

# PRAYING MANTIS PLUSH



a free sewing pattern by



# PRAYING MANTIS PLUSH

Whether you're a bug fan or not, hopefully you will appreciate the unique and graceful look to these elegant mantises! They are known for having long upright bodies and distinctive arms for grasping their prey. This plush version also incorporates their triangular heads, large eyes, and bent legs. Also included are alternate pieces to make a gorgeous orchid mantis with petal-shaped legs.

## DIFFICULTY:



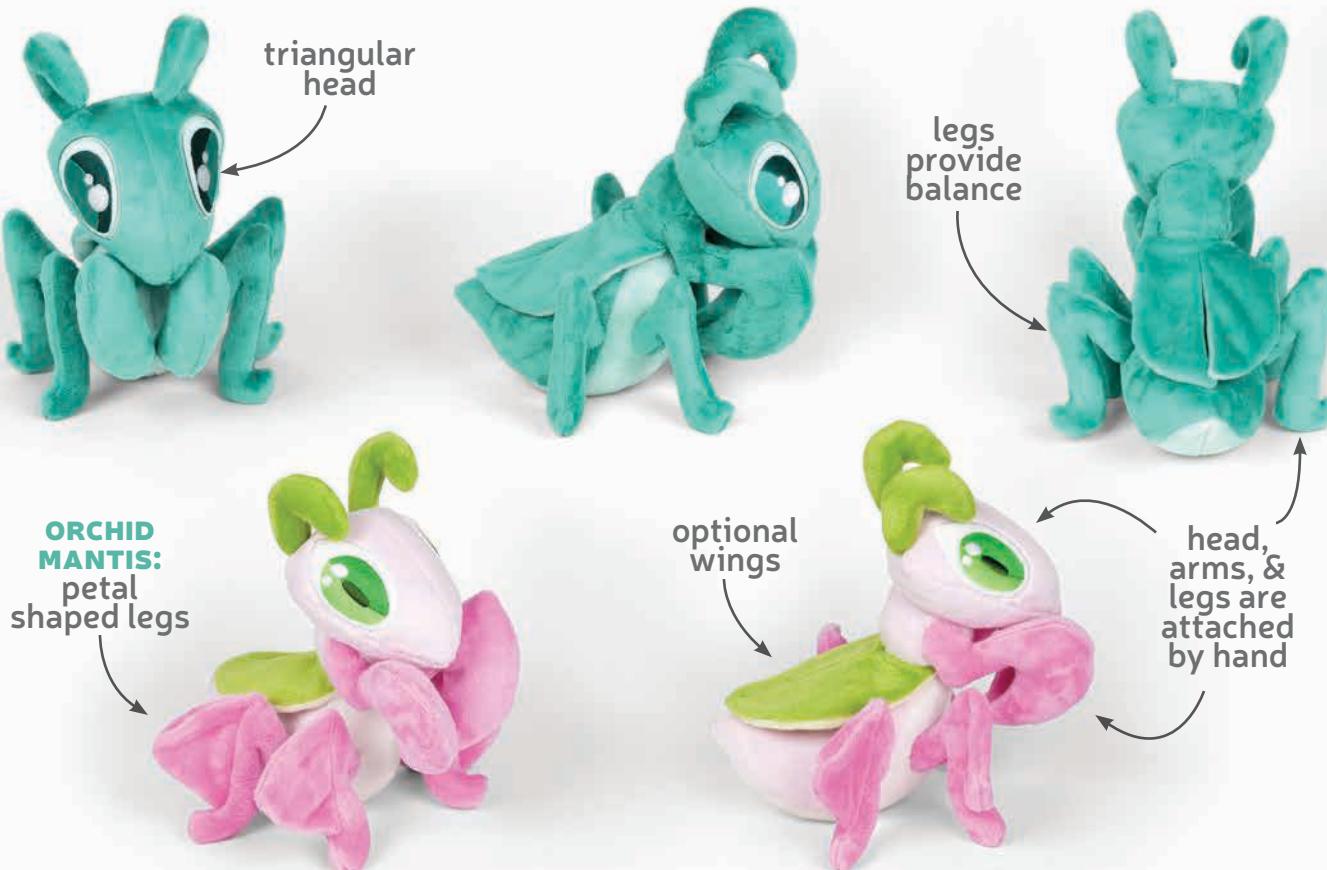
With 4 skinny legs and 2 skinny arms, this plush requires a decent bit of hand sewing. And with some careful placement, you can use the legs to help it stand. But if you're not as familiar with hand sewing it might be troublesome.

## SKILLS USED:

- Fusible web applique
- Curved sewing
- Ladder stitch
- Sewing small pieces
- Matching notches and points
- Darts
- Gathering; gathering stitch

## MAKES:

**ONE PLUSH:** about 8" tall (10" if you include antennae), 9" long, and 4" wide (7" if you include legs)



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## MATERIALS & TOOLS:

- 1/3 yd. of main fabric
- 1/3 yd. or 11" x 12" of accent fabric for belly and wings
- 8" x 8" of scrap fabric for poly pellet pouch
- 4" x 4" of light green fabric for outer eye
- 4" x 4" of black fabric for eyes
- 3" x 3" of accent fabric for eye highlight
- 2" x 2" of white fabric for eye shines
- 6" x 6" of light or heavy duty fusible web

- sewing thread to match main fabric and applique fabrics
- poly-fil stuffing
- poly pellets for weight and balance
- spoon or funnel for filling poly pellets
- 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 MAIN 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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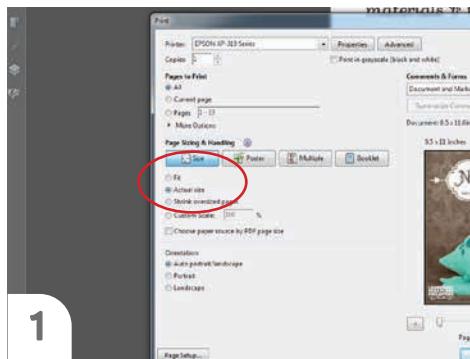
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## PRINTING THE PATTERN:

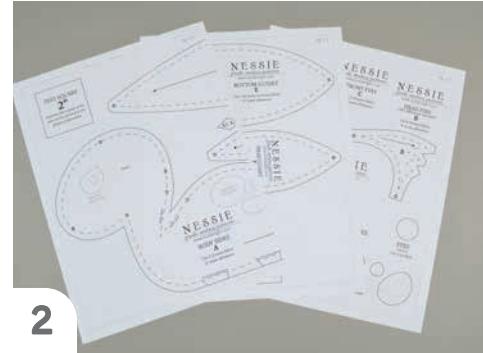
Set your computer to print **PAGES 23-28**.

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.



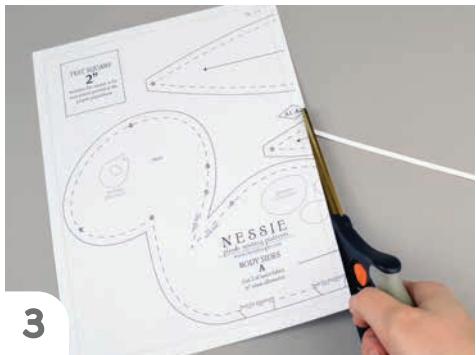
1



2

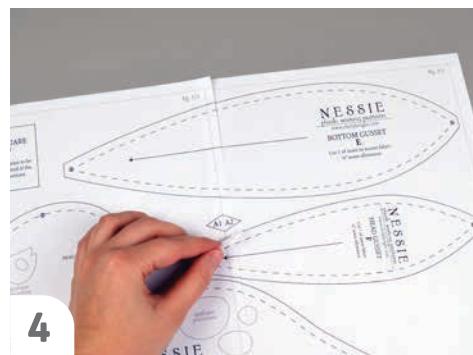
At the print dialog box, check the box that says print at "Actual Size" or 100%. Any other selection (such as "Fit to page") will distort the pattern so it's slightly larger or smaller and we don't want that.

