

Homemade Dress Forms

Duct Tape OG: end up with a dummy made up of a duct tape exterior, stuffed.

- ❖ Pros: fast, easy, cheap
- ❖ Cons: sticky residue on clothes and pins, cannot be stored in heat, does not hold up well over time.

Materials: Plastic wrap, 1-2 rolls of duct tape, scissors, sturdy cardboard, foam stuffing, PVC pipe for stand

Duct Tape Patterned Form: use the duct tape shell you've made, cut it into a pattern, and stitch it with another sturdy fabric and stuff it

- ❖ Pros: Does not need a cover, no residue on fabric, holds up over time
- ❖ Cons: requires more time and materials, lacking in structural support, more room for error during sewing,

Materials: Plastic wrap, 1-2 rolls of duct tape, scissors, sturdy cardboard, heavy canvas, heavyweight interfacing, sharpie, foam stuffing, PVC pipe for stand

Wrapping the model

You are trying to create a layer that is as close to the exact body shape and size as possible. Choose underthings that follow your natural shape and won't add much bulk. No shirt or pants, underwear and bra only. No padded bras unless you are always going to wear one with everything you make. Wrap your subject in layers of saran wrap, starting with over the shoulders, following over the curve of the breast across to the opposite hip. Continue wrapping by crossing pieces, trying not to build up too many layers in any one area. Flatten or cut pieces that try to bunch up together. You should build a protective casing about 2-3 layers on all the areas you want in your dress form, including the neck and shoulder caps. Make sure your plastic wrap layers cover more than the duct tape area will by at least a 1" margin.



Once wrapped in plastic, move on to wrapping your model in duct tape. Again, start at the shoulders and wrap pieces crosswise on the body. You are trying to overlap the pieces just at their edge, and follow the natural curves. Avoid any wrinkling or bunching up and try not to put layers directly over one another. You should end up with the ends of the tape crossing at the sides of the body, and down the front and back center line, giving the most structure at these points. Make sure you get



the neck, shoulder caps, and below the curve to the butt. You want to avoid doing more than one layer of tape, as you want it to be the size of the model's body without adding too much extra bulk.

For Duct Tape Dress Form OG, go ahead and cut in a straight line using a pair of non pointed scissors down your model's back, starting at the nape of the neck and using your fingers to lift the duct tape away slightly. Make sure not to cut the model's underwear or skin (obviously). For the patterned form, go ahead and use your sharpie to draw lines delineating the pattern you want on the body. Divide the body into sections - line down the center front and center back, line down each side going from neck to shoulder and from underarm to hips. The neck should be a separate section. From here you should have a shell close to the shape of your model. Trim up the edges, fill in any gaps.



For the patterned form, go ahead and cut along the lines. You should get fairly flat pattern pieces at the end. If there are any significant curves, likely around the breast and butt, cut into them to create a completely flat pattern. These will add to your stitch lines to help create the curves. Cut this pattern onto a very stiff canvas, (the stiffer the better) and use NON-fusible interfacing to line the back to add additional structure. The fusible will leave a residue on any pins you stick into it, thus defeating the purpose of the cloth version. Make sure you add in seam allowance, not too small as this seams will have a lot of strain on them. Use a good thread and a tight stitch. It is recommended to go over your stitch lines twice. To create extra

