

The Nutcracker – Approximately 11” Tall

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This Nutcracker is the perfect size for Clara or any large doll to hold. Because he is so lightweight, he's also great tucked into a large holiday tree as an ornament, as part of a holiday wreath or standing alone. If you have bits of braid, embroidery floss, beads, charms or ribbon; this is a great project for using them.



**Please read through instructions before you begin.
You may wish to paint before you joint, or change other aspects of this design.**

**Patterns are templates; so trace, then sew on the tracing line before cutting.
Seam allowances are approximately 1/8". Clip curves where necessary.**

Materials:

- Scraps (about 1/4 yard) of bleached or unbleached cotton muslin.
- Polyester fiberfill.
- Thread.
- Approximately 1 yard of 1/8" satin polyester ribbon for jointing. If you are making a hanging loop, choose the color you like based on the loop.
- Fray Check (recommended).
- Hair – Such as wool or mohair roving, braided wool, mohair locks, rabbit fur or fake fur.)
- Bits of assorted trims; such as braided trims, embroidery flosses, beads, charms, 1/4" to 3/8" satin ribbons.
- Satin ribbon: 5/8" for belt.
- Plume for hat; such as a white chenille stem, feather or thin wire and feathery trims).
- Black Fun Foam (used on hat).
- 1 3 oz. size disposable plastic bathroom cup for hat. (Solo is one brand of cup. These cups are also great for mixing paint.)
- A piece of fine grit sandpaper or an emery board.
- Acrylic paints: black, white, flesh (or colors you'll need to make your custom flesh paint), metallic gold and colors of your choice for the tunic/jacket, pants, gloves, base and irises of the eyes. Irises can also be done with Prismacolor pencils.
- Mod Podge (Gloss Finish).
- Black Micron Pen.
- A rosy blush colored Prismacolor pencil, and Q-Tips.
- Fabri-Tac Glue. (I love this product because it is strong and grabs fast. I used it throughout this project. If you prefer different glue, feel free to use it; but please don't use a glue gun!)
- Elmer's Glue (must be Elmer's) if you want to make the crackle finish on the base. Elmer's School Glue will also work.
- 3/16" thick Foam Core Board (for the Nutcracker's base).
- An X-acto knife with a pointed blade. Make sure it is sharp or it will drag on the foam core.
- About 12" of 1/2" wide twisted decorative cording, fancy braid, or other dimensional trim for the base. You can also use narrower trim and line them up side by side to get the 1/2" width, but you'll have to get more "yardage". It's not necessary to worry about color, because you can paint over it.
- Paint brushes: fine point and flat. Gold or white bristles are best.
- A 6" or 7" Jointing needle and a regular hand sewing needle.

Instructions:

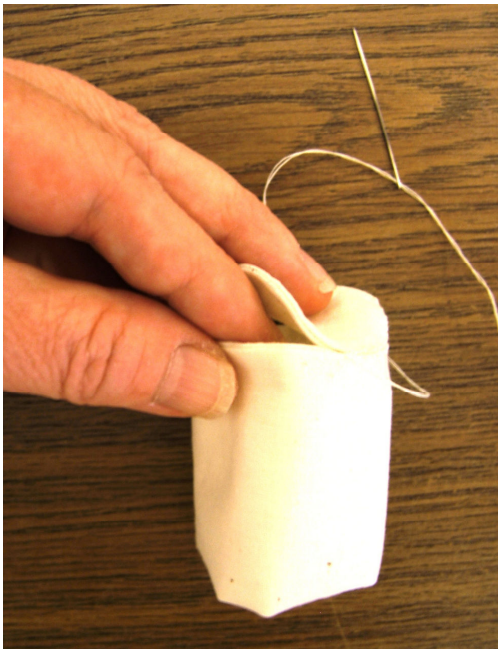
Step 1: On doubled fabric, trace the head caps, head plate, torso, arms, legs, and tunic/jacket pattern pieces out onto fabric and sew on the tracing lines by machine with small stitches, leaving an opening to turn where indicated on the pattern pieces.

Suggestion: Apply Fray Check to all stress points and the raw edges of all turn- and-stuff openings. Fray Check reduces the chance of blow-outs when stuffing firmly. It will keep your narrow seam allowances around the turn-and-stuff openings from fraying while you are stuffing. It also adds body to the turn-and-stuff area of the fabric and makes it easier to line up edges and close.

Turn all pieces right side out. Iron the tunic/jacket skirt pieces, head caps and head plate flat and sew the openings closed by hand.

Butt (not overlap) the side seams of the tunic/jacket skirt pieces together and sew them together by hand. It should look like an a-line skirt when finished. Set this piece aside until later.

Step 2: Stuff the arms and legs very firmly. Sew the openings closed with small closing stitches.



Step 3, Figure A

Step 3 (Fig. A):

The head is marshmallow shaped. Butt (not overlap) the short ends of the head plate into a loop (or circle) and sew the ends together by hand with tiny stitches. Take one of the head caps and hand stitch it to one side of the loop. It should now look like a cup. Sew the other end of the head cap to the head plate, but leave about half of it open to add your fiberfill stuffing. You will stuff this piece after it is jointed to the torso.

Suggestion: After some trial and error, I found that holding the circular head plate and head caps in this manner made it easier to hand sew.

Step 4: Mix your flesh-tone paint:

Important: If you are unfamiliar with premixed flesh-tone acrylic paints, test (as in paint on a scrap of fabric and let dry) your flesh-tone paint color – they almost always dry far darker than they appear in the bottle. Add some white paint to lighten, if needed, and then test again.

When you've mixed the color to your liking; paint the head cap that is completely sewn all the way around the head plate, with 2 coats of flesh paint, letting it dry between coats. This is the

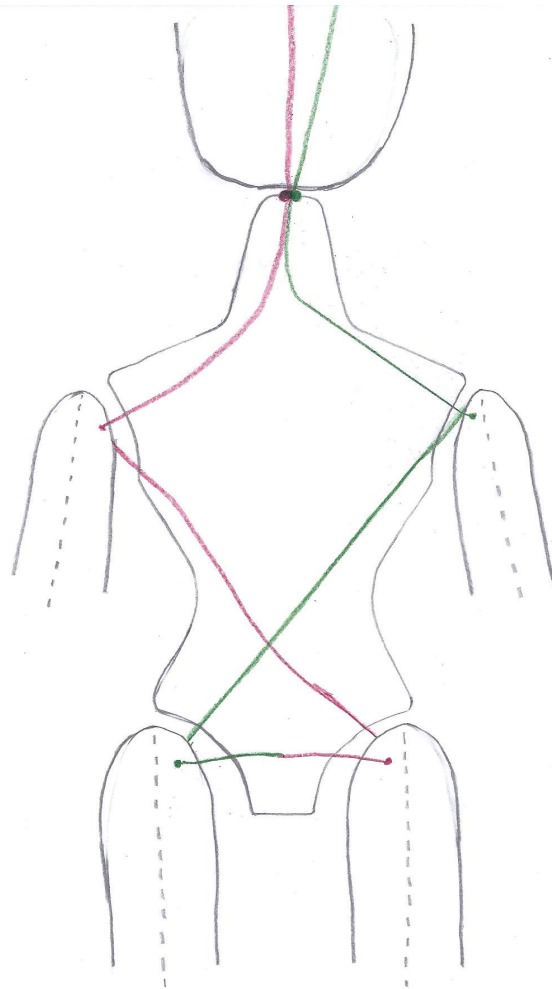
side that will be against the torso. Painting that head cap now will save you from having to paint it later when it's against the nutcracker's shoulders.