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

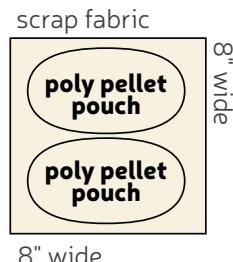
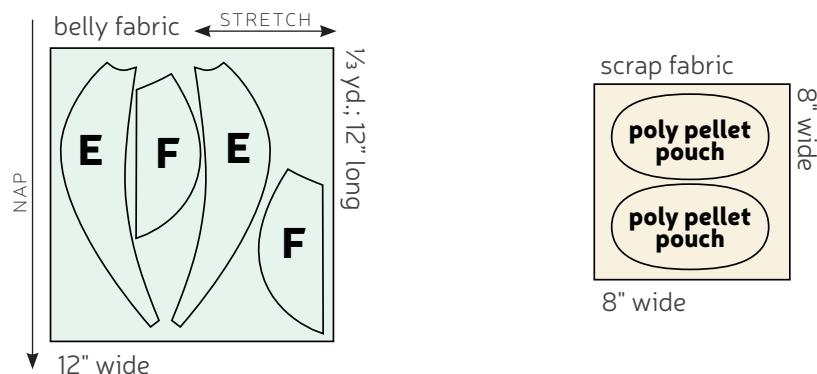
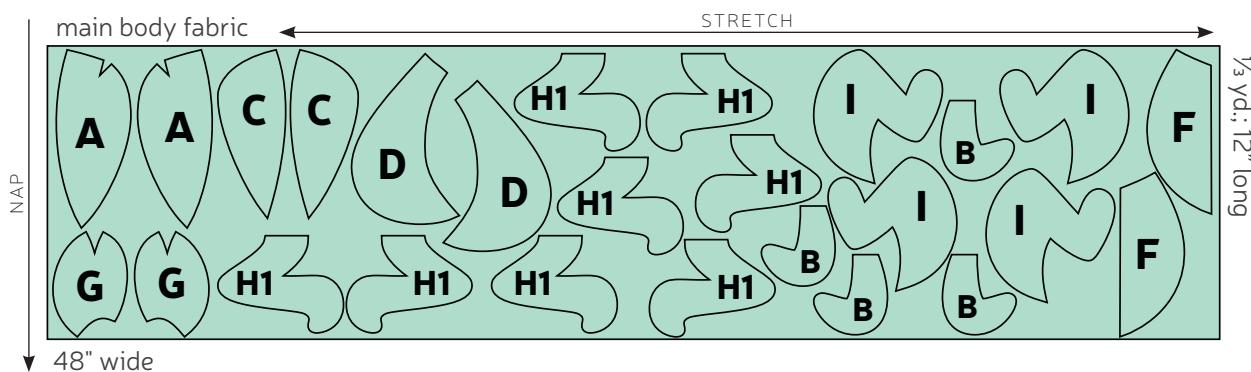
Using the paper as a template, cut out the fabric. Cut the required amount according to the pattern.



4

For all fur fabrics, shake the excess fuzz away.

## CUTTING LAYOUT:

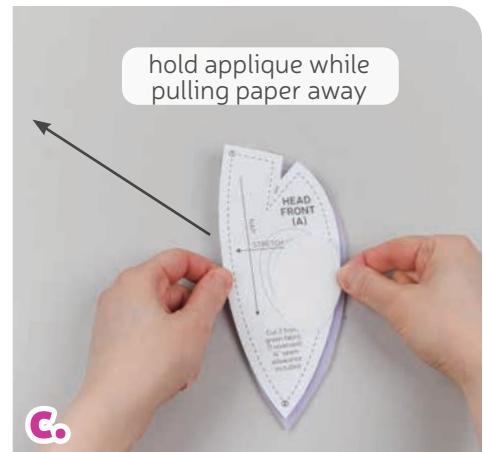


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**BEFORE YOU BEGIN:**

- 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. FUSE THE EYE APPLIQUE**

- Grab your fusible web and applique templates. Trace the pieces for the eyes of your mantis. You have your choice of rounded eyes or pointed eyes. Here we're building the **ROUNDED EYES**. You should have:
  - **outer eyes** (2, light green or white)
  - **eye highlights** (2, accent color)
  - **eyes** (2, black)
  - **eye shines** (4, white)
- Fuse the bumpy (adhesive) side of the fusible web onto the applique fabrics.
- Cut out your applique pieces and grab your **HEAD FRONT** piece (A). Grab the **outer eye** applique piece. Set your paper pattern on top of the head front 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.
- 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.



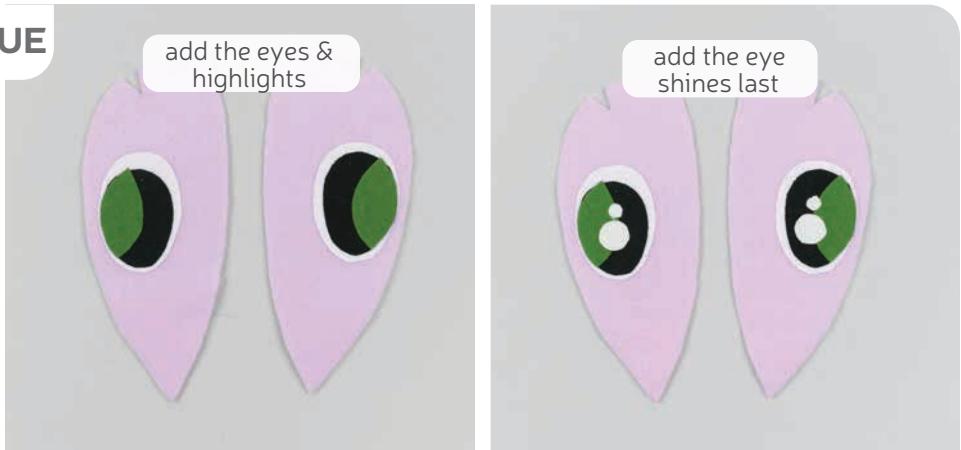
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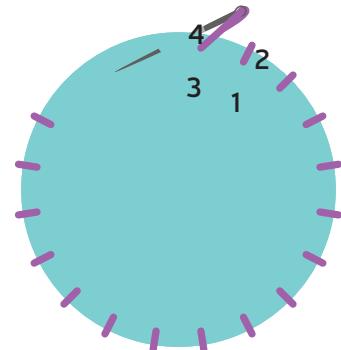
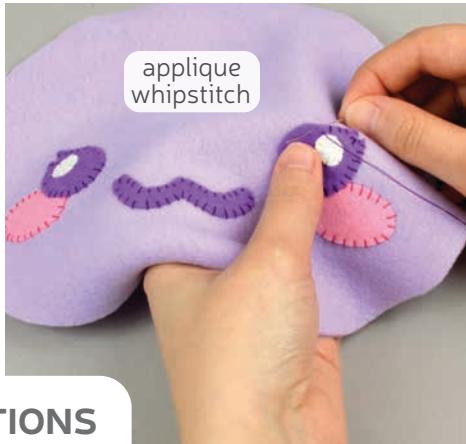
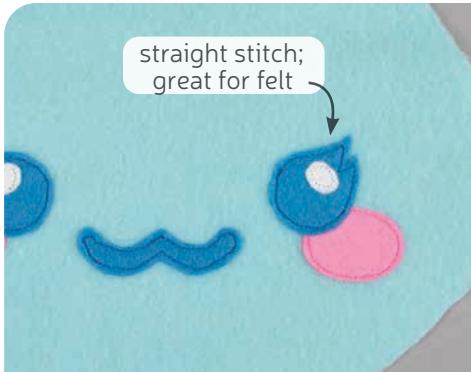
## 2. SEW THE EYE APPLIQUE

- a. Add the **eye and eye highlight** pieces next. Use the paper pattern and photos as a placement guide.
- b. Lastly add the smallest pieces, the **eye shines**.

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.

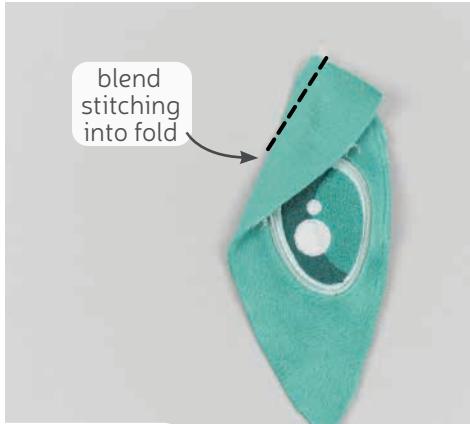


## 3. OTHER APPLIQUE OPTIONS

- 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.

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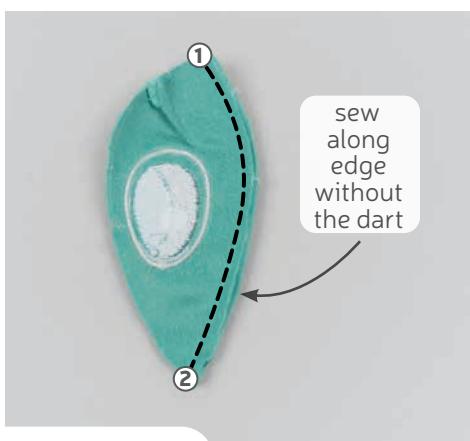
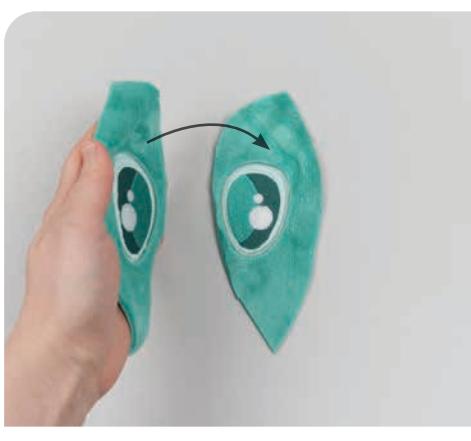


## 4. SEW THE HEAD FRONT DARTS

- Grab your **HEAD FRONT** pieces (A). These pieces have **darts** in the upper corner. They're the small wedge shapes found along the edge of the fabric. To sew them, start by folding the fabric along the point of the **dart** so the slanted edges match up with right sides facing. Pin the fabrics together.
- Sew from the opening of the **dart** down to the point. Try to blend your stitching into the fold for a smooth transition and a rounder finish to the plush.
- Repeat this with your other head front piece so you have two **darts** 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.

