

Dolls from old clothes



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Learning Objectives

1. To improve elderly adults' imagination and creativity and to encourage seniors to put these into practice.
2. To increase seniors' awareness about creative upcycling and to teach them how to use second hand fabric and cloth for making new, decorative items for their homes or for gifts to their grandchildren.
3. To improve elderly people's cognitive and fine motor abilities and communication and storytelling skills.
4. To encourage intergenerational bonds within elder adults' families.
5. To refresh seniors' childhood memories and to support their creative reminiscence and active ageing.

Duration

Between 3 and 4 hours, depending on skills level and experience of participants.

Group Size

Total number of participants – between 10 and 12 people, working in small groups or individually.

Materials Needed

Basic materials:

- Pieces of different fabric. These might be from old dresses, jeans, towels, bed sheets, tablecloths, etc.
- Decorative elements, such as attractive buttons, colourful yarn or thread, ribbons, lace trims, tassels, or other appliques.
- Cotton, felt or other soft fabric (to make the stuffing of the soft doll).



Basic tools:

- Scissors
- Measuring tape or ruler
- Pencil or chalk (for making measurements on fabric)
- Sheets of paper and pen or pencil (for making patterns)
- Needles, pins and threads (for sewing fabric pieces and making the doll and its dresses)
- Velcro straps (to put together dress pieces, if you do not like to sew/stitch them)

Step-by-step Description

Step 1: Gather all necessary tools and materials and prepare your workplace

Gather all necessary tools and materials which you will use in the production process. Also make sure that you have enough space to manipulate, to cut and sew fabric pieces and to decorate the ready-made soft doll.

It is recommended to use a stable table, so to easily put all tools and materials and to safely manipulate them.

Step 2: Make the 'body' of your doll

Think about how big your soft rag doll you like to be. Look at your fabric pieces and select large enough parts in a suitable colour, depending on what skin colour you like your doll to have. On a piece of paper, draw the body pattern of your doll.



Tip to consider:

- On the Internet, there are many ready-made patterns of human bodies. Browse there for inspiration. If you like anything, make yourself a copy of it (if your drawing skills are good) or print it out and use it for your rag doll body.

Once you have the paper version of your doll's body pattern, it is time to transfer it onto the selected fabric piece.

Put the fabric on the table and stretch it well. Place the pattern on it. With pencil or chalk transfer the pattern on the fabric.

Keep in mind that when cutting the pattern, you will need to leave between 0.5 and 1 centimeter extra for properly sewing different pieces of the doll's soft body.

Once you transfer the pattern into fabric pieces, it is time to start sewing the 'body' of the soft rag doll. You can do it by hand sewing or by using a sewing machine.

Tips to consider:

- It is better to sew different parts of the doll's 'body' from the back side of the fabric, so to make it neat.
- If you like to use buttons for the eyes of your soft doll or to make some decorative stitches for the nose and the mouth, it is easier to add them before sewing the front and back sides of the doll's body. In fact, manipulating separately the front or the back sides would be easier than the ready-made 'body'. Keep in mind that the soft doll's body will be rather small size, so you will need good fine motor skills to make even stitches.



- When almost ready, leave a small ‘hole’ to put the stuffing inside the ready-made doll’s body.

Once the doll’s body is ready, turn it to the front side of the fabric. If necessary, make some adjustments to the stitches. Put the stuffing inside.

Tips to consider:

- If necessary, pre-cut the stuffing fabric into small pieces to make it easier to manipulate.
- If you need, you could use a big-size hook to help stuff the doll.

Once the body of your soft doll is fully stuffed, make the necessary adjustments to make it even. Sew the small hole through which you stuffed the doll.

Step 3: Decide about the outfit of your soft rag doll and make its dress

Think about how you like your doll to be dressed. Some of them might wear dresses, while others – blouses, skirts or trousers. Some of them might be male, while others – female. Some might have a hat on their head, a poncho, a scarf, a belt, shoes, etc.

There are many ideas – just be creative.

Once you decide about the outfit of your doll, make a sketch or a pattern on a sheet of paper. This will allow you to visualize your idea and to make some adjustments, if necessary.



Tips to consider:

- On the Internet, there are many ready-made patterns of different types of doll dresses. Browse there for inspiration. If you like anything, make yourself a copy of it (if your drawing skills are good) or print it out and use it for your soft doll's outfit.
- Think also about the colours of your dolls' dresses and fabric accessories. The outfit might be monochromatic or multicolour. Depending on the fabric pieces you have, you could decide which colours to use as basic, and what – for decoration of the dresses.

