Blue Heron Dolls

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The Fundamentals

Tip #1: Sewing with Freezer Paper



Freezer paper is an absolute necessity for me when sewing dolls, especially when sewing small, detailed bits like fingers. I find this much easier and more accurate than tracing around a template and sewing on the drawn line - nothing against those who do so, this just works better for me (that, and the fact that my purple air-soluble pens are often too dried up to use, or the ink disappears too quickly here in the moist Pacific Northwest).

Additionally, sometimes the traced lines have some width, and if you're not careful fingers get chubby and seam allowances too narrow to turn right side out and stuffed without the dreaded blowouts (happens to all of us). Freezer paper also lends some stability to the fabric you're sewing.

Plastic-backed freezer paper is usually available in the canning sections of most grocery stores, but you can certainly order it online. I use Reynolds brand as it is readily available locally.

To start, trace the pattern pieces onto the freezer paper. Use a window and natural light if you don't have a light box. Avoid using a pencil to trace the pieces, as the graphite can stain your fabric. Be sure to transfer any other markings onto the freezer paper – any indicated openings, fabric stretch direction, etc. It's helpful to put the name of the pattern you're using as well, for easy identification later. *(I've had a torso piece pinned to my wall for years, as I have no idea from which pattern it came, and of course I can't throw it away)*.

Next, carefully cut out each pattern piece from the freezer paper, along the drawn line. Some patterns have darts, so follow the pattern instructions to determine if you need to cut the dart from the paper or leave it drawn.

The freezer paper template is then ironed (plastic side down) to **doubled** fabric, **right sides together**. Pin through the layers to prevent the fabric from shifting. Be sure to follow the designer's suggestion regarding stretch direction of the fabric.

The sewing is done <u>right against the edge of the paper</u>. The designer may indicate a stitch length in the instructions. Sew slowly and accurately. When you come to curves, stop sewing and leave the machine needle in the down position. Lift the presser foot and turn the whole piece, then presser foot down and continue sewing. Sometimes you'll find yourself only sewing a stitch or two between turns of the fabric.

Sometimes you will leave a small section unsewn so you can turn the piece right side out. Other times you will sew all the way around, then carefully cut a slit in one side (e.g., two-piece heads with a front and back only). Be sure to secure your thread ends with a back stitch or hand-tied knot.

Trim the fabric to the appropriate seam allowance as indicated on the pattern/instructions. If you've left a section open for turning right side out and can do this, I suggest making this (open) portion of the seam allowance a little wider as the fabric edges can fray a little as you stuff, making closure a little trickier – especially with a woven fabric. Clip any curves, taking care to avoid snipping through your stitching. If you remove the freezer paper carefully, you can reuse it over and over.

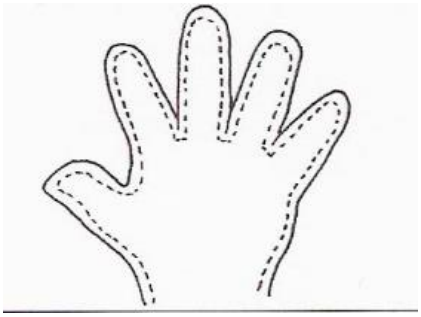
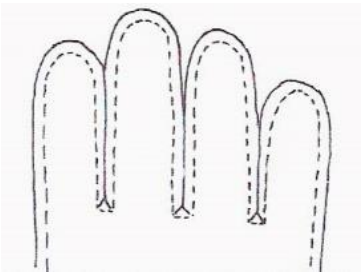
Unless yours is a simple pancake doll, this technique may not be applicable for all doll parts. For example, use freezer paper to sew the center seams of the body front and back (for a 4-part body), but not when sewing the body front to the back. Always refer to the pattern instructions.

You can also use this technique with many fabrics, knit or woven. Below is craft velour, which has some advantages. It doesn't fray, it's quite forgiving, and it's available in a variety of skin colors.

Using an open-toed presser foot really helps you see where you're going - whether using the freezer paper OR the traced template method. My green presser foot is Teflon coated, so it slides along the fabric easily.



You'll notice that there's some space between these fingers. This allows you to take a couple stitches in that area and clip for the best result.

 Take two stitches between each finger.	 Clip (Y-shape) between fingers up to but not through the seam.