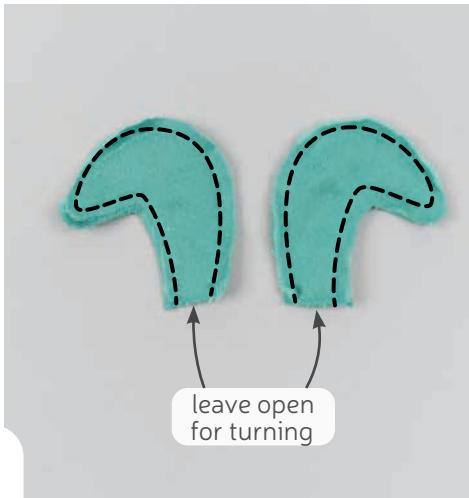


## 5. SEW THE HEAD FRONT CENTER

- Grab your two **HEAD FRONT** pieces (A) and align them with right sides facing and the raw edges matching up.
- Sew the pieces together along the center front edge. This is the edge that doesn't have the **dart**. And if you're watching the **numbered points** marked on the paper pattern, it's also the edge going from **point 1 to 2**. Make sure right sides are facing, and sew the head front pieces together from **point 1 to 2**.
- Open up the pieces when complete.

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## 6. SEW THE ANTENNAE

- a. Grab your **ANTENNAE** (B) pieces. Take two matching ones and line them up with right sides facing.
- b. Sew the pieces together along the long curved edge. Leave the short straight edge open for turning the piece right side out later.  
Repeat this with your other antennae pieces so you have a matching pair as shown.
- c. Trim the excess seam allowance around the tight corners and curves of the antennae. This will reduce bulk and increase flexibility when the pieces are turned later.

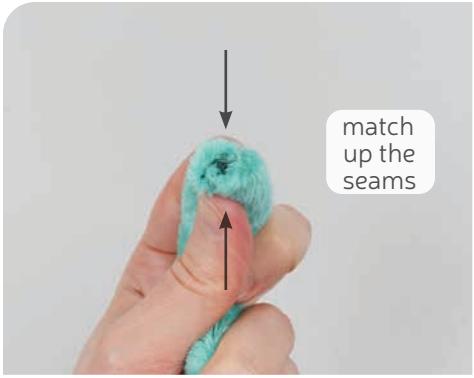
## 7. TURN & STUFF THE ANTENNAE

- a. Turn the antennae right side out through the opening you left in the bottom.
- b. Stuff the antennae lightly with stuffing; just enough so it takes shape. You don't need to stuff the bottom much since it will be attached to the head shortly.



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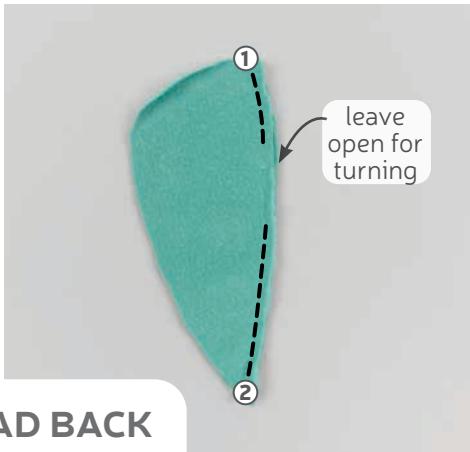


## 8. BASTE THE ANTENNAE

- Take your stuffed **ANTENNAE** (B) and pinch the open end so the seams match up.
- Now grab your **HEAD FRONT** so far (A). The antennae will be joined to the head along the **darts** you sewed back in step 4. Take the pinched end of the antennae and align it over the **dart** so the raw edges match up and the tip of the antenna points down. This will ensure the antennae point forwards when the plush is complete. Make sure the raw edges match up and pin the antenna to the head front.
- Baste the antenna to the head front within the seam allowance. This will hold it in place for future steps. Repeat this with your other antenna piece for a finished pair.

### 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).



## 9. SEW THE CENTER HEAD BACK

- Grab your **HEAD BACK** pieces (C). Align them with right sides facing and the raw edges matching up.
- If you haven't already, note the **opening for turning markings** found on the paper pattern for the head back. Transfer these markings to the wrong side of the fabrics you've just stacked. Sew the head back pieces along this edge, but leave the **opening for turning** that you marked. If you're watching the **numbered points**, this goes from **point 1 to 2**.
- Open up the pieces when complete.

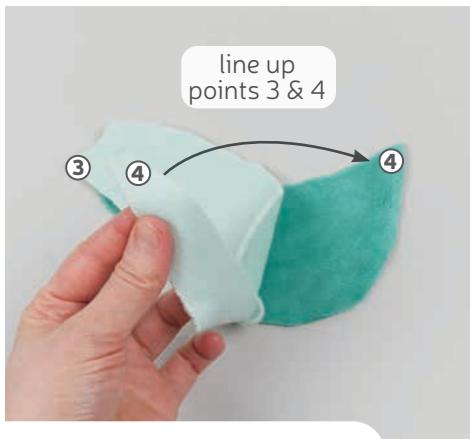
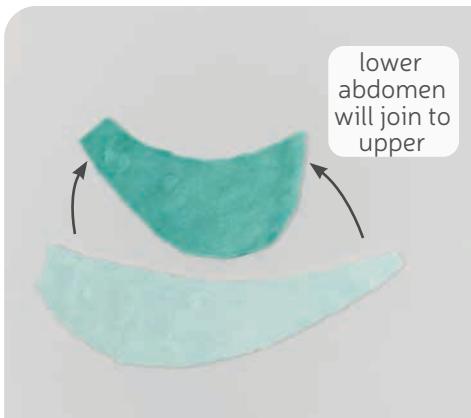
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## 10. SEW THE HEAD FRONT TO THE BACK

- a. Grab your **HEAD FRONT** so far (A) as well as your **HEAD BACK** (C). Align the pieces together with right sides facing. The **center seams** should match up at the top and bottom, marked with **points 1 and 2**. Make sure right sides are facing and the **ANTENNAE** (B) are tucked inside, then pin the head front to the back all the way around.
- b. Sew the head front to the back all the way around the shape, going through **points 1 and 2** at the seams.
- c. Turn the head right side out through the opening you left in the back of the head.



## 11. SEW THE UPPER AND LOWER ABDOMEN

- a. Grab your **UPPER** and **LOWER ABDOMEN** pieces (D & E). We're going to sew these pieces along the inner edges, but you also find the **numbered points** for help with alignment: **points 3 and 4**.
- b. Take your lower abdomen piece and line it up with the upper abdomen so right sides are facing. You'll need to bend the fabric to fit it around the curve. Line up **points 3 and 4** at the corners. Pin the fabrics together.
- c. Sew the lower abdomen to the upper abdomen from **point 3 to 4**. Repeat this with your other abdomen pieces for two total.

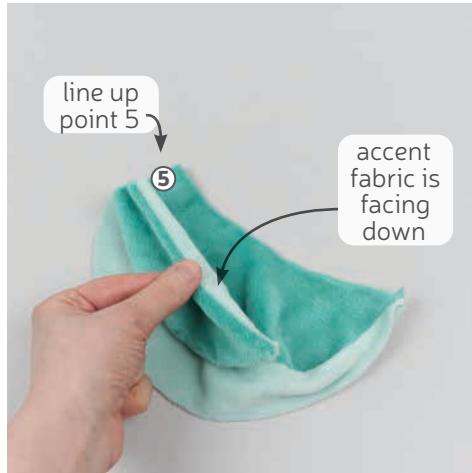
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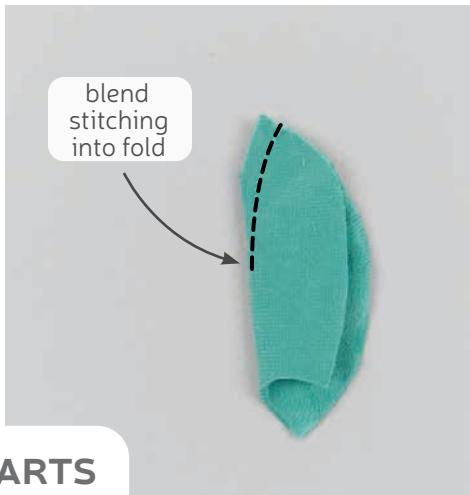
## 12. SEW THE WINGS

- Grab your **WING** pieces (F). Take one from your main fabric and one from your accent fabric. Align them with right sides facing and the raw edges matching up.
- Sew the pieces together along the long edges. Leave the one short end free for turning the piece right side out. Repeat this with your other wing pieces for two total.
- Trim the excess seam allowance along the corner of the wing. This will reduce bulk in this area so the wing turns better.



