



Mimi's Handbook for Dollmakers

Tools For Dollmakers

by Gloria J. "Mimi" Winer

Introduction

These some of the tools that I find useful for dollmaking.

Mimi's Stuffing Tool

It is much easier to make a doll if you have the right tools. The most important tool for a dollmaker is the correct stuffing tool.

I make my stuffing tool from a Stanley TM #64-846 screw driver. It is about 6 inches long with a straight blade 1/8 inch wide. The blade has straight sides without any little "ears."

First, I drill a hole lengthwise in the end of the handle and use a double-ended dowel screw to attach a large, round, wooden drawer-pull knob to make it fit my hand comfortably. Then, I paint it with vinyl paint to give it a softer surface and prevent slivers. Finally, I smooth the tip with a piece of emery paper so that it won't snag the fabric.



You can use the screw driver just as it comes from the store, or you can make your own stuffing tool like I do.

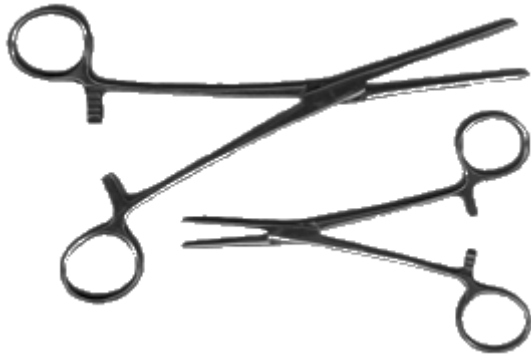
I wrap a small amount of stuffing around the tip to stuff fingers and make knuckles.

I can slip a larger amount of stuffing underneath the doll's skin to fill in soft spots, even after I have finished sculpting. (It fits between sculpting threads.)

I can also use it to reach under the doll's skin to straighten or align seams.

Hemostats

A small hemostat (clamp) is useful for turning fingers, inserting foot plates, inserting wads of stuffing, inserting pom poms, and removing stuffing. You can get them at any surgical supply store and at most Radio Shack stores. Ideally, you should have several in different sizes. If you only get one, get a medium size (5 to 7 inches).



Hot Glue Gun

If you choose to make one of the yarn hair styles, you will want a hot glue gun. It is much faster and easier than sewing the yarn hair.

There are two things to look for in a hot glue gun:

- First, get one with a trigger feed — the kind where you push the glue stick with your thumb often squirts, causing accidents that ruin your doll.
- Second, get one with a built in stand or get a cordless model with a separate stand. The most frequent accident with hot glue guns is getting burned by trying to grab one that is falling over or slipping off the table.

Hot glue guns are available in hardware stores and craft stores.

Hot Gluing Tools

Hot glue takes 15 to 60 seconds to set. You must press the hair yarn firmly into the glue or it won't stick to the head. Most tools will stick to the glue. If you don't use a tool, you will burn your fingers.

I make a non-stick tool by putting a few drops of Sewer's Aid silicon on a wooden tongue depressor, chop stick or craft stick. I rub it in with my fingers and then wipe off the excess with a tissue. I make up several at a time because eventually they do stick to the glue and I don't want to have to stop to make more in the middle of a hair style.

Hair Loom

To make yarn hair, you will wind the yarn around a piece of cardboard or use an adjustable hair loom. The best hair loom is available from: For Kids Only, P.O. Box 1290, Coos Bay, Oregon, 97420. Send a large SASE for ordering information.

Sewer's Aid Silicon

Sewer's Aid silicon is used to lubricate your thread and to make gluing tools. Place a few drops on the spool of thread before winding your bobbin to help prevent skipped stitches. It will also help prevent knots in your sculpting thread.

Sewer's Aid silicon is available in most fabric stores.

Disappearing Markers

Use the air soluble (purple) marker only. Do not use the blue water soluble markers as the blue marks sometimes reappear, making the doll look abused.

The air soluble (purple) markers are available in most fabric stores.

