

Beginners Tips

Advice For Beginners - Unraveling The Mystery Of Bear Making

This is a handy reference section please print out and use while making your bear

Choosing Your Fur Fabric

The choice is endless when it comes to choosing fur fabric to make your bear. If this is your first attempt at bear making, it may be advisable to start with a cheaper synthetic fur, until you feel confident enough to commence with Mohair. Most fur fabrics are easily sewn on a domestic sewing machine or by hand if you wish.

Synthetic Furs

These are a cost effective way to make bears & can produce some wonderful results. All our synthetic fabrics are good quality and there is a wide choice of colours & styles available. You may like to try our "Mock Mohair" which looks and feels very much like mohair, but is actually a synthetic fabric.

Mohair Furs

Mohair is the "Rolls Royce" of teddy bear fur. It is made from mohair woven onto a strong cotton backing. Teddy Bears have been made from mohair for 100 years & it is still the most sought after fabric for bear making. It is available in a huge range of colours & styles including the sparse fabrics which have very little pile. These are very cost effective & make the most wonderful old looking bears. We also stock some beautiful thick piles which make gorgeous cuddly bears, the choice is yours.

Pile Lengths

When choosing your fur fabric, take into account the size of the bear you intend making. As a guideline, the smaller the bear, the shorter the pile you should use. However this is not always the case & you can also make some delightful big bears in very short fabric & vice versa. A good example of this is our bear patterns for "Fleur" & "Lionel". These bears are roughly the same size but Lionel is made in a fairly long 19mm pile fabric, giving him a "whimsical" look and "Fleur" is made in a short (10mm) pile fur. Both fabrics work extremely well, each having a totally different look.

Fabric Finishes

Both mohair & synthetic fabrics come in a variety of finishes. You can see these on our website easily by clicking on the image for a bigger picture. Fabric finishes are often referred to differently by various people or countries. For example our 284 Antique Crush fabric could also be described as "distressed" or "Crushed". Our "Sparse" fabric can sometimes be referred to as 'Vintage" or "Country" Mohair. Our "Ratinee" fabric can also be called "felted", "coiled", "swirled" etc. The names of fabric finishes are chosen by people to try and describe the pile, you can therefore see how many names can be invented to describe one fabric.

Fabric Size

Our fabrics are sold in standard sizes of :

Synthetics fat 1/4mtr, 1/2mtr, 1mtr+

Mohair fat 1/8mtr, fat 1/4mtr, 1/2mtr, 1mtr+

We refer to the lengths as "fat" because they are cut in a square shape. Normally when you buy a 1/4mtr piece of fabric off a roll it would be a long skinny piece. In bear making it is the industry standard to cut in "fat 1/4's" as this gives you a more useable area to cut out your bear pieces.

A fat 1/8th mtr measures approx 50cm x 35cm. It is usually sufficient to make up to a 10" (25cm) bear.

A fat 1/4mtr measures approx 50cm x 70cm and is usually sufficient to make up to a 16" (40cm) bear.

A 1/2mtr measures 50cm x 140cm and is cut straight across the roll.

1mtr measures 100cm x 140cm and is cut straight across the roll.

These measurements are a guideline only, and the size bear you will get from your fabric depends on the pattern design and how well you place your pieces on the fabric before cutting. If you are unsure how much fabric you need, please ask us & we will be happy to advise you. As a general rule, always order a little too much than too little. You can always make a small bear out of your leftovers. Be aware that some fabric rolls can sell out quickly & you cannot always be certain of receiving a second piece of fur from the same roll. As dyelot variations can be quite considerable, it is always safer to ensure that you have ordered enough fabric initially.

Teddy Bear Assembly Instructions

Laying out Pattern

We recommend that you read the instructions right through before commencing. This will help you to understand the steps you need to take. Copying your pattern onto light cardboard will make the pattern easier to use & make sure you have duplicates of all the pieces you need. The pattern tells you when to reverse pieces & how many you need.

Lay all pieces (except the paw & foot pads) on the reverse side of the material. Make sure that you have marked the direction of the nap on the reverse side of the material and that the arrows on the pattern are pointing in the same direction. You may need to try different layouts, to get the most economical use of the fabric.

Draw around the pattern pieces using a soft pencil or fine marking pen, making sure you transfer the joint locating marks and for kits with SAFETY EYES the eye locating marks. Make sure you have marked the correct number of pieces and that where necessary, they have been reversed. **BEFORE YOU START CUTTING - DOUBLE CHECK THAT YOU HAVE THE RIGHT NUMBER OF ARMS AND LEGS ETC, AND THAT YOU HAVE A LEFT AND RIGHT OF EACH. IF IN DOUBT, CHECK AGAIN!** Using small sharp pointed scissors, cut out the pieces keeping the scissor points up under the backing of the material. This will ensure that you are only cutting the backing and not the pile.