## 13. BASTE THE WINGS

- Turn the **WINGS** (F) right side out through the opening that you left. Define the points with a chopstick or similar turning tool.
- Grab your **ABDOMEN** pieces (D & E). Take one of your wings and align it so the accent fabric is facing down and the raw edges match up along the top corner. This is the corner marked with **point 5** if you're watching on the paper pattern.
- Baste the wing to the abdomen along the edge with **point 5**. Repeat this with your other wing piece for two total.



## 14. SEW THE THORAX DARTS

- Grab your **THORAX** pieces (G). These pieces also have a **dart** similar to the head front from before. We're going to sew it the same way, starting by folding the fabric along the point of the **dart** so the slanted lines match up.
- Sew the **dart** from the opening down to the fold of the fabric. Try to blend your stitching into the fold for a smooth transition and a rounder finish to the plush.
- Repeat this with your other thorax piece so you have two total.



## 15. ATTACH THE THORAX

- Grab your abdomen so far as well as your **THORAX** (G) from before. We're going to attach the thorax to the abdomen along the center edges, but they're also marked on the paper pattern for extra help with alignment. Look for **points 5 and 6**.
- Flip the thorax over so now it's right sides facing with the abdomen and **points 5 and 6** match up. This should sandwich the **WING** inside the layers. Make sure right sides are facing and pin the fabrics together.
- Sew the thorax to the abdomen from **point 5 to 6**. Repeat this with your other thorax and abdomen pieces for two sides to the body.

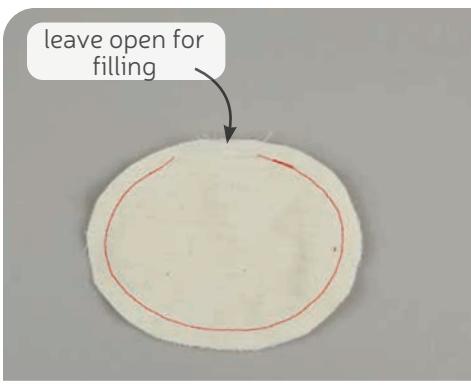
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## 16. SEW THE BODY

- a. Grab both of your body pieces and align them with right sides facing and the raw edges matching up. Make sure the **WINGS** (F) are tucked inside. Pin the pieces together all the way around the edge. The seams from the thorax in the previous step should match up.
- b. If you haven't already, note the **opening for turning markings** found on the **THORAX** (G). Transfer these markings to the wrong side of the fabrics you've just stacked. Sew the body pieces together all the way around the thorax and abdomen, but leave an **opening for turning** as you marked.
- c. Before you turn the body right side out, trim the excess seam allowance at the tip of the body. This is at **point 4** if you're keeping track. This will help reduce bulk when the piece is turned later.



## 17. SEW THE POLY PELLET POUCH

- a. Grab your **POLY PELLET POUCH** pieces. If you haven't already, transfer the opening for filling markings found on the paper pattern for the pellet pouch. Take two matching pieces and align them together (either way facing; doesn't matter). Sew around the perimeter of the piece, leaving an opening as indicated by the markings.
- b. Fill the pouch with poly pellets. I like to use a spoon for this, but some people prefer a funnel.
- c. Once you've finished, thread a hand sewing needle and stitch the opening closed with a whip stitch or back stitch. You can also sew it by machine, but go very slowly or just use the hand wheel. Sewing over a pellet will very likely break a needle.

## 18. STUFF THE BODY &amp; HEAD



a.



b.



c.

- a. Grab your **POLY PELLET POUCH** and insert it into the opening of the body.
- b. Shift the poly pellet pouch into the base of the abdomen area. This will help with the balance of the plush when it's complete.
- c. Now you can stuff the rest of the plush. Start by sneaking some stuffing into the tip of the abdomen. Use small bits of stuffing in the tip so the tip stays pointy and doesn't deflate later.



d.



e.



f.

- d. Continue working your way up the body of the plush, stuffing it firmly so there are no wrinkles near the seams or darts. Fill the body all the way up to the opening you left in the thorax.
- e. Grab your mantis' head and repeat the same process. Stuff the head firmly first by getting small bits in the tip of the nose area.
- f. Continue stuffing firmly so there are no wrinkles near the darts and other seams.

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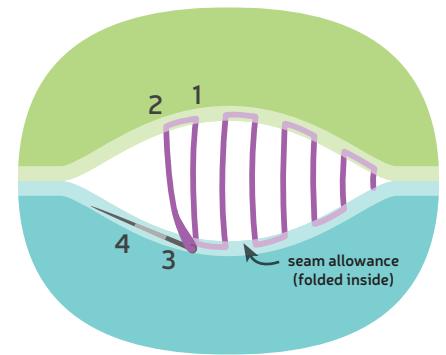
## 19. CLOSE UP THE HEAD AND BODY

- Once the head is stuffed, make sure the seam allowances in the opening are tucked inside and prepare to ladder stitch it closed. Thread a hand-sewing needle and knot it at the end. Insert the needle from the inside of the opening and out of the plush near one edge of the opening. This will leave the knot inside the plush.
- Continue from here doing a ladder stitch. Take a  $1/8"$  stitch into the fold of one side of the opening, then go across and take another. Keep going down the opening until you reach the end.

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.

Pull the thread taut while snipping the thread. The excess thread should sink back inside the plush -- all hidden!

- Repeat this same process for the thorax, but here you can keep the thread attached and use it for securing the head next.



## 20. ATTACH THE HEAD

- Align the head onto the thorax of your plush. The **openings for turning** should roughly match up. If you need help attaching, there are **placement lines** that can be found on the **HEAD BACK (C)** and **THORAX (G)** paper pattern. Transfer these lines onto your plush and use them for aligning the pieces. You could also place the head differently if you want a different look or pose to your plush.
- Attach the head to the thorax by taking a stitch from the **placement guide** into the head, then going across and taking a stitch into the thorax. Continue this way all the way around the **placement guide**.



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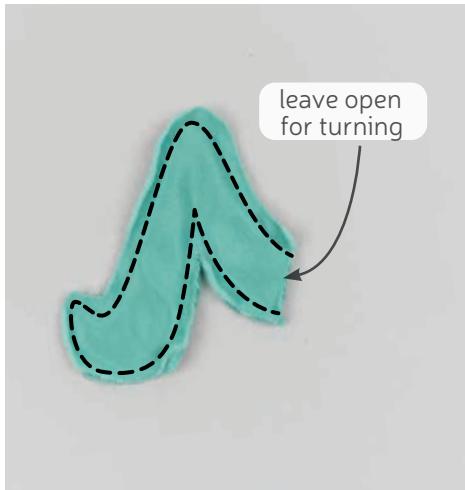
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## 21. SECURE THE ANTENNAE AND WINGS

a. If desired, you can take this time to secure the **ANTENNAE** and **WINGS**. Both of these parts are currently floppy, so if you want them to hold still, follow the next steps.

b. To make the antennae hold still securely, ladder stitch them to the **HEAD FRONT** about  $\frac{1}{4}$ " up from the seam. Take one stitch into the head, then go across and take another stitch into the antennae. Go across the antenna in this manner until you reach the other side. Then repeat this again with your other antenna.

c. For the wings, you may want them more tucked in instead of hanging loosely. To do this, bring the center edges together near the thorax. Ladder stitch the edges together about  $\frac{1}{2}$ " down from the thorax seam.



## 22. SEW THE LEGS

a. Grab your **LEG** pieces (H1 or H2). Take two matching ones and align them with right sides facing.

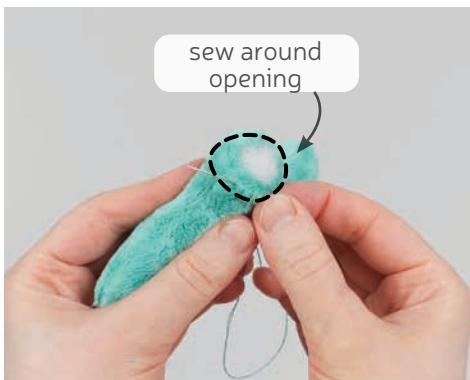
b. Sew the pieces together along the curved edges, but leave the short straight edge free for turning the piece right side out later.

c. Repeat this three more times so you have four legs total.



