with tails of floss coming out the joint. To hide these, I usually lose them in the body. I thread them (two individual pieces of floss at a time) onto a long but slim needle, insert the needle into the joint and come out somewhere else in the body. Cut close to the body and turn the arm – the tail will disappear!

**Repeat the process for the legs.**



**Step 5 – Finishing:** Once you are finished jointing, you can decide whether you want to sculpt fingers and toes for Punkin, add hair and clothes, or add a tail. Adding a tail with yarn is simple, as you would just stitch on some yarn and braid it, or you could glue a pompom on there for a bunny. You could also make an elaborate tail out of fur and hand stitch it on if you were making a squirrel, for example. I have taken some embroidery floss and embroidered an X on the end of his snout in order to make a nose. Or you could decide to leave Punkin as is, which is what I did for this one on the advice of my husband. See [www.craftster.org](http://www.craftster.org) for tips on hair wefting, eyelids, ladder stitching and making clothing.

See you next pattern!

XOXO  
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