

A Simple Ghost Marionette

Imagine a ghostly marionette that can fly around the room and jump out from behind the furniture!

You can make a simple one in probably less than 45 minutes, or you can get "fancy" and add details and decorations. Start with the simple one and see how you like it!

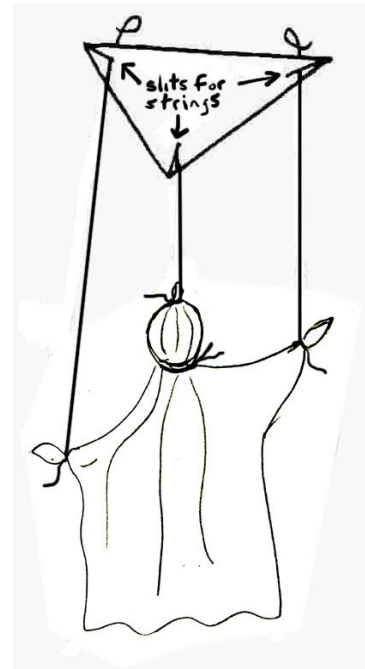
WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Materials

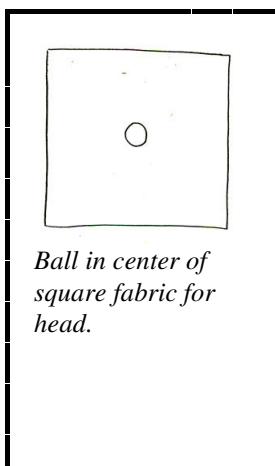
- 1 piece of white slinky, silky type fabric, about 1 yard (or 1 meter) square, or even a little bigger. If you can see through it a little, it will be even more "ghostly." You can use it square or cut it in a big circle.
- 1 triangle piece of stiff cardboard, about 8-12 inches on a side
- A ping pong or other white ball (or you can even use wadded up paper or balled fabric!)
- String (like kite string) or thread, to string your puppet

Tools

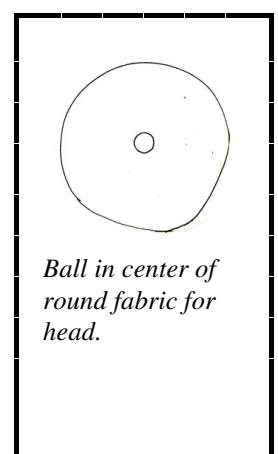
- Needle (Optional, to sew the thread onto the puppet...if you don't want to sew, you can just tie the thread on...it will work just as well.)
- Scissors



LETS GET STARTED!



You can use your fabric as a square or as a circle. Either way will make a fun ghost. Lay out the scarf on a flat surface and find the center. If you have a white ping pong ball or other kind of small ball, you can use it in the center to make your ghost head. If you want, you can make a ball of paper or fabric (remember that if your ghost fabric is a little see-through, then whatever you use for the head might show. (TIP: If your "head" is not quite white, you can wrap it in white cloth or masking (or adhesive) tape before you enclose it in the ghost head.)



HEAD AND BODY: Keeping your head ball in the center of the fabric, flip the fabric down so that the head is completely enclosed in the fabric. When you hold the ball through the fabric, the fabric will drape down, just like if you put a sheet over your own head! Take a piece of string and tie it around the neck so that the head/ball can not fall out. Figure 1 shows how to tie the string around the neck (don't worry about tying it too tight...Ghosts don't have to breath!)

