

Wigging a Cloth Doll

Tried and true techniques for turning a skein of yarn into an enchanting wig for your doll

by Colette Wolff

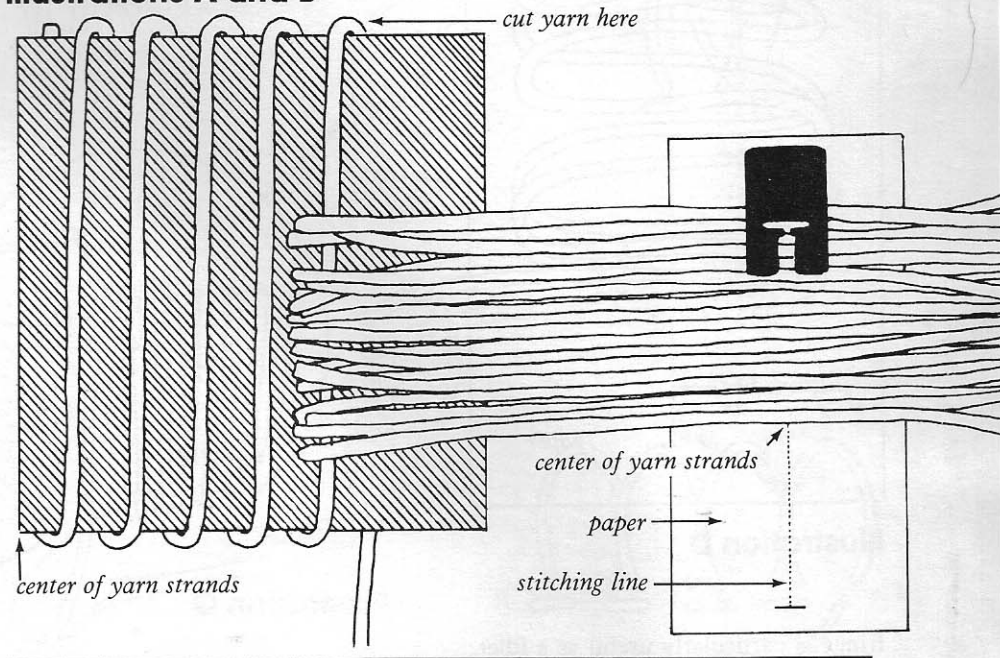
Making a wig for a cloth doll is not difficult once you've mastered a few basic techniques. Harder, perhaps, for novice dollmakers is choosing a wig style that will enhance the age, sex and character of the doll. If this is one of your problems, you can get hairstyle ideas by visiting your local toy store and inspecting the wigs of the dolls being sold, and by studying the hairstyles of the dolls shown in this and similar magazines.

Once you've chosen a style for the wig, you must decide on the color and type of yarn to be used. Wool and acrylic yarns are both suitable for wigging cloth dolls, and they can be two-, three- or four-ply. Lastly, you must decide on the best method or combination of methods to use for applying the yarn to the doll's head. Generally, the yarn is sewn into fringes or tied into tassels before application.

Fringes

The most common method of yarn application is the use of fringes. For a wig style that requires long strands of yarn, you will need to make a long, yarn fringe. To do this, measure the doll for the desired length of the strands, wrap yarn around a piece of sturdy cardboard measuring that length and cut the yarn (illustration A). You could also measure the yarn directly against a ruler. After the yarn is cut, machine stitch the strands to a line ruled on a piece of paper (illustration B). Stitch across the center of the yarn strands, or off-center, as the wig style demands. The line should be as long as the fringe must be for its intended position on the doll's head. (Yarn can also be sewn to a strip of fabric, tape or wig cap.) Sew with small stitches to catch each strand of yarn. Arrange the yarn strands either parallel and touching or parallel and thickly bunched together as the head location and style require; double stitch

illustrations A and B



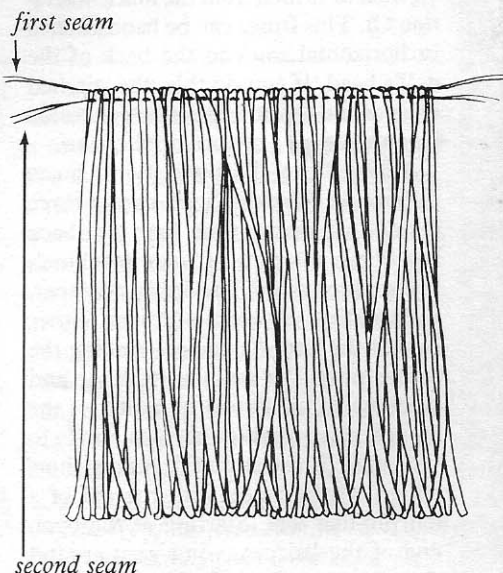
for security. Gently tear the paper away from the completed fringe.