Paw Pads

Using suede or felt, cut out the paw pad and foot pads as per the pattern pieces.

Sewing

If you are sewing your bear by machine, make sure you have a good quality cotton in a colour that matches the fabric. You may find it necessary to use a leather needle if using suede for paw pads. Make sure the tension on the machine is not

too tight and that the stitches are neither too small or too large. It is a good idea to use some fragments of your material to check that the machine is set properly before you commence sewing.

You should also ensure that the presser foot on your machine is correctly adjusted for the fur fabric. If it is too tight, the fabric will move out of alignment during sewing and you will not get an even finish. If it is too loose you will not be able to control the feeding adequately. Whether you are sewing your bear by hand or machine it is advisable to either pin or tack the pieces together first before final sewing. On areas such as the muzzle and foot pads, hand tacking is recommended before sewing. If stitching by hand use backstitch or reverse stitching for seams using the thread double. The seam allowance is 5mm, unless the pattern says otherwise.

NOTE: It is advisable to use Fraystoppa on the edge of all openings to ensure that they do not fray when being sewn up. If your fabric has a tendency to fray, it is advisable to Fraystop all seams.

Head

First place the two sides of the head (fur sides together) and stitch from the tip of the muzzle to the base of the neck. Make sure that the seams are as clear of fur as possible by brushing the pile away from the seams before sewing. Then place the head gusset between the two head sides and hand tack the muzzle section in place before sewing. Then pin the remaining gusset section to the head pieces from the neck edge to the muzzle. This should then be sewn in by gently easing the fabric to fit, ensuring that the neck seams are even.

Some patterns have an opening in the head. If this is the case, be sure to leave it open so that you can install the head joint. REFER TO YOUR PATTERN.

TIP: (FOR ADVANCED BEAR MAKERS) - TO AVOID TUFTS ALONG THE MUZZLE SEAMS, PICK TRAPPED FUR OUT FROM THE INSIDE AS WELL AS THE OUTSIDE OF THE SEAM. ALTERNATIVELY CLIP FUR FROM SEAM ALLOWANCE BEFORE SEWING GUSSET IN PLACE.

Note: If you sew any parts together incorrectly, carefully unpick them and re-stitch the correct way. Turn the head to the right side of the fabric and brush or pick out any fur pile that is caught in the seams.

Note: If your kit contains safety eyes, you will need to install them now. Push a needle through the eye locating marks from the inside out, then enlarge the hole with a knitting needle. Pass the shaft of the eye through the hole (check the eyes are in the correct place) and secure the retaining washer onto the shaft. Be sure the eyes are in the correct position as it is very difficult to move them later on.

Body

Pin the two front sections of the body together and sew from neck opening to the base of the body. Pin the two back sections together sewing just short of the neck edge down to the bottom. Leave an opening in the middle of the back section large enough for one of the wooden disks to pass through. Then sew the two front pieces to the two back pieces, creating the body of the bear. Be sure to match your bottom seams evenly.

Turn the body to the right side through the neck or disk opening and brush out any fur caught in the seams. 4 Part or 2 part? Some patterns may have a 2 or 3 part body instead of 4.

Arms & Legs

First sew the paw pad to the inside arm section, right sides together. Then place inside and outside arm pieces right side together, and sew around (leaving an opening to fit wooden disk) half way down the back of the arm. Note: Some patterns have a 1 part arm with opening at the front.

You may need to trim off the excess suede or felt before turning to the right side. Sew the leg sections together (leaving an opening half way down the back of the leg). Leave the sections inside out and pin the foot pad into the base of the foot using pins. Then hand tack using overcast stitch around the foot pad to hold it in place firmly. Remove the pins and sew by hand or sewing machine. You may find this a little difficult at first, but go slowly and ease the material as you go. You may find it easier to sew on the material side of the foot, not the suede side, as this is the side which is more likely to pucker and needs to be eased carefully. Note: On 1 part leg opening is at the front.

Trim the excess suede if necessary from the seams. , then take out the tacking thread. Turn right side out and brush fur from seams.

