

capybara PLUSH



a free sewing pattern by



capybara plush

Come chill out with this adorable giant rodent, a cute chubby capybara! It's the largest living rodent and a close cousin to the guinea pig. This South American sweetheart is known for being very gregarious and able to relax around lots of animals. This plush version has a big round head and body with tiny arm and foot paws. To finish off the look is a tiny plush orange you can attach to its head, which you may have seen in pictures of them chilling out in hot springs.

DIFFICULTY:



The most difficult part of this plush is sewing the gussets for both the body and the head. They require marking and matching placement points and also some curved sewing. But in this case it's not very complex curves, so it's good practice. The paws also require a good bit of hand sewing, so give yourself time for that.

SKILLS USED:

- Fusible web applique
- Curved sewing
- Ladder stitch
- Matching notches and points
- Gathering, gathering stitch
- Basting
- Darts

MAKES:

About 6" tall (8" if you include the orange), 8" long (from tip of nose to back of body), and 4" wide from each side of body.



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MATERIALS & TOOLS:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ yd. (or 14" x 18") of fabric for main body and head
- $\frac{1}{8}$ yd. of accent fabric for front and back paws
- **OPTIONAL** $\frac{1}{8}$ yd. (or 9" x 5") of orange fabric for orange
- **OPTIONAL** $\frac{1}{8}$ yd. (or 4" x 4") of green fabric for orange leaf
- 3" x 3" of black applique fabric for eyes and muzzle
- 2" x 2" of pink applique fabric for blush
- 4" x 4" of light or heavy duty fusible web
- sewing thread to match main fabric and applique fabrics
- poly-fil stuffing
- basic sewing tools (sewing machine, scissors, iron, needles, pins, fabric marker, seam ripper)

FUSIBLE WEB:

- Fusible web adhesive is a sheet of adhesive with a paper backing.
- **Not to be confused with fusible interfacing**, which is adhesive attached to a fabric/fiber backing.
- Some common brands are **Pellon** & **HeatnBond**
- In countries outside the US, it may also be known as **bondaweb**
- It comes in **light** and **heavy duty** varieties. Lightweight strength is meant for applique you intend to sew later. Heavy duty versions are for a no-sew bond. If you try to sew them later your machine might have trouble penetrating the glue.



APPLIQUE FABRICS:

- Good applique fabrics include **flannel**, **cotton**, **felt**, **minky**, and **fleece**.
- Flannel and cotton are best for detailed applique with a lot of layers because they're thinner. Meanwhile felt, minky, and fleece are better for simpler applique like body markings.
- **Flannel** is used in the example instructions (page 7).



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fabric comparison:



MINKY VS. FELT



SUGGESTED FABRICS:

MINKY OR FLEECE

Medium weight, plush fabrics with about 20%-30% stretch along the crosswise grain work best for this project. The varieties shown to the left are some good options and names to look for. Try to avoid heavyweight versions of fleece that are intended for outdoor apparel or they may cause trouble for the detailed areas.

You can also use non-stretch fabrics (such as felt), but be aware that the curves will be more difficult to sew and the result will look different. The plush will become more elongated and the edges will look sharper.

10" of minky
stretches to 13"
= 30% stretch



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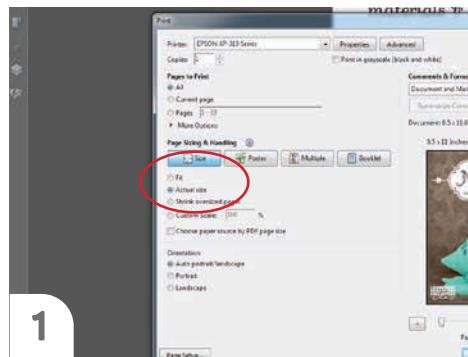
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PRINTING THE PATTERN:

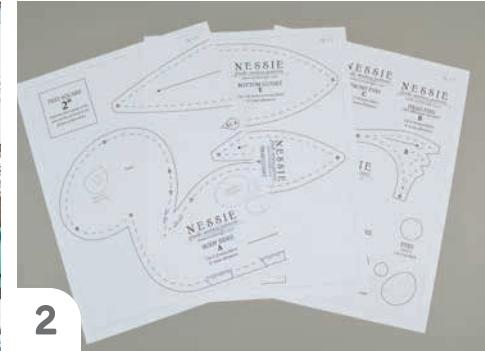
Set your computer to print **PAGES 24-27**.

If you're unfamiliar with printing and assembling a .pdf pattern, read the steps to follow.

For the best results, use a .pdf reader like **ADOBE READER**. That's what is shown here and will give you the most control over the settings.



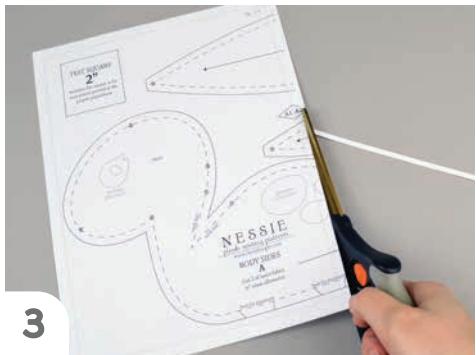
1



2

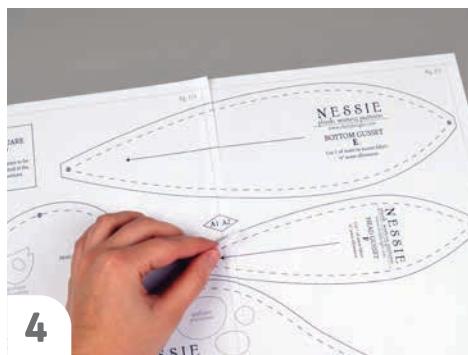
At the print dialog box, check the box that says print at "Actual Size" or 100%. Any other selection (such as "Fit to page") will distort the pattern so it's slightly larger or smaller and we don't want that.

Print the pages needed for the file. You might have one or more. Either way, be sure you have the full collection by noting the page numbers in the corner.



3

It's likely your printer will have a margin that ensures your image doesn't print to the very edge. Assembly will be easier if you trim off this blank margin edge. This will give you pages that overlap slightly during assembly. If you trim across the gray outline boxes, this will give you pages that don't overlap but rather butt against each other.



4

To line up the pattern pages, match up the corresponding diamond shapes. Each diamond will have a letter, so it's simply a matter of matching A1 to A2, B3 to B4 and so on. The faint gray lines indicate the border of every page, you should be able to line those up as well. When the diamond goes together, tape it in place.

If you have many pages, it's easier to tape up the pages into rows first. Then tape the rows together into a full block.



5

You can trace the patterns onto a different paper, or you can also just cut them straight from the printer paper -- be sure that each piece is fully taped together along the joins so they don't fall apart when you cut them.