## 23. TRIM & TURN THE LEGS

- Trim the excess seam allowance around the inner and outer corners of the legs. Trimming the inner corners will increase flexibility in that area, and trimming the outer corners will reduce bulk in those areas. This will help the legs turn more cleanly when you flip them.
- Turn the legs right side out through the opening you left, then define the points with a chopstick or similar turning tool.
- FOR THE ORCHID MANTIS LEGS (H2):** follow the paper pattern guide to top stitch down the leg. This will create the petal shape along the side of the leg. Repeat this for all four legs.



## 24. STUFF & CINCH THE LEGS CLOSED

- Stuff the legs firmly with stuffing. It helps to use small bits of stuffing at a time so the legs look evenly stuffed and don't have empty spots.
- To close up the leg, start by grabbing a hand sewing needle and threading it. Sew a gathering stitch around the opening of the leg about  $\frac{1}{4}$ " away from the edge.
- Pull at the gathering thread to cinch the opening closed. Sew a few knots into the center of the opening to hold it closed. Repeat this for your other three legs for four total.

### 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  $\frac{1}{4}$ "- $\frac{1}{2}$ " long) gather the fabric when pulled later.



## 25. ATTACH THE FRONT LEGS

- Grab your mantis so far as well as two of your **LEGS** (H1 or H2). We're going to attach the front legs first. Align the cinched end of the leg onto one side of the lower abdomen. Here they're placed about  $2\frac{1}{4}$ " down from the thorax and  $\frac{1}{2}$ " in from the upper abdomen seam. But you can also check the **placement guide** on the paper pattern for more help. The goal is for the bottoms of the feet to be even with the bottom of the abdomen. So use the **placement guide** as a starting point and adjust if you need to.
- Ladder stitch the legs where they meet the abdomen. For best results, just use a long basting stitch for this first go. This way we can check that the mantis balances properly. Baste both front legs in place.
- Check that your mantis can sit upright using the front legs as support. If you need to adjust them, you can undo the basting stitches and try again. They may need to be placed a little further forward for better leverage.

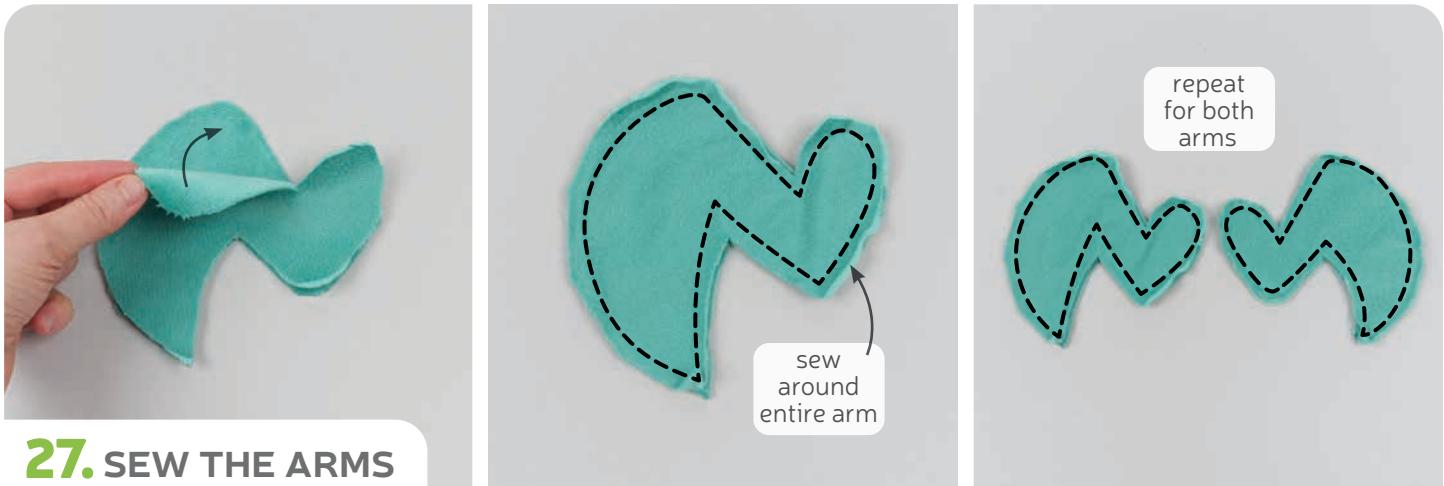


## 26. ATTACH THE BACK LEGS

- If your legs are in a good position, you can now secure them in place by sewing around them again with a tighter, neater ladder stitch.
- Take your other two leg pieces and align them on the upper abdomen for the back legs. The **placement markings** for the back legs can be found on the **UPPER ABDOMEN** template (D). Use this as a starting point and adjust if you need to. The goal is for all the legs to be even along the bottom with the abdomen.
- Ladder stitch the legs to the upper abdomen where they meet. Sew around the cinched end, then repeat on the other side for the other back leg.

**sew desu ne?**

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## 27. SEW THE ARMS

- Grab your **ARM** pieces (I). Take two of them and align them with right sides facing and the raw edges matching up.
- Sew the pieces together all the way around the arm shape.
- Repeat this once more with your remaining arm pieces for two arms total.



## 28. TRIM & TURN THE ARMS

- Trim the excess seam allowance around the inner and outer corners of the **ARMS**. Trimming the inner corners will increase flexibility in that area, and trimming the outer corners will reduce bulk in those areas. This will help the arms turn more cleanly when you flip them.
- To turn the arms right side out, cut a short slit into one layer of the fabric only near the base of the arm. You can refer to the **cutting guide** found on the paper pattern if you need extra help. Be sure to cut on the other side for the other arm. It helps to have them both in front of you so they make a mirrored pair.
- Turn the arms right side out through the opening you cut, then define the points with a chopstick or similar turning tool.

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## 29. ATTACH THE ARMS



a.



b.



c.

- a. Grab your arms and stuff them semi-firmly with stuffing. They don't need to be especially firm, just enough so they keep their shape. Be sure to get small bits in the tips of the arms so they stay looking pointy and don't deflate later.
- b. Grab your arm and align it onto the side of the **THORAX** (G). Align it so the cut side is facing down. Here the shoulder area is placed about  $\frac{1}{4}$ " down from the neck and  $1\frac{1}{4}$ " away from the center back. But you can also use the **placement guides** on the paper pattern for help. You can use that as a starting point then adjust it if you prefer something different.
- c. Ladder stitch the arm to the thorax first by going around the shoulder seam.



d.

- d. Then flip the arm up and stitch underneath, going around the cut you made before. Repeat this for the other arm so you have two total.



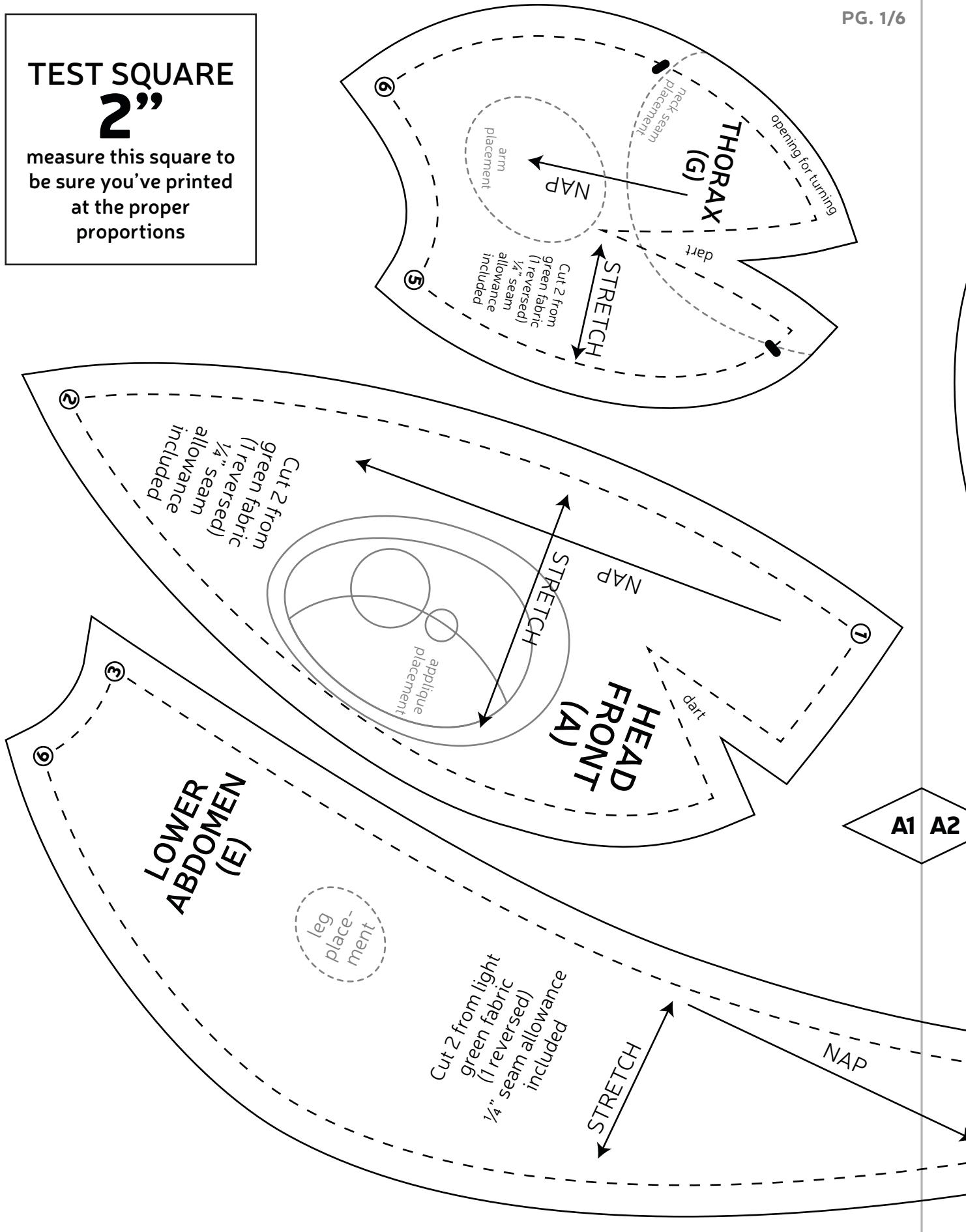
**CONGRATS!**  
This completes your plush!  
Now give it a big hug!

