

An Edwardian Ladies Hat Tutorial By Judy Skeel

A Little Fashion History

In the year 1901 Queen Victoria passed on and reign in England was taken over by her 60 year old son Prince Edward. As fashion began to change from Victorian to Edwardian women of stature dressed elegantly in silk and large highly decorated hats. Corsets were popular and used beginning at a young age to keep the waist tiny. The extremely tight corset was intended to support the back, improve posture by pushing back the shoulders and slim the waist line, which in turn kept a young ladies rib cage from expanding. This created an "S" shape figure and garments were designed to show off the elegant tiny waistline. Skirts were tapered to curve back towards the body at the thighs and then swept out in the front and back, often with a train. Wealthy women wore silk and fine fabrics that made a marvelous swishing sound as they strolled by. Less extravagant fabrics were used by women of lesser means and well to do ladies found it was necessary to continually update their wardrobe to make it clear they were the high society ladies that deserved more attention. Each new gown required accessories to match and this included large parasols and extravagant hats that appeared to float on top of a woman's head.

The secret to the floating hat belonged to hairdressers. Women wore a frame called a pompadour that was attached to the head and hair was styled up and over the frame. By creating this "big hair" illusion hats actually had a firm foundation to rest on but maintained the "floating" appearance. Hat pins were used to secure the hat to the frame in case a small breeze passed, which could lift and carry a hat away.

The basic form of a 1901 hat was simple. Edges were wired to allow swooping sides and raised backs. Typically these hats were quite high on the rear, with large flowers, ribbon work or ostrich plumes. To add to the height often the form itself would be higher towards the back. The crown of the hat might also be towards the rear, rather than centered and was not always as large as a woman's head since the hat floated on the pompadour frame and not a head.

Basic hat anatomy: The large wired section is called the brim. The small flat wired part is the crown and the section that connects the brim and crown is called the side band.

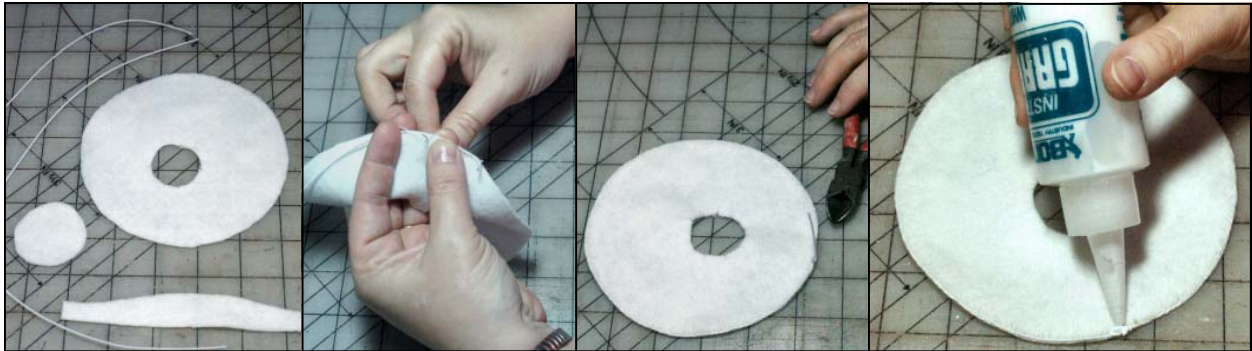
Basic Hat Supplies:

- Sturdy wool felt or buckram
- Cloth covered 20 gauge wire
- Wire cutters
- White glue
- Silk or thin "drapey" fabric
- 3/4" rayon lace
- 3 yards of multicolor hand dyed bias cut silk ribbon
- Craft feathers

