

## Here are some brilliant time and 'tear' saving ideas!

**Discipline** : There are certain rules that *have* to be met before you can let your imagination loose. Once you have mastered these, the rest falls into place naturally.

**Planning and preparing ZZZzzz!** Sounds boring I know but it is something I learned from my patchwork course. The discipline to take my time and plan things out before racing off at top speed without checking pattern templates against the grain of fabric, marking them out & pinning properly or sewing slowly and methodically and checking the stitches before continuing.

**Side splitting** Sew all seams twice to prevent splitting when turning/stuffing. Using a sewing machine stitch length of 1.5 (on face, fingers and toes) and 2.0 around the rest of the doll body will give a good strong seam.

### Clipping

Clip around the shapes, (especially around the curved areas) without cutting into the stitches only where absolutely necessary, to provide the sewn fabric with greater flexibility required for turning & stuffing.

BEWARE though that certain vulnerable areas, where there is going to be serious tension from filling material (such as around the neck) should not be clipped as this will encourage stitch splitting. Only clip where there is a severe corner or less vulnerable curve. CLIP SPARINGLY.



**Slow Down!** Hey I can say this with impunity. I was so keen to see how the project would turn out; I would speed on at full throttle and end up frustrated and disappointed. Be '*one*' with your sewing machine. When listening to the sound of your machine as you sew, aim for methodical-muncher rather than fly-girl racer! If you are new to your sewing machine, learn to feel comfortable with it. Practice with some odd scraps of material and learn to sew slowly. Learn about your machine and why sometimes the stitches are too tight or too loose with changes in tension.

**Sewing the Pattern Pieces:** With small or tricky pattern pieces it is usual to *sew* around the template first *before cutting* out the shapes from the fabric, sometimes leaving a gap for turning and stuffing and sometimes cutting a slit in an area of the pattern piece for turning and stuffing. The slit will be in an area hidden by another piece when the doll is sewn together.

**Pressing versus ironing:** If you are going to press your seams remember that doesn't mean iron. Ironing involves moving the iron around the material and this will stretch and distort the shapes you are working with. Pressing means just that, pressing the iron down on the material and then lifting it up again without moving it across the piece. Finger pressing involves running your thumb across the seam to press it sufficiently so that it lies flatter for the next lot of sewing.

**Cutting line versus sewing line:** One thing that took an age to dawn on me was that it is the sewing line and not the cutting line that determines the finished shape and size of your piece of work. However, if the cutting line is crooked or too near to the sewing line, splits, holes and distortions may appear in your work, so take care when cutting out your shapes and sewing them together.

Remember that the **thickness of pen** you use for your templates will affect the size of your pattern pieces. If the line is thick, the pieces will be cut less evenly. Using finer tipped pens results in a cleaner, crisper marked line for your pattern shapes.

**Check twice, cut/sew once:** It is so important to keep checking your work as you go. Then mistakes can be rectified immediately and not agonised over when it is far too late or too difficult to do anything.

**Preventing fabric fraying whilst stuffing** Once you have sewn, clipped and turned your pattern pieces RSO, hand baste/tack the seam allowance around the openings *before* you stuff. This prevents fraying and provides a nicely creased edge for sewing together once you've finished filling.

## Stuffing Tips

You need to use a good quality stuffing material. Ordinary toy filling has a rather matted texture, whilst super soft poly filling which breaks away in wisps is the best to use.

When stuffing your doll you need to fill from the **OUTSIDE INWARDS**, so that it is smooth against the outer skin of the doll. Insert your finger or stuffing tool to create a well or cavity inside the stuffing you have already inserted and into which you can push more of the stuffing. In this way the more compacted, lumpy stuffing is in the centre of the doll where it cannot be seen, whilst the softer layer of stuffing fibre is around the outer edge.

Some dollmakers suggest using small pieces of filling and teasing it out before using it, others suggest using large pieces of stuffing since if it is small it will be more likely to clump and lump. Consequently it seems for a smooth finish you need large pieces as much as possible and smaller pieces where necessary.

You should also stuff **VERY FIRMLY**. Pre-wrap any **ARMATURE** before inserting into doll.

Be careful not to burst your stitches, though. A short machine stitch of 2.0 or 1.5 is recommended. Hand stitch openings closed using ladder stitch.

Stuff the **BODY** firmly from bottom to waist. Then insert half a drinking straw or a folded in half and twisted chenille stem *wrapped in polyester wadding* into the upper body and neck. Fill carefully all around this armature.

Pointed/ protruding profile **NOSES** and **CHINS** can pose problems as stuffing them can pucker the surrounding fabric or the stuffing can become redistributed into the head making the nose flatter than you intended. Some dollmakers suggest inserting clay into the nose and filling with polyester wadding after the clay nose has dried and hardened.

Other dollmakers suggest filling any protruding parts, first (i.e. fingers toes, ears, nose etc). However, the filling is likely to re-disperse as you stuff. Stuffing outside inwards is a better bet, inserting your finger or stuffing tool inside the **HEAD** to create a cavity into which you can push more of the stuffing and in which the **NECK** can later be inserted. You can always then tease small pieces of the filling into those tricky areas such as the nose when it can be supported by the surrounding filling.