Step 5: Jointing the nutcracker (Diagram and Figures B through H):

The entire nutcracker (hat and all) can be jointed with a single piece of 1/8" satin ribbon and your jointing needle. If you like, you can make a hanging loop and use your nutcracker as a holiday tree ornament – all with the one piece of ribbon.

To determine the length of ribbon you'll need, refer to the diagram, below. (This diagram was taken from my Beyond Bows Ribbon Tutorial CD. The shape in the diagram is a little different than the nutcracker, but the principle is the same.)

This diagram shows the how you should arrange the parts on your work surface so you can measure for the jointing ribbon. You'll note that path of the ribbon is in red and green so you can see how they crisscross through the body. Just lay your ribbon over the nutcracker parts on your work surface, following the path in the diagram. Add additional ribbon length for height of the hat and the hanging loop, plus a couple of square knots. I recommend you err on high side so that you'll have plenty. Go ahead and cut the ribbon to length.



Nancy Dittus
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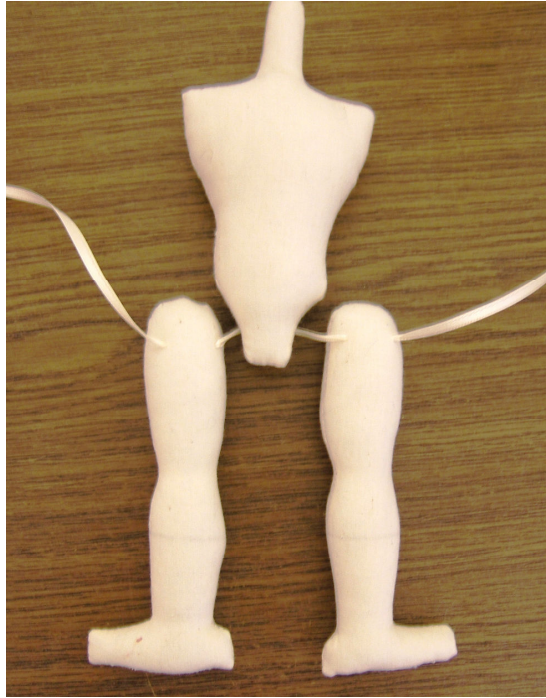


Figure B

Fig. B: This photo shows the unpainted nutcracker positioned face up. The insides of the legs are also face up.

Thread your jointing needle with one end of your ribbon and pull it through the needle's eye about 2 or 3 inches so it won't fall out.

Insert the needle through one leg near the front, exit near the back. Enter and exit at the crotch area of the torso as shown. *Never pull the ribbon through the seams* – always enter and exit a fraction of an inch off the seam. Enter the other leg near the back and exit near the front.

Even up your ribbon ends.

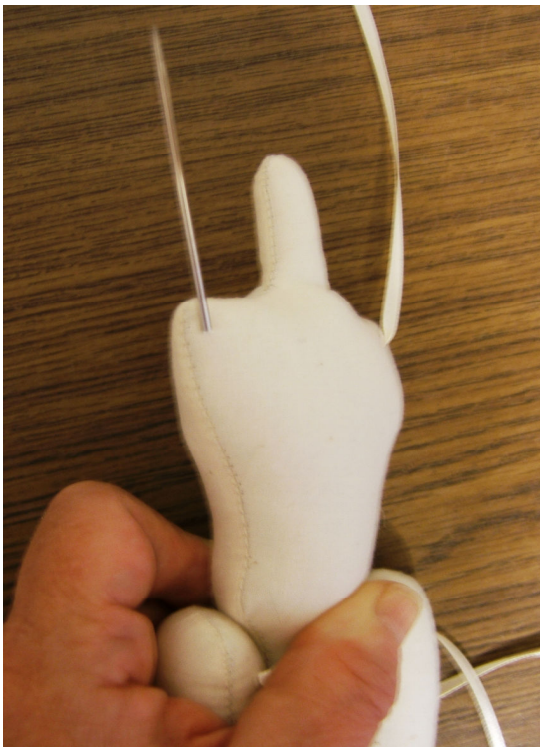


Figure C

Fig. C:

Thread one ribbon end through the needle's eye.

Insert the needle through the torso (near the crotch) and exit near the arm pit on the *opposite side* of the torso. (Refer to the diagram in Step 5, for more clarification.)

Repeat this process with the other ribbon end; bringing the ribbon from the other leg and out through the opposite side, near the other arm pit.

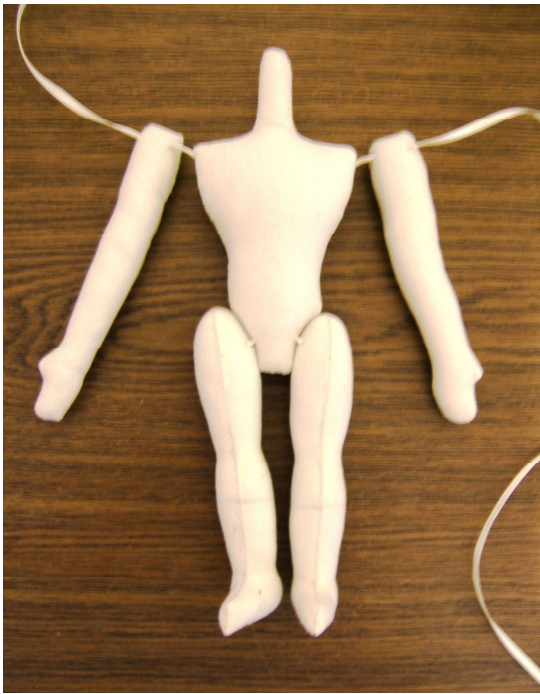


Figure D

Fig. D:

Pull on the ribbon ends to bring the legs into their proper position against the torso.