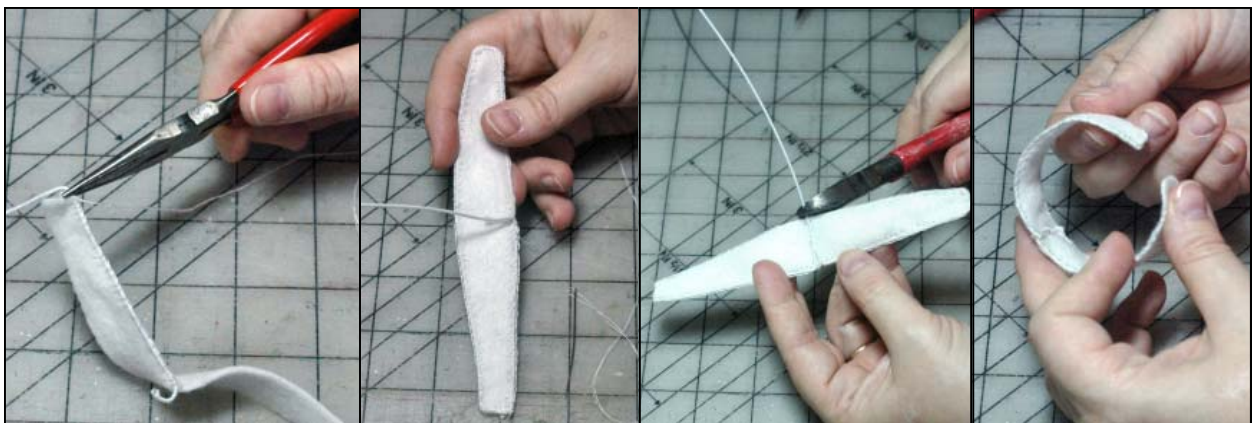


Hat Form Instructions:

- Cut the pattern pieces as marked from felt or buckram. The brim shows 2 inner circles. Cut on the dotted line and clip as indicated to the inner solid line. This will create small flaps to assist in attaching to the side band.
- If you don't have cloth covered wire you can wrap floral wire with white florist tape and get the same effect. The wire should be covered to prevent stains metal residue stains.
- Bend up one end of the wrapped wire. This will keep the wire from sliding out of place as it is stitched. Curl the end to keep the wire from poking you as you work. Use a blanket binding stitch to attach the wire to the brim. This will keep the wire on the edge and not on the top or bottom of the brim.
- Blanket stitch: insert a needle with doubled knotted thread through the brim 1/16" from the outer edge from the top, then reinsert the needle over 1/16" from the top and feed the needle through the loop between the two stitches. This will give a finished edge and keep the wire directly on the edge.
- Continue stitching until the wire ends overlap 1/8". When the wires overlap use the blanket stitch catch both wires. This will keep the frame sturdy. Cut and discard the wire ends.
- Add a dot of white glue over the final stitches and wire ends. Set aside.



- Repeat the steps above for the side band beginning in the center of one long side.
- Use needle nose pliers to bend the wire at all corners to keep them square.
- When the wire ends meet fold the excess wire up to meet the top long side. Fold the excess wire to overlap the frame wire and stitch 1/8" to secure.
- Cut the wire end and discard. Add white glue as for the brim.



- Roll the side band into a circle. Mine fit around my glue bottle, which made it easier to shape. Stitch the two short sides together.
- Fit the crown over the curved top of the side band. Stitch in place.
- Set the side band on the brim so the high side is closer to the edge of the back of the brim. The crown will sit higher on the back of the hat.

- Fold the flaps created by clipping the brim inside the side band and pin in place. Stitch in place. Remove pins.



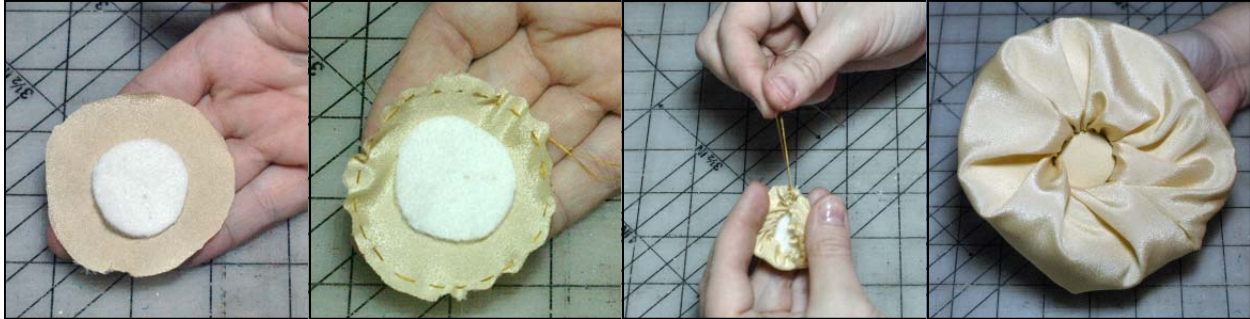
Covering The Hat

This is where the fun begins! The hat challenge is to use the basic form and create a fancy hat of your own. Fabric that covers the hat needs to be thin like silk. The fabric may be attached in a variety of ways from a flat covering (use a fusible webbing to make that easy), gathered tight towards the band and loose towards the edge of the brim, pleated or ruched. Here is how I used faux ruching to cover my hat:

- Cut fabric to 8" by 18". If you choose a different covering technique you may need to adjust the fabric size. Stitch the 8" sides together to create a tube.
- With right sides together gather one end with small stitches, pull snug and tie a knot. If the gathering leaves an opening, wrap the thread tight around the fabric and tie a knot.
- Gather the opposite end and turn right side out but before pulling the threads to close insert the hat form. The first gathered end should be on the crown, the second will be inside the side band.
- Pull the gathering threads together so the ends meet, like when making a yoyo. Take a small stitch to attach the fabric to the crown felt. Be careful not to stitch through the silk above the crown.



