

How to make a shadow puppet

Little
Angel
Theatre



Shadow Puppets

Black Card Shadow Puppets

What you need

- Pencil
- Paper
- Black card
- Sticky tape
- Wooden skewers (sharp ends cut off)
- Adhesive Velcro
- Optional - coloured tissue paper or cellophane to add details
- Split pins – For articulated puppets

- Draw a design of the shadow puppet on paper
- Copy the design on to black card
- Carefully cut out the puppet with scissors, removing sections to create detail
- To cut out sections in the centre of the card carefully pierce with scissors or a sharp pencil
- Stick coloured gel or tissue paper over hollow sections to give it colour
- For control from behind: use a wooden skewer, with the sharp ends removed. This can be attached to the puppet with self adhesive Velcro. This will allow the rods to be transferred easily between puppets

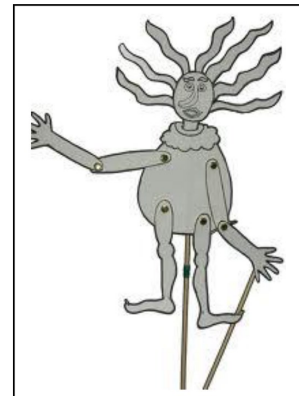


An example of coloured tissue paper covering holes cut out of a black shadow puppet. Note – It does not have to be as neat as this! As anything stuck on the black card will only show as a silhouette when it is in shadow.

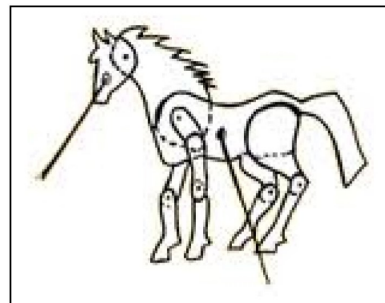
Articulated Shadow Puppets

- Draw a design of the puppet on paper
- Transfer the design on to black card remember to draw the moving parts
- separately so that they will overlap by about 1cm when placed together
- Make sure moving parts are not too small or the split pin will tear through
- Carefully cut out with scissors, removing sections to create detail
- To make a joint pierce a hole through both pieces of card and fasten together with a split pin

An example of an articulated shadow puppet using split pins



The Rods



The Velcro means you can position the rods outwards and move them to different parts of the puppet

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Coloured Shadow Puppets

Coloured Shadow Puppets

What you need

Pencil
Paper
White card
coloured felt pens
Cooking oil
Split pins (optional)
Sticky tape
Wooden skewers (sharp ends cut off)
Adhesive Velcro
Stapler

- Draw a design of the puppet on paper
- Transfer the design on to white card remember to draw any moving parts separately so that they will overlap by about half an inch when placed together
- Carefully cut out with scissors
- **Colour in the puppet and add detail using coloured pens**
- **rub cooking oil in to the card until it becomes translucent, wipe away excess oil with kitchen towel**
- To make a joint pierce a hole through both pieces of card and fasten together with a split pin
- For control from behind: use wooden skewers, with the sharp ends removed, one attached to upper body, the other to the hand or elbow or other moving part if you have one. This can be attached to the puppet with Velcro. **As the self adhesive Velcro does not stick well to the oily cardboard it is best to staple the Velcro onto the card.**



Performing with coloured shadow puppets

To get the best effect with this type of shadow puppet they should be pressed up against the screen so that the colours can be seen clearly.



This back view of a shadow puppet shows that his wings and headdress are made from fabric and feathers. The translucency of the fabric means the colour will be visible in shadow.

Playing with light

When using shadows and shadow puppets try experimenting with moving nearer and further away from the light source. This alters the size of the shadows created and can make some interesting effects. Also try experimenting with more fluid materials such as coloured oil or sand on transparent containers. Using an OHP covered in sand can allow you to make swirling patterns or textured backgrounds for example.



Experiment with scale and size of the shadows you can create.

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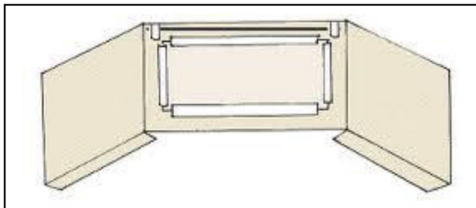


Shadow Screens and Light Sources

Screens

Depending on the size and scale of the performance you want to create there are many ways you can make a screen.

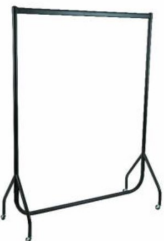
For a very small scale show with one or two performers you can use a cardboard box to make your screen. Good quality tracing paper or baking paper can be used to make the screen. Make sure it is pulled and secured tightly so the screen is taut.



This design has a rod along the top for extra strength.

For larger set ups you can use a white sheet or length of fabric as a screen. This can be held up using:

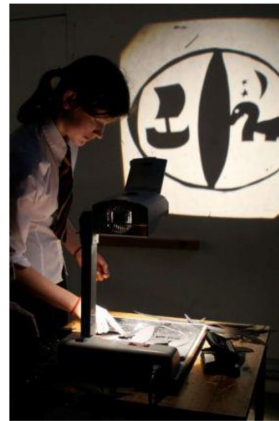
- A washing line strung across a room with a sheet pegged and secured to the floor with heavy objects
- An upturned table on another table, using the legs as a frame.



- A clothes rail. Attach the corners of sheet to the rail with Velcro tabs. This type of set up can be packed away easily when not in use.

Light Sources

Do not throw your old overhead projector away!



An OHP is perfect for shadow work as you can use the facility of the flat screen on the projector to create backgrounds and settings. It also enables you to play with scale by having items very close to the light source safely.

Depending on the size of the screen you want to illuminate then the light source can be as simple as a desk top angle poise lamp (these are good as the direction of the light can be angled and the lamp shade also helps direct the light). For maximum effect replace a standard bulb with a halogen one.

Be careful with these though as they can get hot.



Experiment with positioning of puppeteers and watch each other work so that you can eliminate too much exposure of the puppeteer's body unless this is the desired effect.