

EAR PLACEMENT

Ears sewn into the seam can often look flat and uninteresting. Ears are better sewn on after the head is stuffed. There is no hard and fast rule as to when to sew the ears on. We often find that we pull the eyes in before attaching the ears.

Ears can be placed in many positions, high or low on the head, forward or back straight or at right angles. For a 'Pooh' bear look, the ears are normally placed high on the head and well back. Alternatively they can be large or small. The front of the ear can be of a different colour or of a shorter fur or even trimmed. The inner surface of an animals ear is not hairy, so for a change why not sometime either trim off the fur on the inside of the ear or use the paw pad fabric on the inner surface. Ears do not have to always face the front, they can sometimes look nice if the inside surface is positioned looking slightly down.

Enormous ears like Dumbo do not look very attractive on a bear. Most patterns are designed so that the base of the ears are meant to be turned up inside and you can adjust the size of the ear by the amount that you turn it up.

After sewing around the two ear pieces turn to right side and prepare to attach to the head by turning the bottom of the ear up inside so that the raw edge is concealed then over stitch across the bottom of the ear to hold in place.

Hint: A simple way to do this is to sew around the ear sewing in a little on each side at the bottom. The raw edge will then automatically turn up inside.

You are now ready to attach the ears to the head. Fix a fairly long strong thread into the top corner of the ear (this could be an extension of the thread which you have used to sew across the bottom of the ear).

1. Pass the needle with this thread into the head at the position which you would like the top of the ear to sit.
2. Exit the needle at the bottom ear position.
3. Pass the needle through the bottom corner of the ear then back into the head at bottom position and out again at top position.
4. Pull on the thread firmly and this will lock the ear into position and at the same time create a nice curve.
5. All you need to do now is to ladder stitch the ear firmly to the head around the back, making sure that you follow the curve and do not push it flat. There is no need to stitch across the front of the ear, you have already stitched the front of the ear to the back at the beginning.

Do experiment with different positions it can change your bears demeanor immensely.

Alternative Ear Stitching



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NEEDLE SCULPTURE & EAR PLACEMENT FOR BEARS

Bear Talk Fact Sheet



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NEEDLE SCULPTURE

The shape of your bears face can be enhanced considerably when tying in glass eyes, but alternatively you may wish to give even extra depth to the eyes or create a higher bridge between the eyes and this can be done with needle sculpture. Needle sculpture is the art or practice of moulding and shaping the already sewn and stuffed head by way of executing a series of stitches, which will gradually alter the shape of the head.

Needle sculpting can give a professional look to your bear, which might otherwise look rather uninteresting. Adventurous artists often sculpt to create unusual and interesting effects, for example enlarged jowls, wrinkles and furrows across the brow or raised eye brows to name a few.

The most popular reason for needle sculpting is to form a bridge between the eyes thus creating deeper eye sockets.

Needle sculpting is most often done before the eyes are inserted but if it is done after eyes are inserted the glass eyes may need to be retied if they become loose.

You may wish to trim a little fur away from the eye and snout area to make it easier to see where you are stitching. There are various thread options used for needle sculpture and you will have to experiment to find which suits you. A single strand of strong thread is the most popular option and if you are careful to take small stitches you will not have a problem when using a natural coloured thread or one that is not quite a perfect match to the back of the fabric.

Some thread options are:-

- a) Waxed dental floss is strong and works well on most bears.
- b) Waxed sinew is an even stronger thread but may have to be split to gain a suitable thread thickness. To do this, cut off a length of waxed sinew, divide the strands with a pin or needle and pull apart to separate down the whole length of the thread. You can usually get 2 to 3 strands from one length of sinew. Colour choices are limited so natural is most often used for all coloured bears.
- c) Extra strong upholstery thread, which is fine, does have more colour options.

Note: It has been suggested to me that dental floss stretches. I do not believe this to be so as I have used it for over 15 years for inserting eyes, sculpting and stitching up closures and have never had a problem.

I feel that some bear makers have let their knots slip as they are tying off.

Before starting to needle sculpt a head make sure that it is stuffed firmly, though not as hard as a rock or it will be difficult to pull in.