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CUTTING THE FABRIC:

1



Place pattern on the fabric, and make sure the stretch line matches the stretch of the fabric. The nap line should go in the direction of the fur.

2



Pin the pattern in place, use pattern weights, or trace the outline of the pattern with a washable marker.

3



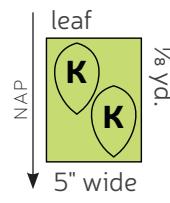
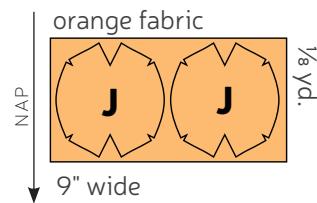
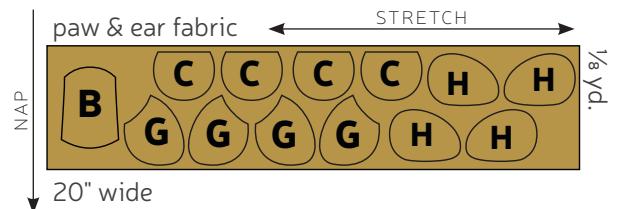
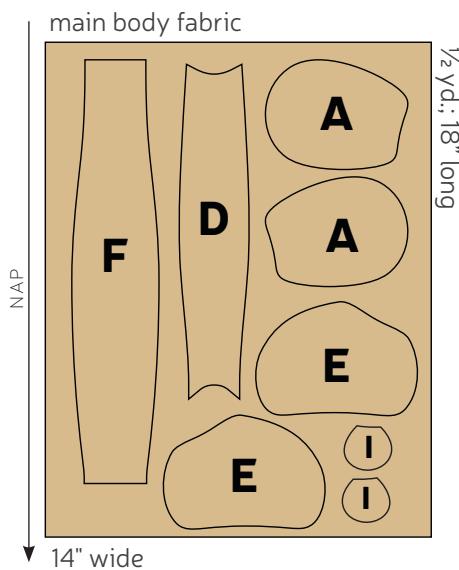
Using the paper as a template, cut out the fabric. Cut the required amount according to the pattern.

4



For all fur fabrics, shake the excess fuzz away.

CUTTING LAYOUT:



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BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

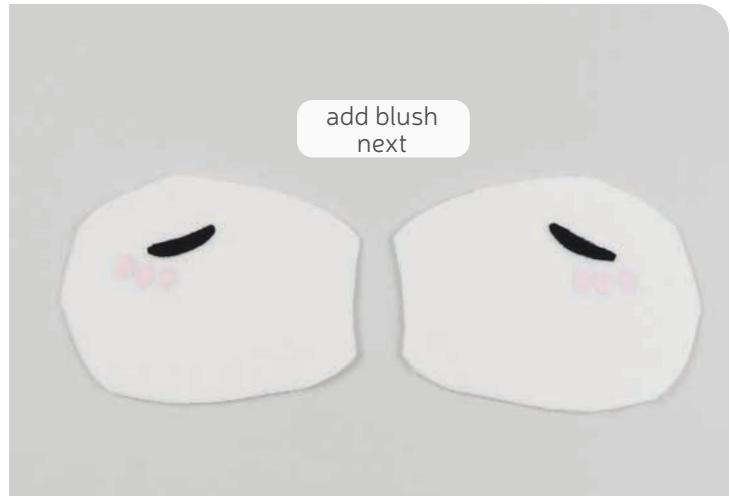
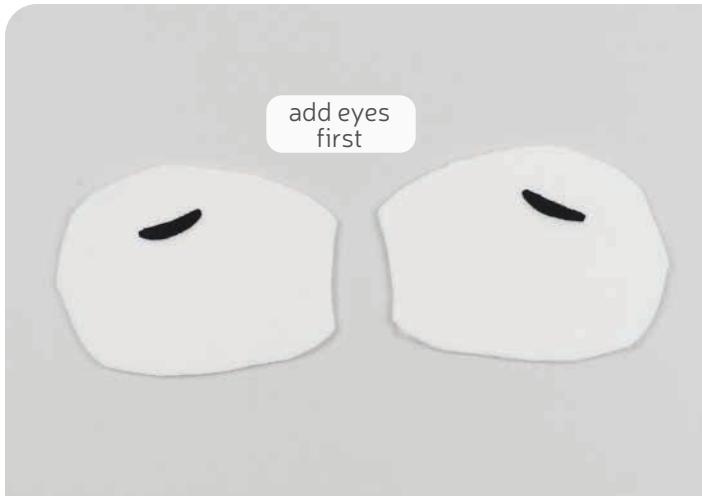
- Briefly read the project instructions so you know what to expect.
- If desired, mark the cut fabric pieces with the markings and symbols from the pattern. Or wait until the applicable step before transferring.
- Note that a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance is used throughout the project, which is included in the pattern templates.

**1. PREPARE THE FACE APPLIQUE**

- Grab your fusible web and applique templates. Trace the pieces for the eyes and muzzle. You should have:
 - **eyes** (2, black)
 - **nostrils** (2, black)
 - **blush** (6, pink)
 - **muzzle** (1, black)
- Fuse the bumpy (adhesive) side of the fusible web onto the applique fabrics.
- Cut out your applique pieces and grab your **HEAD SIDE** piece (A). Grab your **eye** piece. Set your paper pattern on top of the head side piece. Align the applique piece on top where the placement markings are. Next, carefully pull the paper pattern away while holding the applique piece in place.

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2. FINISH THE FACE APPLIQUE

- a. Fuse the applique pieces with your iron. Use a press cloth, such as a scrap piece of cotton. This will help protect any polyester or fuzzy fabrics from melting or scorching.
- b. Continue adding the next pieces; the **blush**. Use the paper pattern and photos as a guide.

3. FUSE THE NOSTRILS AND MUZZLE

- a. Take this time to also applique your **nostrils** and **muzzle** to the **MUZZLE** piece (B). Use the same method as the eyes.