Thread on the arms as you did with the legs.

At this point, your nutcracker should look very much like the photo on the left. A little bit of ribbon shows at the leg junction, but it will be covered with paint later.

This ribbon jointing technique will work on all slender-bodied dolls made with cotton weaves or craft velour.

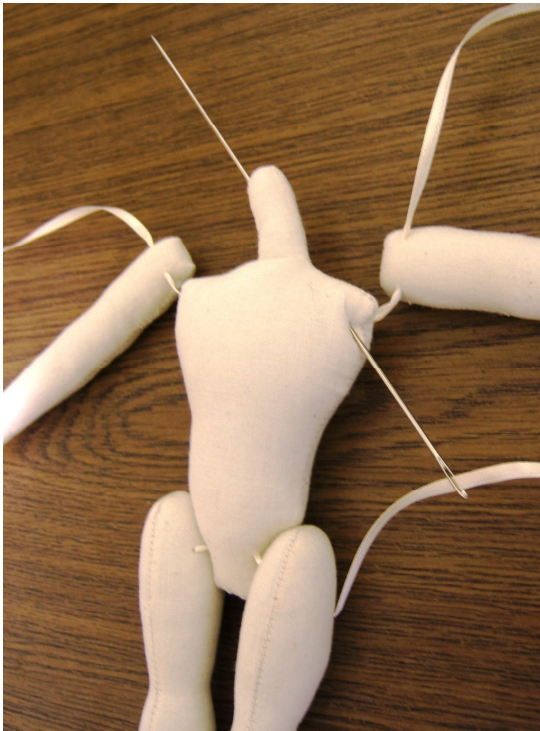


Figure E

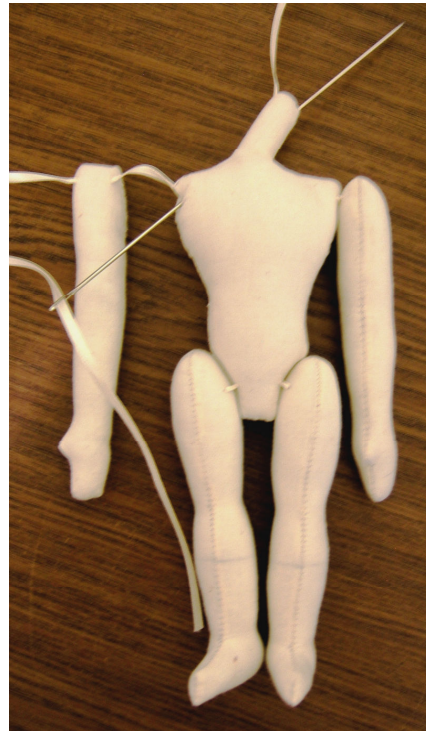


Figure F

Figs. E and F: Each ribbon end is now threaded from arm pit to the top of the neck stem.

When both ribbons are through the neck stem, pull them to bring each arm into its proper position. If you've stuffed the torso firmly, the neck stem should return to its correct position.

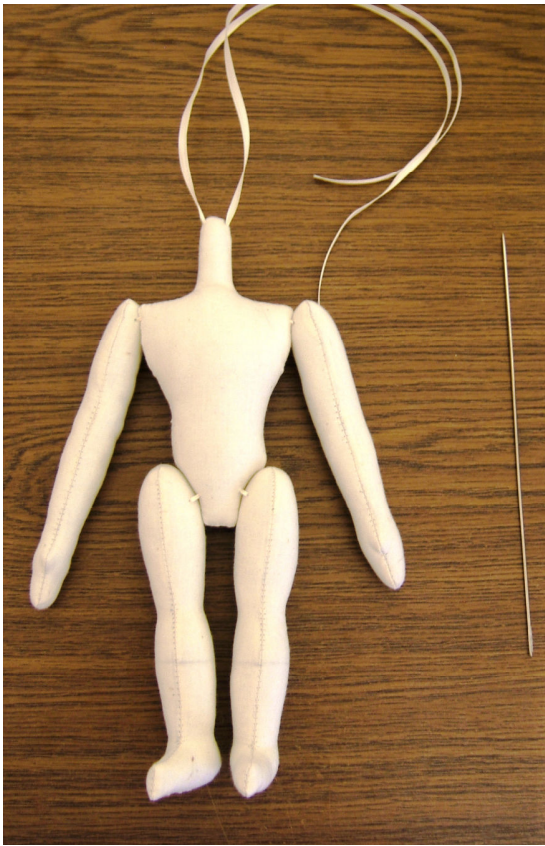


Figure G

Fig. G:

Your nutcracker should now look very similar to the photo on the left. Notice all the ribbon left at the top of the neck stem. There's enough there to add the head, hat and a hanging loop. Pretty cool!

Once you get the hang of this, you'll be able to ribbon joint your dolls quickly and easily, without tiring your hands.

Many of the polyester fiberfill stuffing materials now on the market have silkier, finer fibers that are more slippery. They don't clump up like they used to. If your fiberfill gets lumpy or pulls out of the fabric with your jointing needle, you might want to think about replacing it. I've found Fairfield Premium Poly-fil to be of excellent quality, readily available and at a good price.