Pins

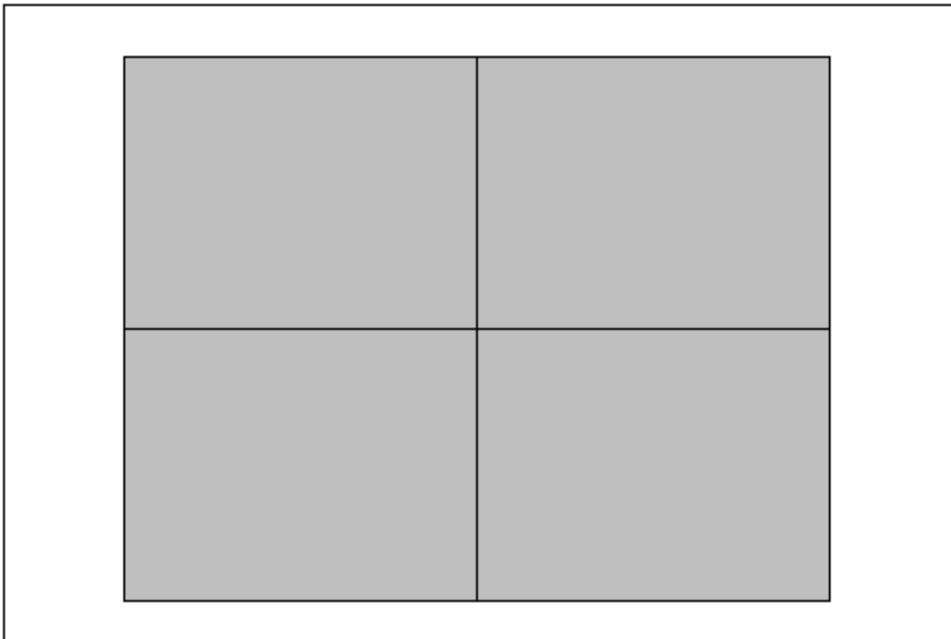
Long, sharp, silk or ballpoint pins are best. My favorites are: IBC glass head pins, #5010, 1-3/8" long (50MM), 250 pins per box, available from Clotilde, Inc., P.O. Box 22312, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33335. (Send \$1.00 for a catalog. She has oodles of wonderful sewing notions.)

These pins are long and fine and sharp. They replace all the ball point and silk pins I used to use. They are general purpose pins.

Marking Board

Tracing patterns on stretch fabric is much easier when the fabric doesn't move while you're drawing on it. You can make up a non-slip board by pasting sheets of sandpaper (from the hardware store) onto a heavy illustration board that you can get at your local art supply store.

Use Fine ** 150 grade sandpaper. It comes in a pack of 5 sheets, each 9 inches by 11 inches. Four sheets will glue nicely onto a 20 by 30 inch illustration board with 1 inch margins at each side and 4 inch margins at the top and bottom. Save the fifth sheet (mount it on a smaller board) for holding the face front while you paint the doll's eyes.



If you use a rotary cutter, remember to move the fabric to the cutting mat before you cut it. The rotary cutter will destroy the sandpaper and the sandpaper will destroy the rotary cutter.

Rotary Cutter

A rotary cutter is a little, circular knife that rolls and cuts like a pizza wheel—except it's designed for fabric. You use it with a special plastic mat that heals after each cut.

The easy way to use it is to trace a template onto your fabric (with the sandpaper board) and then move the fabric to the cutting mat and roll around it with the cutter, or to place your pattern on top of the fabric, hold it in place with Wonder Weights, and then cut around the edge of the pattern.

Rotary cutters and self-healing mats are available in any fabric or sewing store.

Wonder Weights

Wonder Weights are small pieces of heavy metal encased in plastic. You use them to hold down your template while you trace it or to hold your pattern onto the fabric while you cut it with a rotary cutter. It is much easier than having three hands to hold your templates or pinning patterns to the fabric for cutting.

Wonder Weights are available in most fabric and craft stores.