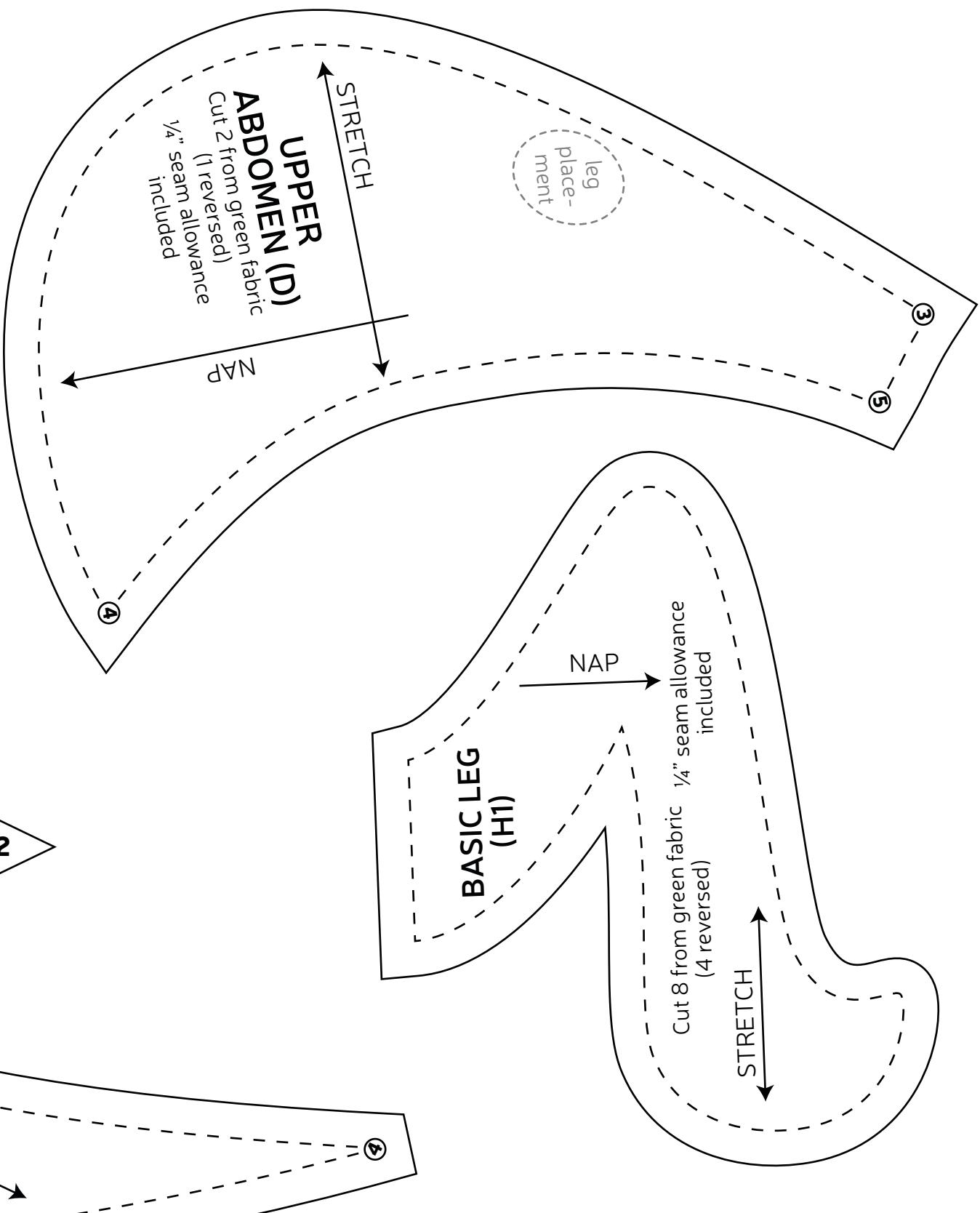
**sew desu ne?**

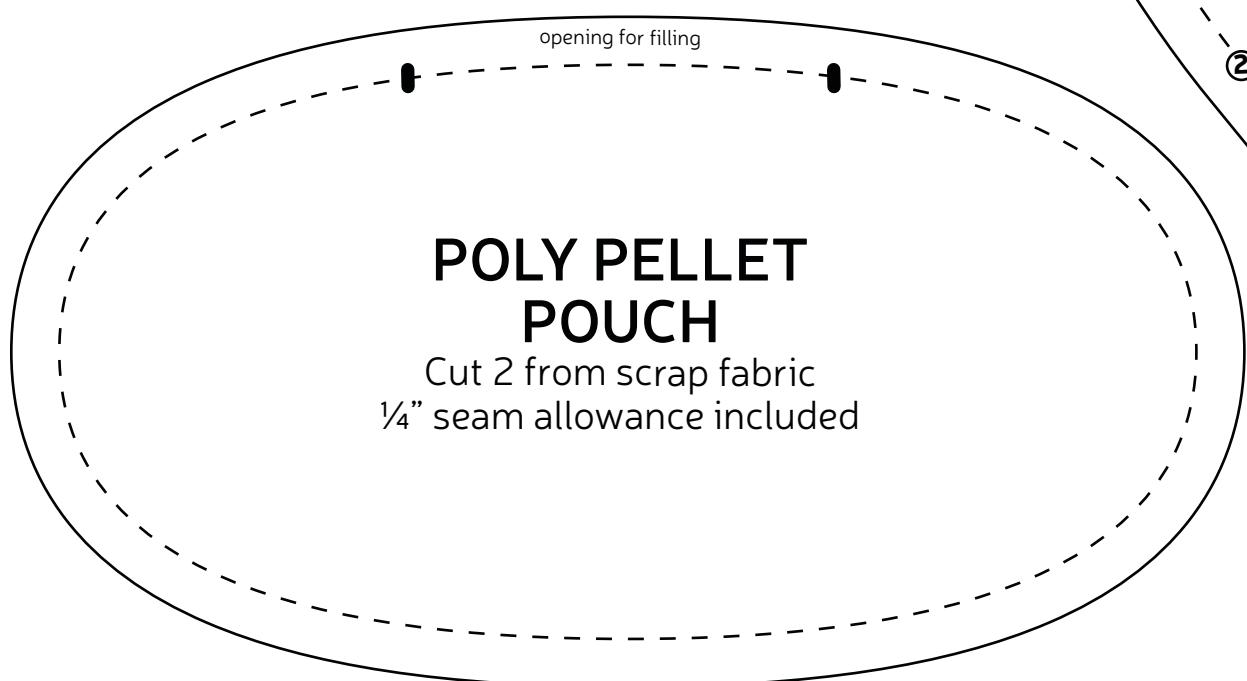
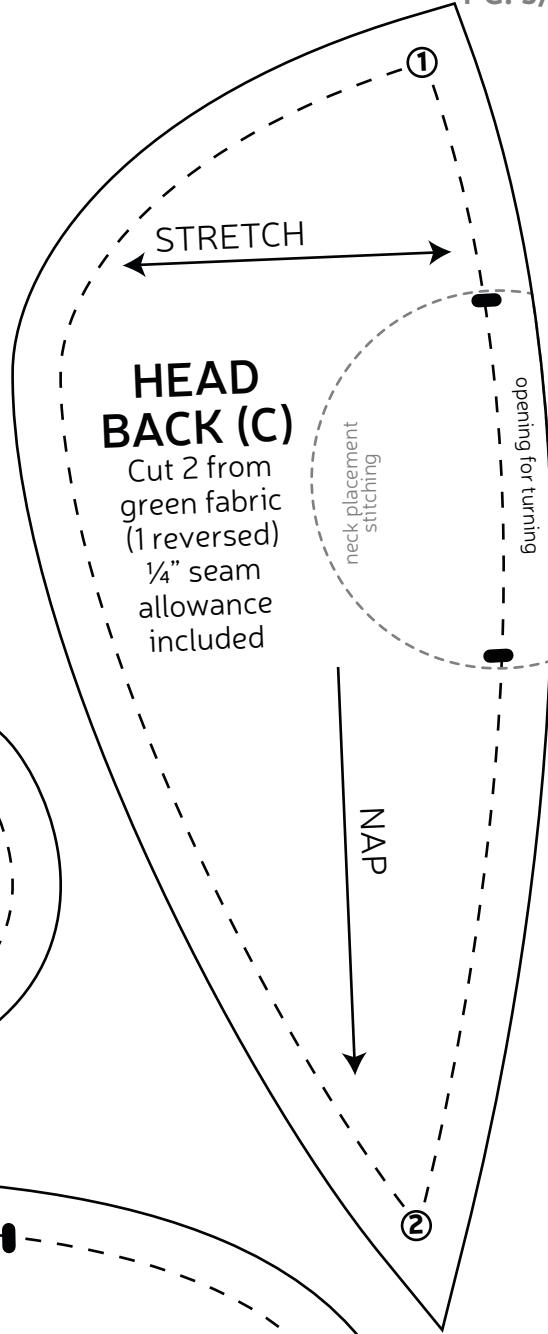
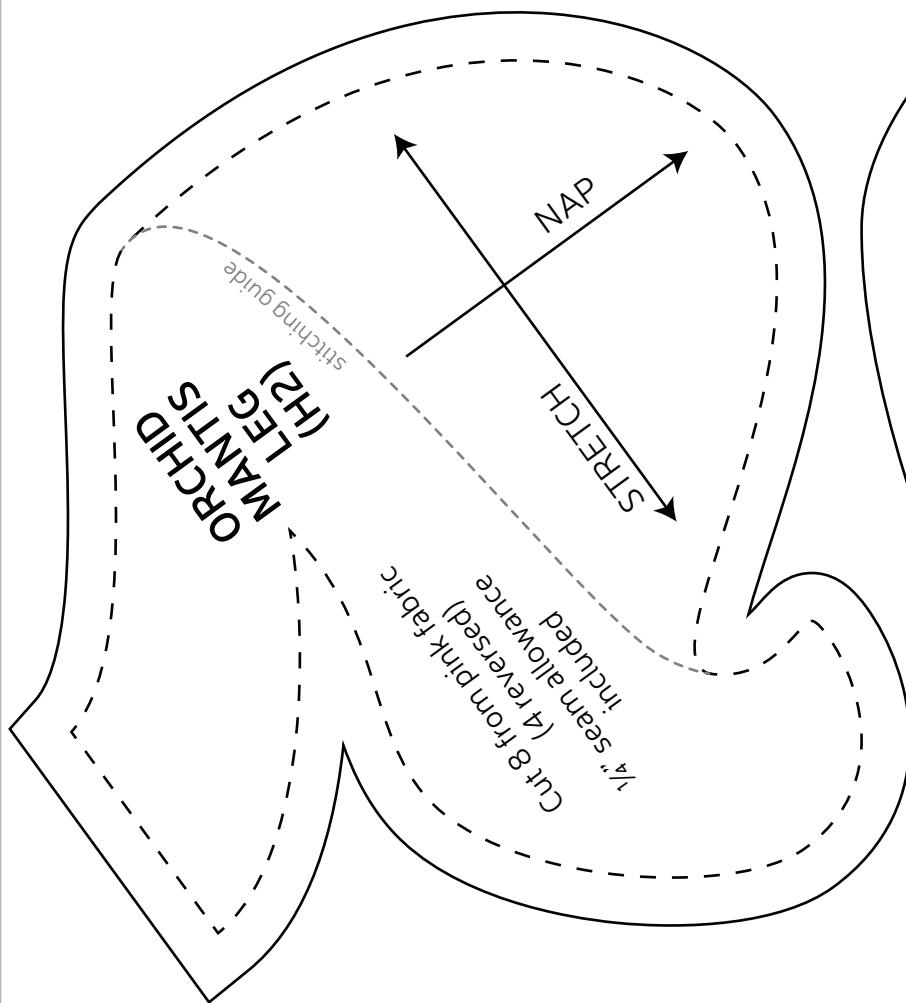
