

Dragon Making 102

Looking for a simple, fun project to do with your kids? Find it here!

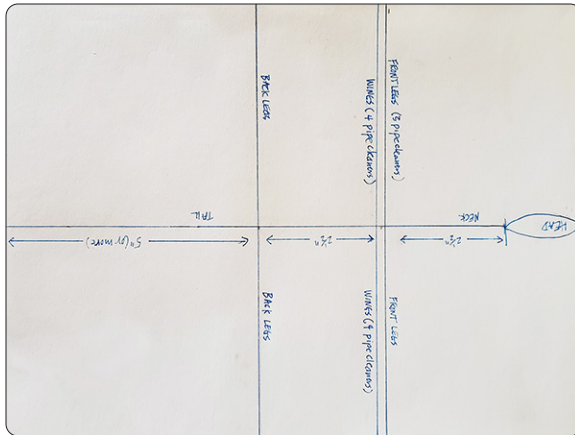
Follow these easy step by step instructions for creating your own dragon using just these few basic materials:



- Pipe cleaners, 12" in assorted colors, found in craft stores and online
- Yarn
- Felt (1-2 squares), found in most craft stores
- Hot glue gun and glue sticks, found in craft stores
- E6000 glue, found in craft and hardware stores
- Paper toweling
- Aluminum foil
- Ruler
- Scissors
- Fabric for dragon wings
Lightweight fabrics such as cotton, silk, rayon and polyester blends work best.
- Glass eyes or beads for the dragon's eyes
Julie Wang offers 5 different sized dragon eyes, 100 eye assortment for \$11.99 on Amazon.

1 Printing the template

Go to the last page of these instructions and print “Template 101,” a blueprint for sizing the pipe cleaner “skeleton.” You can either lay pipe cleaners over the template for a visual reference, or use a tape measure and follow the written measurements. For simplicity, pipe cleaners are referred to as PCs or wires.



Template 101

2 Making the dragon's spine

Shaping head & neck

For the head and neck, bend 2 PCs in half and create a 1" loop at the folded end, then twist together, leaving 1" untwisted at the other end. *Photo 1*



Photo 1

Shaping body & tail

For the belly and tail, twist 3 PCs together, leaving 1-1.5" of wire untwisted at one end.

Joining head & tail sections

Lay the untwisted ends of both the head/neck section and body/tail section together. *Photo 2*



Photo 2

Then twist individual wires of each section together until both sections are firmly joined. If the connection seems a little loose, use E6000 to bind more tightly. You now have one continuous body. *Photo 3*



Photo 3

3 Making legs & wings

If you want the exposed parts of the leg and wings to coordinate with the yarn-wrapped body, choose your PC colors accordingly.

Shaping legs

For both front and back legs, wind 3 PCs together, starting at the middle and twisting out. You'll want approximately 4" of twist. After twisting, measure to make sure there's approximately the same length of untwisted wire on either side of the center twist. *Photo 4*

Note: These 3 wires form 3 toes on each of the legs. If you want a 4-toed dragon use 4 wires.

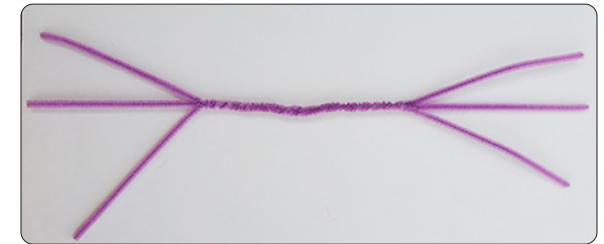


Photo 4

Shaping wings

For the wings, twist 4 PCs together, starting at the center. Twist 1-1.5" of the center together. Leave most of the wire untwisted to form the “ribs” of the wings. *Photo 5*

