



# Christmas Goose Felt Ornament

Finished goose measures 3½" tall (approx)

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# Materials

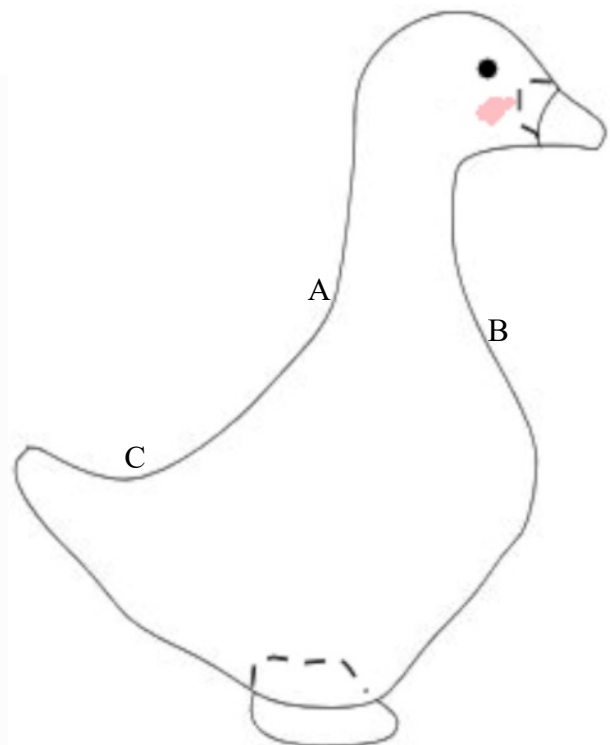
- 4" x 8" white wool blend felt
- Scraps of golden yellow felt
- ½" x 6" blue felt or woollen fabric scrap for scarf
- 8" twine or ribbon for hanging
- Stranded embroidery floss or perle thread in golden yellow, white, black and light pink.
- Toy stuffing

# Method

- Use two strands of floss throughout
- From the full size template below cut two goose shapes in white felt.
- Cut beak and foot shapes in yellow felt, extending the shape as shown by the dotted line. This means you'll have a little extra to push into the main body and stitch in place.
- Place the two goose shapes together. You are going to join them with wrong sides together with white floss using either blanket stitch or a decorative half cross stitch, whichever you prefer. The decorative half cross stitch is worked by whip stitching over the edges of the pieces to be joined at a 45 degree angle in one direction, then returning and angling your stitches in the other direction to complete the stitch.
- Join around the head from A to B inserting the beak as you go. The beak can be secured with small stab stitches that go through both the beak and body shapes.
- Stuff the head end. You will find a stuffing stick useful for this, I use a bamboo skewer with the point broken off and the end frayed so that it "grabs" the stuffing as I work. Use small pieces

of stuffing to avoid lumpiness. Stuff firmly but don't over stuff as this may tear your stitches and distort the shape.

- Now continue joining the two body pieces together from B to C inserting the foot as shown on the template in the same way as the beak.
- Finish stuffing your goose and close the gap between A and c. Insert the hanging twine at A and add more stuffing as you go if necessary to make sure your goose is nice and firm.
- The eye is a few stitches in black floss. The position is shown on the template - take your time over the eyes as they will affect your goose's final expression. Make sure they're level on both sides! Add a few pink stitches for cheeks.
- Tie the strip of felt/woollen fabric around neck for scarf. Secure with a few stitches if necessary and trim to desired length. Make a few snips in the ends to represent fringes.





What ever  
became of  
the  
Christmas  
Goose?



Will you be having goose or turkey this Christmas? Today most people enjoy roast turkey for their Christmas lunch, but this hasn't always been the case. Both birds have featured on our festive menu for hundreds of years, but the goose was most definitely around first! Anglo Saxon farmers were raising geese long before the new-fangled turkeys arrived from America in the early 1500s. Once it had arrived on our shores however, the turkey quickly became popular and by 1573 the poet Thomas Tusser was recommending it as entirely suitable as an addition to the English husbandman's Christmas dinner, though it remained an expensive luxury until Victorian times.

In contrast, geese were relatively cheap and in plentiful supply. From the middle ages onwards,

*"There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits in particular, were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows!"*

*Charles Dickens, "A Christmas Carol", 1843*

every English village would have had its pond, often stocked with geese that provided meat for the table, grease for medicine and valuable feathers used for making both arrows and quills.

All the great English classic novels would have been written with goose feather quills for at least a thousand years - from Beowulf to Jane Austin, via Shakespeare's sonnets and Dr Johnson's dictionary - all owed a great deal to the humble farmyard goose. By the early nineteenth century about nine million geese were plucked every year for pens alone!

Traditionally the most important occasion for serving goose had been Michaelmas or St Michael's Day on 29 September. As soon as the harvest had been gathered the village geese were turned into the fields to glean any grain left





behind in the stubble. As a result they grew to perfection in late September and early October. A number would have been held back however and fattened further for the Christmas table.

Unlike the free gleanings available to the geese in September, they would have been fed bran, barley, oats and potatoes during the intervening months - all of which had to be paid for - as a result of which fresh goose at Christmas was an expensive luxury. As a result goose clubs were established for the benefit of poorer folk who would put a few pence away each week to ensure that the family could afford their goose at Christmas, and this is probably how the Cratchits could afford their goose in Charles' Dickens "A Christmas Carol".

The age-old method of cooking your goose was to roast it upon an iron spit before a blazing fire in the kitchen inglenook. By

Victorian times clockwork mechanisms known as bottlejacks meant that less well off country people could roast their geese in

*"Christmas is coming, the  
goose is getting fat,  
Please put a penny in the old  
man's hat.*

*If you haven't got a penny, a  
ha'penny will do,  
If you haven't got a  
ha'penny, a farthing will do,  
If you haven't got a farthing,  
then God bless you!"*

### *Traditional rhyme*

front of their cottage fires, whilst the urban poor sent their birds to be cooked by the baker in his bread oven. Roast geese were usually stuffed and the forcemeat served as a sauce. In a recipe from 1490, the writer recommends

filling your goose with a mixture of quinces, pears, grapes, garlic, sage and hyssop to make a fruity "sawce madam", By Georgian times, a stuffing of chestnuts or breadcrumbs, sage and onion - very similar to today's stuffing - had become the norm whilst potatoes were roasted before the fire in the dripping pan.

Perhaps the most spectacular festive dish of all was the ornamental Christmas pie, filled with boned turkey, goose and a variety of other fowl and game birds. This was a great way of improving the texture and flavour of the turkey - which as we are only too well aware today can be dry and tasteless if not well cooked. The fat from the goose moistened the naturally dry flesh of the turkey making this dish the ideal combination of our two favourite Christmas birds!





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*Helen xx*