



Hats

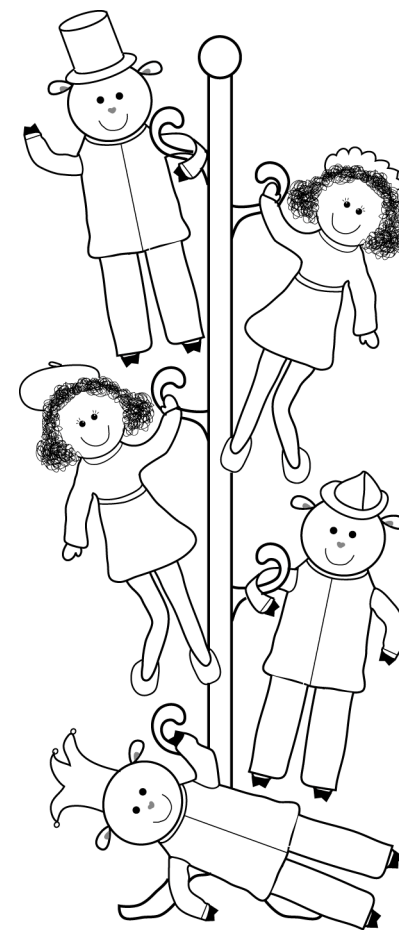


Top it off

Hats can be costumes of their own. Put a red helmet on your puppet, and poof! You've got a firefighter! A police officer, a cab driver, a sailor, a painter, a chef...the list goes on and on. After years of costuming, I'm totally convinced there's no simpler way to create many types of characters than through hats. And they're especially useful when you need to throw together a skit in a hurry. You don't always have time to make costumes from top to bottom, and when that happens, I recommend that you start at the top. (Oh yes...they're also useful for completing the look of a costume too.)

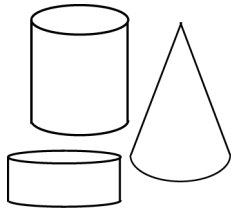
Hat making can get quite complicated—it's really a craft of its own—but you can make simple hats without much trouble at all. The main types of hats covered this chapter include:

- ✂ **Tube hats** (like top hats, boaters, jester hats, and crowns)
- ✂ **Gathered hats** (like bonnets, berets, and chef's hats)
- ✂ **"Soft shape" hats** (like Dutch caps, rainhats, woodsman and detective hats, and fire helmets)
- ✂ **Hoods** (like Little Red riding hoods and astronaut and knight helmets)



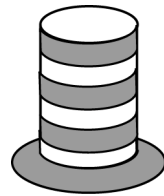
Tube hats

Tube hats work well for top hats, boaters, jester hats, crowns, and the lower parts of chefs' hats. You can get a lot of different styles just by varying the height and shape of the tube. And by cutting the edge of the tube at an angle, you can even make cone-shaped hats like those of the princess and Tin Woodsman.



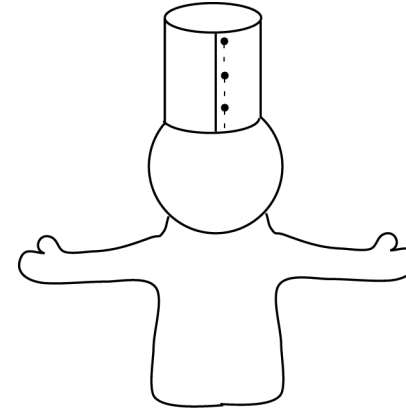
The easiest way to give the hat the stiffness it needs is to make it from felt. Since felt only comes in a limited number of colors, you may want to cover the felt with fabric (as explained in step 3).

For a whimsical effect (like a jester hat), you can use one kind of fabric for the inside of the hat, and a contrasting fabric for the outside. By using striped fabric (or sewing together pieces of contrasting fabric), you can even make a "Cat in the Hat" hat.



Make the tube

1. Cut a rectangle from felt that's as tall as you want the hat (plus 1/4" if you plan to add a top, and another 1/4" if you want to add a brim) and wide enough to fit comfortably atop your puppet's head when the ends of the rectangle are pinned together.



