

# Papier-Mâché Puppet Wizardry

Step aside Harry Potter; a new wizard is in town! Now your child can create his own wizard or witch puppet to send off on imagined adventures! This project blends many types of artistic elements, such as papier-mâché, painting, sewing, and designing. Making the puppet is a detailed, multi-step process that can be completed over several days, giving your child the satisfaction of seeing a longer project reach fruition.



## What You Need:

- Balloon
- White flour
- Water
- Newspaper, torn (not cut) into strips about 2 x 6 inches each
- 3 wooden dowels, about 18-inches long
- Paint
- Fabric
- Cotton batting
- Needle
- Thread
- Various items for decorating the puppet, such as foil, tinsel, yarn, false eyelashes, etc.

## What to Do:

1. Have your child create the papier-mâché paste by mixing three parts water to one part flour in a large bowl. You two can experiment with more or less water, depending on how thick you like the paste (more flour will result in thicker paste).
2. Blow up the balloon so it is about 6 inches in diameter, depending on how big you want your puppet to be. The balloon will serve as a mold for making the puppet's head.
3. Ask your child to dip a strip of newspaper into the paste so that it is completely coated, then run it between two fingers to remove excess paste.
4. Have your child place the strip on the balloon and smooth it with his fingers. Repeat this process until the entire balloon is covered with one layer of newspaper. Make sure he leaves a small opening around the knot where the balloon is tied, and that the newspaper strips overlap slightly. Allow the layer to dry completely (at least 24 hours).
5. When the first layer is dry, cut the balloon knot and have your child insert the dowel in the hole at the top of the puppet's head. Be careful; this one layer of papier-mâché is not very strong yet!
6. Ask your child to add another layer of newspaper strips with the paste. This time, have him extend the layer an inch or two down the dowel. Half of the strip should be attached to the puppet's head, and the rest should wrap around the dowel. This will serve to secure the puppet's head to the dowel!
7. Have your child repeat the above steps until the balloon and top section of the dowel have 4–5 layers, making sure each layer dries completely before adding the next one.
8. Once the final layer of papier-mâché is completely dry, your child can paint the puppet's face and add other features, such as hair and eyelashes.
9. To make a pointy hat, roll a piece of card stock into a cone shape and staple it to hold. Have your child paint it and attach decorations such as foil shapes or tinsel, then secure the puppet's head with small tacks. It is easier to wait to attach the puppet's hat until the project is finished.
10. To create the puppet's body, have your child cut a 10" x 12" fabric rectangle and fold it over lengthwise. Stitch the long edges together.

11. Have your child slip the dowel through the fabric rectangle. Stitch the top opening tightly on either side of the dowel.
12. Stuff cotton batting up through the bottom end of the rectangle until it is stuffed tight. Sew up the bottom opening tightly on either side of the dowel.
13. To create the puppet's arms, help your child cut two long rectangles of fabric, about 14 inches long and 3–4 inches wide. Fold one rectangle over lengthwise. Stitch the long edges together and fill the tube with batting, leaving the first inch unfilled on either end.
14. Where the batting starts, sew the top end closed, leaving an inch of extra fabric. Repeat for the bottom end.
15. Sew a line across the middle of the tube. This will create an "elbow" so the arms can bend.
16. Attach the arms to the body by sewing the extra inch of fabric to the top of the puppet's body.
17. If desired, your child can create fabric hands and sew them to the bottom of the arms, or just make the clothing long enough that the puppet's hands are hidden.
18. To maneuver your puppet's arms, wrap a long piece of sewing thread tightly about 10 times around the end of a wooden dowel and secure it with strong tape, leaving the unused portion of thread hanging down. Thread the unused portion onto a needle and stitch it securely to the puppet's hand.
19. Have your child use his own imagination for the puppet's clothing! Witch and wizard attire is loose and flowy, so no precise patterns or expert sewing skills are necessary. Have him drape fabric around the puppet as he sees fit, then help him cut and stitch it up into a loose "robe."

Once the puppet is completed, the activity can be extended to include writing and performing by having your child adapt his own script from a favorite book or write his own play.

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