

Foam Latex Puppet Basics

Written by Marc Spess

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Foam Puppet Captain Jet Lag. Picture from Scott Gamble

So you might have heard about the strange material called foam latex for use in puppets. So what is foam latex?

Foam latex is essentially injected several different chemicals into a mold, and it is ready to go.

-Make a sketch of a character your interested in animating.

-Make a sculpture of the character based on the drawing.

-Make a mold of the character in at least two parts using Ultra Cal 30 as your mold material. Ultra Cal is

-Pull the clay out of the mold and wash the inside of the mold out.

-After you've pulled the clay out of the mold and washed it, you need to place the mold in an oven for a v

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- Remove the mold from the oven and create a wire or ball and socket armature to place in the mold.
- After making the armature make sure you have two holes in the mold to insert tie downs for the feet. The
- Mix up your foam latex ingredients in a mixmaster blender, and pour it into both mold halves. Then pour
- Bake the mold in a latex specific oven so that the gelling agents congeal the foam for use in animation.
- Pry the mold halves apart and brush in talc powder or corn starch so that the latex does not stick to itself.
- Wash the foam latex to get rid of any mold releases that were in your UltraCal 30 mold.



A basic two part UltraCal 30 mold with silicone mold keys

- Mix up pros aide "a latex appliance glue" and cabisol "a fine powder to give the pros aide some bulk" together to make a paste. Then cut any seams "flashing" off the foam latex puppet, and fill any holes with your pros aide/cabisol concoction.
- Fill any large air pockets with cotton mixed with a little straight latex.

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-Mix some pros aide and acrylic paints/pigments to create flexible bendy paint for the outer surface of the puppet. You paint it on and brush talc or corn starch after your done so it won't stick to itself.

-So there you have it, a starting point for making a foam latex puppet. As you can see that each step can be expanded on with more detail, but this would take up a book to write. But the reason for the list is only to show the main steps in making a foam puppet.

So why make a puppet out of foam at all? The main benefits to using foam instead of clay is that foam will not crack, melt, be too heavy, or collect dirt and thumb prints as easily. Obviously this saves time, but it also is very expensive, toxic, and requires a long time to get right through experimentation. So there are pro's and con's just like anything else. If you are doing a project that requires the highest quality type of puppet, or one that needs to look realistic - we suggest using foam.

On the internet, the best source for making foam puppets is stopmotionanimation.com. There is a wealth of information there that covers just about every stage in detail - so make sure to use the search function carefully in the message boards.

Lionel Ivan Orozco also has a wealth of information on making foam puppets [here](#).

The best brand of foam latex we know of is the [Michael Davey foam latex](#). Also known as M.D. Foam. It is formulated specifically for puppets, and not foam appliances. It is also the easiest to use and doesn't require expensive scales to measure each of the latex ingredients. But there are also other brands that will work but require more tools and act quirky in different temperatures and humidity.

[GM foam](#)

is one such type of foam, and

[Monster Makers Foam Latex](#)

For Ultra Cal 30 mold material and foam latex you can go to the Burman Industries [site here](#). They also have some great tapes on making molds here. If your serious about mold making you really should get their tapes since they are the best ones out there. Burman also carries foam latex paints that are pre-made and will work well.

Foam Latex Tips

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- Insert ball bearings into your puppets eyes during the sculpting stage. When you pull out the clay, put a tiny bit of wax on the end of your clean ball bearings and stick them into the eye area of the mold. When you pull the latex puppet out, the eyes will be locked inside the head and ready for animating.
- For hair on puppets you can use an [electrostatic flock machine](#) and spray adhesive. Flock is sort of like the fuzz they put on tennis balls, and you can buy it at model railroad shops.
- For the mouth, sculpt your puppets mouth in an open position. That way you can close it after it is cast and have all the teeth and tongue sculpted inside.

If your interested in watching a how-to video, Kathi Zung's Foam Latex Puppetmaking 101 is the best tutorial you can find [here](#) .