Stuffing Head

Fill the head, nose first, with stuffing. It is important to get the stuffing right into the nose cavity as it is impossible to pack it firmly once the rest of the head is stuffed. When full, slip stitch around the neck opening and insert the wooden disk & bolt. Note: you may like to super glue bolt, washer & disk together to make joint easier to tighten. Draw up the thread tightly and tie off. TIP: IF YOU DON'T STUFF THE NOSE FIRMLY, IT IS MORE DIFFICULT TO EMBROIDER THE NOSE ON LATER AS THE FABRIC WILL PUCKER

Stitch around neck bolt by hand to secure it before attaching rest of body.

Note: never stuff head with ginned cotton if kit has glass eyes. Cotton packs down very firmly & it will be impossible to pass doll needle through head. Polyfill is recommended for stuffing head. NOTE: Some patterns require the head to be fitted to the body before stuffing the head, see additional instructions on your pattern.

Attaching Head to Body

Slip stitch around neck opening, draw the threads tightly and tie off. Stitch around neck opening by hand to secure it firmly, before pushing first a knitting needle and then the head bolt through body neck. Insert disk through opening in the body and place the disk over the bolt shaft protruding into the body. Now place washer and hexagonal nut on bolt.

Note: because it is not possible to hold the head of the bolt which is inside the head of the bear, the head nut is not a nylon locking nut. Use the ordinary nut and tighten as much as possible.

Check that no body fabric is caught in the joint and that the head is tight. You should just be able to move the head. (Remember joints will loosen with use, so ensure they are tight.) Now add one drop of super glue to the thread of the bolt just above the nut to lock it into position.

Attaching Arms & Legs

Place disk into arm and ensure that it is the width of the seam salvage from the top of the arm (5-8mm). Check that the arm is the correct way round and push a long needle from the outside of the arm through the hole in the disk. (note: you should only go through the fabric on one side of the arm). Carefully enlarge the hole made by the needle using an awl or similar pointed object, until you have a hole large enough for the bolt to pass through. If you are using armature (i.e. Bendy Bits), now is the time to install them. Put the washer on the bolt, insert it through the opening in the arm, locate the hole in the disk and push bolt through the hole in the disk and then the fabric. Make sure the disk is right to the top of the arm and that the bolt is through the fabric as far as possible. Repeat this for the other arm and the legs. (Make sure that the bolts are inserted in the correct side of the arms and legs). i.e. One on left, one on right.

Using a large darning needle, make a hole through the fabric from the inside out, using the joint locating spot to correctly position the joints. Carefully pull the needle through, then insert awl or similar to increase the size of the hole to take the bolt. Take the limb with the bolt protruding from it and insert into the hole in the body. Insert a disk through the body opening and place it over the bolt inside the body. Now place the washer and nut on the bolt and using a screwdriver, hold the head of the bolt in the arm and tighten the nut inside the body using Joint Tool Set. Tighten the nut as tight as possible and then loosen it half a turn. Now check that the joint is clear and that no body fabric or limb fabric is caught in the joint. Repeat this for all joints and check that the arms appear level with one another and the legs are level. If they are not, now is the time to relocate them before the bear is stuffed.

Stuffing

Stuff the bear firmly using both your fingers and a Stuffing Tool. Stuff the body first, then the arms and legs. It is best to stuff in small pieces, packing each piece down firmly before inserting the next. Work from both ends towards the opening making sure the part being stuffed feels firm and that you have got stuffing into every corner. If you are using plastic/glass beads, they will need to be placed in the centre of the bear's body & limbs. . Pack paws & leg joints with polyfill and fill neck with polyfill to stop head sagging, then put beads in tummy.

Sewing Up

It is best to sew up the openings after you have stuffed that section of the bear, particularly if you are using bead stuffing. Using a needle and thread, close the openings carefully using ladder stitch, so stitches are not visible when sewn up. Be careful to sew together the edges which have been slightly turned under so you are not sewing together raw edges. Tie off thread securely.

Eyes (glass)

(Note: kits with SAFETY EYES can bypass this section)

Placement of the eyes is critical to the finished look of your bear. Be careful not to place the eyes too high on the bear's head or too far apart. Generally speaking, the closer together your bears eyes are placed, the younger he will look.

Take your time when placing eyes & ears & it will save you a lot of time later. When the bear looks at you and you can't bear to part with him, you've got it right!!