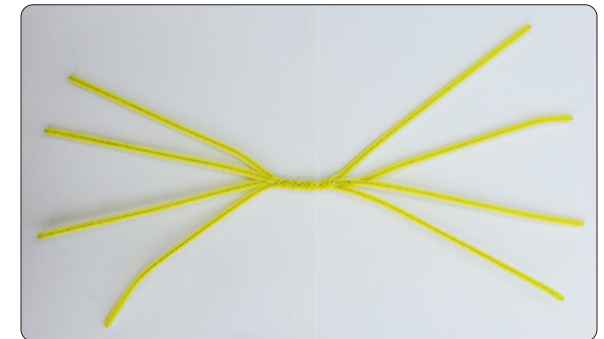


Photo 5

4 Joining wings & legs to body

Now measure 2.5" from the base of the looped head and twist the front leg wires once around the body. Measure to make sure both legs match in length.

Position the wings directly behind the front legs, twist once around the body, then measure to make sure both wings are the same length.

Next measure another 2.5" down the spine to position the back legs, then twist wires once around the body.

Hot glue the legs and wings to the body, gluing on both the top and bottom of the spine, making sure the wires are firmly attached to the body. *Photo 6*

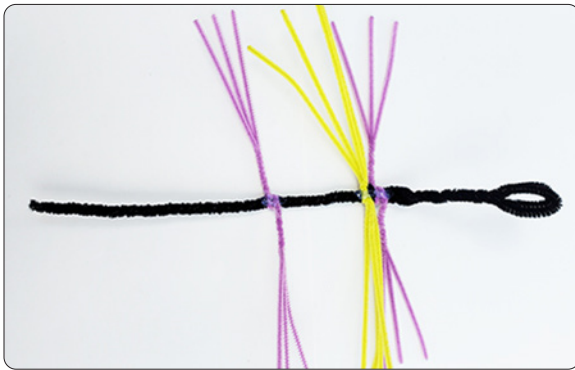


Photo 6

5 Fleshing out the body

Next let's flesh out the body using paper toweling. There's approximately 3" of "belly" between the front and back legs. It's necessary to taper the belly into

both the neck and tail sections to make a smooth transition.

If 3 separate paper rolls are created for neck, belly and tail, the 2 transition points between these 3 segments create messy discontinuities in the body that are hard to smooth over.

The solution is to add 4" onto the 3" belly to create a single tapered 7" roll.

Standard paper towels come in 11" squares. Fold a sheet not quite in half, allowing for a 1.5" single layer margin down one side of the sheet. Repeat the process with a second sheet of paper.

Place one sheet over the other with the 2 single layer margins on opposite sides. The combined width of the 2 sheets is approximately 7". *Photo 7*

Next, to create a fuller belly midsection, cut or tear a third paper towel in half. Fold this piece in half and lay on top of the 2 bottom sheets. *Photo 8*

In this photo notice that the belly isn't placed exactly in the middle. Because the neck (top of *Photo 8*) is shorter than the tail (bottom of *Photo 8*), a little less length is needed for tapering the neck compared to the tail.