You can make use of this fringe in various ways. For instance, the seam of the fringe can become the part. Or, the seam can become the hairline—when one side of the fringe is flipped back over the other side, the fringe seam is hidden. The fringe can also be used as a filler piece by stitching it to the head to fill in empty areas, such as behind the forehead hairline or to the side or in back of a part, where additional yarn may be needed.

Once you've decided how you want to use the fringe, pin the stitched seam to the desired position on the doll's head and handsew with doubled thread, backstitching over the seam. (If you have sewn the fringe to a tape, you must handsew the sides of the tape to the doll's head.)

You can make a double seam on the fringe to flatten the top of it; this type of

illustration C



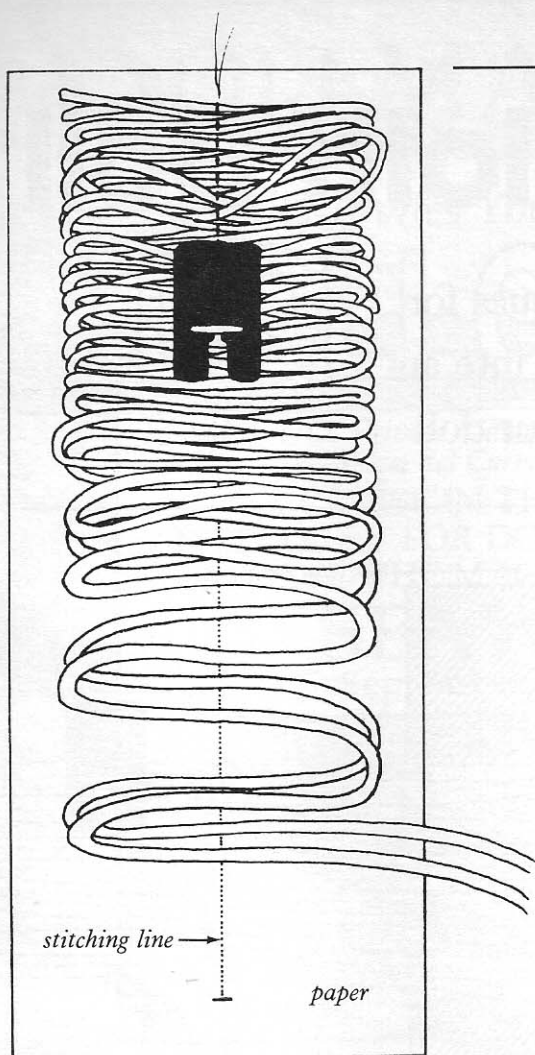


illustration D

fringe is particularly useful as a filler. To do this, sew the yarn to a piece of paper, as described previously, and then fold one side of the fringe over the other side at the seam. Sew the fringe again, $\frac{1}{16}$ inch to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch from the fold (illustration C). This fringe can be handstitched in horizontal rows to the back of the doll's head. If you do this, the stitched edge of the top row must be concealed by another type of yarn application.

A fringe for a short wig style is made differently. Working with two or three strands of yarn at a time, loop yarn back and forth in front of your machine's presser foot, over a line drawn on paper, maintaining an even width on either side of the line. As you are making the loops, push the strands together and machine stitch across the center of the looped yarn, sewing the yarn fringe to the paper (illustration D). A very short fringe can be made with the aid of a hairpin-like tool. Starting at the open end of the hairpin, wind yarn around the tool up to the arch. Machine stitch up the center of the yarn, pull the tool

out from most of the stitched yarn, wind more yarn around the tool and resume stitching; continue doing this until you have the desired length.