Using a doll needle (i.e. about 4x long) make a hole in the fabric where the eye is to go and enlarge the hole with a knitting needle or similar. When the hole is large enough to fit the shank of the eye, using a strong thread that matches your fabric,

thread the eyes through. The thread should be used double. Thread the doll needle then the eye & tie off the thread with a double knot. Move the knot until it sits just under the shank of the eye. Pass the needle through the eye position and out at the base of the head. Hold the head (facing you) in both hands and using your thumbs, push the eyes into the head while someone else ties off the two threads. Push them in further than you want them, as they will come out slightly, when you remove your thumbs. Sinking the eyes gives a better look than just having them sitting on the surface. It is advisable to pull the cotton through to the base of the neck. The needles for both eyes are best brought out one each side of a gusset seam. The seam will then prevent the threads pulling through fabric when the eyes are tied off.

TIP: USE 'TEST EYES' TO CHECK EYE PLACEMENT. PUT THE PINS WHERE YOU THINK THE EYE SHOULD GO, TRYING SEVERAL PLACEMENTS. WHEN YOU ARE SATISFIED, CAREFULLY REMOVE TEST EYE AND INSERT YOUR DOLL NEEDLE IN HOLE MADE BY PIN. TEST EYES ARE AVAILABLE FROM BEARY CHEAP.

Ears

You may find the ears a little difficult to sew on, just take your time and remember they do not have to be perfectly placed, as a slightly twisted ear, often adds to a bear's appeal.

Pin the ears to the head first to determine the overall placement. They should have a curl with the edge of the ears near to the face.

Using double thread sew the ear to the head taking a small piece of head fabric each time you make a stitch. Try to turn under a tiny section of the ear fabric as you go, so as not to get a raw edge. However with the thicker fur fabric this is not so important as the pile will hide the raw edge more than adequately in most cases.

Nose

The embroidering of the nose is probably the most difficult part of your bear. Having a template under the nose makes it much easier. Cut out a nose shape using a matching coloured felt and tack on with matching cotton, single thickness. Then make a knot in the end of the embroidery thread and pass the needle under the felt nose so that the knot is sunk under the felt. Then embroider the nose starting at one end by making very even stitches, very close together. If not happy with the stitch you have just made, take it out and do again. When you reach the other end of nose, take thread underneath the nose to the tip of the nose and stitch the mouth. This can be three single strands of thread or more complicated if you like. When the mouth is finished, make a sewing knot to anchor the end of the thread, then push needle through and out near nose. Pull tightly and snip off thread close to bear. End should disappear back into head.

Finishing

When your bear is complete, it is important to make sure all fur has been brushed out of the seams as if it is left, it will detract from the overall look of the bear. Using a large darning needle, pick out any fur which has been trapped in the seams and any tacking thread which may still be caught in the seams. You may then like to brush your bear with a Fur Reactivator Brush.

If you are not happy with your finished bear, all may not be lost. Don't try to fix it straight away. Wait a day or two and try and work out what it is that you don't like. Are his eyes in the wrong place, or are they too big or too small? Are the ears in the right position?

Does your embroidery need re-doing?

When you are sure you know what's wrong, have another go. Very often moving the eyes just 1 or 2mm can make the world of difference. Experience will tell you when its right.

Toe Sculpting

This is an excerpt from the book "Teddy Bear Art" by Australian Bear Artist, Jennifer Laing. The book concentrates on designing your own patterns & advanced bear making techniques. Highly recommended for bear makers with a little experience. Available via our on-line store for A\$39.95

"Toe sculpting is fun on contemporary looking bears and is done after the leg is stuffed. The paws need to be large and not too tightly stuffed. Using your long needle and a strong thread (nylon line or a close colour match to the paw pad material is a good idea) take long stitches down into the paw pad as in picture and pull up tightly. Make the number of pads you want then secure a tight knot. If you wish you can also edge the bottom of the pads by putting in stitches which pull away from each other, as illustrated.

The most important part of bear making is the FACE.

It is the place where the bear expresses his/her personality and it is the first thing most people notice when purchasing a bear. It is important that the bear looks back at you, if he doesn't, there is no appeal.

The art of perfecting a face is the most fundamental part of bear making. A good pattern helps, correct size & placement of eyes is also very important, the nose & mouth are important, but even when you seem to have got all these attributes right, does the bear say what you want it to? Maybe it's time to look at face sculpting - no, not with a hammer and chisel, but a needle & thread!

With just a few stitches in the right place, it is possible to add considerable character to your bear. Describing needle sculpting as it is called, is not easy, but we'll give it a try. Giving your bear deeper eye sockets or a more pronounced bridge to the nose is not difficult. The head of your bear must be stuffed firmly, but not rock hard, (the best filling is poly flock or similar) the neck joint should be already inserted and all stitching finished.

