

Faery Wings

How to make your own pair

By

<http://www.angelfire.com/magic/rosemilk/wingsmain.html>

Anyone who has tried to find wing making instructions on Google knows how hard it is to find a tutorial that goes beyond sliding panty hose over coathangers. In an effort to fill the gap and give every fairy a chance to craft their perfect wings, this page was created. A big thanks to the fae over at [FaerieFashion](#), without whom this page never would have been possible.

Construction

It is always a good idea to look through all the instructions before beginning, as this will give you an idea of how each step leads to the next, allowing you to think ahead and avoid silly mistakes!

Getting Started:

Begin by designing your wings. Before you go crashing straight ahead with scissors and wire cutters, put some thought into what you want to do. Do you want to base your wings off a moth or a butterfly? Are they going to be completely fantasy? Are they going to be big, or small? When you think about the size, you might also want to consider how much weight you could deal with on your back. Four feet from wingtip to wingtip is a good size to wear if you still want to be able to fit through doors. Sit down and page through some books (or [google searches](#)) for inspiration, *remembering that inspiration is different than ripping off/copying/stealing*, and make a few little sketches. Play with ideas until you've come up with something you both like and feel you have enough ambition/skill to make. If the wing design is very complicated, it may be a good idea to get some fabric you don't care about and draw your design on it at the size you want to make it, and cut it out. Newspaper also works. This can be used as your pattern. If you want to go all out, you could try making your pattern out of a thick cardboard. Make one wing out of cardboard, and you can bend your wire right around it, flip the cardboard over, and make the other side for a very exact, symmetrical shape. If you want even more precision and have the extra energy, you might want to try making something called a "wing jig." This is a large board with nails placed strategically in it, so that you can wrap the wire right around it tightly. Lots of professional wing makers use these.

On the other hand, if you're going for sort of a "modified tinkerbell" shape, you probably won't need a life sized pattern.

Once you have your design, get the right [materials](#) for the job.

Making the Frame:

The most common, tried and true method of wing making is to start with a wire frame. If you want a lot of detail in the edges, or are using very stiff wire, needlenose pliers can be very helpful in shaping the wire exactly how you want it. Work gloves can also be helpful, if you have them. On the other hand, if you just want rounded, "teardrop" shaped

wings, you probably won't need them.

If you are making super tiny wings, you may just want to make both sides of your wings out of one long piece of wire. This is still possible to do with large wings, but it is so difficult most people won't bother with it. You'll likely want to shape each side out of a separate length of wire -- Make sure that you have several inches of extra wire at each end, on the inside edge of the wings. This can be used both for safety, if you want to bend your wings a little differently later on, and with attaching your wings in the end.

Most of the time, just eyeballing your wings should be sufficient to get the two sides to match up. But if you're trying to make a more "advanced" or difficult pair of wings, with very detailed edges, you might have some more trouble, especially if you did not create a life sized pattern first. Try using the finished side as a guide. Or, if that is too difficult, place your finished side on a large piece of paper (tape together several pieces, if you need too) and trace the finished side. Then lay the unfinished side against the tracing and shape it using that as a base. You should have much better results.

If that doesn't work, you might want to try going back and cutting out the shape you want from cardboard first. You can bend the wire right around the cardboard, flip the cardboard over, and do it again on the other side for an exact shape. Making a cardboard guide will also allow you to experiment with new shapes before you start bending your wire.

You can add veins within your wings by adding several curved lengths of wire within the frame, wrapping the ends of your "vein" wire tightly around the inside edge of the frame, close to the bottom, being careful that there are no sharp edges. Secure with a dot of hot glue, or wrap with floral tape or duct tape. This will also help prevent the wire from poking you in the back. Remember that veins can also be added later on using fabric paint or glitter glue, if you don't require the specific effect of wire and painting them on would be easier.

Take the extra wire ends you left on the inside edge of each wing, and twist all four of them together tightly so that they form a bar that can rest against your back. You'll probably want to use a pair of pliers to help you with this. For extra strength and protection from pokey edges, it is a good idea to wrap this bar in floral tape or duct tape. You can cover this bar in opaque material as well, if you'd like.