Step 4: Prepare your soft rag doll's dresses

Once you have the patterns of doll's dresses on paper, it is time to transfer them on the fabric pieces. Take the right measurement of your rag doll, to be sure that the dresses you make are the right size and will fit your doll.

Put the fabric on the table and stretch it well. Place the pattern on it. With pencil or chalk transfer the pattern on the fabric. Keep in mind that when cutting the pattern, you will need to leave between 0.5 and 1 centimeter extra for properly sewing different pieces of the dress.

Once you transfer all patterns into fabric pieces, it is time to start tailoring the dresses. You can do it by hand sewing or by using a sewing machine.



Tips to consider:

- If you like to put some decoration on the dress, like a pocket, collar, belt, buttons or something else, it is easier to add it before sewing the dress itself. In fact, manipulating separately the front or the back side of the dress would be easier than the full dress. Keep in mind that it will be quite a small sized dress, and you will need very good fine motor skills to make even stitches.
- You could also add some other decoration to the dress, like ribbons, lace trims or tassels, to make it unique.
- It is better to sew different pieces of the dress from the back side of the fabric, so to make the dress neat.
- If you are not very good at stitches, you could also add Velcro strap onto the front and back sides of the dress and just stick them.

Once all dresses are ready, turn them to the front side of the fabric. If necessary, make some adjustments to the stitches.

Step 5: Dress up your soft rag doll

Once you have all the dresses ready, it is time to put them up on your doll. Make some adjustments, if necessary.

Add the accessories, if you have done such, and adjust them to the right places.



Step 6: Give the name of your doll and enjoy it

Now, it is time to think about the name of your soft rag doll. You can name it yourself, or ask your grandchildren, other family members or friends for some ideas.

Put your newly made rag doll on your sofa or commode and enjoy it. Or make a wonderful gift for your grandchildren, great grandchildren, or other family members or friends.

TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE WRITTEN EXPLANATION, WATCH THE VIDEO. [CLICK HERE.](#)

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Learning Outcomes


1. Explore their imagination and creativity on how to experiment and transform old fabric into new, artistic items, which could be given like gifts to younger members of their families or to some friends.
2. Increase their awareness about creative upcycling and how to put old fabric and other decorative elements into meaningful use.
3. Improve their cognitive and fine motor abilities, 'hand-to-eye' coordination and communication skills.
4. Refresh their childhood memories and support their creative reminiscence and active ageing.
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5. Strengthen intergenerational bonds within their families.
6. Diversify and enrich their daily routine with meaningful and creative activities.

Tips and Adaptations

- More skillful creative seniors could add hair to female puppets and mustaches or beard to male ones. For this, they could use yarn, cotton, felt or some fur in the respective colour and just stitch or needle felt it to the soft rag doll.
- You could also consider making a bag, hat, purse, necklace, bracelet, brooch, tie, bow tie, etc. for your doll. These accessories could be movable and might be added in addition to the doll's outfit. They will make your soft doll really unique.
- If you are good at embroidery, you could consider making some wonderful patterns on the dresses of your doll. Or if you are good at knitting, you could make some of the dresses hand-knit with one or two needles.
- Working with small buttons or fabric pieces might require good fine motor skills, a certain level of dexterity and rather good sewing/stitching skills, to sew or stitch them to the right places. This might need some preliminary experience and calmness during the process. It is recommended to start with bigger sized buttons or fabric pieces first, before going to smaller sized ones.

- When deciding about the pattern of the doll's dresses, take into account that more complicated shapes require a higher level of skillfulness, good fine motor and sewing skills, good sight abilities and 'hand-to-eye' coordination. So, start with simpler alternatives, before going to more complicated designs. Don't forget that the most important thing is to enjoy the activity and to create something out of your hands, and not to win a championship.

Ideas for Inspiration

- [*How to Sew an Easy Soft Rag Doll*](#)
- [*How to Make a Basic Cloth Doll- doll making tutorial- super easy method revealed-*](#)
- [*How to Sew a Doll Body: This Is My Favorite Doll So Far*](#)
 [*Free Pattern*](#)
- [*Cute Handmade Rag Doll Tutorial with Free Pattern \(New Version\)*](#)
- [*Rolling Doll 01 - For The First Time | DinLife*](#)
- [*How to Make a Rag Doll For Beginners || Simple Waldorf Doll Without Sewing*](#)