To follow is a simple technique to build up a raised bridge between the eye positions of your bear.

1. With a long needle pass a strong thread up from the side of the lower chin and exit at the eye position on the opposite side of the head beside the gusset seam.
2. Next take a small stitch across the seam the needle entering the head and passing across the muzzle area to the eye position on the opposite side beside the seam.
3. Take care not to enter or exit in the seam stitching or you may break your seam. Take another small stitch across this seam, the needle entering the head and passing back to the opposite eye position. As you pass the needle across and back try to sink it into the stuffing well under the surface of the muzzle.
4. Continue to work across and back taking small stitches under the eye area.
5. After passing across and back for the second time, squeeze in on the eye positions with the thumb and forefinger and pull gently on the thread. Do not pull up too tightly or too quickly or you may tear the fabric backing.
6. As you continue to work across and back each time, pull the thread up a little to gain the desired shape. The stitches need to be small enough so that they can not be seen but not so small they will cut through the fabric.
7. When shaping is complete pass the thread back down to a spot near the starting position and tie off securely. Thread the ends back into the head beside your knot and cut the ends off where they emerge from the head.

To help conceal your stitches the glass eyes can be placed strategically over them.

If you wish for the bridge to be built further up the forehead, gradually work up the side of the gusset seams passing the needle across and back under the stuffing in the same way taking small stitches. A bridge normally widens as it progresses up the forehead, so you will not need to draw up the threads as tightly on that area. Experiment with different patterns and various head shapes. Look through books for ideas and try to develop your own style.

Hint: When you have completed sculpting take a mattress needle and pushing it well into the area which you wish to be raised lift the fabric and stuffing, stretching the surface of the fabric to gain the shape desired.

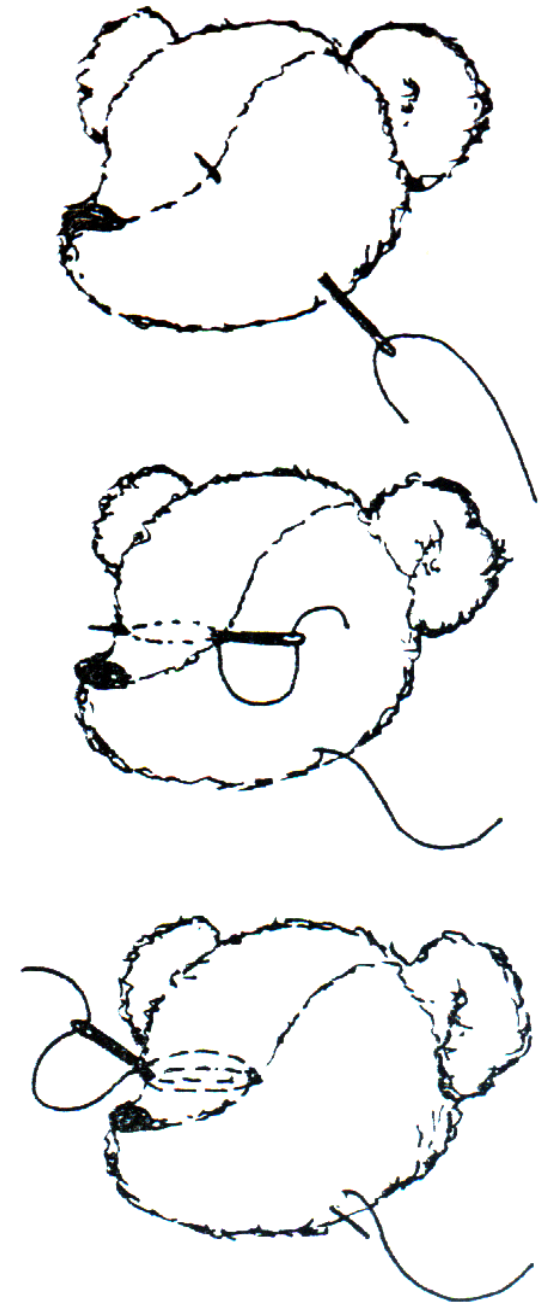


Figure 1. Simple Sculpting Technique