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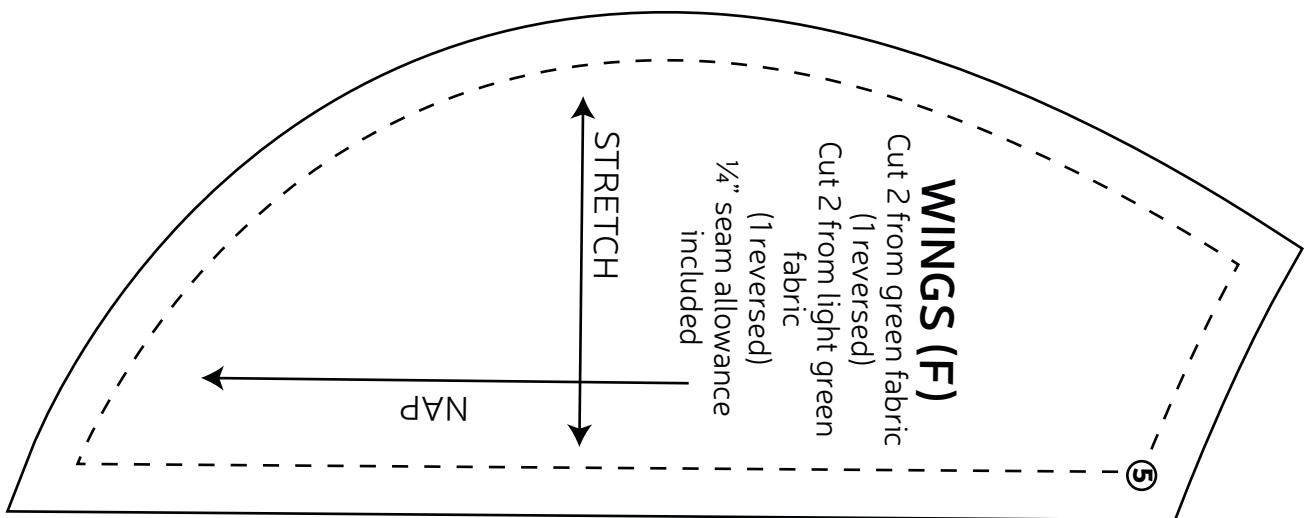
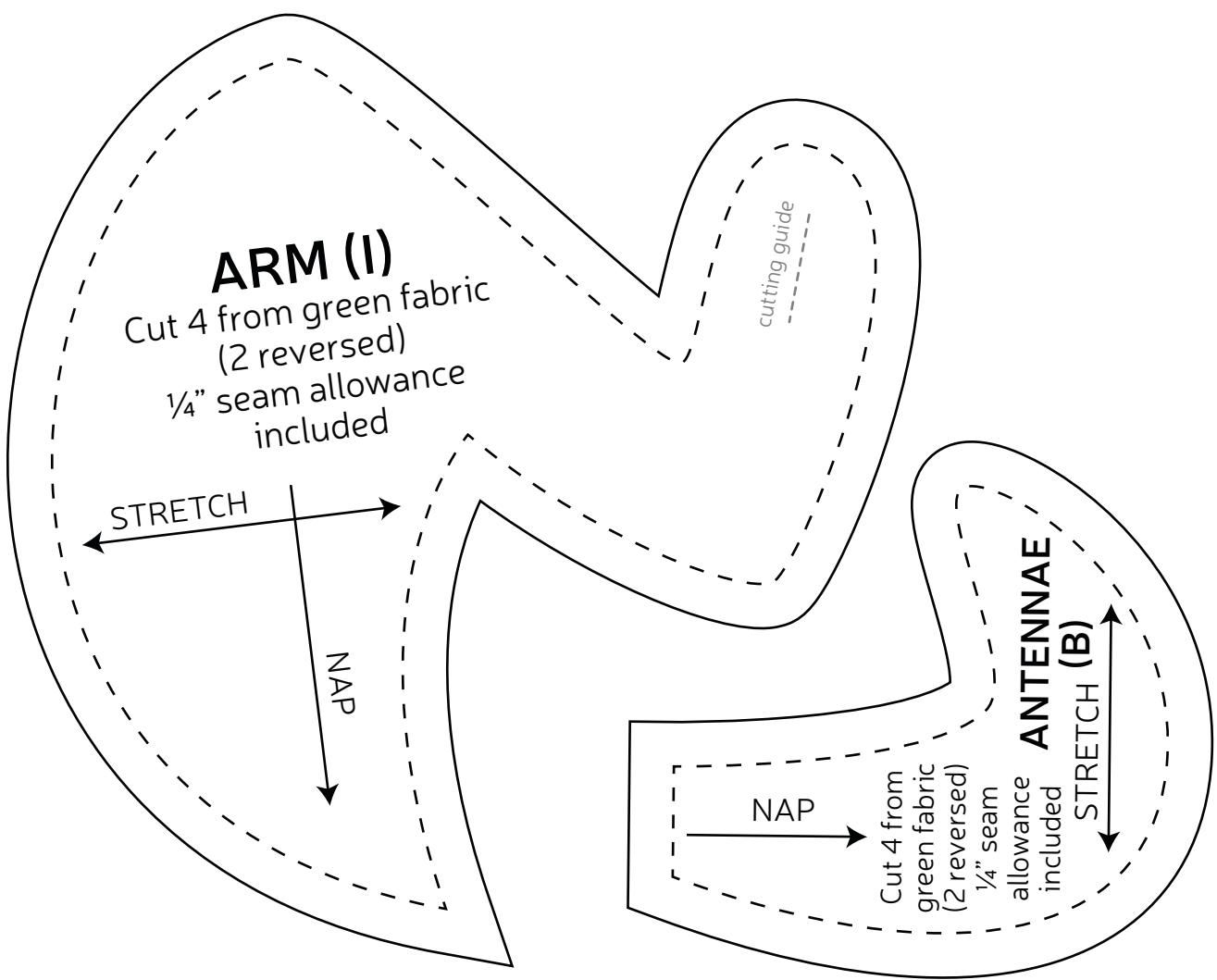
# TEST SQUARE 2"

