

Rat Gas Mask Costume

By [Look-I-Made-A-Rat](#) in [CraftCostumes & Cosplay](#)
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Introduction: Rat Gas Mask Costume





Recently I've been extremely interested in a "lost" Broadway musical known as Raggedy Ann. Notorious in it's time for it's dark themes that some considered inappropriate for children, it's no surprise I was drawn to the villain! And when I learned the original intent had been to portray him as a giant rat, a concept that barely made it onstage, I just had to give a re-design a go!

I was tossing around ideas when this rat/skull/gas mask idea popped into my head. The shape seemed to fit well with a rat-like silhouette without (hopefully) being too goofy and sacrificing his creepiness. He is, after all, the harbinger of death and devourer of souls. He's gotta be unnerving.

I based the costume partly off his Moscow tour appearance with a little Nutcracker Mouse King and a bit of margin of error since I was throwing it together as cheaply as possible as a sort of proof-of-concept. The coat I already owned, military patches and ribbons were easy to buy or make, and the hat came from Amazon and just needed some embellishing. So on to the mask!

I chose a canvas mask since they are historically accurate and much easier to work with than rubber. This mask is **far from functional** and is purely for costume purposes. All of the materials are fairly common, you might need a trip to the craft store or amazon for a couple things. I managed to make it almost entirely out of already-owned scrap fabric and junk, only needing to purchase materials for the eyes, whiskers, and straps.

The scar was a later addition. While the blind eye was part of the concept from the beginning since it's part of the character, I thought a scar might draw a bit more attention to it and make the corresponding makeup more interesting. It's based on a lightning scar, since in canon he sacrificed his eye and also is shown to have some power over storms. A bit melodramatic, but appropriate.

As usual please post below or tag me on my socials if you make this! It makes my day every time.

P.S. if you're interested in that Raggedy Ann musical: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raggedy_Ann_\(musical\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raggedy_Ann_(musical))

Supplies

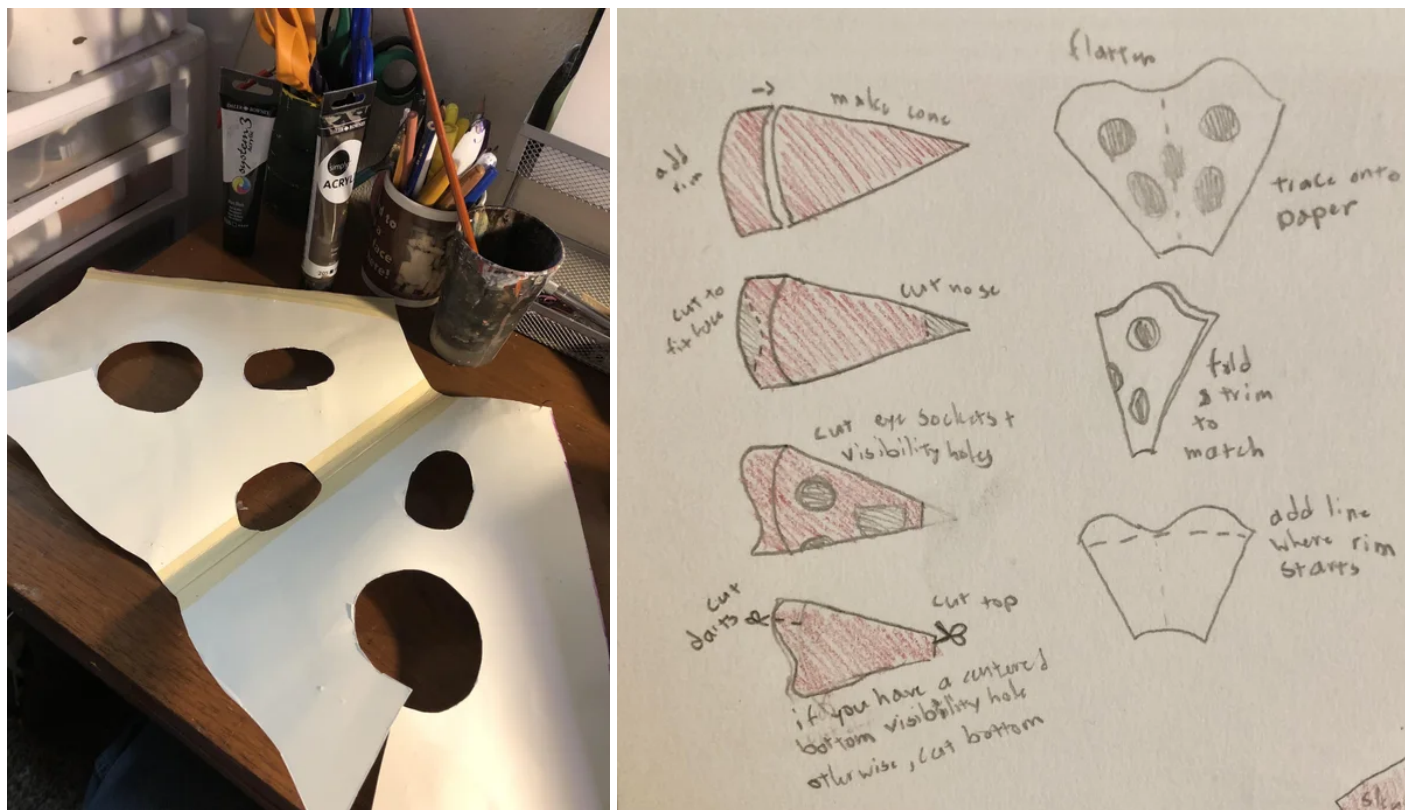
Materials:

- **Cardboard (24" square piece)** this is for drafting the pattern for the mask
- **Mask material (24" square piece)** you will need a skeleton inside your mask to keep its shape. I used cardboard but you can use EVA foam or worbla or whatever you like, as long as it's less than 1/4 inch thick and a little flexible.
- **Canvas** or other thick, industrial fabric (**24" square piece**) I cut some from the legs of a worn pair of work pants.
- **Cotton or similar fabric** for lining (**24" square piece**)
- **Clear DIY Christmas ornament** that is split in half into two half globes.
- 6" square or so piece of **buckram**.
- I used some recycled junk for the filter part of my mask. I support finding your own filter pieces with what you have lying around, but if you really want to follow mine perfectly:
- I used one of these spice containers, I could only find them online in bulk but I've also noticed them in stores sold individually: <https://www.amazon.com/Stainless-Containers-Organic/>
- And the metal tin from Blue Diamonds almonds: <https://www.amazon.com/Blue-Diamond-Almonds-Whole-...>
- **Whisker material**, I used faux leather cord.
- **Woven straps**. I used 36" of 1" thick straps and it was just enough. I like to think I have an average sized head but you might need a little more to be careful. You will also need a buckle to match.
- **Paint** for the eyes, matching the color of your mask fabric, black + white for mixing, brown, red, & yellow for weathering.
- Elmer's Glue
- Thermoplastic
- Scrap fabric or rag for weathering

Tools:

- **Hot glue**
- **Superglue**
- **Paint brushes** and other painting supplies
- **Sewing machine** and needed notions
- **Heavy duty sewing machine needles**
- **Hand sewing notions**
- **Pliers**, wire cutters, and/or other metal cutting tools
- **Awl** or other hole-making tool

Step 1: Patterning



I started with patterning the mask shape out of cardboard.

First, cut out a half circle with a 24-inch radius out of cardboard. Using the edge of a desk, crease the cardboard along the corner, making radial lines from the center every half inch or so. It should naturally want to curve into a cone. Curl it and adjust the width until it fits comfortably around your face— there will be a decent amount of excess — and glue in place. Next, cut a 3" wide strip of cardboard (possibly 4" if your head is considerably large) and crease it so it curls into a ring. Keeping the ring shape, glue it around the rim of the cone so it sticks out directly. There will be a bit of an angle between the cone and the rim.