2. For crowns and jester hats, you can cut the top of the rectangle into points.



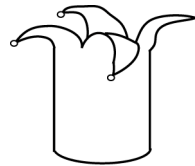
3. If you want to cover the felt, cut two identical rectangles from fabric. Sandwich the felt between the two pieces of fabric, with the right sides of the fabric facing out. Then stitch (or zig-zag stitch) them together along the edges using a matching colored thread.



4. Fold the rectangle in half right sides together and stitch the edge opposite the fold closed.



For crowns, just turn the tube right side out and you're done! By putting weights (like bells) on the ends of the points, you can make the hat curl down for a jester look.

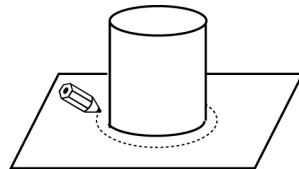


For tops hats, boaters, and the like, continue on with the directions "Add a top (optional)" and "Add a brim (optional)".

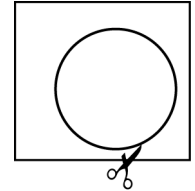
To make a chef's hat, skip to the "Gathered hats" directions on page 105.

Add a top (optional)

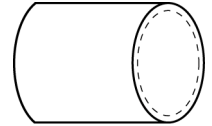
1. Place the end of the tube on a piece of paper and trace around it, about 1/4" away from the edge of the fabric.



2. Cut out the paper along the trace mark, then use the paper as a pattern to cut out a piece of fabric or felt for the top of the hat.



3. Turn the tube inside out, pin the top to the edge of the tube and stitch all the way around (removing the pins as you go).



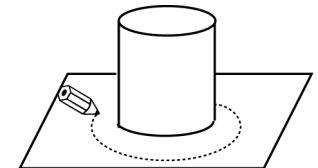
Turn the tube right side out, and you're ready to "Add a brim (optional)."

Add a brim (optional)

You can make brims that go all the way around the hat (as explained in the next paragraph), or partial, "duck bill" brims (explained on page 104). These brims work for more than just tube hats, too—you can use the same technique to add brims to gathered and soft shape hats.

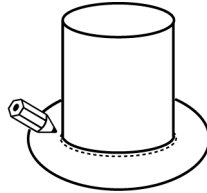
To make a brim that goes all the way around the hat:

1. Cut a circle of felt about 2-4" wider than the tube (or hat) itself. You can trace a bowl, a paper plate, a pot lid, a watermelon rind...

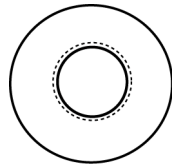


whatever you happen to have handy that's the right size. (Maybe even a compass!) Or you can use the tube as a guide and just eyeball it.

- Place the end of the tube (or hat) on top of the felt circle and trace around the edge.

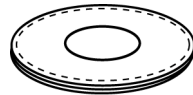


- Cut out the center of the circle, approximately 1/4" smaller than the trace mark. You should end up with a doughnut like shape. (This allows your puppet to get its head into the hat.)



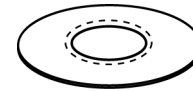
If you want to cover the brim with fabric (to match the rest of the hat):

- Cut out two fabric circles identical to the felt. Place the two fabric circles right sides together, put the felt circle on top, and stitch all three layers along the outside edge.

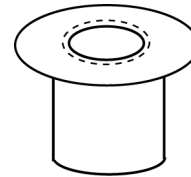


- Turn the brim right side out (you may need a blunt object like the end of pen to get everything smooth) and iron it flat.

- Stitch all three layers (felt and fabric) together along the inside edge.



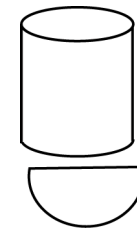
To attach the brim to the hat, place the inside edge of the brim and the end of the tube right sides together, pinning them in place. Stitch them together (removing the pins as you go), and you've got a hat!



For a very finished, professional look, you can hand stitch a piece of complementary ribbon (or a strip of fabric—see page 113) over the seam between the brim and tube. This part shouldn't show, so it's not really necessary, but it can be a nice touch.