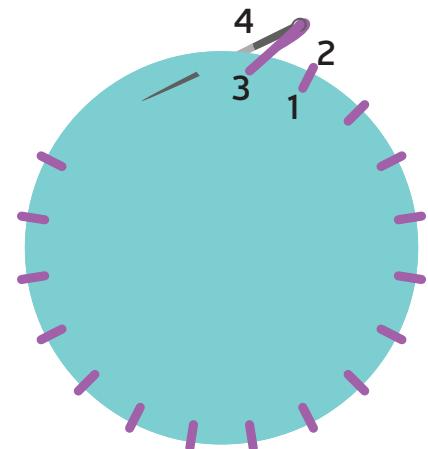
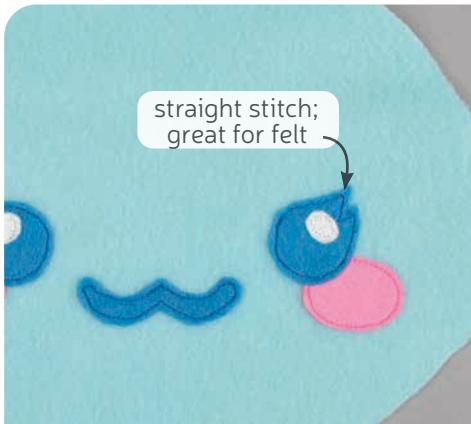
If you used heavy duty fusible web, you can keep the pieces fused without sewing, or you can sew them in place a number of ways. I've used a zigzag stitch here.

→ *Refer to the next step for some other applique options.*



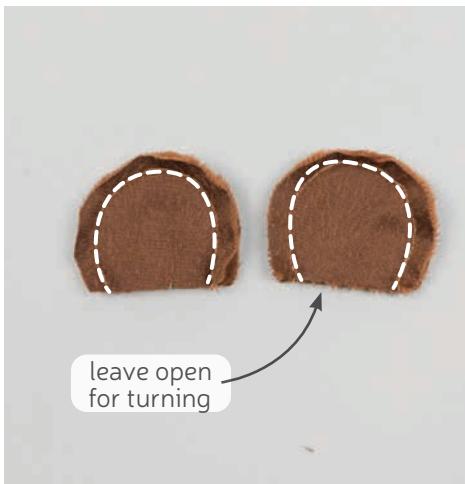
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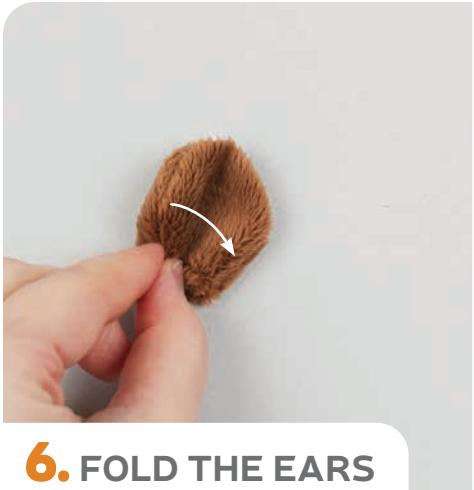
4. OTHER APPLIQUE OPTIONS

- a. Other good options for applique include a straight stitch, which involves sewing around the edge of the applique pieces with a straight stitch using matching thread -- about 1/8" in from the edge.
- b. You can also applique by hand; I prefer a whipstitch. Thread a hand-sewing needle with some matching thread and knot it. Bring the thread up from the back of the project; about 1/8" in from the edge of the applique shape. Bring it down perpendicular from the curve, just outside of the applique shape. This completes one stitch.
- c. For the next stitch, bring the needle back up about 1/8" away from the previous stitch and 1/8" in from the edge just as in the first stitch. Once again, bring it down just outside the applique shape. Continue this way until you've sewn around the shape.



5. SEW THE EARS

- a. Grab your **EAR** pieces (C). Take two of them and align them with right sides facing and the raw edges matching up.
- b. Sew the ears together along the long curved edge. Leave the shorter straight edge free for turning the piece right side out later. Repeat with your other ear pieces for two total.
- c. Turn the ears right side out through the opening that you left.

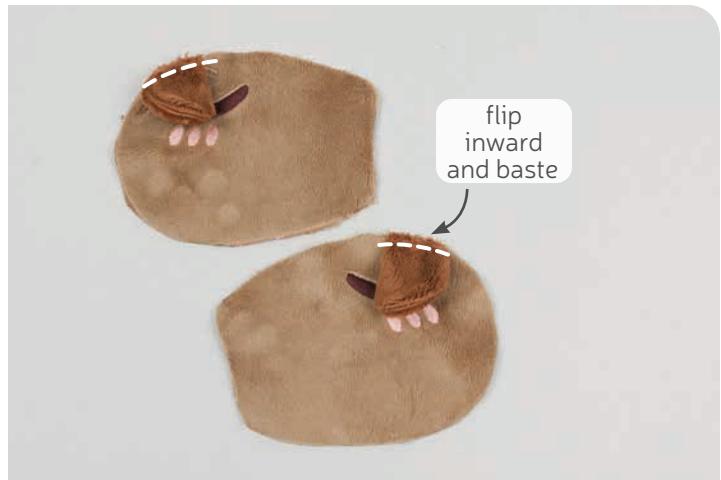


6. FOLD THE EARS

- Grab one of your **EARS** (C) and fold it along the **fold line guide** found on the paper pattern. The raw open edges should line up.
- Sew along the bottom raw edge of the ear to hold the fold in place. Repeat with your other ear, but be sure to fold it from the other side so you have a mirrored pair as shown.

BASTING:

A form of temporary sewing meant to hold pieces in place. A long stitch length is often used for this reason. The finished result is not meant to be seen and sometimes is even removed later (depending on your project).



7. BASTE THE EARS

- If you haven't already, note the **ear placement lines** found on the paper pattern for the **HEAD FRONT** (A). Align the raw edge of the ear within these **placement lines** so the folded edge is pointed toward the nose.
- Now flip the ears downward so the folded side is facing the head. Line up the raw edges and baste the ears in place. Repeat with your other ear and head side pieces for two heads total. This will leave them secured while we move onto future steps.

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8. ATTACH THE MUZZLE

- Grab your **MUZZLE** piece (B) as well as your **HEAD GUSSET** (D). The gusset is going to be joined into a ring shape with the muzzle in the middle. First off, the muzzle will be joined to the gusset along the inner curves, but there are also **numbered points** to help with alignment: look for **point 1** on the muzzle and gusset.
- Flip the gusset over so now it's right sides facing with the muzzle. Line up the raw edges so **point 1** matches up at each corner. You'll need to bend the curve of the muzzle fabric to do this. Make sure right sides are facing and pin the fabrics together.
- Sew the gusset to the muzzle from **point 1 to 1** on the other side.
- Next, take the other short end of your gusset and match it up with the bottom of the muzzle. **Point 2** should match up at the corners.



- Bend the gusset fabric to fit around the muzzle, then pin the fabrics together.
- Sew the gusset to the muzzle from **point 2 to 2** on the other side.
- When complete, the gusset and muzzle should make a ring shape as shown in photo G.

