

Hand Tutorial

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Page 1 of 5

While I was at AFIC, I had a small trunk show at the DollMakers Journey booth of some of my dolls. I received quite a few inquiries as to how I make my hands so I thought I would create this tutorial. I only use a 200 ct cotton for most of my dolls and the hands depicted here are made from Pimatex cotton. They are cut on the straight grain which runs from wrist to finger tip along the selvage. There are many ways to sew and turn fingers. I have used Fraychec, Griiiip, and cutting the hands on the bias in the past but I find this method for me is the most successful. I still have blowouts, but mainly because I try to force a too large turning tube into the finger. I liked Fraychec but if it gets outside the seam allowance, it can discolor the fabric. I never had any luck with Griiiip and wound up throwing out many hands. Cutting the hands on the bias was OK but I tended to have more blowouts because the fabric frays easily and also if the hand is part of the arm, the arm tends to get fatter so I had to make adjustments to the pattern. The pattern I used here is the hand from my One Kiss pattern reduced 15%. These hands are will be used on my 2011 Hoffman Challenge doll.



I use the Freezer Paper template method. Cut the hands out of freezer paper, iron onto the fabric and sew around carefully staying as close to the paper as possible. I have one stitch between the fingers because I used a 1.5 stitch. If you use a 1.0 (which I recommend) you should be able to fit 2 stitches. Most of these fingers look even but the middle finger is a little narrower and may pose a problem. I probably wasn't too careful tracing the pattern or cutting it out as I should have been. I also have a habit of reusing the hands a few too many times! But in general, this will make an OK hand despite the imperfections.



I then sew a second time around the hand as close to the first sewing as possible. Don't worry about the area between the fingers. This second stitching can be clipped but not the first. You can see I didn't keep all the stitching close, just go over these areas again closer to the original stitching.



A hand sewn twice with the freezer paper removed.



Cut out the hand as close to the stitching as possible. The more seam allowance you leave on the fingers, the harder they will be to turn. Clip a Y into the corners between the fingers being careful NOT to clip the first set of stitching. This is the hand with the narrow middle finger.



Choose the largest of the turning tubes that will fit in the fingers without forcing it. If you have trouble getting the tube into the finger, go to the next smaller size. Forcing it will blow out the finger. A blow-out can be fixed if it does happen.



Here is the tube in the finger. It fits without stretching the fabric to the point of bursting.



This was a little hard to photograph. To turn the finger, take the narrowest rod. Use it to fold over the seam allowance on the top of the finger as shown. This extra layer of fabric will keep the tube from piercing the finger tip. Now gently slide the finger up the narrow rod. I do this by grabbing the seam and sliding a little at a time. If it doesn't seem to be moving, slide it back down and try again. Sometimes I use my nails to grab the seam and gently pull it up one side at a time little at a time. There will come a point when you get it up enough that the finger will slide up easily. This takes a gentle touch and patience. You may use a product like Lickety Split to make your fingers a little sticky. There are lots of products available that does this used by quilters.



Repeat for all the fingers. Once they are all inside the hand, use a Hemostat to grab at least two of them and pull them out the wrist. Pull the fingers to straighten and work between the fingers. I also insert a narrow wooden skewer dull end to push out the finger tips. I don't use anything pointed because I don't want to accidentally poke out the tip. This is the hand with the narrow middle finger which I had to use a narrower turning tube in.

I hope you have found this tutorial helpful. Like all things, it takes practice. If you do blow out a finger, insert your wire/pipecleaner, apply a little glue with a pin to the pipecleaner and using a pin, slide along the raw edges of the blowout tucking them in against the glue. Squeeze the finger between your fingers and hold until the glue sets.