For a partial brim (like a soldier's helmet or baseball cap):

- Cut a half circle of felt about the same width as the tube (or hat).
- Cover it with fabric using the same method as in steps 4-6 of the previous section (optional).



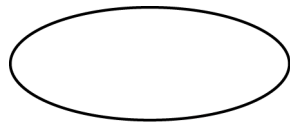
- Attach it to the hat as shown above.

Gathered hats

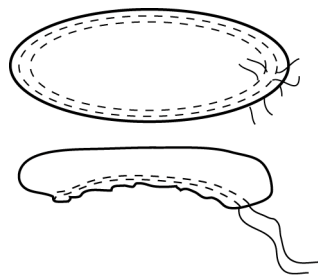
Gathered hats include everything from bonnets, shower caps, and surgical scrubs to the top part of a chef's hat and the suitor's hat on the inside front cover. And much more! The gathered part of the hat can be as large as your puppet's head, or it can make up just part of the hat (like the Bo Peep bonnet with a gathered back and large brim).

To make a gathered hat:

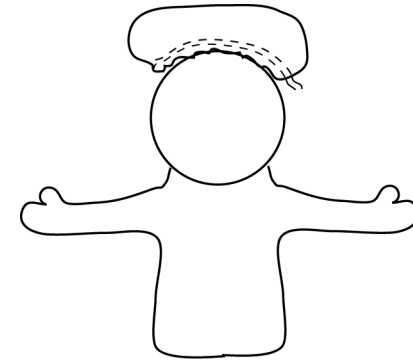
1. Cut a circle of fabric that's about twice as big as you want the finished hat.



2. Gather the edges of the circle using the technique from page 22.

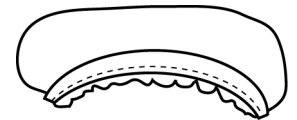


3. Adjust the gathers until the hat fits your puppet's head.

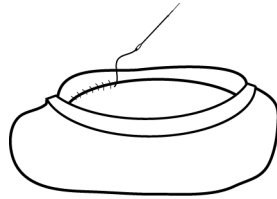


To finish the hat, you can attach it to a tube (page 102), add a brim (page 103), or simply enclose the lower edge with a strip of fabric:

1. Cut a rectangle of fabric that's about 3" wide and long enough to wrap around the gathered edge of the hat.
2. Place the fabric right sides together against the gathered edge of the hat, lining up the lower edge of the fabric with the lower row of gathering. Then stitch the fabric to the hat. (Go slowly and hold on to the fabric tightly to keep the gathers from getting pushed out.)



3. Turn the unstitched edge of the fabric to the inside of the hat and hand stitch it in place using the whip stitch from page 26. If you stitch carefully, and only put the needle through the inner part of the fabric, the stitches won't show on the outside.



CongrHATulations! You've made a gathered hat!

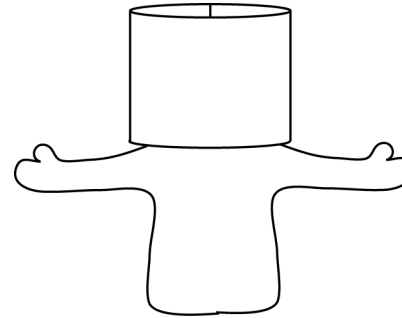
"Soft shape" hats

With this technique, I made hats for the Dutch girl, woodsman/accordion player, detective, firefighter, Scarecrow, and sou'wester costumes. (How's that for variety?) You can make just about any type of hat with a semi-triangular or rounded shape (hats for baseball players, sailors, pirates, nurses...)

Depending on how stiff you want the hat, you can use two layers of fabric, one layer of felt, or (for the stiffest soft hats) a layer of felt covered with two layers of fabric.

NOTE: You can shape the hat directly on the fabric, but if you're squeamish about wasting fabric or not getting it "right" the first time, you may want to practice on paper towels first.

1. Cut a rectangle of fabric large enough to wrap completely around your puppet's head. Then cut a second, identical rectangle.

