

Apple head Doll

Imagine living in Delaware 200 years ago. What would you do during the day? Most likely you would attend school and do chores to help your family. Sound familiar? What toys do you believe you'd have? Pioneer children didn't have a lot of toys and would use natural resources found nearby such as nuts, twigs, corn husks, corn cobs, wood, and gourds were used to create their own toysⁱ¹. Native American Indians taught many early settlers how to make apple head dolls. One such example is the apple head doll.

The Seneca Indians are believed to have taught early settlers to make apple head dolls². This folk craft was then passed down by settlers.



This apple-head trio was designed and made in North Carolina about 1892. Apple-head dolls probably originated with the Iroquois Indians. The expression on the face was produced by pinching the surface of the apple when it began to shrink.

Jane Iverson (artist), American, active c. 1935, Mrs. Almira Smith (object maker), Wenham Historical Society (object owner), *American Dolls*, c. 1936, watercolor, graphite, and pen and ink on paper, Index of American Design, [1943.8.15576](https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/1943.8.15576)

National Gallery of Art

https://www.nga.gov/features/slideshows/dolls-from-the-index-of-american-design.html#slide_7



To make an apple head doll, choose an apple. Any kind of apple will do. Ask an adult to pare the apple peel. It might be helpful to draw some lines on the apple to identify where you will cut out the eyes, nose and mouth.



With a plastic spoon, carve out spaces for the eyes. Carve the base of the nose by cutting a line straight across where the bottom of the nose would be. Make another line for the mouth. Set the apple in lemon juice for 30 minutes. For the next two weeks the apple will wither and create interesting facial features.



Cut a wire that is about 24 inches long to form the body. Start at one end, measure 12 inches, bend and take wire back up to the top. This forms the body and one leg. Stick one end into the base of the apple to form the neck. Cut another wire that is about 16 inches long. Wrap the wire around the body so that half becomes the left arm and half becomes the right arm. Add another wire about halfway down the length of the body to form the second leg.

Make clothing for the doll. Cut a whole in the toe of a sock and slide it over the apple head. Decorate the sock with buttons, markers, ribbon, etc.

Have fun!

Directions for an apple head doll are found here.

<https://thelibrary.org/loclist/periodicals/bittersweet/wi74f.htm>

Doll face as it ages:

<https://dustyoldthing.com/apple-head-dolls-diy/>

Make the doll and clothes

<https://www.wikihow.com/Create-an-Apple-Doll>

Downes, J. and R. "Make Applehead Dolls: Making applehead dolls is an old down-home craft that's fun and potentially profitable too". (Mother Earth News, July/August, 1980).

<https://www.motherearthnews.com/diy/applehead-dolls-zmaz80jazraw>

Heichelbech, R. "Fall Crafts In The Old Days Weren't Complete Without Creepy Apple Dolls"
Dusty Old Things. <https://dustyoldthing.com/apple-head-dolls-diy/>

Lucas, Verna. Applehead Dolls, Bittersweet. Volume II, No. 2, Winter 1974,
<https://thelibrary.org/lohist/periodicals/bittersweet/wi74f.htm>

National Gallery of Art, Applehead Dolls.

¹ Julie and Robert Downes, *"Make Applehead Dolls: Making applehead dolls is an old down-home craft that's fun and potentially profitable too"*. (Mother Earth News, July/August, 1980).
<https://www.motherearthnews.com/diy/applehead-dolls-zmaz80jazraw>

² Julie and Robert Downes, *"Make Applehead Dolls: Making applehead dolls is an old down-home craft that's fun and potentially profitable too"*. (Mother Earth News, July/August, 1980).
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