Try to avoid sharp tools that may pierce through the fabric. Chopsticks, stuffing forks, dowel rods and Hemostats are the popular choice. (see [tools](#))

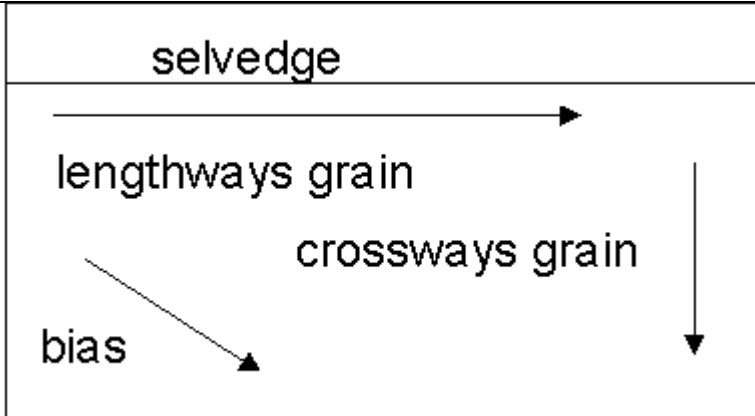
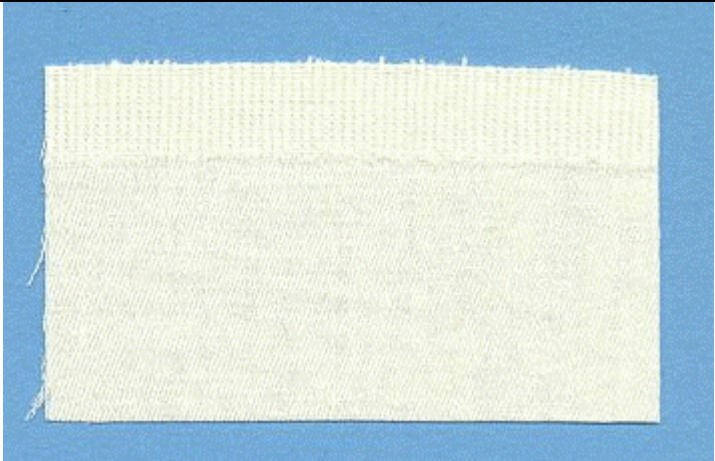
If you want some give in the arms and legs, fill **LEGS** and **ARMS** very firmly to right above the knees and elbows, then very lightly stuff the rest. Never stuff closer than 1" to ½" from the end of the arms and legs if they are to be sewn across at the tops.

**ANKLES:** Place the last piece of filling fibre for the foot so that it is large enough to fill the heel and up the back of the leg to prevent floppiness.

Too much stuffing in the **HANDS** looks unrealistic. 'Place' rather than ram in the stuffing. Use chenille stems (pipe cleaners) wrapped with a wisp of stuffing for each separate finger. Fill **WRISTS** firmly as you need strong wrists on your doll.

Stuffing the **BUST** can also be a rather frustrating challenge at times. To make it easier you may consider using little chenille pompoms, or you may prefer to stuff the breasts like the nose, *after*

you have filled the surrounding area. You may also consider temporarily tacking the breast stuffing in place to prevent it 'popping out' or becoming redistributed as you continue to stuff the torso.

<p><b>Manipulating fabric</b></p> <p><b>These are the pages I used to skim through or ignore because I just wanted to get on a CREATE a DOLL! I learned the hard way by trial and error and as I started to make lots of dolls the boring background information began to sink in and make more sense, enabling me to apply it intuitively as I worked.</b></p>	 <p>Patterns are often marked with arrows to show the direction of the grain. Make sure the arrow on your pattern piece lies parallel with the grain of your fabric for best results .</p>
<p>The <b>SELVEDGE</b> is the non-fraying strip that runs along the lengthways sides of woven cloth. It is not normally used in making dolls and garments (unless you want to produce a particular effect)</p> <p>The <b>GRAIN</b> describes the woven threads in the fabric, which lie in different directions: You can just make out the selvedge at the top of the fabric sample (left) It helps to give the fabric more strength and to keep its shape before use. The texture of the fabric is created by the woven threads, which make up the grain and stretchiness.</p>	

The **CROSSWAYS GRAIN** runs perpendicular to the selvedge and has more stretch.

The **BIAS** runs at 45° angles to the selvedge and has maximum stretch.

The **LENGTHWAYS GRAIN** runs parallel with the selvedge and has less stretch. This is important when sewing and stuffing your doll to prevent the parts of the doll body becoming distorted and matching poorly.

A pattern piece cut on the **STRAIGHT** grain has been placed in line with the lengthways grain.