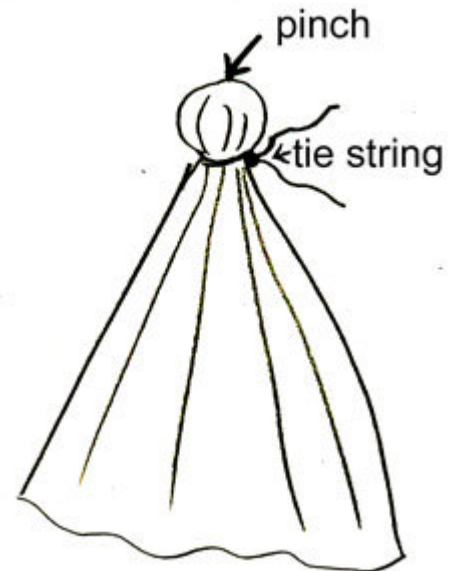


Figure 1

HEAD ATTACHMENT: Now you want to make a way to attach the head to your marionette control. Pinch a little bit of fabric just at the top of the head and either tie a piece of your string around it or sew it to the head at that point. The main thing is to get a good attachment from your puppet's head to your controller. Figure one shows where to pinch, and figure 2 shows the string attached to the head and ready to attach to the triangular marionette controller which you will use to control your puppet. For now leave about 3 feet of string (you can always cut it shorter later if you need to.)

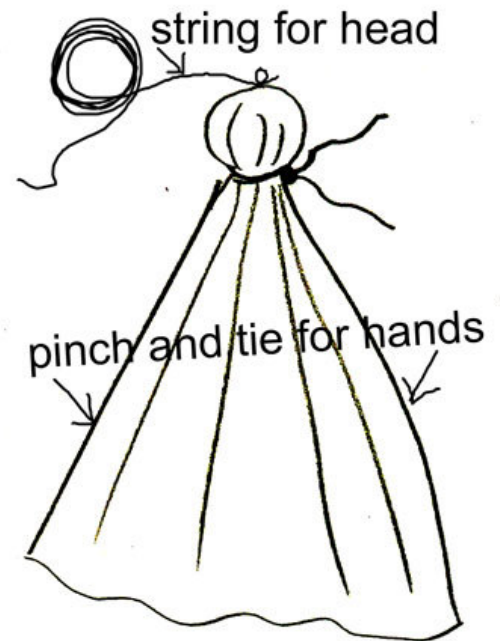


Figure 2

HAND ATTACHMENTS: Now you can pinch and tie or sew the strings for the hands on. You can put them part way down the fabric or all the way at the end. A good puppet builder might experiment, pinching and holding the fabric in different places to see what looks and moves best. You don't want the arms too short so that they won't float around in a good ghostly way! Once you decide where you want to have the "hands" attach the string (again, about 3 feet is a good string length to start.) You can leave little tufts of cloth sticking out to be your hands (ADVANCED TIP: Want to make creepy hands? How about taking white pipe cleaners and making some twisty, gnarly fingers and hands and attaching them at the wrists with your strings?)

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER:

Now your ghost marionette is ready for the controller. Take your triangle of cardboard and cut a small slit in each corner. Slide the string into the slits as shown in the drawing below. The head string should go in the center corner of the triangle that faces back (towards the back of the puppet.) The slits should hold the string but allow you to adjust the length of the strings until you have them just the way you like them.

Adjusting your controller strings: The cardboard triangle should be more or less parallel to the floor when you work your puppet. You should adjust the length of the strings by sliding them up or down in the slits in the cardboard until you can hold the cardboard triangle controller at a comfortable height when your puppets feet are on the floor. Adjust the head string length first, and then adjust the arm strings so they are of equal length to each other. Practice a bit with your puppet before attaching the strings permanently (wrap the strings a few times through the slits when you like the length and then tape them so they won't come out-- that way if your strings get tangled, you can undo them from the cardboard easily to untangle them.)

PRACTICING WITH YOUR PUPPET

Now you are ready to make your puppet come to life (at least as much as a ghost can!) Are you holding your puppet with the triangle parallel to the ground? Is the point attached to the head pointing back? Good. Now, I want you to tip the controller to the side so that the left arm raises up in the air. Now try the other arm. See if you can make your puppet float mysteriously over the floor. Can you make it gently fly up through the air?

Decorating your puppet: You can put on a face or other decorations for your puppet. Just remember that if you glue on or attach too many things, your ghost puppet may not fly and flutter as well.

HINT: When you go to store your puppet, you can store it hanging from the controller to keep it from getting tangled, or you can carefully wrap the string around the controller, then carefully unwrap it when you are ready to use it again.