Cut curves into the top of the mask at the forehead and the neck, until it fits comfortably and there are two tabs that curve around in front of your ears.

Sketch out and cut holes for the eyes, using your eyes of choice as templates and making sure they fit through easily. Next, add your visibility holes. Depending on the stability of your material you can make these a lot bigger than mine. Then, cut off the top of the nose to the length you desire.

To make the pattern, cut the cone open and lay it flat. If you have a visibility hole centered on the bottom like I do you'll want to cut along the top. Otherwise, cut along the bottom so your future seam is hidden. Make darts along the temples, cutting from the edge of the rim to the hole for the eye, to allow the cardboard to flatten. Next, remove the rim from your template to trace the edge of the original cone without it onto your pattern.

Trace the pattern on a large piece of paper, then fold it in half along the center line before cutting. As you cut, try to average out the differences on either side so you'll end up with a symmetrical piece. Cut along the far outer line, but keep the line for the edge of the cone marked.

Step 2: Starting on the Painting



I recommend starting the painting early, as it will take multiple coats that will get a chance to dry as other steps are worked on.

Paint the buckram to match the color of your fabric. Pick it up off your surface to keep it from sticking and try to get paint around all the cracks.

Next, paint the *inside* of the Christmas ornament halves. You will want the effect of that shiny plastic globe on the outside of your paint. For pupils or designs, paint the smallest design first and let it dry, you may even want to do multiple coats until it's solid. Then paint the base layer on top of it.

Once your eyes are fully dry, paint a layer of glue inside them just in case.

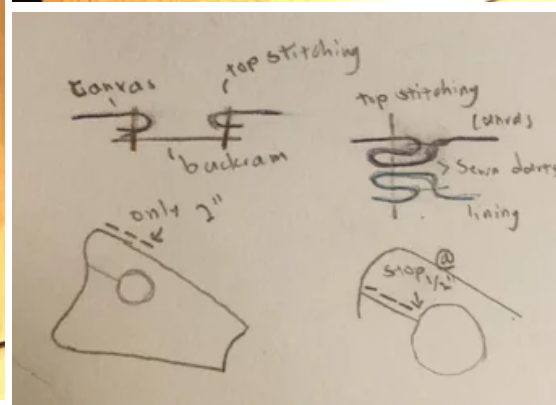
Step 3: Cutting Out the Pattern

Trace and cut your skull material using the line on the pattern that excludes the ear flaps. Add a 1/4 inch seam allowance at the top seam, which should work perfectly well for most materials. Adjust this allowance if your material or joining method requires more overlap. Yes, the eye dart needs to be cut into the skull as well.

Next cut the full version of the pattern out of your fabrics. You will need to add a seam allowance to this one, I used 1/2 inch to be on the safe side. In your canvas you will also want to add 1/2 inch seam allowance around each of the holes. For the lining, cut the holes exactly where marked. The lining will not be visible and will be glued, so there's no need for nice finished edges. Mark the darts along the temples, but do not cut them.

Cut your painted buckram to the size of the holes, with a 1/2 inch seam allowance as well.

Step 4: The Machine Sewing





Sew the darts along the temples of both the lining and the canvas.