Deeper Eye Sockets (the easy way)

Decide where you want the eyes to go. This can be made easier by using a pair of drawing pins or round headed map pins. Using the pins, try several positions until you are sure that their placement gives the look you are after.

Using a long doll needle threaded with double strong thread (use a colour close to the colour of the fabric backing, as this will make it easier to hide the stitches), start as follows:

Thread the eyes on to a long doll needle with strong thread. Pass the needle through the spot marked by the pin and bring it out low down near head joint. Repeat for other eye. It is advisable to bring the threads out one each side of the head gusset seam and tie them across the seam. This protects against the fabric tearing. Now you will need help. Get someone else (preferably a strong person) to hold the head in both hands with the face towards them. Get them to place a thumb on each eye and push them both in the direction the needles pass through the head. While they hold the eyes in hard, you tie off the threads with a triple knot. You need to push the eyes in further than you want them, as they will come out a bit when the pressure is released. How much you have stuffed the head will make a

lot of difference as to how deep the eyes are set. If they are not right, just snip the thread near the knot and try again.

Eyes Deeper (Sculpting)

Anchor your thread at base of neck & bring your needle out where you want to place the eye. Make a small stitch, then back out to base of neck. Repeat, usually 2 or 3 stitches are required to be placed evenly around the socket.

Eyes Closer Together

Anchor thread, bring needle out near eye placement. Make a small stitch, go across to the other eye & make a stitch, then back to first eye. Then just place your eyes as normal. See diagram over page.

Higher Nose Bridge

This can be done before or after the eyes are inserted. Using a long Doll Needle with double thread, first anchor the thread under the chin, near neck joint. Put a large knot in end of thread, push needle in one side of neck seam and out the other. Repeat again, then pass needle through loop, pull tight.

This will make sure the thread doesn't come loose. Pass needle through head and come out near an eye socket. Pass needle back through nose coming out at same spot on other side of gusset. Making 3-4mm stitches, work backward and forward, moving towards the tip of nose. Pull each stitch until the bridge is increased in height. It should only take 4 or 5 stitches. Be careful not to pull too tight, as you may tear fabric backing. A practice on a spare head is a good idea.

When you have made the last stitch, pass needle back down to neck seam and do a couple of stitches at neck to ensure that it won't come loose. It is essential to keep your thread tight at all times, so the sculpting stays in place.

The only problem you may encounter is that the fabric at the top of the nose bridge is loose. This is because the stuffing has not gone up into the higher bridge. You can overcome this when putting in the sculpting stitches by angling the needle down till you are half way through the nose, then tipping it up to come out the other side. When the stitch is pulled tight it will lift stuffing into nose bridge.

Cheeks

Anchor your thread. Bring needle out on cheek. Take a small 4mm stitch, then take needle back to anchor, pull to get desired effect and tie off. Repeat for other cheek.

This will give you anything from a pimple to a hollow. The point from which you anchor can also make a huge difference. i.e. Base of neck, half way up head or top of head. You can use these Sculpting Technique to create many different facial effects. You are only limited by your imagination!

Pass needle from back of head to eye socket, through loop in first eye & back through same hole and out other eye socket. Pass through loop in 2nd eye, back through same hole and down to back of neck. Tie off as before.

Embroidering Noses

This is an excerpt from the book "Making Adorable Teddy Bears" by Anita Louise Crane. The book is full of beautiful bear patterns as well as handy hints and instructions. Available via our on-line store for A\$27.45.

1. Thread a large embroidery needle with the desired colour of cotton floss. For best results use a single thread.

2. Cut a piece of felt from leftover scraps of felt, in the desired nose shape. You will want to experiment with the scraps until you find the shape & size you want. This will be your template to help you stay in the lines and will make a nice pad for the stitching. I like to try several different styles until I find the one best suited for the Teddy I am working on.

3. Baste or glue the template in position where it gives the most expression. Below are examples of the most common types of nose and mouth patterns.

4. Carefully embroider the nose & mouth, following the pattern. Keep your tension even and tight and untwist threads as you go. If the fur around the nose pulls into the stitches, try holding down the muzzle fur with removable sticky tape, or trim it a little more. If you are not satisfied with the appearance, snip the embroidered pieces and pull them out with needle-nose pliers. If there is ever any part of the bear I find myself redoing, it is nose embroidery, so don't worry if the look isn't quite right the first time. Keep cutting and re-stitching until you like it. I always try several different mouth styles when I embroider the nose. You can even embroider a smile on the bear.

5. Do not knot the thread when you are finished. Catch the thread in a backstitch, hiding it in the nose threads.