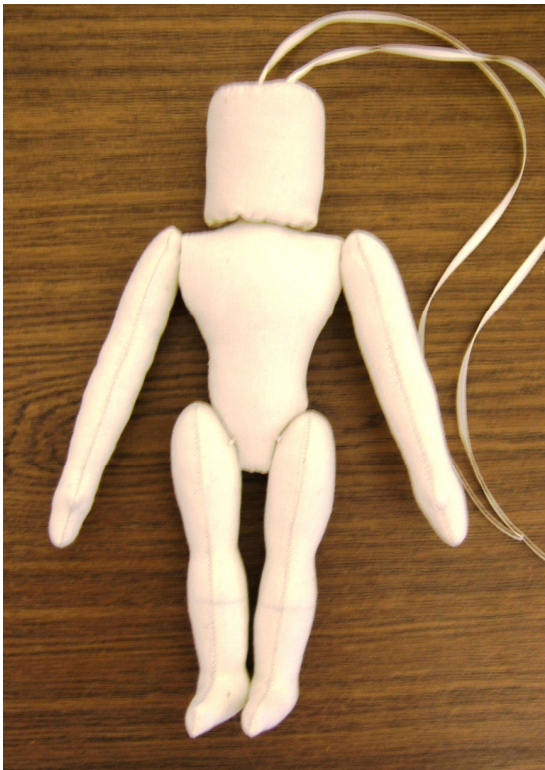


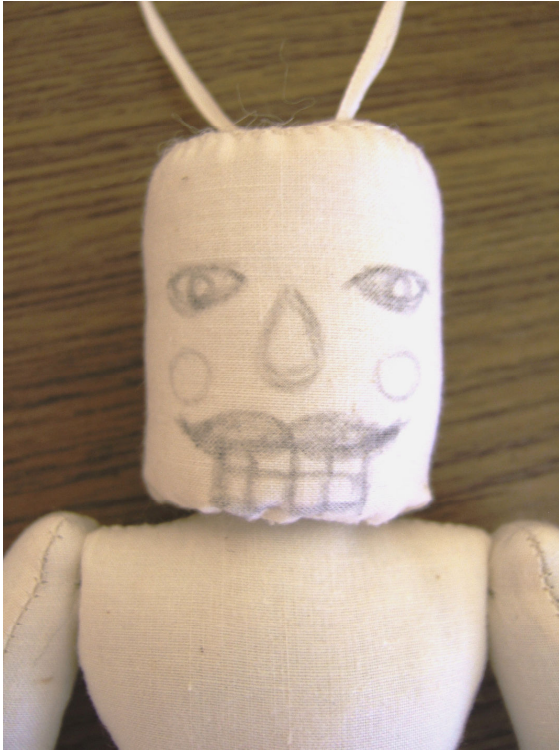
Figure H

Fig. H:

Tie a square knot so that the knot is resting on the tip of the neck stem.

To joint the head, cut a small slit or an X in the center of the painted head cap. Make the cut just large enough to accommodate the neck stem. (If it's too big, you may have stuffing popping out.) Thread your ribbon ends through the slit and out through the center of the other head cap. Push the head down to the shoulders, as shown.

Stuff the head firmly and sew the head cap closed with tiny hand stitches. Rotate the head so that the seam is in the back. Tie another square knot at the top of the head.



Step 6, Figure I

Step 6 (Fig. I):

Using a regular pencil, sketch a face on your nutcracker. If you darken your pencil lines prior, you should be able to see the lines through two coats of light flesh-tone paint. This will save you from painting around features or winging it after the skin is painted!

Note that the nutcracker's toothy grin comes right down to the chin. If you prefer a furry moustache instead of a painted one, skip the drawn one and just make sure you have enough room between the nose and his teeth to glue the moustache later.

I wasn't sure about eyebrows at this point, so they're not drawn. I did paint some on later.



Step 7, Figure J

Step 7 (Fig. J):

When you've finished drawing his face, go ahead and draw in guidelines for the boots, sleeves and waistline.

The length and shape of the boot tops are up to you. I made the little half circles at the top of the boots just to be different!

Step 8: The Face (Figure K):

Paint the rest of the head with your flesh-tone paint. One or two coats should be plenty. Allow to dry.

Outline the eyes, eyebrows and teeth with your black Micron pen. If you are painting the moustache, outline that too.

Paint the whites of the eyes and the teeth. The bottoms of the teeth, at the chin, are rounded slightly – the same way human teeth are set into the gums.

Paint or use colored pencils to make the irises. If you want to (and you have room), use a lighter eye color for the entire iris and a darker eye color for the upper half of the iris. Make a small black dot for the pupil. When dry, add a tiny white dot for eye highlights.

Paint in the eyebrows and moustache. Use either black paint and a tiny brush, or the black Micron pen to clean up the lines around the eyes and around the teeth.

Draw an elongated tear drop shape for the nose and circles for the cheeks with a rosy blush colored pencil. The cheeks and nose on my nutcracker are not solid spots of color. The color is darker on the outlined area and fades out towards the center of each feature. Use the rosy pencil color to get your darker areas and the Q-Tip to smear/spread your rosy pencil marks into the center of the cheeks and nose.



Step 8, Figure K

Step 9: (Figures L through N):

With the other colors you have chosen, apply two coats of paint to:

- The lower half of the torso and the legs (from hips to a little below the knees) to look like pants.
- The hands from wrist down for gloves.
- (In black paint for) the lower half of the legs (where the pants end to the entire foot) for boots.
- The neck stem, upper torso, arms and the inside of the tunic/jacket skirt. (See **Figure N.**)

Allow your nutcracker to dry completely. I like to let it dry for 4 to 6 hours. Overnight is even better. The ribbon coming out of the top of the head is great for suspending your nutcracker during its drying time.



Figure L



Figure M

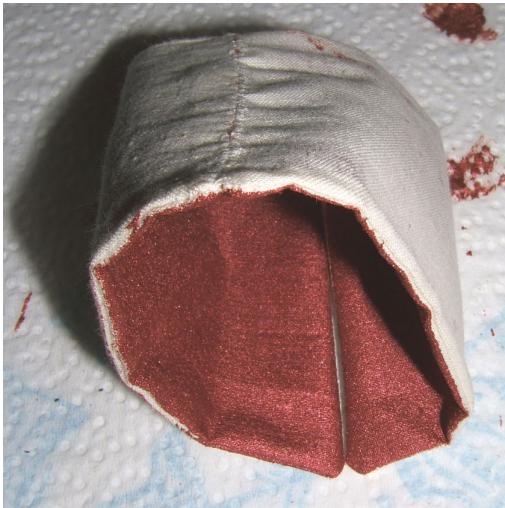


Figure N

Step 10: The Hat (Figures O and P):

The 3 oz. disposable plastic cup and the Fun Foam will be used to make the hat. The bottom of the cup will rest on the top of the nutcracker's head.

To start, carefully cut the lip of the cup with scissors to make a slit. Make it about 1/2" to 1" long. Cut another slit about 1/2" from the first slit. Bend this tab out a bit and snip it off. The plastic tears rather easily, so do this carefully. Now you have some maneuvering room for your scissors. Trim the cup down to the height you want for the hat.

Put the cup on a padded surface, bottom side down (I use my padded ironing board) and with your jointing needle, poke a hole, dead center at the bottom of the cup, and pull your jointing needle all the way through. (Your jointing ribbons will be going through this hole, so please make it big enough.) Figure P shows the inside of the cup with the hole.

Take the sand paper or emery board and sand the outside and bottom of the cup so that your paint will adhere to it. Paint the outside of the cup with black paint. Several coats will be needed. Let dry between coats.



Fig. O:
On the left is an original cup. On the right is another cup that has been cut to size, sanded and painted with two (or three, I forget ...) coats of black paint.

Figure O



Figure P: Cup with hole and two circles of Fun Foam.