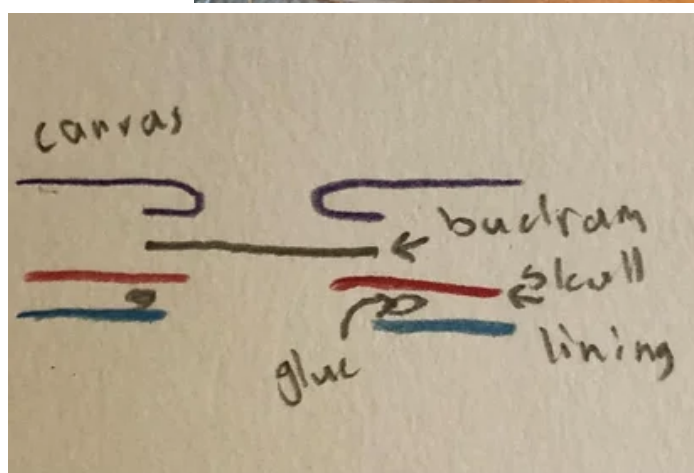
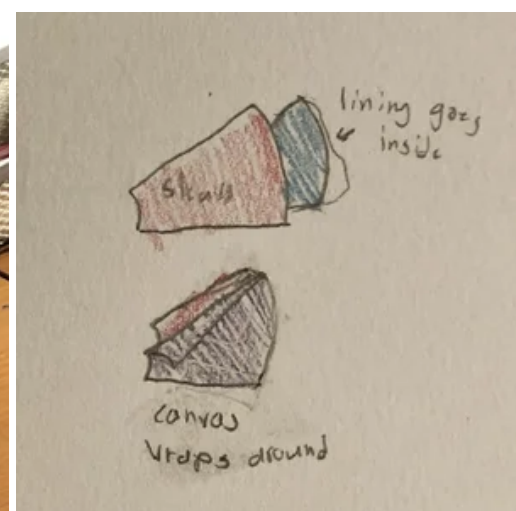
Around each hole in the outer fabric, clip the fabric every 1/2 inch so it can fold inward. Fold and pin the fabric around the visibility holes, and pin the buckram in behind it. Topstitch along the folded edge.

Pin the lining into a cone shape and sew all the way down. With your outer layer, only sew about 2 inches down from the top of the head. You will need the rest to remain open to fit it onto the skull, and will ladder stitch it up later.

Next pin the outer layer and lining together at the seam where the mask meets your face (right sides together!) and sew along it. If you're confident in your sizing, you can jump down to Step 9 and attach the straps in the seam here, but I waited until I could test it on my head first.

Turn inside out and top stitch the edge seam so it lies flat. Match up the dart seams from the lining and the canvas and press and top stitch them flat as well, stopping about 1/2 inch from the edge of the eye.

