

Balloon Sculpture Basics

Workshop by Brad Brown
www.BradBrownMagic.com
brad@bradbrownmagic.com

Safety Warning

Pieces of popped balloons pose a choking hazard. Balloons should never be given to small children.

Supplies & Suppliers

There are many types of balloons that can be used for balloon sculpture. To keep things simple, I use only one type, the 260. They're called "260's" because when fully inflated, these balloons are approximately 2 inches across and 60 inches long. I recommend Qualitex brand. (Qualitex 260's are often called 260Q's.) They're strong and relatively easy to inflate. Well, they're easier than some other brands, but there are still few people who can inflate them by mouth.

Unless you're one of the few people with enough hot air to inflate them by mouth, you'll need a pump. Most people use a plastic 2-way hand pump. "2-way" pumps inflate both when you pull out the plunger and when you push it back in. (These pumps are cheap, but they do wear out with use, so it's a good idea to keep an extra on hand if you are making balloons for an event.) If you *really* get into ballooning, you can get a single stroke floor pump or a battery powered pump.

There are a lot of suppliers of balloons. I primarily use T. Myers...

T. Myers Magic
6513 Thomas Springs Road
Austin, TX 78736

Orders: 1-800-648-6221
Info: 1-512-288-7925

Web: www.tmyers.com

If you'd like to learn more, I recommend Ralph Dewey's books. "Dewey's Basic Balloon Sculpturing Course" and "Dewey's New Balloon Animals" are good starting points. He also has several books with Gospel balloon routines. T. Myers does sell Ralph Dewey's books.

Techniques

Inflation

The first question most people have is, "How do you twist the balloon without popping it?" The answer—*very carefully!* Seriously, when you twist the balloon, the extra air has to go somewhere. So, when inflating, leave the end of the balloon uninflated. The more twists you'll be doing in a balloon, the more room you'll need to leave for expansion. In a typical dog sculpture, for example, you'll need to leave about four inches uninflated.

It also can be helpful to "burp" the balloon. This refers to letting a little air out of the balloon before tying the knot. This makes the balloon softer and easier to work with.

Bubble Twist

Start the sculpture at the nozzle end of the balloon. Hold onto the balloon with both hands. Twist your hands in opposite directions, and a bubble will form. Twist the balloon at least two full revolutions so it will not untwist.

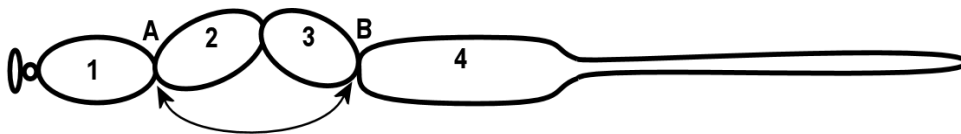


You can twist as many bubbles in a row as you need, as long as you always twist the same direction. However, with just simple bubble twists, you can't let go. As soon as you let go, the balloon will untwist.



Lock Twist

As the name implies, a lock twist will "lock" bubble twists together so they won't come apart. Start with a balloon with several bubble twists. Fold the balloon so bubbles on each end are together. Hold both bubbles with one hand, and use the other hand to twist the bubbles together to connect them. Twist at least one full revolution. (In the illustration below, hold bubbles 1 and 4 in one hand, and twist bubbles 2 and three together, so points A and B are connected.)



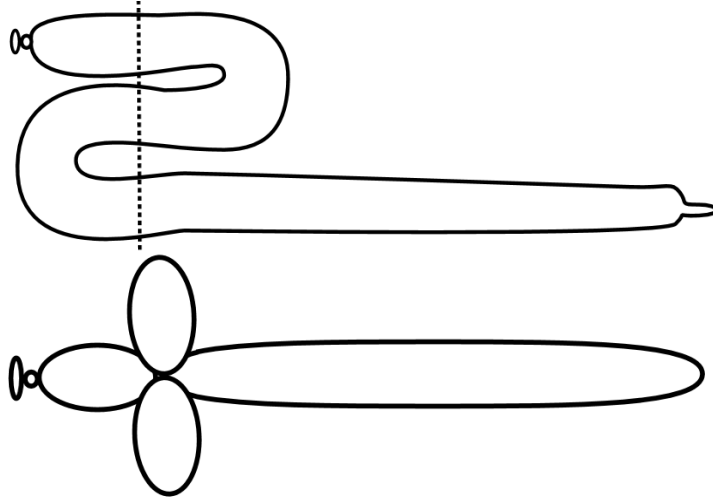
Writing on Balloons

Many balloon sculptures can be enhanced by writing on the balloon, such as drawing a face on a balloon dog. "Sharpie" permanent magic markers are ideal for this purpose.

Sculptures

Sword

The sword is a quick and easy sculpture. It is also very popular. Inflate the balloon nearly all the way. Leave only one inch un-inflated. Fold the first two-or-so feet of the balloon into an "S". Grab the "S" with both hands. Twist the balloon right in the middle of the "S", as shown. Arrange the bubbles so they're sword shaped, and you're done!