<p>Different types of fabric have a different feel to them. Learn to feel the difference between different types of fabric as you wander around the fabric shop</p>	<p>Fabrics are generally woven in three <u>widths</u>:</p> <p>36 inches ( 90 cm)</p> <p>45 inches (115 cm)</p> <p>60 inches (150 cm)</p>
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<p align="center"><b>Fabrics for soft sculpture cloth figures</b></p>		<p align="center"><b>Fabrics for Rag Doll Making</b></p>
<p>High thread count, 100% woven cotton fabrics are best: <b>Pimatex &amp; Egyptian Cottons</b> are recommended.</p> <p><b>Velour</b> (Robe Velour) 100% polyester 1 way stretch knit, thicker and slightly more stretchy than Buck Suede.</p> <p>'<b>Doll Skin</b>' polyester double knit with a one way stretch</p> <p><b>Sensua Nude</b> 4 way stretch Tricot</p> <p><b>Lycra Ribbing</b> 96% cotton, 4% Tubular Ribbing Lycra that has great stretch and shape retention.</p> <p><b>Stockinette</b> elasticated knitted fabric, also known as cotton jersey knit</p>	<p><b>Doe suede</b> 100% Polyester 58/60" Wide, with a one way stretch and comes in a variety of colours. The right side is soft with a little fuzzy texture and the wrong side is a smooth knit.</p> <p><b>To clothe your cloth figures or create the illusion of costume</b></p> <p>it is important to choose fabrics with small size prints, checks and plaids so that they fit in with the overall proportions of the doll. The easiest fabrics to sew are the 100% cottons, whilst silks give a crisp shine to the look of your doll.</p>	<p><b>Calico/ 100% muslin cottons</b> (In its natural state, the stuffing does not show through. Nevertheless, calico can also be easily dyed)</p> <p><b>Cotton jersey knits/ stockinette</b> (stretchy and soft) These tend to be sold as either natural/unbleached (cream colour) or white. They are produced in different weights in UK: Light, medium &amp; 'good quality' and sold in widths of 150cm (60"); 90cms (36") and 240cms (extra wide). It is possible to <b>dye them with tea</b> or cold water dyes to achieve more ethnic skin tones.</p>

**Regular sewing machines needles are appropriate for woven fabrics, whilst Ballpoint needles are good for stretchy fabrics**

See: [http://www.uksewing.com/index.php/cPath/44\\_47](http://www.uksewing.com/index.php/cPath/44_47)

## Proportions

When making your own doll it is important to take into account the relative proportions of the different body parts.

The most conventional method of measuring the dimensions of a doll (and people) uses the head size.

The total height of an adult, for example, can be measured as 7.5 to 8 times the length of the head.

Whilst young children have relatively larger heads and shorter limbs.

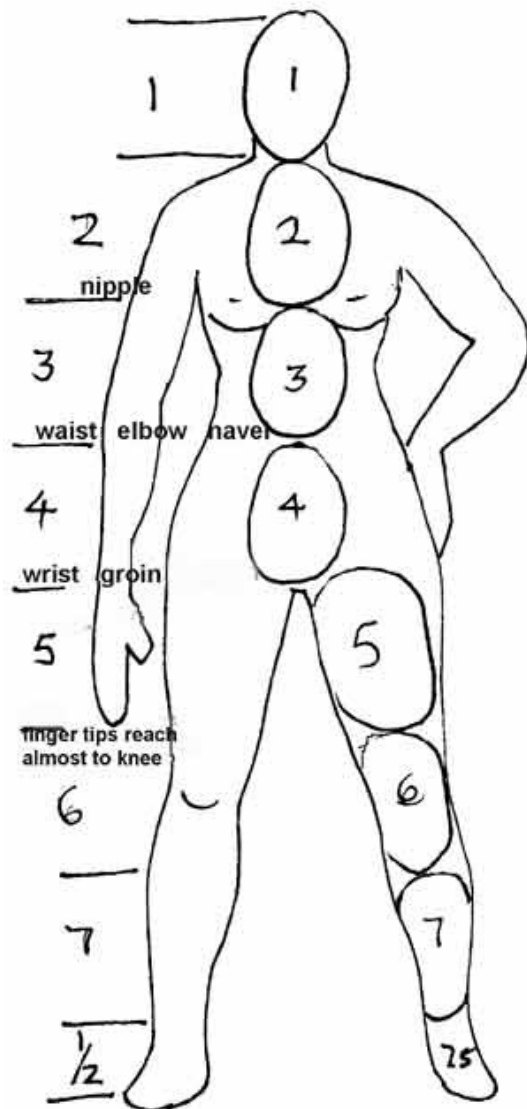
The height of a child of 5 years can be measured as 5 times the head length.

A child of 8 years as 6 times the head length.

Also it is important to note that no matter what age of person, their arms always reach halfway down the thigh.

Upper arms from shoulder to elbow are slightly longer than lower arms from elbow to wrist.

Upper legs from hip to knee are also slightly longer than lower legs from knee to ankle.



## Armature

There are times when your doll may need to be posed (such as limbs and fingers), or you may wish to make your figure stand unaided. Also you may need some extra strength in a certain area of the doll, such as the neck. For this you will need what is called armature.

For most dolls a permanent pose can be achieved by sewing the limbs a certain way without the need for wiring. Separate fingers work best when they are wired with pipecleaners or chenille stems.