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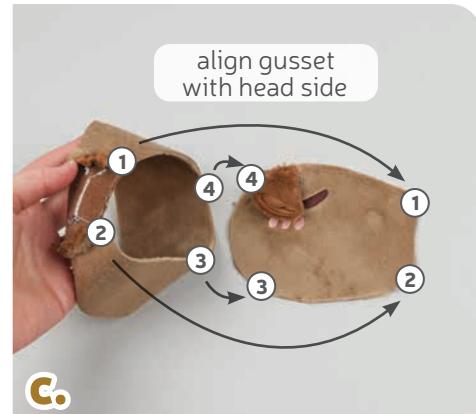
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a.



b.



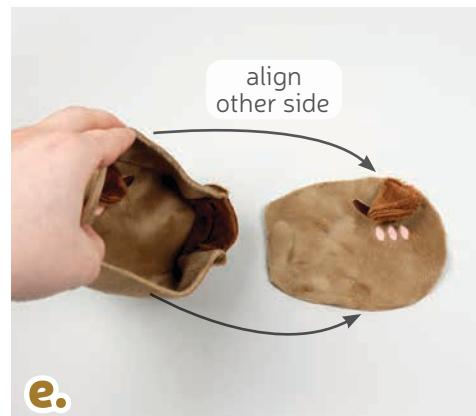
c.

9. ATTACH THE HEAD GUSSET

- Next up is to attach the **GUSSET** (D) to the **HEAD SIDE** (A) all the way around. But to help with alignment, look out for the **numbered points**. If you haven't already marked them on your fabric, look for **points 1, 2, 3, and 4** on your gusset pattern and transfer them to your fabric.
- Repeat with both head side pieces, transferring **points 1, 2, 3, and 4**.
- Take your gusset and align it with your head side piece so **points 1, 2, 3, and 4** match up. Make sure right sides are facing and the raw edges are aligned. Also be sure that the **EARs** (C) are tucked inside, then pin the fabrics together.
- Sew the gusset to the head side all around the shape, going through **points 1, 2, 3 and 4**. This should secure the ear inside the seam.
- Grab your other head side piece and align it with the other side of the gusset. Line up **points 1, 2, 3, and 4** all the way around.
- Sew the head side to the gusset around **points 1, 2, 3, and 4**.
- When complete it should make a 3D shape as shown in photo G.



d.



e.



f.



g.

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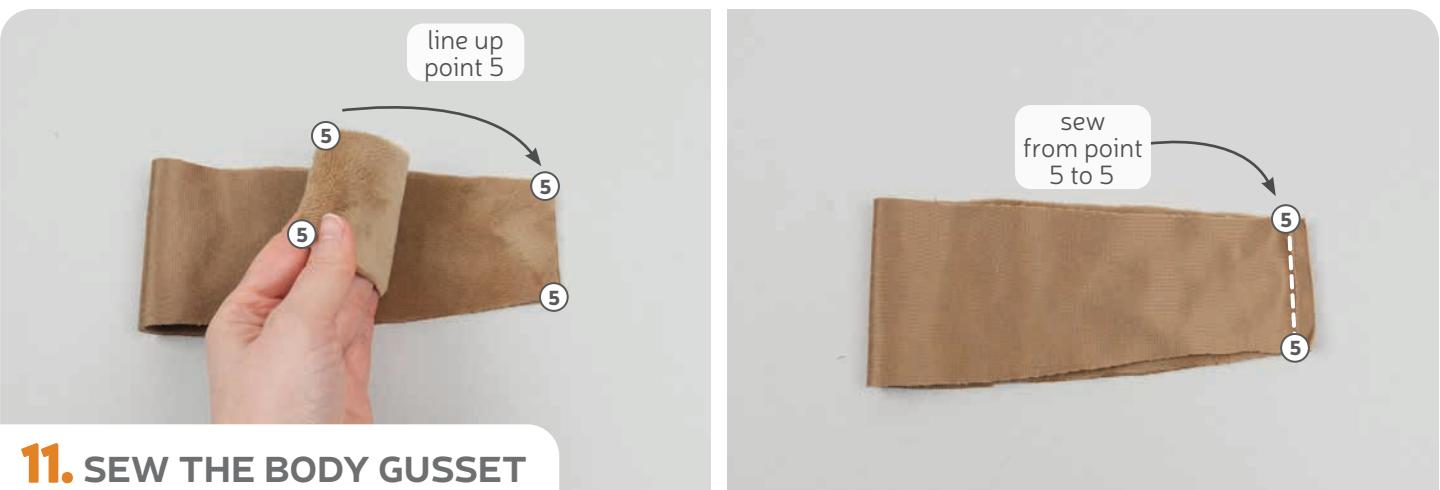
10. TURN THE HEAD

- a. To turn the head right side out, we're going to make a cut near the neck area. Look out for the **cutting guide** found on the paper pattern for the **HEAD GUSSET** (D). This is around **point 3**. Make a small clip into the center of the gusset fabric only, then cut down about 2".
- b. Turn the head right side out through the opening that you cut.



11. SEW THE BODY GUSSET

- a. Grab your **BODY GUSSET** pieces (F). We're going to join the two short ends, but they're also marked with **numbered points** for help with alignment, **point 5**.
- b. Sew the gusset pieces together from **point 5 to 5**.



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12. ATTACH THE BODY GUSSET

- a. We're going to repeat the same process from step 9 for the head and do the same to the body. Start by transferring the **numbered points** that will help with alignment, **points 5, 6, 7, and 8**. Transfer these to both your **GUSSET** piece (F) and your **BODY SIDE** piece (E).
- b. Take your gusset and align it with your body side piece so **points 5, 6, 7, and 8** match up. Make sure right sides are facing and the raw edges are aligned. Pin the fabrics together.
- c. Sew the gusset to the body side all around the shape, going through **points, 5, 6, 7, and 8**.



- d. Grab your other body side piece and align it with the other side of the gusset. Line up **points 5, 6, 7 and 8** all the way around.
- e. Sew the body side to the gusset around **points 5, 6, 7, and 8**.
- f. When complete it should make a 3D shape as shown in photo F.

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13. STUFF THE BODY & HEAD

- To turn the body right side out, we're going to make a cut near the neck area. Look out for the **cutting guide** found on the paper pattern for the **BODY GUSSET** (F). This is between **points 5 and 6**. Make a small clip into the center of the gusset fabric only, then cut down about 2".
- Turn the body right side out through the opening you've cut, then stuff it firmly with stuffing. Be sure to get plenty around the seams so they don't look wrinkly.
- Repeat this stuffing with the head of your capybara. Also stuff it firmly enough so there are no wrinkles in the fabric, especially near the seams.

14. DRAW THE NECK PLACEMENT LINES

- If you haven't already, note the **neck placement stitching guides** found on the paper pattern for both the **HEAD GUSSET** (D) and the **BODY GUSSET** (F). We're going to use these guides to attach the head to the body. Start by transferring the guides using the pattern as a reference template.