Hat

Basic Helmet

Inflate the balloon nearly all the way. Twist a small bubble. Then twist a *very* long bubble, about 2/3 of the length of the balloon. Lock twist the long bubble into a loop.



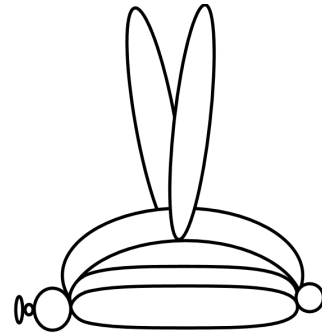
Twist a small bubble at the end of the balloon. Twist connect this bubble to the center of the loop to complete the helmet.



"Fancy" Hats

The basic balloon helmet is rather boring, but it can be dressed up. Add other balloons to make it more memorable. For example, fully inflate a balloon, and twist it in half. Twist it around the top of the helmet to make antennae or rabbit-ears.

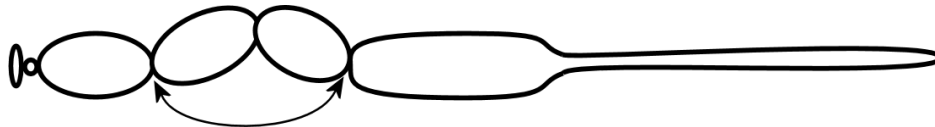
Use your imagination to make all kinds of creative hats. You can attach two looped balloons to make giant mouse ears. Attach a balloon twisted into a spiral for a tornado hat. Attach a balloon going in an arc from side to side to make a rainbow hat. The possibilities are endless.



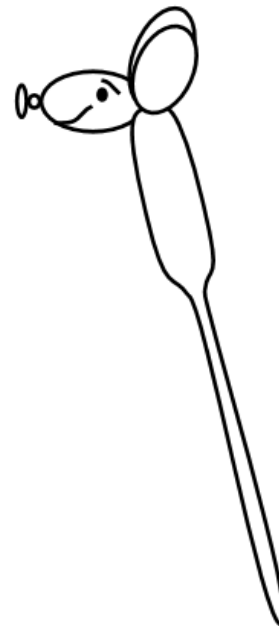
Animals

Flying Mouse

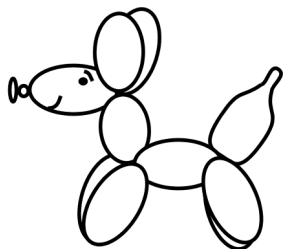
The flying mouse is another popular but simple balloon. Begin by inflating about nine inches of the balloon. Twist a three-to-four inch bubble for the head. While holding onto the first bubble, make a second bubble about the same size for one of the ears. Without letting go of the first bubble, twist a third bubble for the other ear. Lock twist the ears together.



The finished sculpture should look something like this. To make the mouse fly, make a circle with the finger and thumb of your left hand, similar to an OK sign. Pull the tail of the mouse down through the circle. Stretch the tail and release. The mouse will fly into the air.



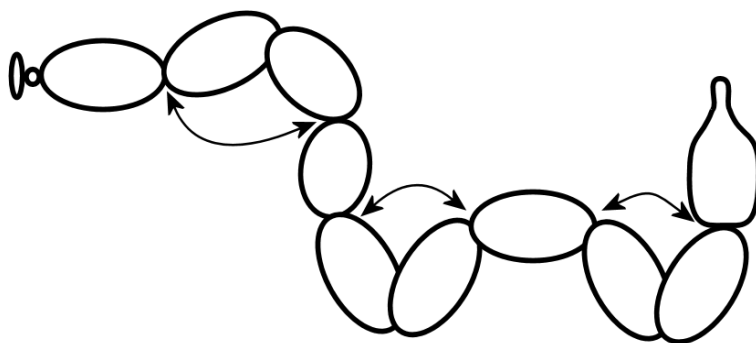
Basic Dog



Leave about four inches of the balloon uninflated. Twist a three-to-four inch bubble for the head. Twist two more three-to-four inch bubble for the ears. Lock twist the ears together. (If this seems familiar, it's exactly like the head of the flying mouse.)

Twist a two inch bubble for the neck, and two four inch bubbles for the front legs. Lock twist the legs together.

Twist a five inch bubble for the body, and two more four inch bubbles for the back legs. (The remainder of the balloon will be the tail.) Lock twist the back legs together.



Dog Variations

Give the dog shorter legs and a longer body to make a wiener dog.

Give the dog a long neck and shorter body and legs, and it's a giraffe.

Only inflate the balloon about eight or nine inches, and make small twists. It's a mouse.

© Copyright 2005 Brad Brown, Magic

This document may be freely distributed as long as it is provided free of charge and is complete and unaltered, including this notice.