Now that the cup is cut to size, place the cup, bottom side down, on the Fun Foam and trace around it with a ball point pen. (I find a blue ball point pen is the only thing that leaves a visible mark on black and brown Fun Foam.) Decide how much of a brim you want on the hat and make a bigger circle around the first circle for this brim. Flip the cup over and trace another circle of Fun Foam for the top of the hat. Cut out the circles with scissors. It's okay if they are a little too big or irregular, you can trim them down after you've glued them on the cup.

Glue the smaller circle of Fun Foam to the bottom of the cup and let the glue dry completely. After the glue is dry, paint the both pieces of Fun Foam with your black paint. You will probably need to apply two coats as the first coat will sink in. The good thing about the paint is that it changes the appearance of the Fun Foam so it doesn't look like a piece of sponge. It also makes the color richer. When the paint is dry, apply at least one coat of Mod Podge.

Set the hat pieces aside for the moment. We'll attach them after the nutcracker is decorated, and the hair is glued to his head.

Step 11: The Nutcracker Base:

The nutcracker's base is made from two circles of Foam Core board. Foam Core board is available in many craft stores and sometimes even in the grocery store in the office and crafts supplies area. Foam Core comes in several thicknesses and is used a lot for school projects. It has white, semi-glossy paper surfaces with a Styrofoam layer sandwiched in between. It is cut with a sharp, pointed X-acto knife.

Important: Foam Core must be painted with Mod Podge on both sides of its paper surface before you do anything else to it. It will warp if you skip this step!

If you are making several nutcrackers at the same time, it will save you time in the long run if you paint the entire sheet of Foam Core with one coat of Mod Podge. During the drying process, the Foam Core will warp some. When it's dry, flip it over and paint the other side. The Foam Core will relax and flatten out again.

You can use the round pattern provided or cut square shapes instead. (Round or square, the procedure for making the base is the same.) Trace two pattern shapes onto the Foam Core with a pencil. Use a protective surface, like a plastic cutting board underneath the Foam Core and carefully cut the shapes out with your X-acto knife. Glue the circles together to make a thicker base. Notice how lightweight, yet rigid it is? (I love this stuff!)

Figure Q: View of the Foam Core's Styrofoam insides and paper surface.

Figure R: The two circles of Foam Core glued together.

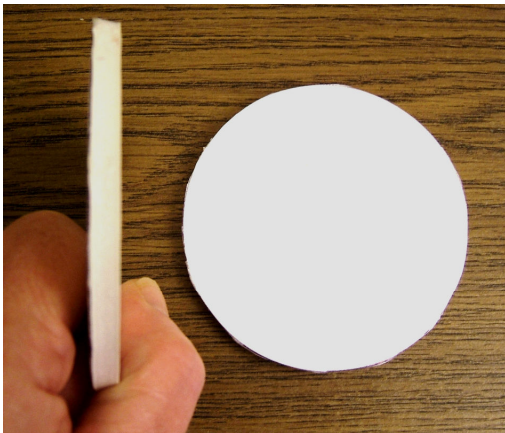


Figure Q



Figure R

Once the glue is completely dry, you can begin the painting and crackle finish process. Crackle finishing is fascinating to watch. If you prefer a solid color base, that's fine, but please keep this neat trick in mind for another project. Last year I tried this on a couple of stuffed muslin carrousel horses I made for my holiday tree and it worked perfectly!

Remember: The first coat or two of paint is your base coat. When you've finished the crackle process, this color will be the color of the cracks.

Paint the entire nutcracker base with two coats of base coat paint. I've used gold metallic acrylic paint right out of the bottle. Let dry completely after each coat. While you're waiting,

grab the second color of paint you're going to use and have it readily available. Once the glue goes on, you won't have much time to get your supplies and mix colors.

Crackle coat of glue: Squirt a squiggle of Elmer's glue onto one side of your painted Foam Core base and spread it out evenly with a paint brush. You don't have to be fussy with the glue coat, just be even. Don't cover the cut edges, just the top, and later, the bottom. The thicker the coat of glue, the bigger your cracks will be. **Figure S** shows the wet glue spread over one side of the base. The picture is pretty big so you can see how the glue is applied.

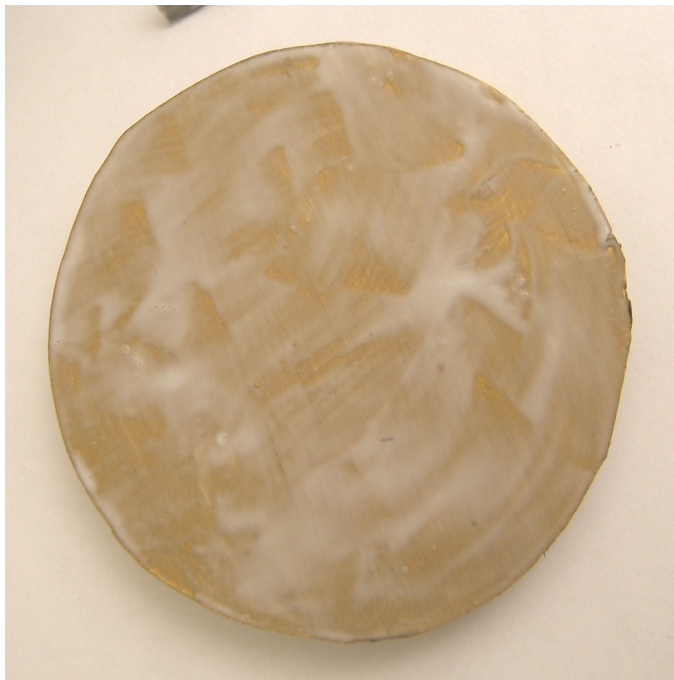


Figure S

Allow the glue to get slightly tacky and set up a little. With a coat like the one above, it will take about two or three minutes. It depends on the humidity, air flow, temperature of the room -- and probably a whole bunch of other things I know nothing about! Main thing is, you don't want it to be either soupy or dry.

Second paint color: Take a clean, dry, flat brush and load it up with enough paint to make a stroke or two from one edge to the other. Paint in straight lines, side by side, like a fence. *Do not go back over the surface again.* Once you have covered the entire surface with this second color, you're done with that side.

Figures T and U do not do justice to the actual color I used. These pictures look like I painted it with tomato soup. The real color is Metallic Regal Red (Folk Art brand) which is kind of a ruby/cranberry color. I mixed it with a touch of black paint to darken the hue a bit.

Figure T shows the paint right after I painted it over the glue. The surface looks all warped and weird, but it doesn't dry like this. (I was a tad worried at the time.)