- The guides should make a nice wide oval around the cuts you made in the neck area earlier. Don't forget to mark the points for the **center front** (circle) and **back** (square). This will help ensure the head isn't twisted.

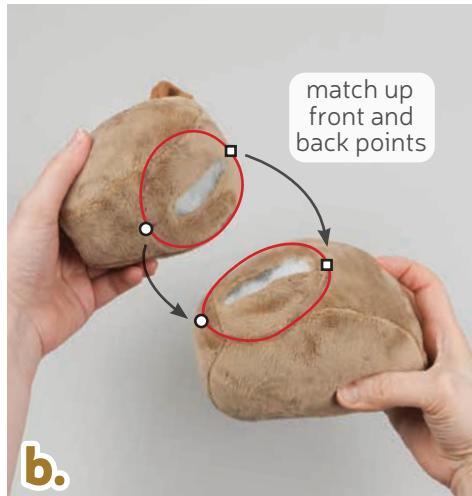


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a.



b.

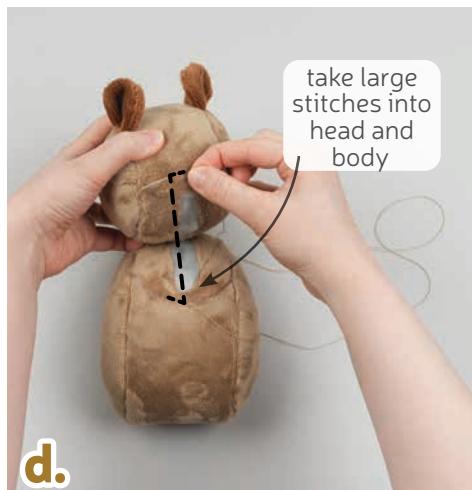


c.

15. ALIGN & BASTE THE HEAD TO THE BODY

- a. Grab your head and align it onto the body so they're both facing forward. Up next we're going to attach the head to the body using a ladder stitch, but we'll use quick, long stitches first so we can check the alignment.
- b. Match up the **stitching guides** along the lines you drew as well as the markings for the **front** and **back**. The front of the neck has a **circle marking** and the back of the neck has a **square**.
- c. Thread a hand-sewing needle and knot it at the end. Insert the needle from the inside of the opening of the body and bring it out near the **center back marking**. This will leave the knot inside the plush.
- d. Begin to stitch the body to the head. Start by taking a large stitch (about $\frac{1}{2}$) going through the **stitching guide** on the head at the **center back marking**. Then go across and take another large stitch into the **stitching guide** on the body. A callout box says 'take large stitches into head and body'.
- e. Keep going around the **stitching guide** in this manner. Right now, it's not important that the stitches are neat and tiny. Instead focus on making sure that they line up perfectly with the **stitching guide**. The **center front markings** should line up at the front of the capybara. Continue stitching until you've gone all the way around.

When you've finished the first go around, stop and check the capybara from all angles to make sure the head is centered and not twisted. If it looks good, continue ahead to the next step.



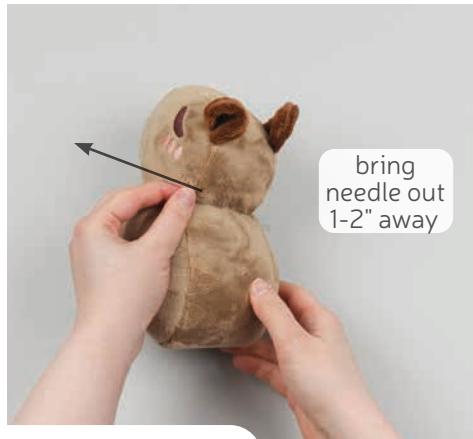
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e.

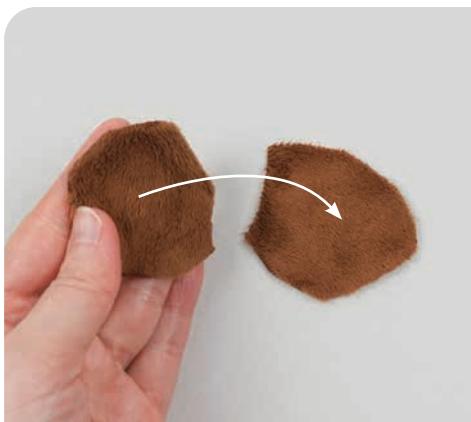
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16. SECURE THE HEAD TO THE BODY

- a. Sew around the neck once again, but this time use tinier, neater stitches (about 1/8" long). Sew just outside of your previous stitching, and this will connect the head more securely.
- b. When you're finished, stitch a knot into the end of the seam. Then insert the needle near the finished knot. Bring the needle out about 1-2" away and pull it through.
- c. Pull the thread taut while snipping the thread. The excess thread should sink back inside the plush -- all hidden!



17. SEW THE FRONT PAWS

- a. Grab your **FRONT PAW** pieces (G). Take two and align them with right sides facing and the raw edges matching up.
- b. Sew the pieces together along the long curved edge. Leave the shorter curved edge open for turning the pieces right side out.
- c. Turn the paws right side out through the opening you left. Repeat this with your other paw pieces so you have two total.



18. STUFF & ATTACH THE FRONT PAWS

- Take your **FRONT PAWS** (G) and stuff them semi-firmly with stuffing.
- Take a hand-sewing needle and thread it. Sew a gathering stitch around the opening of the front paw, about $1/4"$ around the edge.
- Pull at the thread to cinch the opening closed.

GATHERING:

The process of shortening the length of a piece of fabric by sewing long stitches through it. When the thread is pulled, it forms small folds that ruffle the fabric.

GATHERING STITCH:

A long version of the running stitch, which is a stitch done by weaving the needle in and out of a length of fabric going along a line. The long stitches (about $1/4$ " - $1/2$ " long) gather the fabric when pulled later.



- Take your front paw and align it onto the bottom front of your plush so far. The **BODY SIDE** (E) and **BODY GUSSET** (F) pieces have **stitching guides** for extra help. Make sure the cinched end is facing the plush.
- Also check that the front paw and body make an even line along the bottom. This will help prop up your capybara and keep it from falling over forward or to the side.
- Ladder stitch the paw to the body around the base of the piece. Repeat for both front paws. You can utilize the basting technique (from step 15) by basting the paws first and make sure they hold the body up. If they don't, you can nudge them down or outward a little so they provide better leverage for the body.

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19. SEW & ATTACH THE BACK PAWS

- Grab your **BACK PAW** pieces (H). Take two of them and align them with right sides facing and the raw edges matching up.
- Sew the pieces together entirely around the edge. Repeat with your remaining paw pieces for two total.
- To turn the pieces right side out, cut a small slit through one layer of the fabric only, near the base of the paw. This is also marked with a **cutting guide** on the paper pattern for help. To ensure the pieces are mirror opposites, it helps to make the cut while you have both pieces in front of you, each pointing in opposite directions.



