

Make the duct tape dress form shown on page 90 of our “Live to Give” Dec–Jan 2009 issue.



# DUCT TAPE dress form

## MAKE A DUCT TAPE DRESS FORM

The duct tape form is great for the seamstress who wants to try things on a form patterned after her own body, but doesn't need to pin into the form (the pins get sticky from the tape). Great for special occasion garments, display-only garments, or occasional use. It's fast and easy to make.

### YOU'LL NEED

- two 60-yard rolls of duct tape
- sacrificial t-shirt that reaches past your bum
- scrap of fabric or plastic wrap to put around the base of your neck
- sharp scissors you don't mind getting sticky
- filling for the form: poly filling, shoulder pads (free, recycled), foam, plastic bags, etc.
- cardboard (free, recycled)
- a stand or hanger for the dress form (we used a floor lamp from a second-hand store)

Our duct tape form cost a total of \$20.

This is a two-person project. Since you need to be the “model” for your own dress form, you'll need a friend to tape you up!

First, make sure you are wearing a “good” bra—one that gives you the shape you'll want for your form. Then put on your t-shirt. It can be fairly loose, as it will smooth down during the process. You will get the most accurate form if you wear only undergarments while modeling for your form. Make sure you have done all the necessities—bathroom, scratching your back, etc.—this will be your last chance! It's wise to make sure your hair is out of the way too.



Start under the bust, and wrap tape in a fairly close fit around the rib cage. Make sure you work at keeping the tape smooth. Make another wrap above the bust in the same manner. Then, depending on your shape and what makes sense, begin to wrap the bust. You can either start by making a cross-your-heart crisscross that starts just below the bust and wraps at an angle to the other shoulder, OR take several shorter strips and start shaping the center of the bust by radiating out and up from under the bust in the center.

Using shorter pieces of tape, carefully wrap around the rest of the bust area in a close, but not tight, way, keeping the tape as smooth as possible. Most of the taping in this area is vertical and at angles to accommodate the bust shape. The model and the person taping work together, with the model patting down the placed tape to ensure a good fit.

Continue to work around the armholes, upper chest, and upper back, working longer pieces of tape from front to back over the shoulders (just like straps). When you get to the neck area, put the protective fabric or plastic wrap around your neck for protection. If you want or need the form to have shoulders, tape those as well. (Traditionally, dress forms don't wrap around the outside edges of the shoulders—that makes getting form-fitting garments on the dress form difficult—but if this is for a wedding dress or other open-neck top, you may need the shoulders for support.)

Begin wrapping around the base of the form, about mid-thigh. Wrap the tape around the body horizontally. You will want to use pieces rather than just feeding off the roll so that you have more control. Continue wrapping around the body over the hips and waist up to the chest area to finish the first layer.

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You will now cover the whole form with two more layers. To help keep the surface even, the second layer should be taped vertically, and the third layer horizontally. You can add more definition in these outer layers by pulling the tape a bit tighter so you are not just adding bulk to the original layer.

Mark the waistline and any other dressmaking marks you want on your form with a permanent marker. If the bottom of the form is not perfectly straight, you can use a yardstick and mark the hips (or a bottom edge) evenly from the floor (this is also helpful for positioning the form on a stand evenly).

You're now ready to remove the form from your body. Carefully cut through all layers of the tape and the t-shirt up through the center back, and remove the form from the model. Then align the cut ends and tape over them to close the back again.

Now you need to decide how you want to suspend your form—on a stand or from a hanger. If you're using a hanger, you can first glue a set of old shoulder pads inside the form to help keep its shape, and then just hang it on a heavy-duty hanger. If you're using a stand, you may want to cut a cardboard shape for the top of the neck and tape it on. Then put the stand piece in the center of the form so that you can stuff around it. The stand can be a PVC pipe, an old broom handle, a flagpole, or a heavy-duty fabric roll cardboard tube. You can also add a cross-piece to the top of the pole that sits in the shoulders to keep it sturdy. You can make a base for your stand from a Christmas tree stand, a computer chair base, or something else you find around the house (farmgirl ingenuity!). The old floor lamp we found was perfect because it's weighted at the base, making the dress form very stable on its "feet."

You're now ready to stuff the form. It's easiest to start from the bottom. You might find it helpful to glue in a pair of old foam shoulder pads to retain the bust structure. Since the duct tape is soft, the pads will help keep the bust from becoming dented with use. Then stuff away!

You can either tape shut the armhole openings or tape on cardboard pieces patterned from the actual holes of the dress form. Using cardboard will help keep the depth of the body shape, while just using tape will keep the form flexible.

At the bottom, you can either tape it up after you are nearly done stuffing, then stuff and tape to finish, or you can cut a cardboard piece to tape onto the bottom, then lift a corner to finish stuffing. Again, the cardboard will help give it a bit more structure.

If you want, you can cover the form with a lightweight stretch fabric to finish.



“The mind, once expanded with the knowledge of duct tape, never returns to its original size.”

– Author Unknown