Another way to attach your two wings is to trim the two loose ends so that you have just enough to wrap them together, making your frame a loop that goes around forever. Once your material has been applied, you can sew them to another support bar that you've created. Corrugated cardboard covered in material can be very strong, or even layered, very heavy fabric. Create something based on the size and weight of your wings.

Later on, you can hide the support bar using ribbon, feathers, flowers or leaves, if you like.

Adding the Membrane:

If you are using panty hose, snip the two legs off from the main panty, and stretch one pant over each wing. If you have multiple sections to each side of your wing, you'll need a leg for each one. Stretch it a little tighter than you want, as it will relax a little while you are trying to secure it. Stitch the hose closed along the outside of the frame, or glue it down. Trim the hose down so you don't have any extra hanging off. You may want to wrap the loose bits with floral tape so that it blends into the support bar. Repeat on the other side.

If you are using fabric, sandwich your wings inside two pieces of fabric, and trim it so that there is an eighth of an inch to a half inch extra all around. Roll the fabric around the wire, hiding the seam as best you can, and then stitch it closed carefully. Use pins as liberally as you need to. If you are afraid that your fabric will slide around, you may want to reach inside the two sheets of fabric while one edge is still open, and put a drop of glue here and there along the inside edge of the wire to hold it in place.

Decorating:

This is often the funnest step in the whole process. One can only offer so much guidance -- It's all up to you to decide what you will do. Now is the time to airbrush or paint spots of color on, draw on veins, glue fake jewels, leaves or flowers on, attach ribbons to hang down from the bottom of your wings, etc. But before you decorate the support bar, make sure you have attached the ribbon, string or elastic that will hold your wings onto you.

Finishing Up:

Cut two strips of elastic, long enough to loop around your arms. Wrap one end tightly around the support bar, to one side or the other. Stitch the other end to the part you just sewed, so that you are left with a large loop you can slip your arm through. Repeat on the other side.

You can also use ribbon, string, or strips of fabric to attach your wings.

Other things to try:

1. When you have made the frames for the two sides of your wings, you may want to try duct/floral/electrical taping them together along the inside of the frame, so that there is no supporting bar between them. You will have to sew the ribbon or elastic to attach your wings directly to the fabric, so be careful what materials you choose, and make sure it is sewn tightly to your frame.

2. Experiment with different attachment methods. For instance, you might want to make your support bar a triangle rather than a bar, and attach one end of your loop to the top point and the other to a side point. (There will be two pieces attached to the top.) This might provide better balance, depending on the shape of your wings. Or, you could try making a sideways figure eight out of wire (the infinity symbol,) and using the two loops for your arms, attaching the wings to the center of the eight, where the wire crosses.

3. For a more raggedy, "natural" look, you may want to put small holes here and there in your wings. If you are using Nylon stockings, one method of achieving this is to take

your wings outside (don't even attempt to do this in an enclosed space. It will smell awfully. Do your best to inhale the smell as little as possible), and with the tip of a stick of incense, burn a small hole. If you wish to enlarge it, run a lighter underneath until it is the size you want. The heat will fuse the nylons around the hole so you won't have to worry about seams and runs. Basically, any material with plastic in it will just singe, not burn, so you can use this technique on many different kinds of wing membranes. Just be very careful not to burn yourself or to inhale the fumes.

If you are using fabric, you will probably want to use scissors or an exacto knife to shape your hole, and then outline the edges in glue, paint, or clear nail polish to keep the edges from running.

Choosing Materials

People who are new to wing making often complain that there is too much conflicting information on the web. But remember, there is no one way to make wings, and it doesn't mean that if one set of information is right, another set is wrong. When picking your materials, keep several things in mind: You're going to have to wear these wings on your back, so you don't want to pick materials that are too heavy. If your wings are very large or the fabric needs to be stretched especially tight, you'll want stronger wire.

Unfortunately, the stronger the wire is, the harder it will be to bend into shape. Strike whatever balance feels best to you!

Wire:

The general consensus among wing makers seems to be that 14 guage galvanized steel wire is generally the best. It holds its shape well, yet is not too hard to bend into shape. It can be obtained at any hardware store, often in large rolls, and can be found in silver, copper and gold colors. If you want wire that is a little bit more bendy, try 16 guage wire, and if you want wire that is stronger, try 12 guage. Of course, if you have hardware store a-phobia, you can untwist some coat hangers and use those. They are quite effective.