- Turn the paw right side out through the opening you've cut, then stuff it semi-firmly with stuffing.
- Align the back paw onto the body of your plush so the cut edge is facing the plush. There are **stitching guides** on both pieces that you can transfer if you like or just use as a rough guide.
- Ladder stitch the back paw around the cut you've made. Then repeat on the other side for two back paws.

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20. SEW & ATTACH THE TAIL

- Grab your **TAIL** pieces (I). Align them with right sides facing and the raw edges matching up.
- Sew the pieces together along the round edge, but leave the short straight edge open for turning the piece right side out later.
- Turn the tail right side out, then stuff it lightly with stuffing.

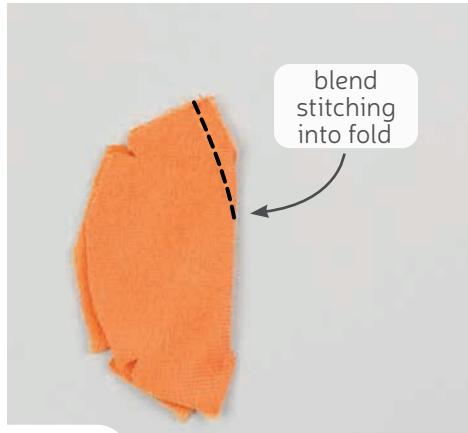


- Sew a gathering stitch around the opening, then pull at the thread to cinch it closed.
- Take the cinched end of your tail and align it onto the back of your plush. You can place it how you prefer, but in this sample it's about $1\frac{1}{2}$ " up from the back bottom corner. There's also a **stitching guide** on the **BODY GUSSET** paper pattern (F) for extra help.
- Secure the tail in place by ladder stitching around the base.

→ **Your capybara is now done! Stop here, or move ahead to create an orange for it.**

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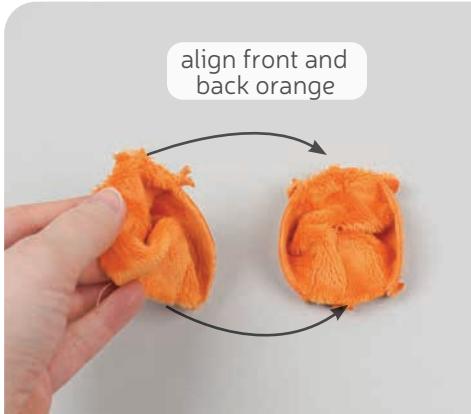


21. SEW THE ORANGE DARTS

- Grab your **ORANGE** pieces (J). These pieces have several **darts** all around the outside. These are the small wedge shapes cut into the piece. To sew them, start by folding the fabric along the point of one of the **darts**. Here we're doing the top center **dart**.
- Sew from the opening of the **dart** into the fold of the fabric. Try to blend your stitching into the fold of the fabric for a smooth transition and a rounder finish to the plush.
- Repeat this with all of the **darts** for the orange piece. There should be three on the top and three on the bottom for 6 total. Repeat once more with your other orange piece for two total.

DARTS:

A wedge-shaped gap found in a pattern. When sewn in fabric, it creates a tuck in the fabric and develops a 3D shape. The diagonal sides of the wedge are the **LEGS**; these are matched up and sewn to the **POINT** of the dart.



22. SEW THE ORANGE FRONT TO THE BACK

- Grab your two **ORANGE** pieces (J) and align them with right sides facing and the raw edges matching up. Make sure the seams from the **darts** match up as well.
- Sew the pieces together all around the circle, but leave an **opening for turning** in the side as marked on the paper pattern.
- Turn the orange right side out through the opening you left.

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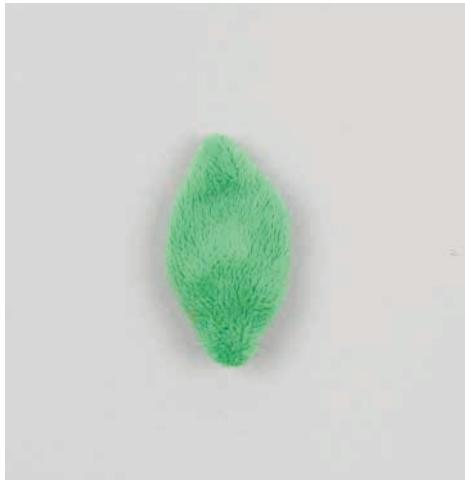
- a. Stuff the orange semi-firmly with stuffing through the opening you left.
- b. Tuck in the seam allowances and ladder stitch the orange closed.



23. STUFF & CLOSE THE ORANGE



24. SEW THE LEAF



- a. Grab your **LEAF** pieces (K). Align them with right sides facing and the raw edges matching up. Sew the pieces together along the pointed edge. Leave the short straight edge along the bottom open for turning the leaf.
- b. Trim the excess seam allowance at the point of the leaf to reduce bulk, then turn the leaf right side out through the opening in the bottom. Define the tip of the leaf with a chopstick or similar turning tool.
- c. If desired, stuff the leaf very lightly with stuffing.

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- a. Grab your sewn leaf and place the open edge centered on the top of your orange.
- b. Tuck in the seam allowances at the opening of the leaf and ladder stitch the opening of the leaf to the orange.



25. ATTACH THE LEAF



26. ATTACH THE ORANGE

- a. Take your finished orange and place it on your capybara's head. Here it's centered right in front of the ears, but you can also place yours elsewhere if you prefer.
- b. Ladder stitch the base of the orange to the head of your capybara to hold it in place.