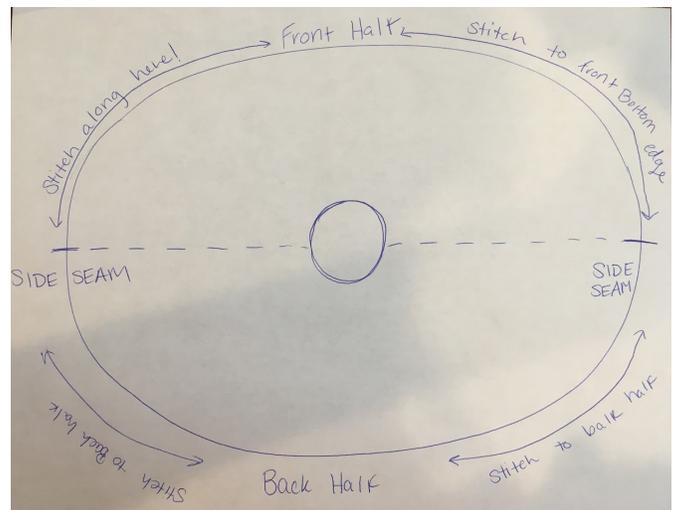
strength, open up your seam and press, then stitch each side of the seam down. Be careful of your curves and your stitch lines, any seam allowance that is not exact will create a pucker or harsh angle in your dress form. This can be fixed later but takes a lot of effort and time.

Both versions of the dressform will need to create a pattern for the covering of the neck, leg, and armholes. The neck is easy, make a circle that fits the hole you already have. Cut it out of a very sturdy cardboard, remembering that this will be the point on which your dress form sits. Several layers of cardboard would not be amiss. OG style, simply tape this into the top hole of your neckline. Patterned version will require a cover. The neckline pattern piece you cut out is a perfect guide for your cardboard circle, make the cardboard circumference the same length as the neck pattern (before seam allowance.) Use your cardboard

as a pattern for the neck hole cover, adding the seam allowance now. Repeat with the arm covers. You may need to shape up the armhole on your duct tape or patterned version, as covering around the arms can be really difficult so it is an easy place to miss. Remember that the arms are situated more towards the front of the body, and have a rounded triangular shape. Stitch the armand neck covers in like you would a sleeve, avoiding any wrinkles because they very much will show. Turn your canvas form inside out, and glue the cardboard armholes to the seam allowance, not to the fabric itself. Remember



we are trying to avoid glue anywhere we would pin. At

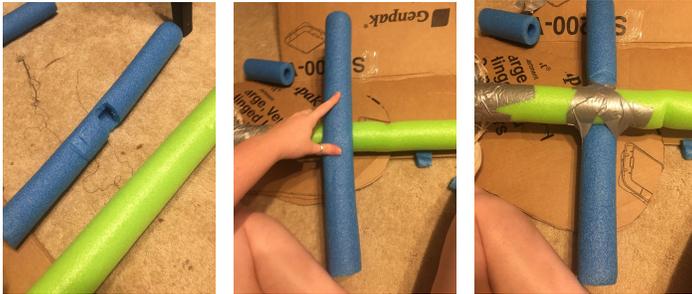


this point you should also cut and stitch a cover for the base of your dress form. Cut one long oval and cut it in half, stitching each curved half to the bottom opening of your dress form, again trying to avoid any wrinkles. Do this now or you'll regret waiting until the end like I did.



Now it's time to think about your stand. You want a PVC pipe (or other pole) at least as long as your dress form. You may want this to go onto an existing stand. In which case make your pipe as long as your torso plus that length, or you may not want a stand at all, just to sit it on the table. You still need an internal structural support, or your form will collapse and lean. I put a pool noodle over my pipe to fill it out a little more and give it something to adhere too. Something wide and strong is best. You're going to duct tape it heavily to the cardboard you're using as your neck support. Now you can glue that cardboard in to the seam allowance of the neck as well. For OG Dress form, just heavily tape the pole in.

Stuffing



In both types of dress form you will need a lot of stuffing, between 5-10 pounds depending on your size. First we need some support. Get a pool noodle and cut it down to the length between the shoulders. You can eyeball it just don't go too small. You want a little pressure on the armhole cardboard that keeps it stretched out. Cut a large notch in the center of the noodles so it can form a sort of joint. Duct tape around that heavily. You can do this at the

center waist and the largest part of the hip as well. This will help lend some structure. The larger the dress form, the more you would want to do this part.