Figure U shows what it looks like when it is crackled. At first, the cracks looked white because the glue is white, but as it dries, it turns clear, exposing your base coat. It's so neat to watch it happen right before your eyes. Little kids would be fascinated with this.



Figure T

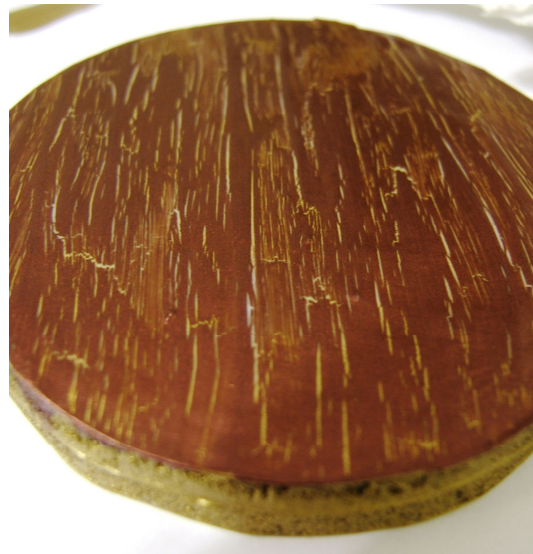


Figure U

When the first side is dry, repeat the glue and top coat process on the other side of the base. When the second side is dry, paint the cut edges with just the top coat of paint. Let everything dry completely. Overnight is good.

Edge trimming on the base: Which side of your base will be the side that shows? And ... which way do you want the crackle finish "grains" to run? Starting at the "back" of the base, wrap your 1/2" wide trim around the cut edge of the base, gluing it as you go. Butt the cut edges of your trim, because overlapping will leave a big bump. Let the glue dry completely. (If you don't like the color of your trim, go ahead and paint over it.)

For nostalgia purposes, sign your name, the date, or something really nice on the bottom of the nutcracker base with your Micron pen and let it dry.

Time to be brave ... because you are now going to paint the entire base with several coats of Mod Podge gloss. Paint the trim and everything ... as many coats as you like. It just gets better and better with each coat.

A bit of caution: I have no idea what dry Mod Podge will do to a real wood table surface that is waxed or shellacked. All I know is that it won't hurt wall paint or painted furniture. So, if you want to display your nutcracker on a fine wood surface, you might want to consider little felt circles on the bottom of the base 😊

Step 12: Costume Details:



Figure V

With the painted side facing inside, slide the tunic/jacket skirt over the feet and up the legs to the waist.

It's going to be too big around the waist, so it has to be taken in by making two pleats in the back. With a regular needle and thread, tack the pleats in place on the unpainted side of the skirt, preferably as close to the waist as possible. (To see the pleat detail, please refer to the **back view on the cover page** and **Figure X**, below.)

Once the tunic/jacket skirt is tacked, finish painting it with the jacket color. **Figure V** shows how this piece should look from the front after it is painted.

Now it's time to get creative with bits of odds and ends to make your nutcracker's costume unique. Consider anything and everything, as long as it is to scale. If you prefer, any of these details can be painted instead.

Jacket Trim: Use 3/16" to 1/2" wide ribbon or braid and glue it to create the suspender-like trim on the nutcracker's jacket. As you can see, it starts at the waistline in the front, runs over the shoulders and down to the waist in the back. (**Figures W** and **X**.)



Figure W



Figure X



Figure Y

Figs. W through Y:

Glue some trim around the sleeves for cuffs. If your trim has some texture, you can sew on some beads as I've done. No need to knot off and re-thread for each bead, as you can travel invisibly through the textured surface of the trim with your needle and thread and exit out the trim to sew on the next bead.

If your trim is flat and you can't sew into it, consider painting on some buttons.



Figure Z

Epaulettes give this nutcracker's jacket some real military flare. To create this effect, glue a length of narrow trim around the upper part of the sleeves near the shoulders. It's not necessary to encircle the whole arm. Just tuck the trim's raw edges between the arm and the torso. Paint the top of the shoulders with gold paint.

You can use your Micron pen to draw on additional detail if you wish. Note the black lines drawn under the gold trim of the epaulettes in **Figure Z**.

The belt is made from a single piece of black 5/8" wide double-faced satin ribbon. Start at the front and wrap the ribbon around his waist, running a thin coat of glue under the ribbon. When you've arrived back in the front, create the illusion of a belt buckle by folding the ribbon back on itself. Eyeball the length needed for the buckle, plus a little extra to turn under. Cut the ribbon, apply a little glue, turn under the raw edge and press the "buckle" flat with your fingers. When the glue is dry; paint the raised ribbon with gold paint, as shown in **Figure AA**.



Figure AA - Belt and buckle detail

The boots were trimmed with a gold metallic embroidery thread for the boot laces. If you don't have this sort of trim, you could use paint and a tiny brush to create the effect instead.



Figure BB

Fig. BB: This is just like lacing a pair of shoes.

For each boot, use your jointing needle to create four pairs of "eyelet" holes. These will be your guide marks.

Thread your needle with gold embroidery thread. Insert the needle through the bottom holes (first set of holes) and pull the thread through the boot midway. Even up your ends.

Crisscross the embroidery thread on the outside of the boot. Push your needle into one of the second eyelet holes. Crisscross inside the boot and exit out at the third hole.

Crisscross again outside the boot then enter the boot again at the fourth eyelet hole. Exit out near the boot top, just outside the center leg seam.

Repeat the process with the other thread end to complete the lacing pattern. Tie the ends into a bow and trim away the excess thread ends. Tie an overhand knot just above each cut end.

Step 13: Clear Coat to Seal:

Time to be brave again ...

Once all the trims and paints are applied and dry, paint the *entire* figure with two or more coats of Mod Podge Gloss. It goes on milky looking, but dries crystal clear. The length of time to dry varies, just like glue. And, naturally, you will need to coat one section at a time because – well - you have to hold him somewhere!

Don't be afraid to paint right over everything; braid trims, ribbon (except the hanging loop), boot lacings, even the beads. Some trims may darken in color – so maybe you want to test a scrap, first. But, as long as you don't let the Mod Podge drip or puddle in any one spot, it will look great. It will also make your nutcracker sturdier, brings out the colors, keeps the gold from getting a tarnished look ... and makes it easier to dust!

Step 14: Hair and Beard:

There are many suitable materials available for the nutcracker's hair and beard. Personally, I like braided wool roving because it is easy to apply and doesn't shed or get tangled up over time. Real fur (like rabbit fur) seems traditional to me, but I know using it is distasteful to some people. I had purchased a few rabbit fur skins about 15 years ago from a Tandy Leather shop located close to where I used to live. Since I had them anyway, I used a piece for this project. If you like the fur option (real or faux), the instructions are a bit further down.

