How to make a Humpback Whale

Normally found in the krill-rich waters of the Arctic and Antarctic, the humpback whale swims up to 25,000 km per year, including to warmer waters to breed and give birth.

The seasonally-changing songs of male humpbacks echo through the ocean waters.

Measuring up to 16m in length and weighing 25-30 tonnes, these large mammals eat krill, which they filter out of the water through hair-like bristles in their mouth called baleen. They are incredibly agile, often swimming near the surface, where they fluke and breach.

Nearly hunted to extinction during the height of the whaling industry, you are now more likely to catch a humpback on a whale watching tour.
1. Make sure that you have all the equipment that you need. If you don't have access to a sewing machine, the whale can be hand-sewn instead.

You will need: a printed copy of the pattern at the end of this pack, fabric, stuffing, thread to match the fabric plus a contrasting thread for the throat grooves and bumps, pins, scissors, an iron, a sewing machine, marker pencil or pen, something for the eyes (buttons, beads, felt or different coloured thread/wool)

*If you are making the whale as a toy for a child, please hand stitch eyes rather than sewing on buttons or felt.*

2. Print and cut out the 5 pieces of the pattern: back, underbelly, flipper, tail fluke and the tiny dorsal fin.
3. Decide which is the right side/wrong side of your fabric/s. Are you going to use just one type of fabric or a number of different pieces? If you are using denim, you might want to use the wrong side as the tummy pieces.

4. Fold the fabric in half so that the right sides are facing inwards.

Pin the pattern pieces to the fabric and mark both the shape of the pattern piece and an extra 0.5-1.0 cm all the way around each piece for your seam allowance. Then cut out around the outer lines.

The inner lines will be the ones that you sew along. Make sure that you mark the extra lines and dots on to the back and underbelly pieces. These lines / dots will help you match the pieces together later on.
5. You should now have 11 fabric pieces in total:

- 2 backs, one right and one wrong side
- 2 underbellies, one right side and one wrong side
- 2 tail flukes, one right side and one wrong side
- 4 flippers, two right sides and two wrong sides
- 1 piece for the dorsal fin.

Make sure that you have marked out the sewing lines on every piece of fabric.

*I will be using the right side of the denim for the back and underbelly plus a different fabric for the underside of the tail fluke and flippers.*
6. Fold the dorsal fin in half so that the right sides are facing inwards. Sew along the outer edge. Use scissors to trim and snip towards the seam along the curve. This helps to neaten the curve and makes it easier to turn inside out. Turn the dorsal fin inside out carefully using a pencil to help you get into the pointy corners, then iron it flat.
7. Line the dorsal fin to the dots on the upper right side of one of the back pieces make sure that the stitched seam of the dorsal fin is facing towards the head, and that the folded side is facing the tail end. It will look as if it's upside down at this point. Sew it in place. Before you continue, check that the dorsal fin is in the right place.

8. Now tuck the fin back down again. Place the other back right side to right side. Making sure that the dots line up with the dorsal fin on both sides, pin the right sides of the 2 backs together. Sew along the inner stitch / seam line. Use scissors to trim and snip towards the seam along the curve. This helps to neaten the curve.
9. Turn the completed back right side out again and iron into the curve so that you there is a neat seam. The dorsal fin should now be in the correct position along the back (stitched seam facing the head, folded seam facing the tail)

10. Pin the right sides of the 2 tail flukes together and sew along the stitch/seam line. Don't sew the base of the tail as this is where you will turn it inside out. Use scissors to trim and snip towards the seam along the curve. The tighter the curve the more snips are needed. Do not snip the straight section at the base of the tail. Turn the tail fluke inside out. You might need to use a pencil to help you get into the curve. Iron the tail fluke flat.
11. *This bit is quite fiddly so you might want to tack it in place before sewing!*

You will only be attaching the top side of the tail fluke to the body at this stage. Open up the tail fluke and pin the underside of the opening down so that it's tucked out of the way. Line up the right side of the base of the tail fluke with the tail end of the right side of the back. Carefully sew into place avoiding the underside of the tail fluke and the underbelly which should remain open. When you turn it over it should look as if there is a tail on the upper part of the body (but not the underside).
12. With pencil or chalk mark a v shape on to the upper side of the tail. Carefully top stitch it into place. I have used contrasting thread so that you can see the shape.

13. Pin the right sides of the 2 flippers together and sew along the inner stitch/seam lines. Don't sew the base of the flippers as this is where you will turn them inside out. Use scissors to trim and snip towards the seam along the curve. Turn the flippers inside out carefully using a pencil to help you get into the pointy corners. Then iron them flat.
14. Pin the underside of the flippers to the right side of the upper part of the underbellies (area marked by lines on the pattern) and stitch along the sewing line.

15. Now to join the underbelly to the back of the whale. This is tricky as you are attaching two curves together, so take your time. Match the flippers to the corresponding marks on the back pieces. The flipper should now be on the inside, sandwiched between the right sides of the back and underbelly. Carefully pin the top of the underbelly to the lower part of the back. It’s best to hand-sew or tack this in place before you sew it. Make sure that the flipper and the tail fluke are both still tucked out of the way so that they don’t get caught in the seam. Sew along the sewing line.
16. Remove the tacking then use scissors to trim and snip towards the seam along the curve. On the wrong side, iron into the curve. Repeat for the other side of the underbelly. The whale is beginning to take shape.

17. To mark the throat pleats/grooves of the whale use a pencil or chalk to draw lines on the underbelly running from the mouth to the underside of where the flippers are. Make sure that the flippers are tucked out of the way. Choosing a different coloured thread, stitch along the lines to show the throat pleats or grooves of the whale.

18. With the right sides together, fold the whale in half lengthways. Tuck the flippers and the tail fluke out of the way. Stitch two short lines along the underbelly, leaving an 8cm gap in the middle of the underbelly. This will be where you turn the whale inside out. Trim and snip the curved seam.
19. Starting at the tail end, carefully turn the whale right side out to check that it looks correct. Remember that there will still be a hole along the underside and also on the underside of the tail.

20. Turn the whale over and fill the tail triangle with small pieces of the stuffing. Use a pencil to get the stuffing all the way to the end of the point in the tail fluke. Now fill the tail end of the body with stuffing. Neatly tuck the underside of the tail fluke inside the body.

21. Gradually add small amounts of the stuffing into the whale. Keep checking on the shape so that it doesn't become too lumpy.
22. Pin the underbelly opening and hand sew it. Then hand sew the tail flap into place. Snip off any loose threads.

23. The eyes could be hand sewn with different colour thread, pieces of felt, buttons or beads.

*If this is being made for a child, please do not use buttons or beads as they could be a choking hazard.*

The last thing to do is to hand sew the bumps (hair follicles) over the top side of the head. French knots work really well for this.

You can find French knot instructions here: [www.instructables.com/id/embroidery-how-to-french-knot/](http://www.instructables.com/id/embroidery-how-to-french-knot/)