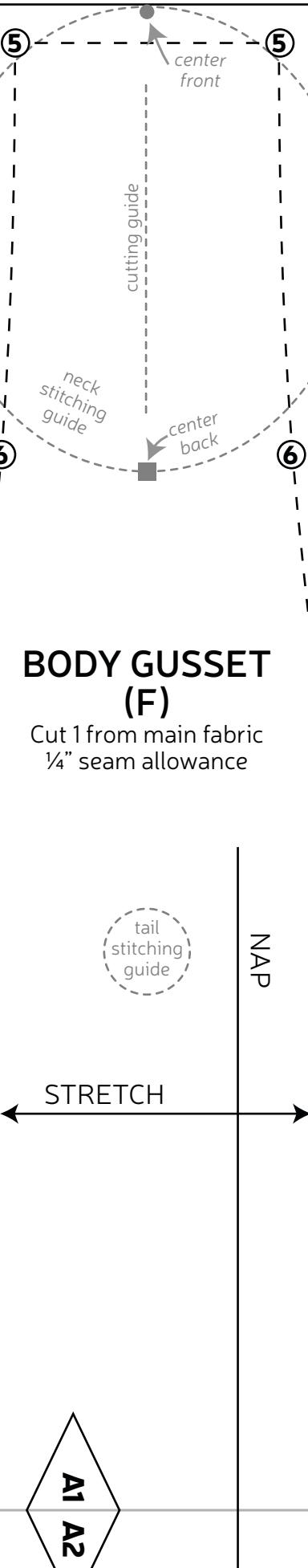
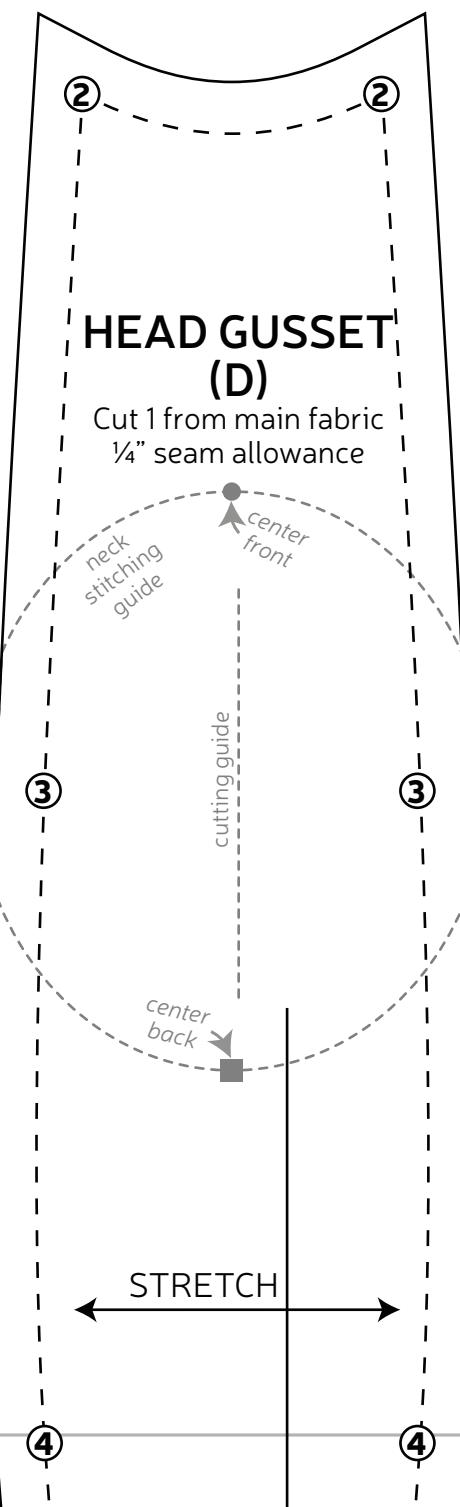
CONGRATS!
This completes your
plush! Now give it a
big hug!