Braided wool option: If you are using braided wool or mohair roving, unravel some from the twine and then fluff it out to make wide sections. The length is up to you. All the nutcrackers I've seen seem to have shoulder length hair.

You *will not* be covering the very top of the head, only the sides and back. You'll need a narrow width for some bangs; which can run across the top of the head like a giant eyebrow -- rather than cutting itty bitty pieces to make fringe bangs. If your nutcracker has a receding hairline, skip the bangs all together!

You'll need a piece of this braided wool for the beard – and, a couple of little wisps for the moustache if you're going that route.



Figure CC

Fig. CC:

Here is a photo of the nutcracker I made for Clara, using the braided wool option. The hair was glued on.

The hat was applied with more glue after the glue on the hair dried.

Fur (real or faux) Option: For the uninitiated, fur, whether faux or real, must be measured and cut from the wrong side (the backing or skin side). If you cut it like a piece of fabric, you'll end up with visible seams and chopped up hair strands. Use an X-acto knife and cut only the skin (or backing), then pull the pieces apart.

Measure the back of the head from temple to temple and from the top edge to the bottom edge of the head. Mark these measurements with a pen on the wrong side of the fur. (Before you cut, remember, the hair hangs *down*.)

Cut a very narrow strip for bangs.

Use the mouth measurement to determine the width of the beard. The full length of the beard goes from under the chin to about mid-point on the chest.

See **Figure DD**. These pieces of fur are shown skin side up; and you can see how long the fur is in relationship to the skin. The narrow strip at the top of the photo is the bangs, the little square will be the beard, and the rectangle at the bottom will be the hair.



Figure DD

Apply a thin layer of glue over the skin side of the bangs section. Place this piece with the long edge of the skin even with the head cap and press it in place.

Apply a thin layer of glue over the skin side of the hair section. Center this piece over the seam in the back of the head, with the long edge of the skin even with the head cap. Press and smooth it in place.

Apply a thin layer of glue over the skin side of the beard. Place the cut edge right below the bottom teeth, but affix it to the torso. (See **Figure Z** again for clarification.)

When the glue is dry, you may snip off any errant strands of fur. I shaped my nutcracker's beard with curved cuticle scissors so it wasn't so poofy looking.

Step 15: Attaching and Finishing the Hat:



Figure EE – "I see you!"

Figure EE shows a nice big close-up of the hat detail. We are going to attach the hat to the head by threading the jointing ribbons through the hole you made in the bottom of the cup earlier.

Place the cup/hat on a padded surface like you did before and push the point of your jointing needle through that hole in the cup (from the inside of the cup), and through the Fun Foam hat brim. Carefully pull it through to make the hole a little bigger.

Reverse your needle, so that the point is now poking through the Fun Foam first. Thread one jointing ribbon through the needle's eye, and then carefully pull the ribbon through the hole. It's a bit of a squeeze, but it is do-able. Repeat this with the second jointing ribbon.

Apply a small amount of glue to either the top of the head or the bottom of the hat. Slide the hat down the ribbon (like a bead) and press it in place on the top of the nutcracker's head.

When the glue is dry, take a long strand of fiberfill and roll it between your hands to make a fiberfill "snake" (lol!). Coil your "snake" inside the cup and around the ribbons. Add more, if you need to. We want the cup firm, so it doesn't get crushed or dented.

Thread on the second Fun Foam circle. Apply a skinny bead of glue on the edge of the cup and push the Fun Foam circle down to seal in the stuffing. You'll have to hold the pieces until the glue sets, or if you have a locking hemostat, you could clamp it to the jointing ribbon. Do not use a piece of tape, because when you pull it off, the paint will come with it.

When the glue is dry, paint the rest of the Fun Foam and any other areas that need touching up.

Decorate the hat with braids, trims, beads or charms. Coat the entire hat with additional Mod Podge Gloss and let dry.

Add a feathery plume if you like. Clara's nutcracker has a plume made from a white chenille stem that was folded into four shorter pieces and twisted together on one end. I put some glue on the twisted end and pushed it into the hole at the top of the hat. When it was dry, I shaped the chenille into a plume.

I made the red nutcracker's plume with a wispy gold embroidery thread and a feathery red embroidery-type thread. The threads were twisted together and wrapped around a thin piece of wire saved from the Beyond Bows Ribbon Tutorial project I had done. The covered wire was folded into fourths and the end of the wire was wrapped around the plume bundle. I squished the wrapped area with my pliers to compact it and make it as flat as I could. It was then painted with gold paint, followed by Mod Podge Gloss. The plume was then glued to the hat.

Step 16: Attaching the Nutcracker Base:

The nutcracker is attached to the decorated Foam Core base with glue. I used some rubber bands to hold the pieces together until the glue was dry (**Figure FF**). Do check your nutcracker's stance from front, back and sides to make sure he's standing straight.