- Create a yoyo of fabric around the hat crown lining piece of felt. Gather the fabric and stitch closed. Place a little white glue on the gathered side and careful insert the yoyo into the inside of the crown. Press in place. This will give a nice finished edge inside the hat.
- Adjust the fabric over the crown and side bands to lay neatly. The fabric will puff a little and it is supposed to. Pin the silk to the side band then use small stitches to hold in place.
- Tug the fabric from the underside of the hat to meet the edge of the brim. All excess fabric should be above the hat. Adjust gathers to be evenly dispersed. Pin in place.



- Choose a pretty lace that will drape over the edges of the hat no wider than 3/4". Pin in place. Adjust how it lays so the ends over lap neatly. Touch the edges with white glue to keep from unraveling.
- Stitch in place with small stitches that won't show on the bottom of the hat. The underside of an Edwardian hat is just as beautiful as the top.
- Your silk will be bunched up on the top. We want to tack it down randomly, tugging the fabric in different directions creating puffs of fabric all about the same size.
- Hide the knot of your thread where the side band meets the brim as you will embellish over this area later.
- Run the needle between the silk and felt about 1" towards the brim. Exit out the silk and catching only a thread or two, reinsert the needle and gently tug the fabric to one side. Take a small stitch through the felt without touching the silk on the underside of the hat. Repeat this stitch using 1" gaps at first so each new stitch tugs the fabric in a different direction than the last stitch. Go back between the stitches and repeat to fill in and keep the puffs each about the same size Eventually your stitches should end up about 1/2" apart.



Embellishing the Hat

In 1901 it was typical to see a variety of embellishments on hats from ribbons, flowers made of ribbons, birds, plumes and fruit. It was all the rave to have a huge tall hat covered with unusual items. This was one way the wealthy women could out do the "commoners." I used a multicolor silk ribbon and craft feathers, which would be considered an "average" embellished hat.

- Double thread and knot a needle to match the ribbon. Fold under 1/4" of the end of the ribbon and insert the needle through both layers. Twist the ribbon once and reinsert the needle into the ribbon about 2 inches away. Take a tacking stitch in the hat at one of the black dots, being careful not to stitch to the underside. The loops will work across the back of the hat between the black dots.
- Repeat this about 4 times then increase the size to about 3". Make five 3" loops, then four more of the 2" loops, tacking each one in place and ending at the second black dot.



- Tie a small hidden knot after the loops are complete but don't cut the thread or ribbon.
- Weave the needle through the ribbon about 1/16" from the edge of the ribbon about every 1". Use the remaining ribbon to create this ruffle.
- Gather the ruffle to fit across the front of the hat between the larger loops. The bottom edge near the stitching should lie against the hat band. When adjusted well tack to the side band next to the first large loop. Feed the needle back through carefully and take tiny tacking stitches about every 1" to keep the ruffle in place. Gorgeous, isn't it?!
- Use dull craft scissors to curl your feathers just like curling ribbon for gift wrapping. You may need to scrape the scissors across the quill of the feather a couple of times and possibly change how you are holding it if the feather wants to curl too far to one side. I used feathers 3 to 4 1/2" long, mixing 2 beige and 3 cream feathers.
- Use tacking stitches to sew the feathers to the side band hiding the stitches between the loops. If your feathers don't stand they way you want add a touch of white glue.
- Fold up the back of the hat to almost 90 degrees. Use a few small tacking stitches through the lace and attach the brim to the side band. This will also help the feathers stand erect.

Judy Skeel has been creating and designing dolls for since 1992. Her award winning work has been displayed in galleries and international expositions. She teaches at clubs, shops and conventions internationally as well as in her home studio and on line. Judy has published articles, patterns and designs in periodicals like Soft Doll & Animals, Creative Doll Costuming, Contemporary Doll Collector and Patti Culea's Book Creative Cloth Doll Faces. Judy has more than a dozen patterns of her own design available at several on line doll pattern shops including Dollmakers Journey and Joggles.com. Her business "With Love From Skeelhaven" can be found on line at www.skeelhaven.com. You can view her blog at http://skeelhaven.blogspot.com/

Resources:

- Doll pattern used for this article is "A Doll For All Seasons" by Bonnie Lewis and Mary Ann Kaahanui at http://dollmakersjourney.com/



Edwardian Ladies Hat

For a 16" tall doll