Step 5: Attach It to the Skull



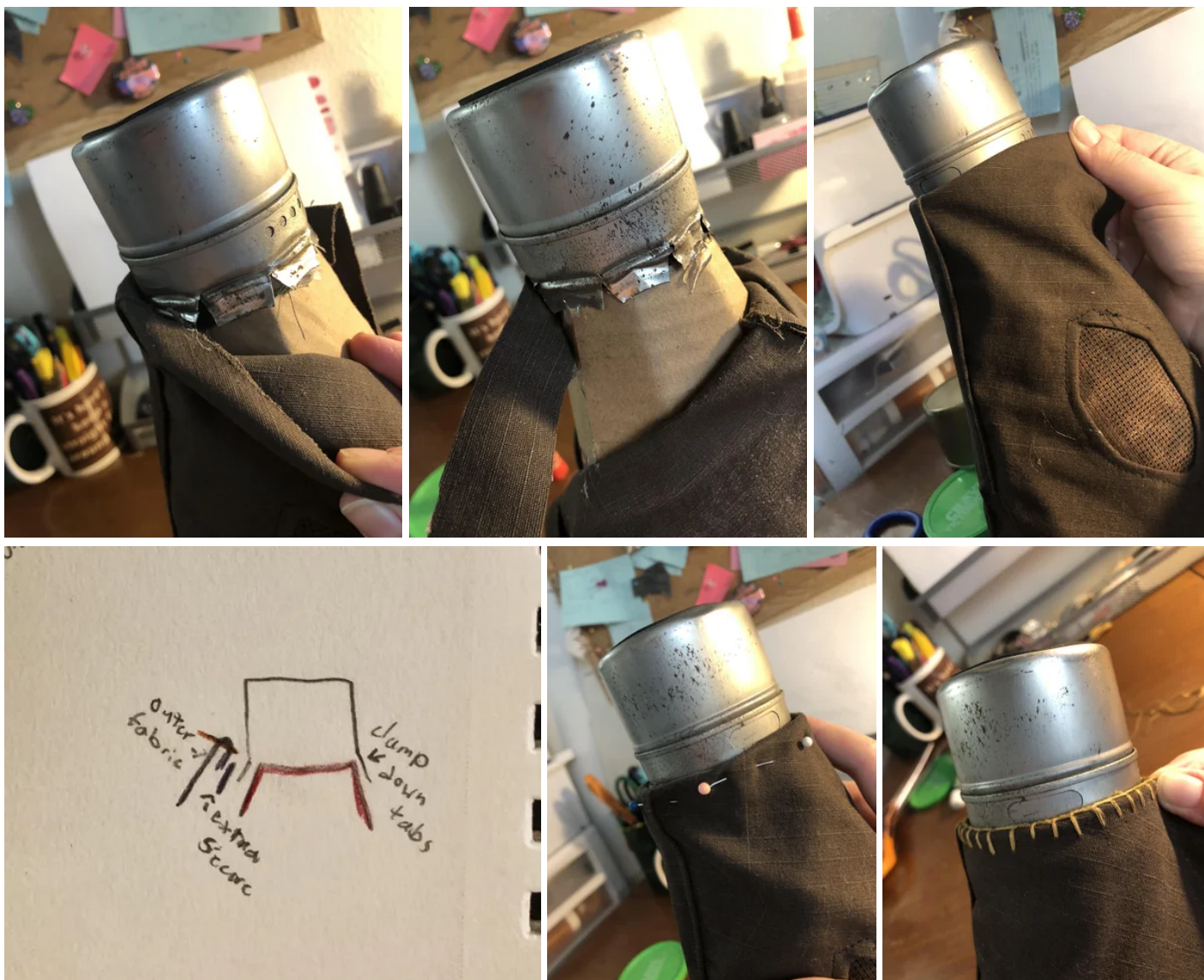


Fold your skull material into a cone and attach it along the seam.

Pull your fabric over the skull starting from the back of the head, the lining should fit inside while the canvas covers the outside. It may take a little bending and shaping, but with the majority of the canvas layer still open it should fit right in. Both layers should line up with the holes.

Looking inside the mask, glue the lining around the visibility holes in the skull. At the tip of the nose, fold the lining over the end of the skull and glue it around the opening.

Step 6: Attaching 1/2 of the Metal Filter





This is where your process may differ, depending on what you managed to find for your filter.

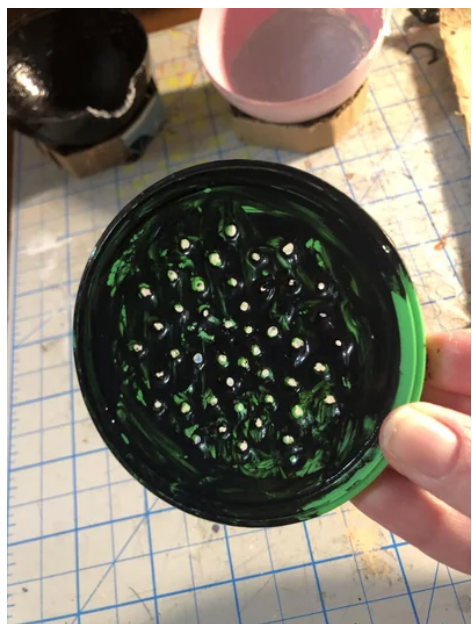
If you're using the same tin that I used:

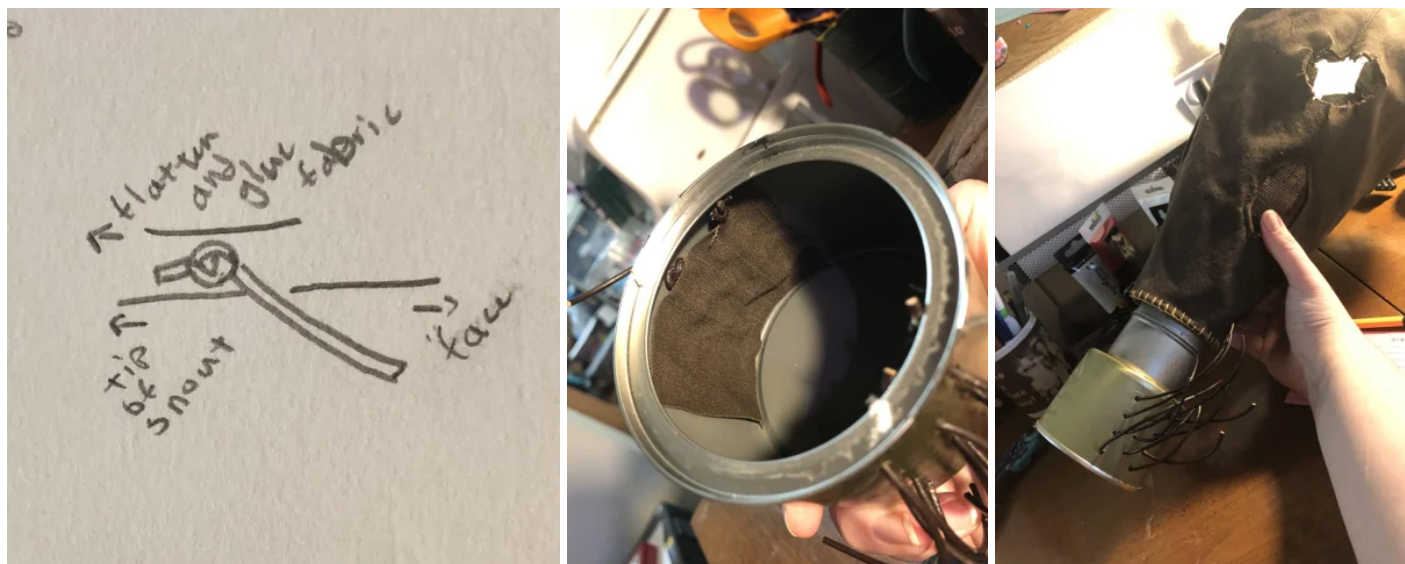
Pull the clear plastic window out and clip along the edges of the metal lip, allowing you to bend the tabs outward. Bend them so they're slightly wider than the container itself and fit it around the nose of the skull. Clamp the tabs inward and glue on a strip of fabric to secure it.

Next, fold over the seam allowance of the nose end of the canvas so that it just covers the edge of the metal. Stitch it in place, I used a blanket stitch and embroidery thread but if you'd rather it be less visible or want to try a different design, anything works.

With a thread matching your fabric, ladder stitch the top seam of the mask together starting from the temple and going down to the tip of the nose. Make sure it's nice and tight around the nose.

Step 7: The Other 1/2 of the Filter and Whiskers





I used an almond can for the other half, probably easier to find than those specific spice tins.

