

Skill Sheet #3: Adapting Patterns for Needle Sculpture

by Judi Ward – Judi's Dolls - <http://JudisDolls.com> - ©1980-2009

Any of my doll patterns and many other doll patterns can be needle sculptured easily by following these instructions. Baby and toddler dolls lend themselves better to this method than teen or adult dolls, because this method gives a cute look rather than a grown up look.

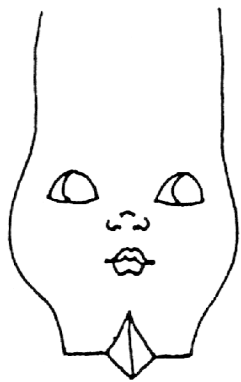
This instructions sheet will teach you how to prepare your pattern for the necessary changes to switch over to the needle sculpturing techniques, and how to needle sculpture your doll using very few stitches to achieve shape, form and a profile.

Instructions

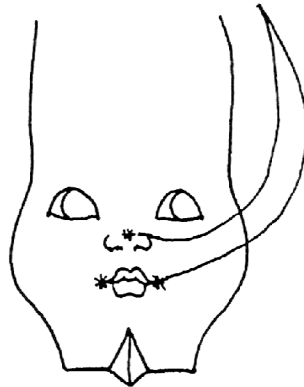
This method works for slightly stretchy fabrics like velour, polyester knit and felt.

1. When you get ready to transfer the face onto your cloth, transfer only the eyes very lightly. Do not transfer the nose and mouth. You will only make nose and month location dots on your fabric face piece as illustrated below.

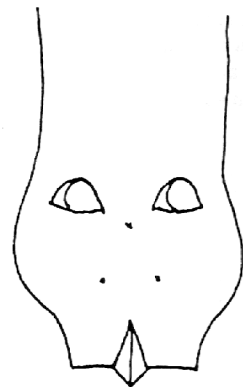
Original Face Pattern



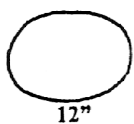
Location of Nose and Mouth Dots



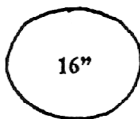
New Face Pattern



2. You will need to cut out a nose from a scrap of fabric. The size will vary according to the dolls size. Below are some common sizes, and you can make more of course because they are just ovals. You can put larger or smaller noses on certain dolls to vary the look of a pattern.



12"



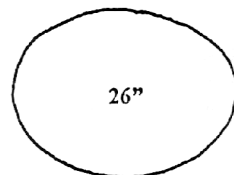
16"



20"



24"



26"

3. You are now ready to construct your doll in the normal way.

4. After your doll head is stuffed very firmly you are ready to do the face. Note... paint or embroider the eyes in the usual way, for whichever doll you are making. Be sure to allow paint to dry thoroughly before going on to needle sculpturing.

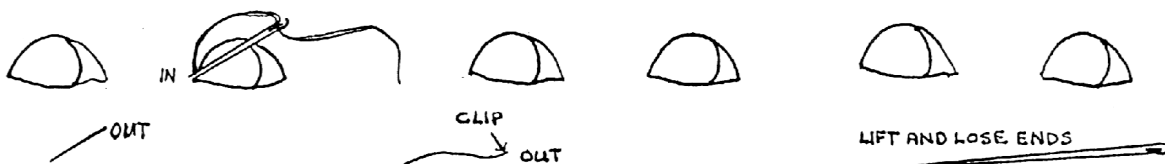
5. Choose a nose size appropriate for your doll size and gather it all around the outside edge using a quadruple thread for strength. Pull the gathers up tightly as you stuff the nose very firmly, keeping the oval shape.

All sculpture is done with a quadruple thread



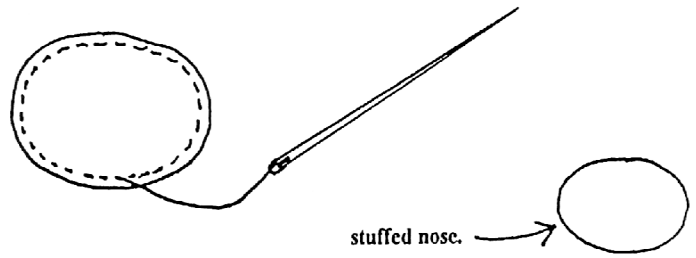
Quadruple Thread Illustration

After each sculpture path is done and tied off you need to lose the ends of the thread. To lose the ends, put your needle in at the tied spot, then bring it out at a spot a little ways away from there. Clip the thread close to the fabric, then lift the fabric with the point of your needle to lose the ends of the thread under the fabric.



6. Gather the nose piece all around then stuff it very firmly.

Important: Do not use quilt, buttonhole or needle sculpture thread. It can cut through your fabric. Use four strands (*quadruple*) of ordinary sewing thread.