Wing Membrane:

If you want your wings to be transparent, go to a fabric store and browse through their gauze, chiffon and light organza. Feel each fabric. Hold it up to the light and see what effects you get. Keep in mind what kind of wings you are making, and what designs you eventually want to apply to them, if any. Which would look best? Perhaps you should try asking yourself which fabric you feel would be easiest to work with. Chiffon is very light and organza can be stiff. Maybe you'd even like to try working in lace!

If you want your wings to be opaque, you can use nearly any fabric you like. Just keep in mind that you'll be wearing these on your back, so try to keep it as light as possible. A good place to start looking might be in the satin or imitation satin sections. Don't be afraid to track down someone who works on the sales floor and tell them what kind of effect you're looking for. They're always a good resource! Just be careful should you

decide to use a knit fabric, because when pulled taught over a frame they may stretch, and the pattern could be distorted or ruined.

Another well known method is to just use panty hose. Though many people look down on this as over simplistic, it is quite possible to achieve very good results with some trusty nylon stockings. They come in a variety of colors and sheens. When choosing, make sure that they do not contain Spandex, as this can cause your wire to crumple in on itself. Control hose is no use here! Always make sure to get the largest size you can find. Also, keep in mind that nylon is basically a plastic, and therefore will not absorb dye.

These are only a few suggestions. It's possible to use almost any material for the wing membrane, with just a bit of imagination and some creative attachment methods. Some people use paper (try saving the light tissue paper you get in christmas presents), plastic, cellophane, shrink wrap, contact paper (You can put anything in between the two sheets before closing them up. String, dried flowers, glitter..). Get creative! What effect are you looking for?

Attachment:

Unless you plan to sew your wings directly to a piece of clothing (making that garment considerably more difficult to wash, no doubt,) you will need some sturdy ribbon, string or elastic to make it possible to wear your wings.

Also, to attach your material to your frame, you are going to need a needle and thread, and quite possible several pins. In general, sewing looks the most professional and "finished." But some people prefer to use a hot glue gun, either to save time, to save a great deal of effort, or because they don't know how to sew. Hot glue also eliminates complaints that the fabric will occasionally slide around, but others complain that hot glue can get very messy looking. If you have the supplies, you might want to try using a few drops of glue here and there to keep the fabric in place, but sew the rest up for that professional look. All of these things are available in most craft and fabric stores.

Coloring:

Most people prefer to use fabric paint when they draw little designs on their wings, such as swirls or veins. This can be obtained in little squeeze bottles in a myriad of colors at any craft or fabric store. You can even find it at some large grocery stores, such as Fred Meyer or Bi-Mart. The best brands to look for are probably Tulip and Polymark.

If you want to spread an even, solid color over all or a largish portion of your wings, you probably want to use airbrushing, or dip your wings in fabric dye. Covering a large portion of your wings in fabric paint is likely to make your wings rather stiff and plastic. You could also try acrylic paints mixed with lots of water to try and fade your colors smoothly. Dye is available in fabric stores and some craft stores, and air brushing materials can be found at most craft stores. Don't be shy about asking a sales associate for help picking the right set for you!

Another possibility is permanent fabric markers. When you look very closely at your

fabric, they may leave a scribbly or "mottled" look in the areas you have filled in. But it is slight, and with practice can be very minimized. So if you don't mind that bit of character, fabric markers are an excellent option. The color dries instantly, eliminating any danger of you smearing it while working on a complicated design, and the color will not peel off as 3D fabric paint occasionally does on some fabrics. However, when it comes to fabric markers, it is definitely worth it to invest in a more expensive brand to ensure that they are truly permanent. They can be found at fabric and craft stores.

Decorations:

You may want to add spray glitter, fake jewels, bells, fake flowers, ribbon, feathers, fringe, sequins, lace, foil or beads to decorate your wings when they are done. You may also want to wrap your wire in colored floral tape before covering it in material for a different look. You can even wrap it more thickly around some portions and only a single layer around others to change the width in a natural way. Floral tape is also useful to help strengthen any connections you've made in the frame.

Now that you've got all your supplies, you're ready to [get started!](#)

If you have any suggestions or corrections for things on this page, please contact me at mango_rosemilk@yahoo.com