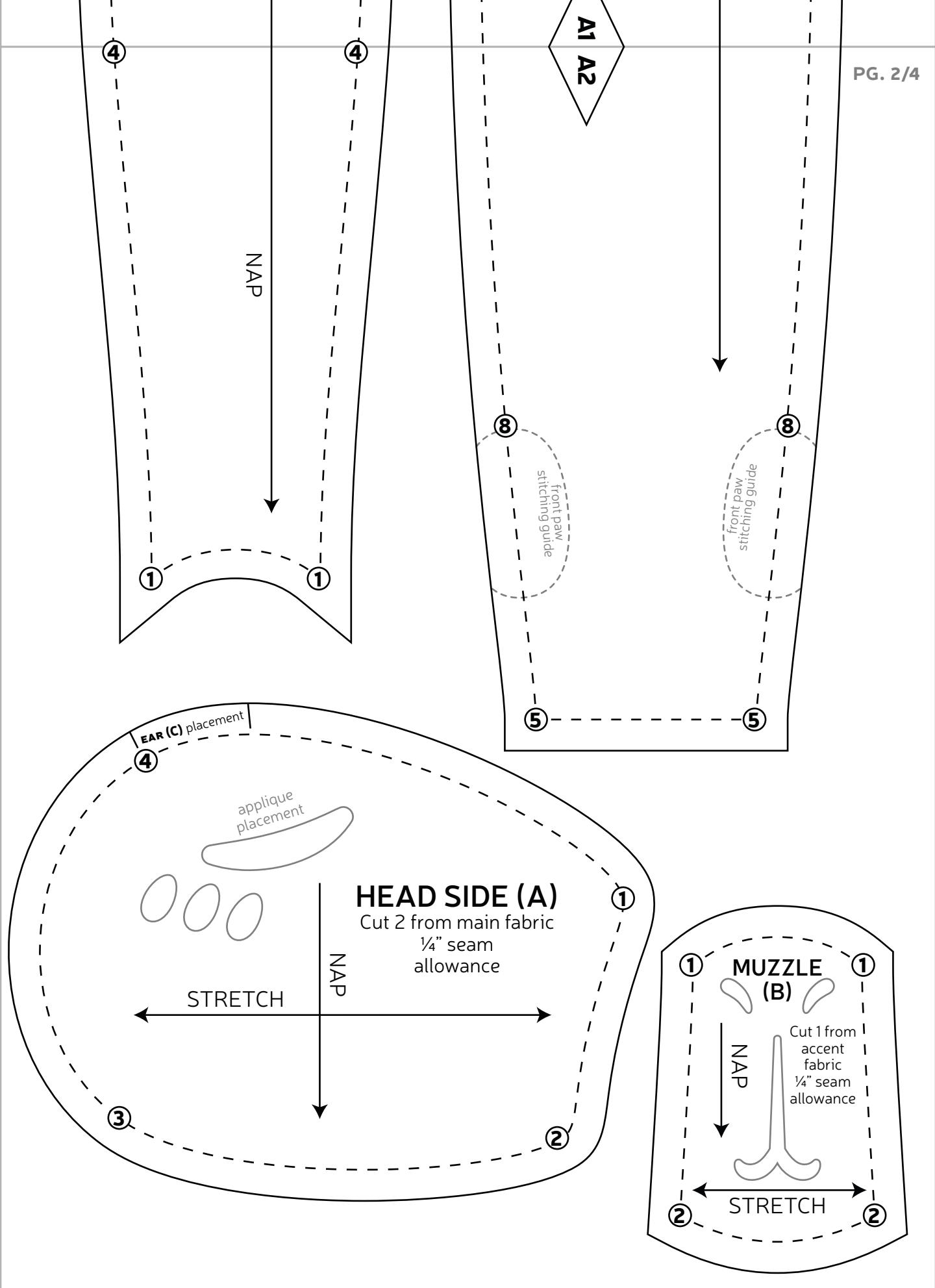
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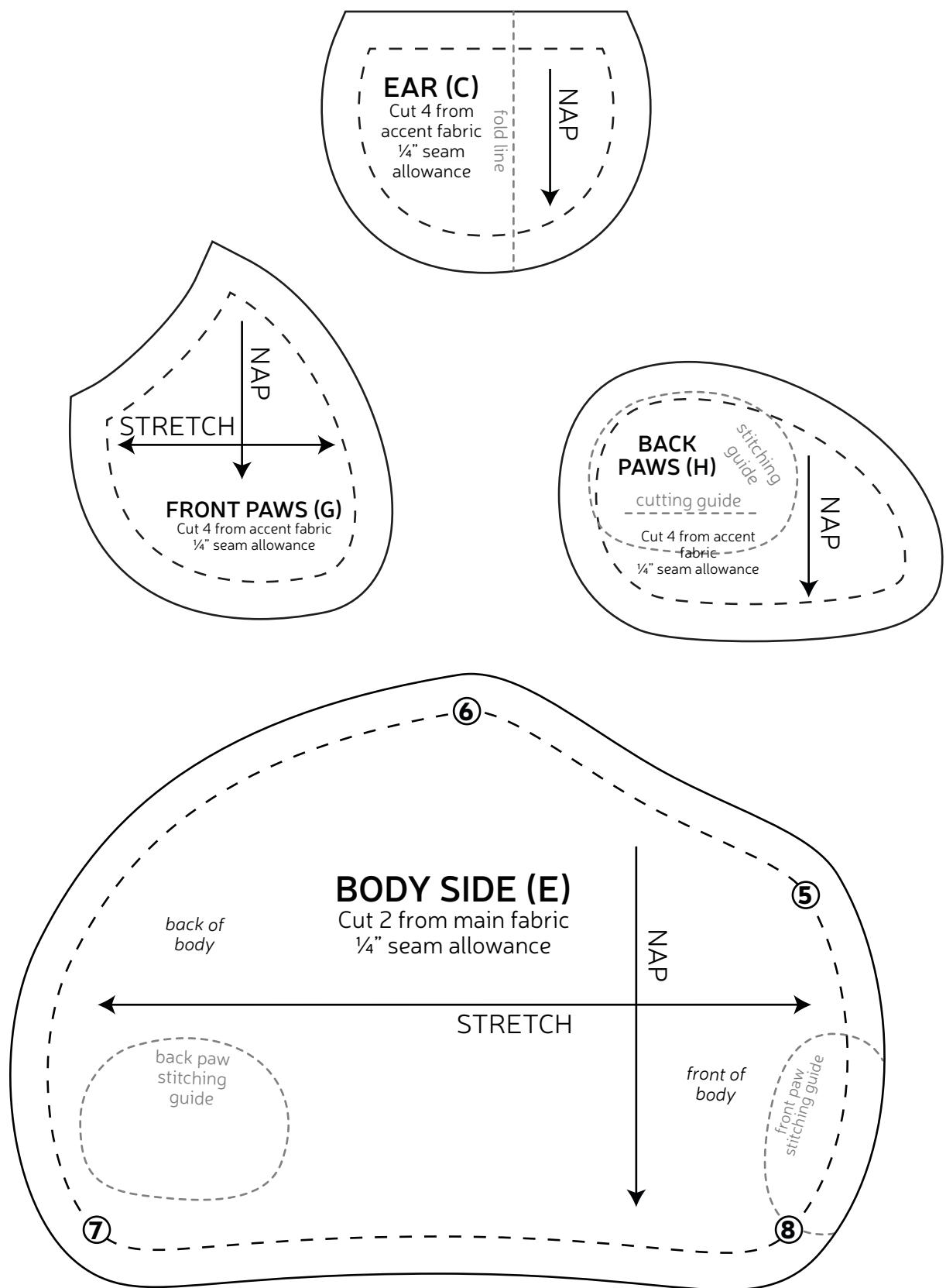
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TEST SQUARE 2"

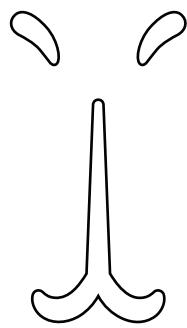
measure this square to be sure you've printed at the proper proportions



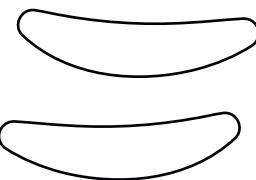




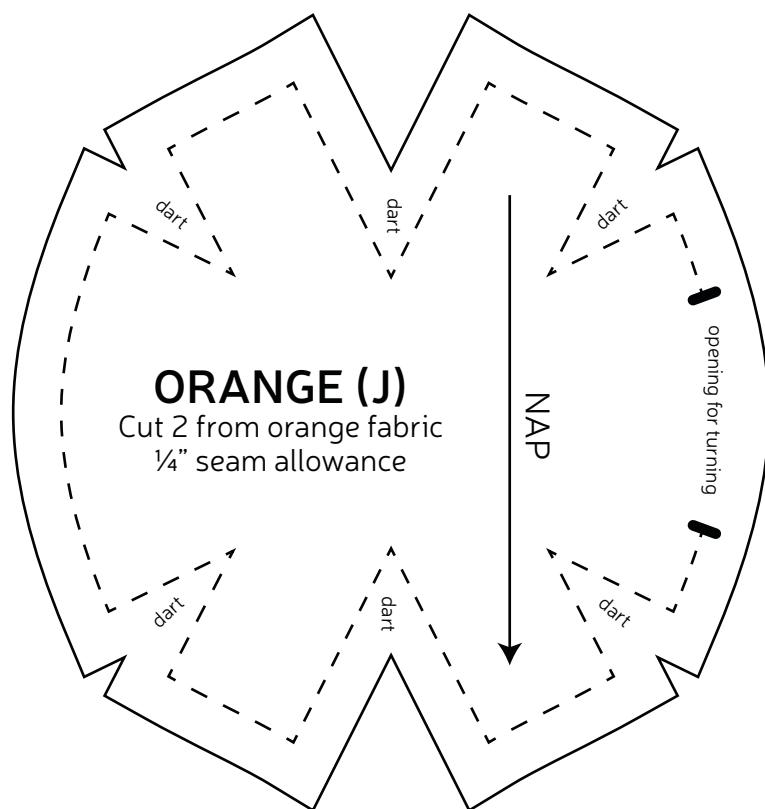
**NOSTRILS &
MUZZLE**
applique
trace & cut 1 each
from black



EYES
applique
trace & cut 1 each
from black



BLUSH
applique
trace & cut 2 each
from pink



ORANGE (J)
Cut 2 from orange fabric
 $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance