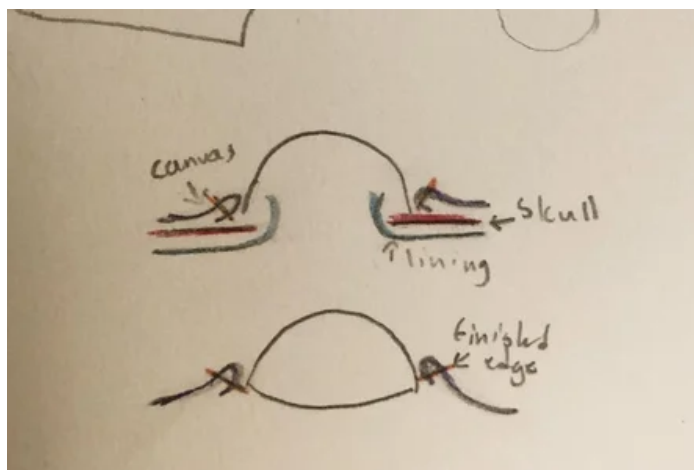
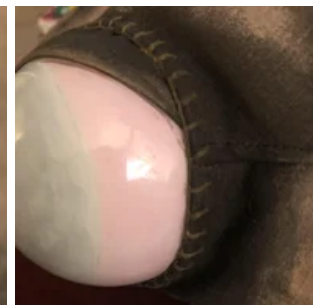
Poke holes in a circular or grid pattern into the lid of the almond container. Mix black paint with Elmers glue 1:1 and paint it. The glue will keep the paint from flaking on the soft plastic. Paint both sides so none of the original color is showing, this will take a couple layers.

Mark holes for the whiskers in a series of lines. If you look closely at any whiskered animal, you'll find they grow in surprisingly organized little lines. I'd recommend using an awl or possibly even a drill to make these if you have the means to clamp it down appropriately. Be careful and don't hurt yourself, and don't use an open pair of scissors like I did.

Cut the whisker cord into multiple different lengths (I did 2x 7", 2x 5" and 7x 4") and tie knots in one end. Thread them through from the inside. Once they're all attached, flatten them all facing away from the snout (if yours is similar to mine, the snout is the open end) and glue fabric to the inside to keep them in place.

Don't glue the lid of the filter on just yet, you'll need it open to attach the teeth.

Step 8: Attaching the Eyes

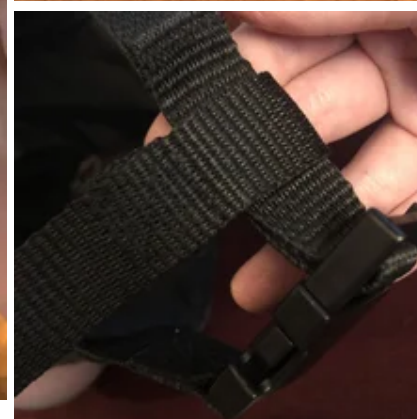
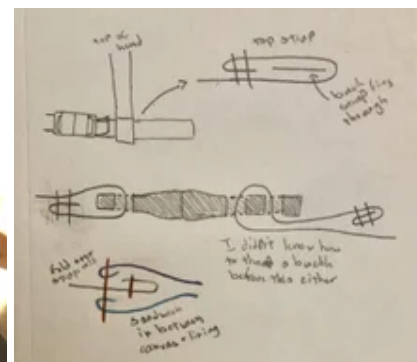




Cut some little rectangles from your fabric and fold over one edge a little, sewing it flat. This is your eyelid (you can make them as you like depending on the expression you're looking for). Glue it in an arc along the edge of each eye, then trim and fold over the inside.

Fit your eyes through the holes in your mask from the inside. With a little finagling you should be able to get them so they are sitting **outside** the skull but **inside** the outer canvas layer. Make small cuts in the circle around the eye until they just barely fit. Remove the eyes and finish this seam the same way you did the end of the nose. Then put the eyes back in and glue. If they're a little loose you may have to glue the fabric all the way around them, but if they're nice and tight they should stay in place without much help. On the inside, fold the lining over inside the eyes and glue it in.

Step 9: Adding the Straps





If you're more used to sewing these sorts of things you could add the straps when sewing the lining and outer layer together. I was not sure of the sizing though so I decided to wait until I was almost finished with the mask before sizing them.

The back strap connects simply above the ears from one side to another, the buckle should be to one side with the extra strap facing towards the back. The top strap comes down from the center of the mask and loops around the back strap. You can tuck the extra strap from the buckle into the loop in the top strap.