Now fold these 3 sheets in half lengthwise and roll up into a tube. Bind

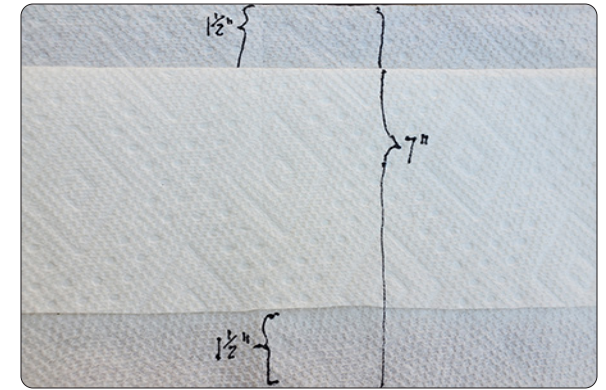


Photo 7

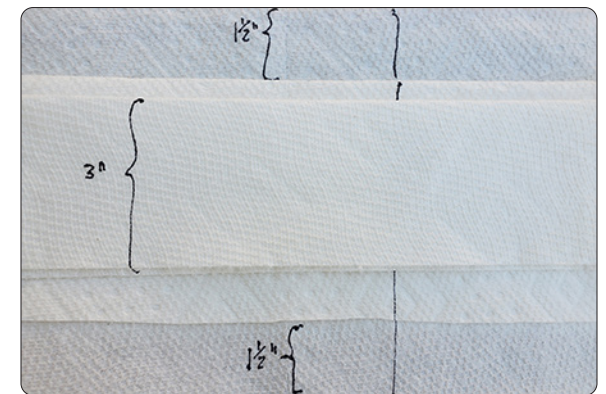


Photo 8

the sheets together by gluing one end of yarn to the paper with a dab of hot glue, then wind the yarn around the paper tube. Make sure to tighten the yarn around both ends to create sufficient taper. Finish by gluing the other end of the yarn to the paper. See *Photo 9* on the next page.

If you want a fuller belly, it's easiest to add at this point. Additional paper toweling doesn't have to be wound fully around the body. It can be folded into



Photo 9

smaller shapes and added to specific areas such as the lower abdomen.

Add a dab of hot glue to hold additions in place, then attach them to the body with more yarn. Be sure to hot glue the ends of additional yarn too.

6 Attaching body to skeleton

Next, hot glue the paper tube onto the wire skeleton, gluing only between the front and back legs as hot glue will stiffen the neck and tail joints. *Photo 10*

As mentioned before, the neck should have a shorter tapered section than the tail since it is shorter than the tail.

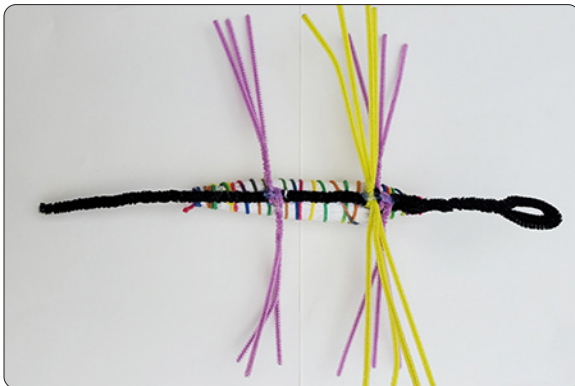


Photo 10

7 Covering body with yarn

Now it's time to cover your dragon with yarn. Attach yarn to the end of the tail with a dab of hot glue and begin winding up towards the back legs. As yarn adheres well to itself and the paper tube, you don't need to glue the yarn along the entire length of the tail (or body and neck), only at the beginning and end. *Photo 11*



Photo 11

Please note: If you do glue along the length of the tail (or body and neck), be sure to use E6000 instead of hot glue in bendable areas like neck, tail and legs.

Add extra bulk to tail, body and neck with extra layers of yarn. Where the yarn meets the tapered ends of the paper tube, layer with yarn to create smooth, seamless transitions.

The intersections of legs and wings with the body are filled by winding the yarn in



Photo 12

a crisscross pattern until the paper tube is covered. *Photo 12*

8 Covering legs with yarn

Now that the general shape of the body is filled out as shown in *Photo 13*, it's easier to decide on leg length. Let's say you want legs 2" long. Twist the 3 wires together until you have 2" of twisted wire. *Photo 13*



Photo 13

Next decide on toe length, and cut off any extra wire from each toe.

To flesh out the legs, glue yarn to each “ankle,” then wind upward towards the spine. It’s much easier to build leg bulk by winding upwards towards the spine rather than downwards towards the foot. The thinner layers of lower leg yarn form a kind of “scaffolding” upon which to build up the increasing thicknesses forming the upper thigh. *Photo 14*



Photo 14

Optional: pointy toes

Dragons with fuzzy pipe cleaner toes may look a little strange. If so, try this simple trick: hold the flame of a match or lighter an inch or so beneath the toes.

