

Project: Cornhusk Doll

Level: Medium

Age: 8 and up

Materials needed: Dried cornhusks (dry them yourself by laying them flat and letting them dry or purchase from a crafts store or mail-order supply company), corn silk (can be purchased or you can husk your own), pipe cleaners, household string, felt-tip pens, black and red, pins

Directions:

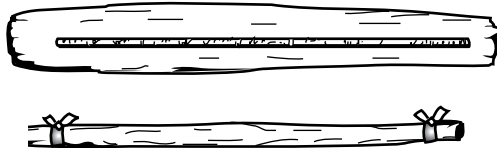
1. Soak cornhusks in lukewarm water for five minutes and rewet as needed. Husks should be kept moist as you work with them.
2. To make the head, tear the husk into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch wide strips and roll into a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch ball. Secure with a pin. Do the same for the body, only this time make the ball about one inch in diameter.

This is what a rolled head and body should look like when you're done.

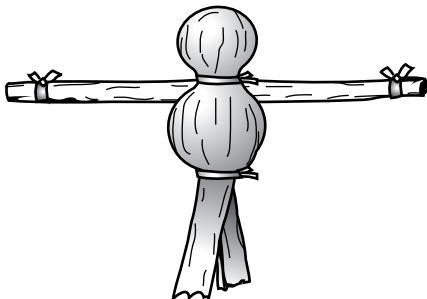


3. To make arms, wrap a pipe cleaner inside a strip of husk that's about one inch wide and a little longer than the pipe cleaner. Roll lengthwise and tie at the ends with $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch-wide strips of husk.

Arms being rolled and tied.

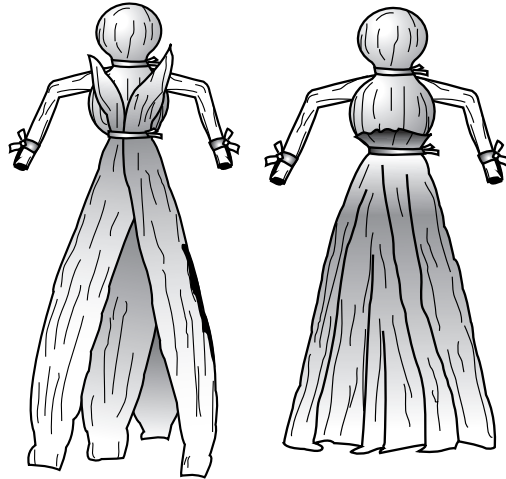


4. Using the clean inside part of a husk, center it smoothly over the front of the smaller ball, twist three times (to give the head more depth) and tie with a string around the neck. The excess should hang down about $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in front and back. Put the arms through under the neck, then insert the body form and tie underneath at the waist.



The head, upper body, and arm assembly.

5. Take several husks and gather around the waist, using the narrow ends on top and making sure the husks at the bottom all turn under. Add more husks for the fullness you want and tie with two wraps of string at the waist. Trim so there's about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch above the waist. Trim the bottom of the skirt evenly. (A male doll can be made by dividing the husks below the waist in half and tying the bottoms.)



Assembling the skirt.

6. Once you've made the basic doll, you can add various accessories as you wish. Try making a blouse, bodice, or shawl (using husks, fabric, felt, or burlap) and securing it with a cornhusk belt. How about a hat? Make a purse or satchel, a baby, or anything else you'd like to try. Bend the arms to the position you want and let dry.

More elaborate clothes and accessories can be made from scraps of fabric, chamois, and felt, although the classic cornhusk doll is made almost exclusively from the husks themselves.

7. Draw eyes and a nose with the black marker and a mouth with the red one. Or you can leave the face blank and imagine whatever features you'd like. Hair is corn silk (soak the silk for five minutes before working with it) sewn or glued to the head. You can leave it loose or make a braid or two.