Now start stuffing! You can use additional pool noodles to fill out space around the pole. Especially with the fabric version you don't want it too near the casing or it will create a lump in your dress form. **DO NOT** use other stuffings like newspaper or anything with a lot of empty space. This is how dressforms lose their structure and collapse, lean, or cave over time. Start at the neck hole and stuff the polyfill in as densely as possible. On the outside the neck should be firm and standing straight up. The goal of filling is to make it so dense that it will support its shape and be able to take a pin without the pin wiggling around a lot so no matter how much you might think it's filled, keep filling. Work your way through the shoulders, making sure your cross noodle stays center while you fill around it. This can be tricky, make sure you get the areas around the cardboard armholes really well, it is an easy spot to have cave ins. Slowly work your way down the chest. Check the outside by putting pressure on it. It should be solid, like a punching bag. If its squishy like a stuffed animal, you need to stuff it even more densely. Duct tape OG won't have any real stretch to it, so you should have an easier time stuffing it and it will feel denser. For your fabric version, you want to push to the fabric's mass capacity. If you double stitched your seams you won't see any pulling and you'll get a more faithful shape.

As you get to the curves in the body, you can pad these out with other materials. For breasts especially, you can use old foam pads or even a cut up old bra to add more rigidity to the curves. Just make sure to stuff densely behind them, otherwise the breasts will sag or cave inwards. On the fabric version, you'll notice anywhere a seam wasn't straight, or you changed directions suddenly will result in puckering and create unwanted lumps. The only solution is to either un stuff it and go back to your machine or to try and stitch it by hand. You'll also notice that as you go down, you'll get lumps anywhere you've over stuffed one area higher than the other. Use your hands to break up the foam into smaller pieces and move them evenly around the area. Alternatively, you can use this to your advantage to create subtle bumps and shapes that got lost in your patterning. Chest a little too straight, you need some pecs in there?



Stuff it really densely in that point. Or maybe you have a lot of under arm fat and want to show that your sleeves aren't always too tight. Maybe you have a really wide but flat behind. Stuff the sides heavily and smooth out the center of the backside. Measuring and also just feeling and checking your body against the dress form is important here. And remember, it will never be 100% perfect so don't stress about it.

Keep following this method all the way down to the bottom, until you get about an inch away from the bottom cover, or about an inch and a half away from the bottom of your duct tape layer. Now it's time to add the bottom cardboard. Cut an oval roughly the size of the bottom of your dress form. You can use the pattern earlier for the bottom cover. The center hole should be the exact size of the pole you'll be sliding it onto. Cut one hole on either side of that one, large enough for your hands. Now slide it on until its just past the bottom of your outer layers. OG style, you can go ahead and tape this cardboard to the bottom layer. Leave the holes open. Fabric style, you want to pull the two bottom cover pieces around the cardboard layer and pin or temporarily tape them there. The curve of the dress form should be enough to keep the cardboard snug, right up against the seam allowance just like in the arm and neck holes of before. Use the two holes to continue stuffing until it is as dense at the bottom as it has been all the way down. It's very easy to stuff the base, so make sure you pack that thing full, Now you can either finish taping over it, or whip stitch your fabric cover together at the base.

There you have it! If you're doing the OG duct tape style, don't keep it in the heat or put your iron or steamer near it, as the duct tape can melt and catch the stuffing on fire. Also, keep a bottle of machine oil near you to wipe off your pins as you use them. They'll get sticky tape residue on them that can transfer to fabric. A great idea is to make a dress form cover which will help prevent any transfer of glue to your creations. For fabric base, keep it sealed up when storing it, as it can take on a musty smell.

This is the best method I have come up with after trying multiple how to guides and using the best parts of everything I've seen. I have further ideas on how to keep improving it as well so check back in with me later. If you have any questions, please feel free to submit them on my website or email me and I will do my best to help you. So now, grab a buddy for an odd bonding exercise and let me know how it goes!



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