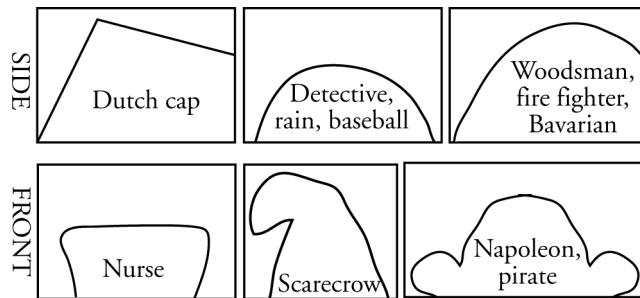


2. Fold each rectangle in half widthwise *wrong sides together*. If you want to make the hat stiffer, cut two rectangles of felt (the same size as the folded fabric) and slip one between the layers of fabric.



3. Place the two pieces of fabric on top of each other, lining them up as closely as possible.

4. Mark a shape for the hat using a pencil or pins. (When in doubt, it's easier to make it too large the first time and stitch it smaller later.) Just make your best guess, keeping in mind the style you want and the shape and size of your puppet's head. You can shape the hat as seen from the side or as seen from the front.

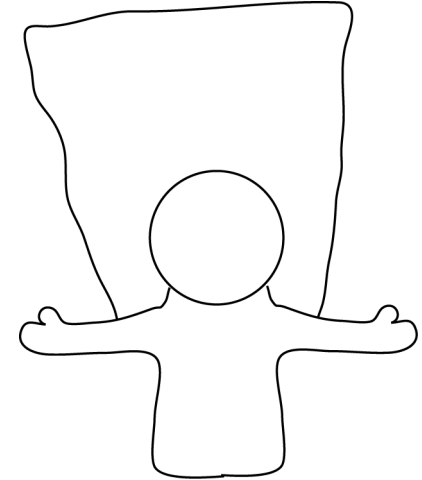


5. Stitch along the line, then turn the hat right side out and try it on your puppet. If it fits, congratulations! Trim off the extra fabric and you're done. If the hat is too large, or doesn't have quite the right shape, turn it inside out and try again, removing the previous stitches if necessary. Keep repeating and restitching until you achieve the look you want.

You can attach a brim to the hat if you want to (by following the directions from the "Add a brim (optional)" section on page 103), or your puppet can wear the hat just as it is.

Hoods

1. Cut a rectangle of fabric that's wide enough to wrap around the back and both sides of your puppet's head (plus 1/2") and tall enough to cover its head completely from front to back.

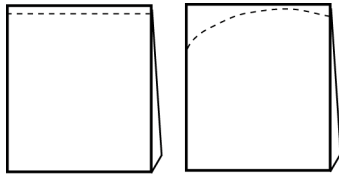


2. Fold the fabric in half heightwise right sides together and stitch along both sides.



3. Turn the fabric right side out and iron it completely flat.

4. Fold the fabric in half widthwise and stitch along the top edge. For a rounded hood, stitch in a gentle curve rather than a straight line.



5. Turn the hood right side out (ironing it again if necessary) and try it on your puppet. If the hood is too large, repeat step 4, stitching a little further away from the edge of the fabric.
6. To hem the bottom of the hood, fold both layers of fabric inside the hood 1/4". Iron the edge flat and stitch along the lower edge.



You can sew the hood to a costume (right sides together!) or you can make it removable by attaching it with small safety pins.

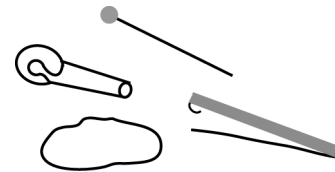
Keep that hat on

Since puppets tend to move a lot during performance, you may need to take some preventative steps to make sure that hat stays on your puppet's head.

Straps can provide a decorative and functional embellishment for some kinds of hats, especially bonnets, helmets, and party hats. See page 113 for strap making instructions.



If you have a soft puppet, you may be able to pin the hat directly to your puppet's head with straight or safety pins. For delicate or hard



bodied puppets, you might try attaching hair clips to the inside of the hat. For hairless puppets, that gummy, playdough like stuff some people use to hang posters on the wall might do the trick.

You'll definitely have to experiment to see what works best for your type of hat and your type of puppet, but the effort will be well spent if it keeps your puppet's hat in place.