Slowly move the flame up and down the length of each toe. The fuzz will begin to shrink. (Don’t worry, it’s not flammable and doesn’t smell much.) *Photo 15*



Photo 15

With just a little practice you can control the shape of the toes. Without the pipe cleaner’s fuzz, the tip of the toe may feel a little sharper, so cover it with a touch of hot glue to blunt the sharpness. Practice this technique a few times on spare pipe cleaners before working on your partially completed dragon.

9 Making the dragon’s head

Next, create the dragon’s head. Using aluminum foil works perfectly for creating the basic head shape.

For the dragon in this tutorial, create a 2” long by 1” wide head by folding a 12”x12” piece of foil in half 3 times to form a 1.5” wide strip. Then fold the strip over twice to make a V-shape roughly 1.5”x3”. This V-shape forms an open mouth. *Photo 16*

You can use this basic process to create whatever size and shape head you wish.



Photo 16

For a narrower, shorter head with a pointed snout, cut the foil down to 1”x2”. To secure the loose layers of foil, run a line of hot glue along the exposed edges. *Photo 17*



Photo 17

Next, open the top and bottom PC loops of the head and glue the foil firmly to the inside of each loop. *Photo 18*

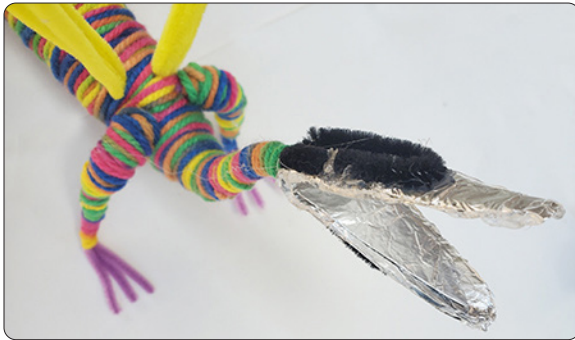


Photo 18

Felt works great for filling out the shape of the head. Create the top jaw and head with a few pieces of felt staggered in length and hot glued to each other and the foil. For the bottom jaw, hot glue a single layer of felt to the foil. Trim any excess felt from the edges. *Photo 19*



Photo 19

10 Covering head with yarn

Glue the yarn end to the base of the head and begin winding up and around the head. If you don't want a lot of extra bulk on the head, cover it with only a single wrap of yarn. *Photo 20*



Photo 20

To ensure uniform coverage of both felt and foil, hot glue each loop of yarn covering the upper and lower jaw, applying the glue to the aluminum foil inner mouth. Glue just 1/2" of foil at a time to ensure the glue stays hot enough to stick to yarn.

Optional: solid color mouth interior

Add color to the mouth interior with a small piece of either red construction paper or paper colored red with a

marker. Glue it in place with E6000. *Photo 21*



Photo 21

11 Adding finishing touches

Felt works great for to create back "fins" and the underbelly.

Shaping fins

Decide how much of the dragon's back you want covered in fins and cut felt to this length. If fins are all one height, cut the width of the felt to this measurement. For fins which are taller near the neck and shorter at the tail, cut the width of the felt to equal the height of the tallest fin. Use a pencil to mark the basic outline for the shorter fins. If the felt color is too dark for pencil lines, lay masking tape over the felt and draw on the tape. Now cut out the shape of each fin, leaving an uncut edge for gluing to the body. *Photo 22*

Apply a 1"-2" line of E6000 to the spine starting at the dragon's head and firmly press the felt into glue. Apply another

1"-2" line of E6000 and continue along the spine working in short segments. *Photo 23.* The reason for these shorter squirts of glue is that the glue quickly forms a "skin" (depending on temperature), making it more difficult to adhere the felt to the yarn.