The short-yarn fringe is handsewn to the doll's head in the same manner as the long-yarn fringe. For an all-short-hair wig, start applying the fringe at the crown of the head and continue applying, in ever widening circles, until the entire wig area is covered to the hair-line. The closeness of the rows will force the fringe to stand up rather than lay flat against the head. If you leave the loops uncut, the wig will have a short, curly style. If the loops are cut and trimmed, the wig will be suitable for a boy or man doll. Another option would

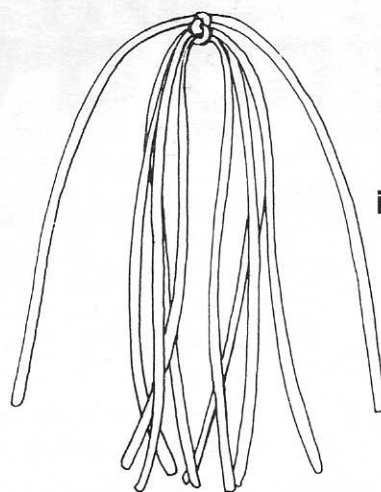


illustration E

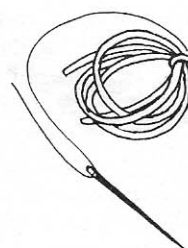


illustration F

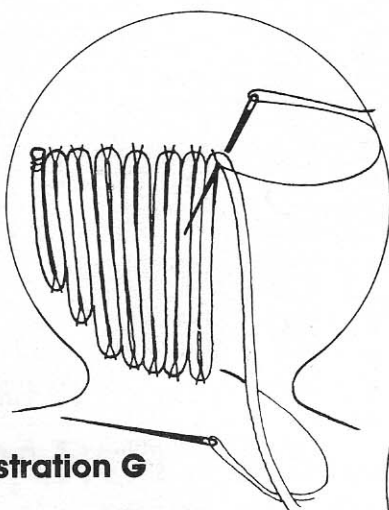


illustration G

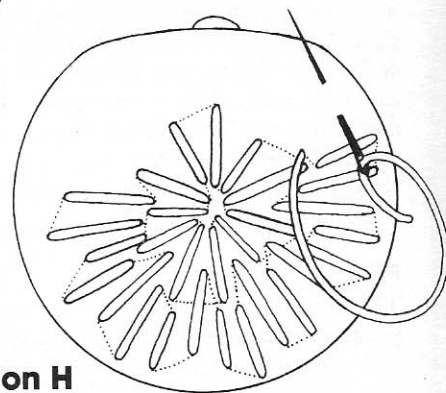


illustration H

be to brush the cut ends of the yarn with a wire brush, which will produce a fuzzy, afro look.

Many different wig styles can be created by combining short- and long-yarn fringes. For example, you can have a short-yarn fringe at the top of the head or framing the forehead, and a long-yarn fringe in back.

Tassels

Another method of yarn application involves making tassels. To make a tassel, collect as many strands of yarn, long or short, as desired; tie the strands of yarn together tightly in the center (illustration E). Handsew each tassel to the doll's head across and through the cen-

ter knot. To make short, looped tassels, wind the yarn a number of times around one, two or three fingers; slip the yarn off your fingers and stitch immediately to the head through the center of the loops (illustration F). These tassels can be left looped or they can be cut.

For a miniature doll, one or two tassels can make the entire wig. A larger doll can be completely wigged with tassels. However, tassels are usually used in combination with other applications as they are useful fillers. For a stylish effect, long tassels, looped or cut, can border the face, temples and/or back of the neck.

Other Methods

Yarn may also be handsewn directly to the doll's head. Long strands of yarn, one, two or three at a time, can be back-stitched to the head at the part or hairline. They can be tacked to the back of the head for filler. Or, short, wispy pieces of yarn can be tacked around the hairline to soften the outline.

Yarn can also be couched to the head in rows, completely concealing the head fabric. For example, yarn looped back and forth from crown to nape and caught at the crown and nape with a needle and thread (illustration G) will cover the back of the head. Such an application could act as a filler, or masking, under a long fringe or tassels that have been attached to the top of the head. Or, if thick enough, the sewn-on yarn could serve as the doll's back hair with a short fringe or some tassels finishing the top of the head and the nape of the neck.