Figure FF



Figure GG

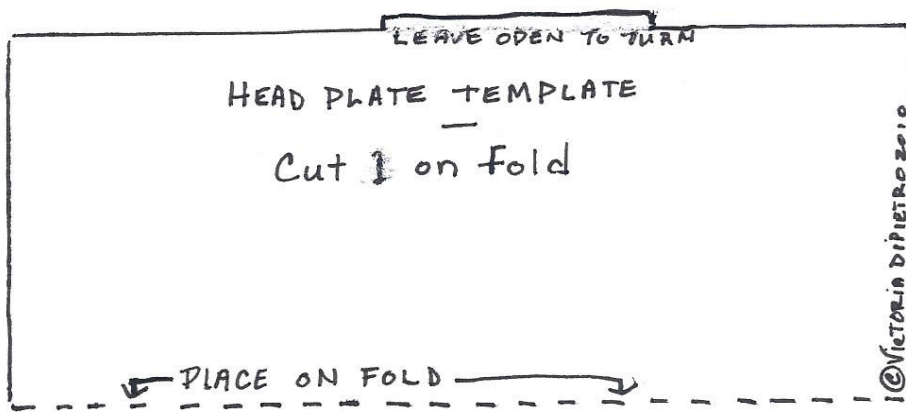
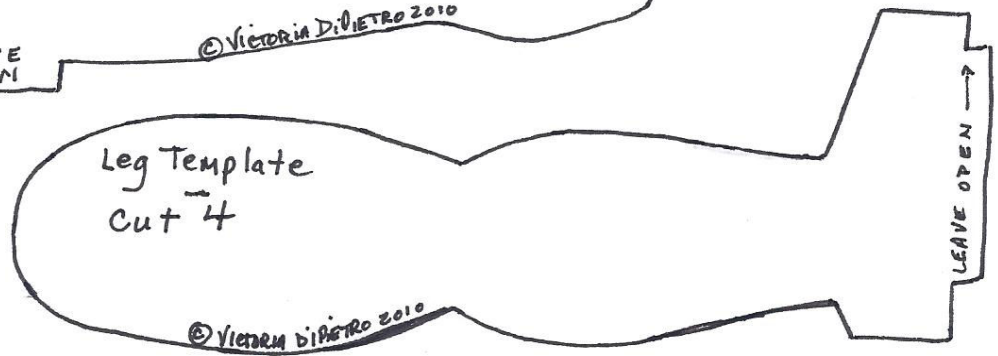
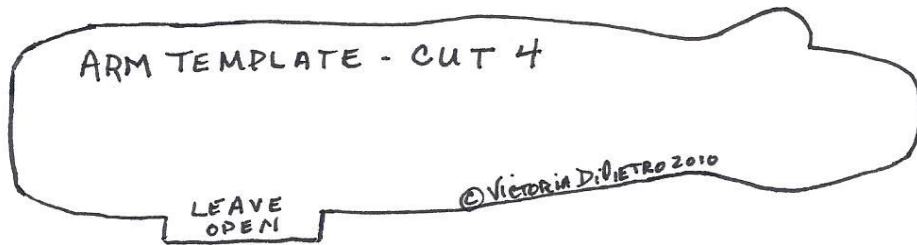
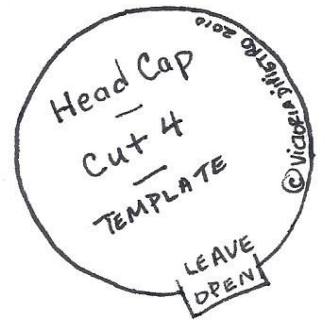
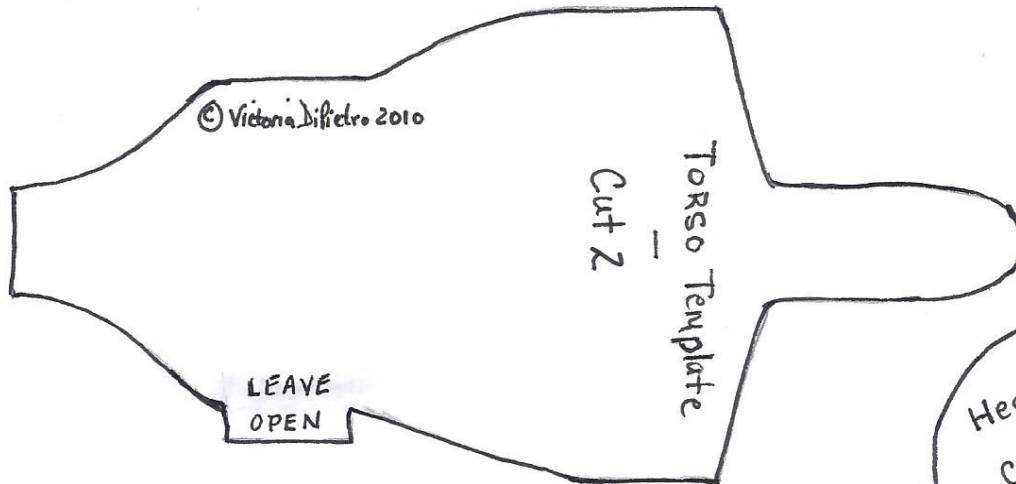
I had some visible strands of glue around the bottom of the boots; which you can see in **Figure FF**. To fix this, I took a tiny brush and painted over the glue with black paint. When the paint was dry, I gave the nutcracker one more coat of Mod Podge, from the top of the boots to the braided trim around the edges of the base. **Figure GG** shows the results.

Last thoughts: I hadn't thought much about nutcrackers until I had to make one for Clara. When I did some on-line research, I was astounded by the variety of designs. Here are two great sites you can go to for additional ideas:

<http://www.nutcrackers.com/>

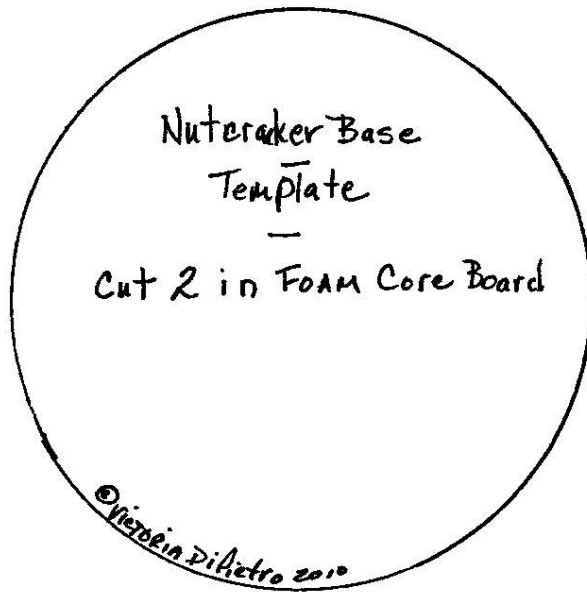
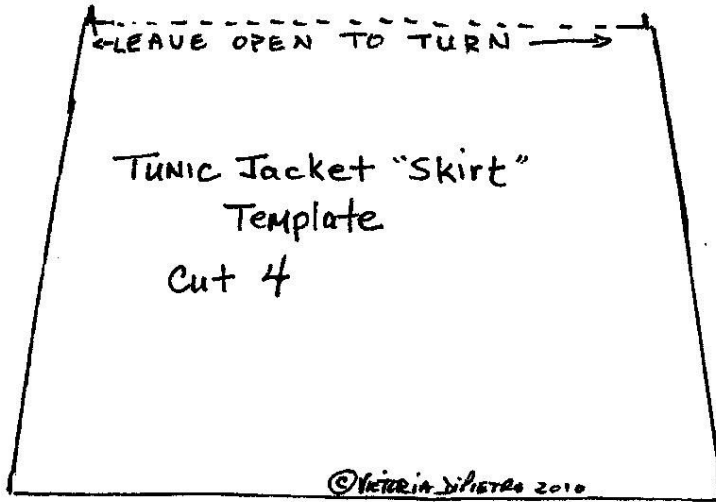
<http://www.ulbricht.com/>

The Ulbricht site gives a lot of information about the history of the Christian Ulbricht Company and their wonderful wooden nutcrackers. Enjoy!



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by Victoria DiPietro ©2010

1 of 2 pages



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2 of 2 pages