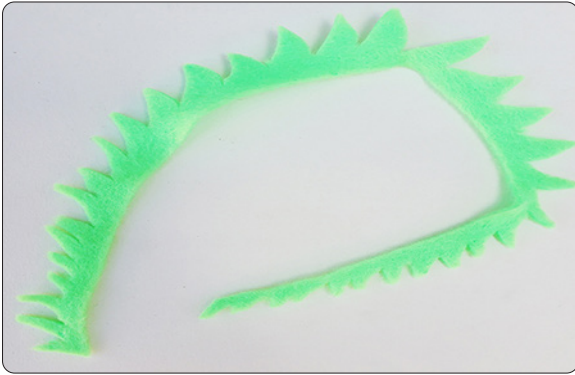


Photo 22



Photo 23

Shaping the underbelly

You can either leave the underbelly covered only with yarn or you can add felt to make it a solid color. Measure the length and width of the area you want to cover, then cut the felt to match. The

felt will resemble an extended oval, with a wider middle for the wider belly, as in *Photo 24.* Then glue the underbelly felt to body with E6000. *Photo 25*



Photo 24



Photo 25

Adding dragon eyes

Hot glue glass dragon eyes to the head. Pieces of PC wrapped around the eyes and hot glued in place will set them off from the body. *Photo 26*



Photo 26

12 Covering wings

Finally, it's wing time! This dragon will have wings approximately 5" long with 4 "ribs" per wing. *Photo 27*

Decide upon the shape of the finished wing. The ribbing can be cut so that ribs go from longer to shorter, or all ribs can fan out at equal lengths. Truth be told, the short pipe cleaner wings don't allow for much variation.



Photo 27

Optional: tapered wing tips

Fuzzy pipe cleaner wing tips may strike you as strange as fuzzy toes. So wings

tips can also be tapered using a flame, as described in Step 8 on page 5 for shaping pointy toes.

Make wing pattern

Fan the wings into the desired shape, then cut a piece of paper a little larger than the wings and hold in place behind one wing. Trace the outline of the wing. This single pattern will work for both wings. *Photo 28*



Photo 28

Add a little extra along the outside of both outer ribs. This serves as the pattern for the fabric. *Photo 29*

Cut wing fabric & glue in place

Place the pattern over the fabric and cut out 2 wings so they mirror each other. An easy way to do this is to fold the fabric in half before cutting both wings at the same time. Alternately, flip the pattern over before positioning it on the fabric and cutting the second wing.

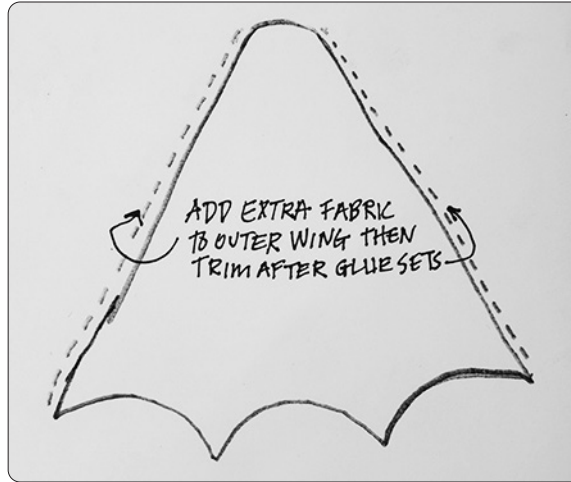


Photo 29

Before gluing, make sure the fabric lines up with the ribbing. I often have to do additional trimming at this point.

It's a toss-up between using hot glue or E6000 for attaching the fabric to the ribs. Hot glue sets fast and grips well, but the fast set time can be a problem if you don't lay the material down quickly and accurately.

E6000 sets more slowly, and is a little fussier to work with, but it's not as exacting as hot glue. Even if some of the E6000 smears onto the fabric, it dries clear and isn't too noticeable.

Whichever glue you use, go slowly and only glue one half of each rib at a time. After the glue has set on all ribs, trim off any extra fabric from the wings.

That's it for your Dragon Making 101 tutorial!

I'd love to see what you've created.

Send me your pictures and I'll start a photo gallery.

Best wishes and happy dragon making!

~ Catherine ~



If you enjoyed this tutorial and are feeling more adventurous, check out Dragon Making 201. Most of the basic techniques outlined in 102 will be found in 201. The differences are in the materials themselves. The materials introduced in Dragon Making 201 allow for more range of artistic expression and experimentation.