Pin all the straps in place, making sure to leave an extra 1 1/2" of strap on any of the ends connecting to the mask, and an extra 2" on any visible joint. For strength and to prevent fraying you'll want to fold all your edges inward. Wrap masking tape around the straps right where they meet the mask, to mark your placing.

Fold over all the edges of the straps and sew them together. Seam rip along the seams of the mask only where you need it, right above the temple darts on the sides and in the middle on the top. Don't forget to slide the back strap through the loop in the top strap before sewing them on.

Machine or hand sew back along the seams of the mask to secure them in place. You will likely need to hand sew the top strap in since it's so close to the skull.

Step 10: Making the Teeth





The teeth on my mask were sculpted out of thermoplastic. Mix a little bit of yellow and tan paint into the plastic while it's soft to color it and give it that nasty yellowed tinge. Each tooth is a rectangle that tapers at the end and curves slightly inward. The front two teeth should be much sorter than the back two.

To attach the front teeth, cut two holes into the back of your front filter, on what will be the bottom. They should be just big enough for the teeth to fit in. Test how long you want the teeth to be- mine go just to the start of the first filter- and superglue in place. Finish it off with hot glue on the inside for stability, and a small line of glue on the outside to fill the crack and form the gums. Paint the gums red and brown and let them dry as you work on the bottom teeth.

Measure out how far back you want the teeth to go. They should almost touch the tips of the front teeth. For stability, you're going to want to cut through the canvas so the teeth can be glued right to the skull. Mark where the back end of the teeth will be, then make two small horizontal cuts 1/2 inch in front of that. The teeth will need to be inserted into the hole in the fabric so the hole itself must be a little farther forward than the back end of the tooth. With an X-acto blade, carefully widen each hole until each tooth just barely fits. Superglue in both the bottom teeth.

Measure and cut a rectangle of fabric to make the gums. It needs to cover the base of the teeth completely with room to be hemmed. Fold over and machine sew one of the long sides, this will be where it meets the teeth, and the other three sides if you wish. Pin it in place and whip stitch the gums to the canvas of the head.

Time to weather the teeth while you can still reach all sides of them! Paint on a mixture of brown paint and water, then gently wipe most of it off with a rag. It should wipe off the plastic super easily so be gentle. Repeat with yellow and red until they look appropriately grimy. Let dry.

I ended up superglueing the very tips of the bottom teeth to the canvas to keep them in position better.

You can now glue on the front filter and its lid!

Step 11: Painting and Weathering



I wanted my mask to have a skull-like withered appearance. Mix some white and brown paint and use a reference to contour the highlights of a rough skull shape onto the fabric. Be careful to only pick up a little paint at a time, and dry brush your edges so they fade. The whole style is a bit rough and industrial so it doesn't have to be perfect.

After going over it with a lighter layer I went back through with watered-down black paint to give the shading a more weathered, natural look. I used the black paint around the eyes and where I wanted to accentuate the shadows of the skull.

Step 12: All Finished! Possible Alterations

Since this was my first try, here's some thoughts on the process that I might include in later versions:

The buckram works very well and blended in to the painting and overall industrial design of the mask more than I had expected! I would likely make these sections bigger, and you can adjust the pattern to do so if you like! Just remember that whatever holes you make will reduce the structural integrity of the skull, so either space things out and design accordingly or use more stable material than cardboard. The mask does have a rather small field of vision and while it's manageable it's not ideal.

Longer whiskers! I ran out of materials and I think in the future I would use much longer cord.

And naturally, more robust material for both the skull and the ears on my hat, as they're both just cardboard at the moment. Especially if I were to re-make him for the stage he's need to be a bit more solid.

Thank you for reading! And once again, please let me know if you make one! Or if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions. I'm constantly updating my tutorials and input from other makers (especially those who have given them a try) helps immensely.

3/17/22: I ended up altering the character's design and added a scar around the blind eye. First I painted on an undercoat in the shape I wanted, then tore apart some cotton balls and dabbed them on with a whole lot of paint. Just shade it with some amber and black for depth and it's good to go!