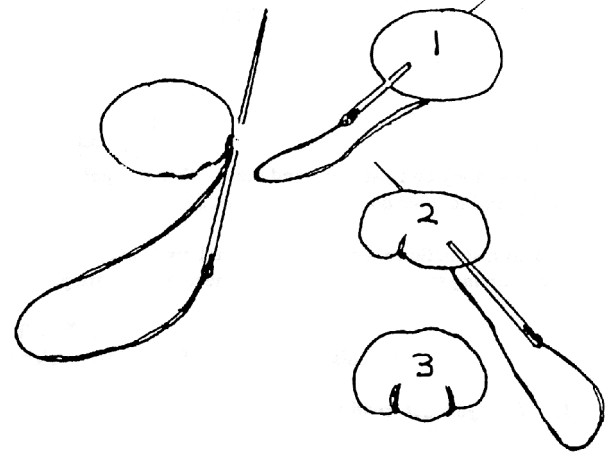


7. Carefully stitch the nose in place on your dolls face using tiny ladder stitches. Do not try to stitch into the face and the nose with the same stitch. Stitch one stitch in the face then one stitch in the back edge of the nose, repeat this all around, pulling the stitches tight after every three or four stitches. When you pull the stitches tight they will disappear.

8. When the nose is stitched in place, stitch from nostril to above the nostril several times for each nostril to fully form the nose. Anchor off the stitching under the edge of the nose.

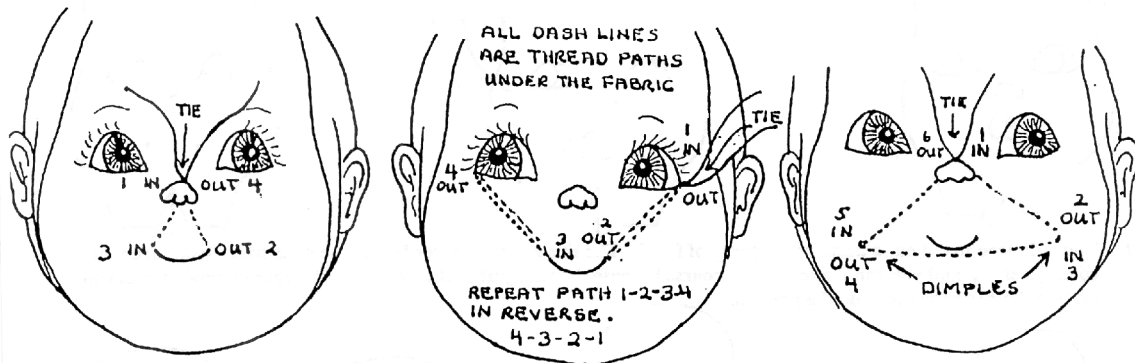
9. With the nose stitched in place you are ready to do the very easy needle sculpturing.

10. Thread a needle sculpturing needle with a *quadruple* thread. Put the needle in at the top edge of the nose then bring it back out at one mouth dot, put it back in at the other mouth dot and bring it out behind the nose again. While pushing the mouth in with your thumbs, pull the threads behind the nose tightly and tie them, which pulls in the mouth. This is the simplest needle sculpture you can do.

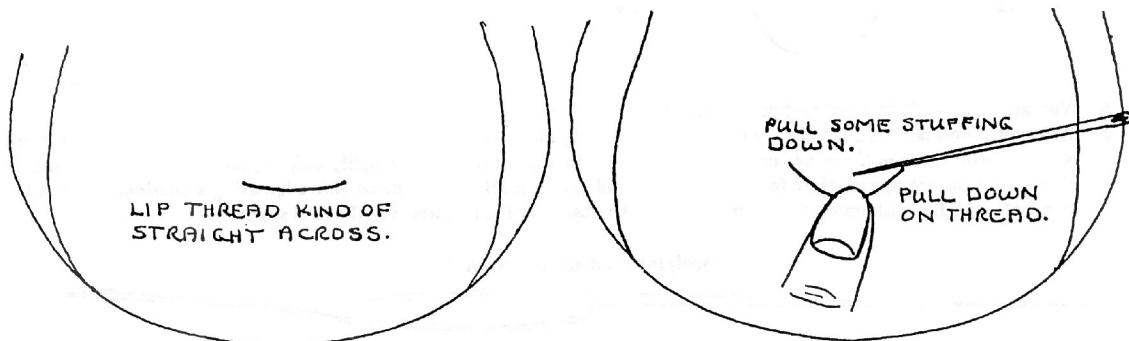


You can elaborate on this method by inserting the needle at the inner eye corner, and following the mouth path again then out at the other eye corner... or... inserting the needle at the outer eye corner and bringing it out at a dimple spot, then follow a dimple-eye corner path for one or two dimples.

Experiment with different sculpture paths for different looks.



11. You may need to pull some stuffing down above the top lip to achieve a smiley look. To do this, reach inside with your needle point and pull some stuffing in place above the top lip. It helps to pull down on the sculpture thread with your fingernail as you do this.



12. Blush the bottom lip area to define the lip. Or to be more elaborate you can paint the lips with acrylic paint. This takes practice and the ability to draw the lips on and paint them.