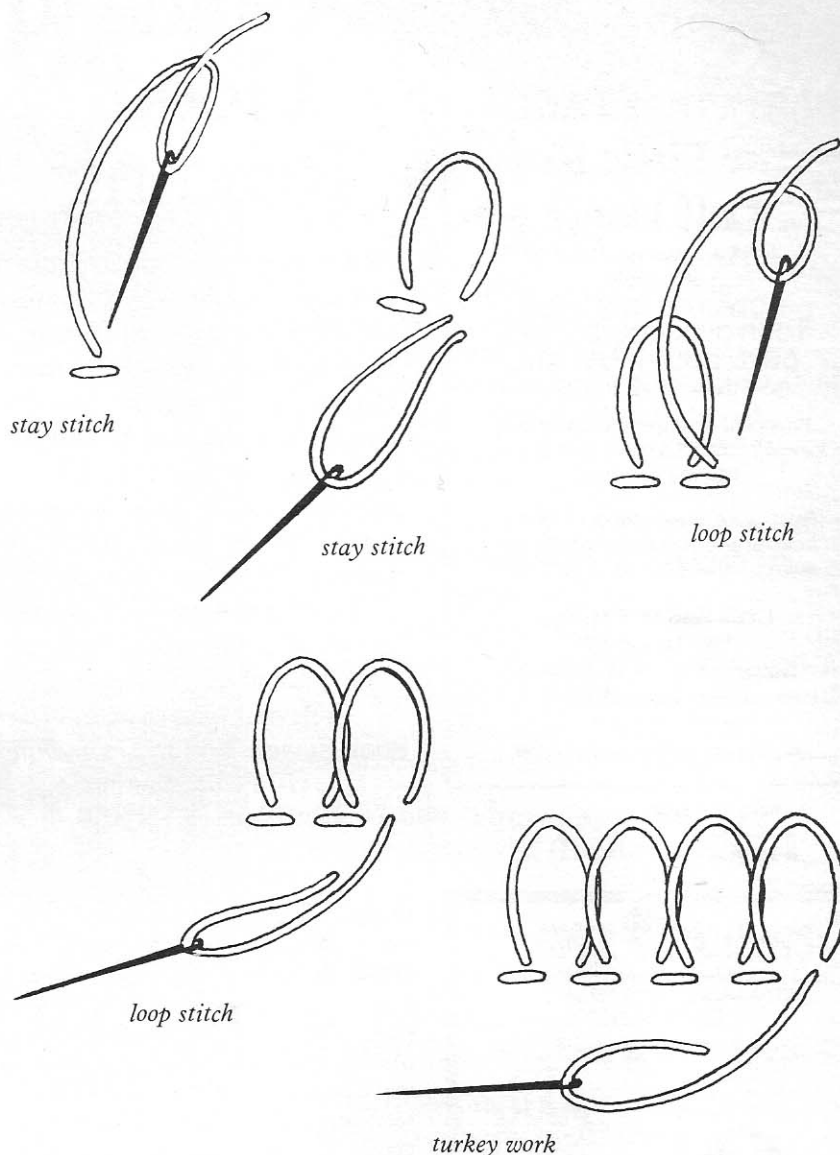
Finally, fine yarn can be threaded into a needle and sewn directly onto the head. If you do this, you can either sew long stitches of yarn that lay flat against the head (illustration H), or sew loops of yarn using a technique called turkey stitching (illustration I).

For special effects, the character of the yarn can be altered. For instance, when yarn plies are untwisted and separated, each ply will be crimped, giving the wig a bushier effect. Also, yarn that has been crocheted or knitted, and then unraveled, will retain its kinkiness. Cut ends can also be brushed into a fuzz, as mentioned previously. To make curls, wrap wet yarn around a wooden dowel and bake until dry in a 200-degree oven (approximately 20 to 25 minutes); this will give you tight curls.

General Rules

The doll's fabric "scalp" should not be visible under the yarn unless desired

Illustration I



for character or age definition. Bulky-and-thick is preferable to thin-and-skimpy, however, bulky-and-thick can be difficult to style effectively, so make sure to control the yarn density accordingly. Yarn generally needs to be thicker at the top of the head than at the sides and back, particularly for long wig styles. Cut yarn strands slightly longer than the wig length measured on the doll to allow for shaping and trimming. To prevent strands of stuffing from coming out with the thread when stitching yarn to the head fabric, run the needle just under the fabric, not into the stuffing.

Choose the method or methods of applying the yarn that will accommodate

the wig style you envision; use any combination of methods to do the job. When the yarn is applied and ready for styling, employ any techniques that give you the desired results. Trim, twist, roll, tack, pin, braid, tie, wrap, curl or bind; this is your chance to be inventive. The wig's finished styling should complement the doll and be secure enough to survive the kind of handling the doll will receive. Other than that, there are no rules; if it works, it's right. ●

Colette Wolff has been making cloth dolls and teaching cloth dollmaking for 20 years. She publishes her original patterns under the name Platypus.