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







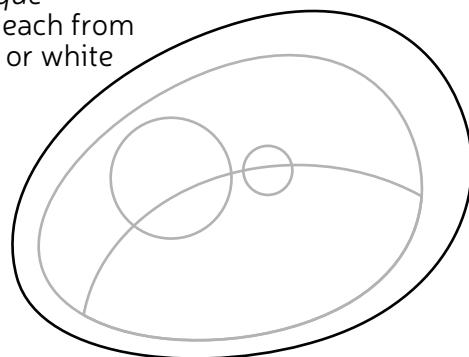
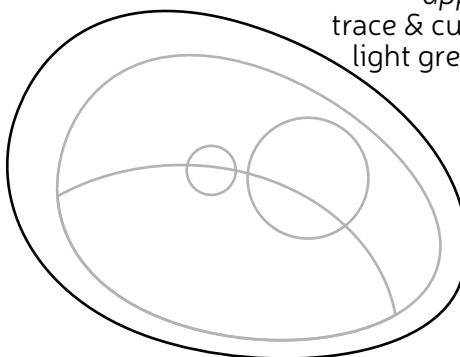


# ROUNDED EYES

## OUTER EYE

*applique*

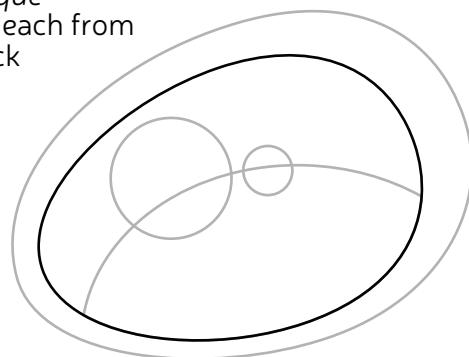
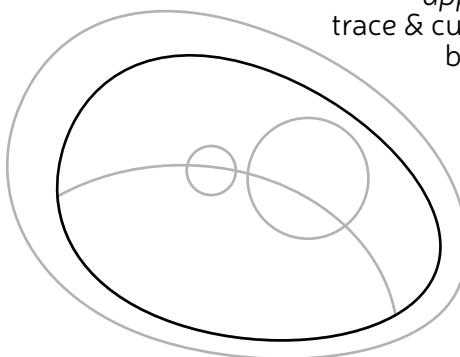
trace & cut 1 each from  
light green or white



## EYE

*applique*

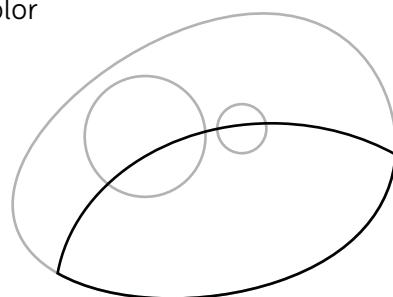
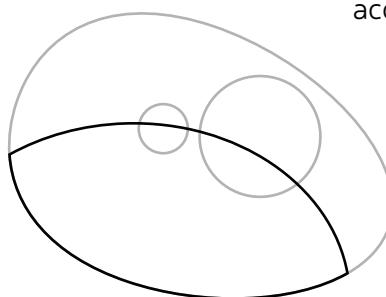
trace & cut 1 each from  
black



## EYE HIGHLIGHT

*applique*

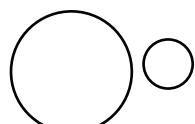
trace & cut 1 each from  
accent color



## EYE SHINE

*applique*

trace & cut 2  
each from white

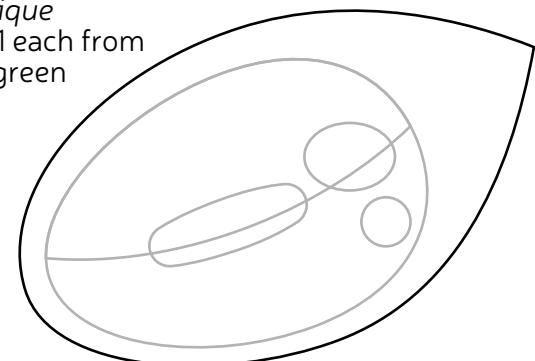
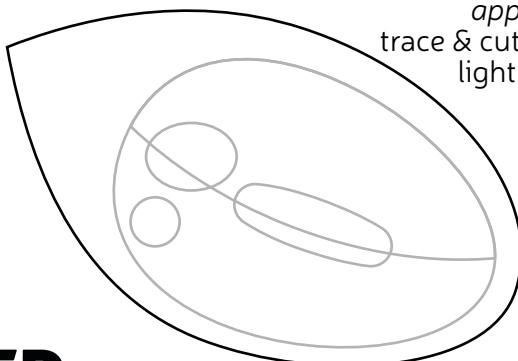


## POINTED EYES

### OUTER EYE

*applique*

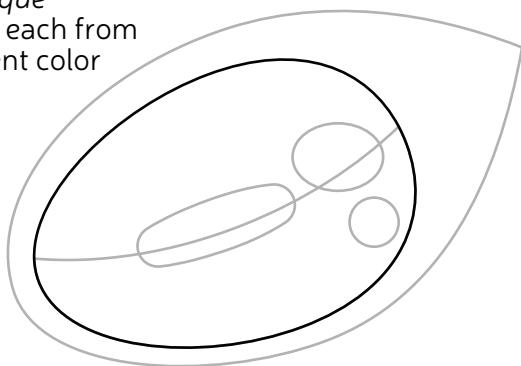
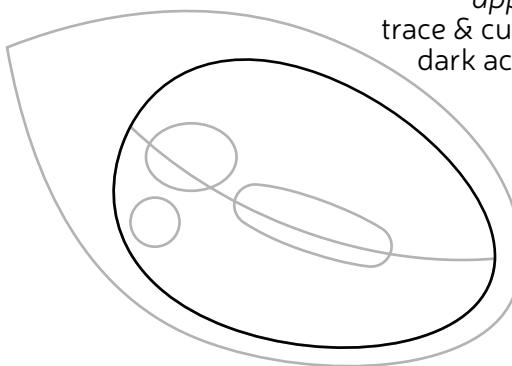
trace & cut 1 each from  
light green



### EYE

*applique*

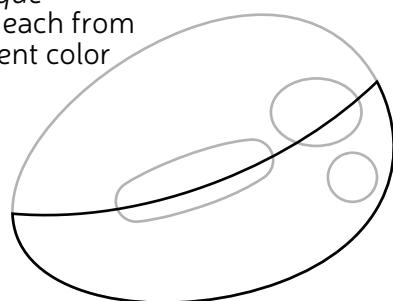
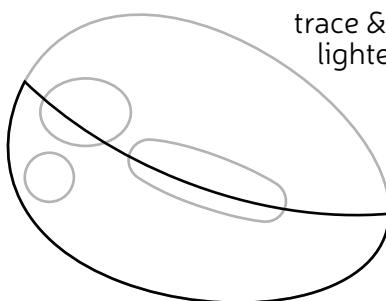
trace & cut 1 each from  
dark accent color



### EYE HIGHLIGHT

*applique*

trace & cut 1 each from  
lighter accent color



### PUPIL

*applique*

trace & cut 2  
from black



### EYE SHINES

*applique*

trace & cut 2  
each from  
white

