

—THE CREATIVE BOOK OF—

# Soft Toys

Complete with patterns  
and sewing instructions  
for making up to 25  
delightful toys



—Sue Quinn—

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# Soft Toys



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Sue Quinn

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 a Salamander book

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LONDON • NEW YORK

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## *CREDITS*

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## INTRODUCTION

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**M**aking soft toys is an enjoyable and rewarding pastime that brings both pleasure and profit to many. The appeal of a soft toy relies largely on the toy's design and character, and within this book Sue Quinn has created a menagerie of charming and beautifully-designed characters that will delight all those that make and play with them. The toys featured range from quick and easy-to-make designs such as the attractive Cheeky Squeaky Mice to more complex creations such as Morris the Monkey and Pan-Pan the Panda — in fact, there is something to suit every taste and sewing ability.

The book opens with an introduction to the equipment, materials and techniques employed in toymaking, essential reading if you are to achieve the best and most professional results. There is information on the equipment needed and its use; the various types of materials available and which to choose; how to prepare the pattern and cut the fabric; plus the numerous techniques referred to throughout the book, such as those required for sewing, turning and stuffing a toy.

Following this are detailed instructions on how to make 25 delightful toys, each design accompanied by a cutting pattern and a series of easy-to-follow step-by-step illustrations.

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## *EQUIPMENT*

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Before you begin to sew, you must assemble the right equipment. Having the correct tool for the job makes the work easier and ensures that the final result is as attractive as possible.

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### *SCISSORS*

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One of the most important pieces of equipment is a good sharp pair of scissors. You should actually have at least two pairs; one for cutting out the cardboard used for making the patterns and one for cutting the fabric. A small pair of embroidery scissors with very sharp points are also a must. These are used for piercing the tiny eye holes, for cutting the ear slits and for unpicking thread.

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### *PINS AND NEEDLES*

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It is very easy to lose pins in the pile of fur fabric, so it is advisable to count the number you use before starting and again when the work is completed. Never leave a pin inside a toy that a child will play with.

Have a wide selection of handsewing needles available. You will soon find the length of needle that suits you best. Have some long darning needles on hand, too, for sewing on the heads of the toys and for embroidering the nose and mouth (see page 17).

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### *BRUSHES*

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Fur fabrics can quickly lose their fluffiness from all the handling. Brushes are used to bring up the pile and to restore the fabric to its original shape. Teazle brushes are especially good for brushing out fur that has become trapped in the seams. For a large toy, though, a dog brush with similar teeth is much easier to use and covers a larger area. The tiny wire teeth in brushes work loose after a time and become stuck in the fabric, so remove any loose teeth from the brush each time it is used. Also, never use the brush too near to the plastic eyes of the toys, as the surface of the eye can easily become scratched.

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### *SCREWDRIVERS*

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Screwdrivers are very useful tools for turning the finished toy the right way out. The screwdriver should be a Phillips-type, as the end is blunt enough not to damage the fabric. A knitting needle can also be used, but always use the blunt end.





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## MATERIALS

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There is a wide range of fabrics and threads available for soft toy making, so, when choosing your materials, try to choose the best quality possible. The look and feel of the toy will be improved and the toy will last that much longer.

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### FUR FABRIC

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It is always best to buy high quality fur fabric, if possible. A fur fabric with a woven backing is usually the best, as it has a pleasant, realistic feel. The fabric does not stretch very much, though, and can be difficult to work with. For a beginner, it is best to choose a fur fabric with a knitted backing. These are easily available, do not fray and will stretch slightly, making them easier to work with.

When choosing fur, look at the pile of the material. If too much of the knitted backing can be detected through the fur, it will be disappointing to work with. Feel the knitted side of the fabric. If it is too harsh and hard, again it will be difficult to sew, turn and stuff. A fabric with a supple backing is a much better choice.

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### FELT

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Felt is delightful to work with. It does not fray, it stretches slightly and comes in a wonderful selection of colours. Felt is usually made of man-made fibres; occasionally a pure wool felt is available but these are very expensive. You can buy felt by the metre or yard. Felt is not washable, though, and does not have the strength that other fabrics have. Self-adhesive felts are available but they come in a limited range of colours. Black self-adhesive felt is extremely useful and can be used successfully for the eyes of the toys.

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### FILLING

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There is quite a variety of fillings to choose from, but the general rule is to use the very best. Never use old stockings or tights, or cuttings of fabric. The result will be disappointing and the toy will look lumpy and rather heavy.

Dacron and polyester, which is a man-made fibre, is the best. It is springy, washable, and non-allergic. It is sold in different grades so choose the best you can afford. This filling also comes in different colours, but only buy coloured filling if a dark toy is being made — otherwise the filling will show through.



*Fur fabric, felt and thread come in a wide range of colours. Using the best quality you can afford will improve the look of the finished toy.*

Kapok is a natural fibre and very fluffy. It is not washable, it is messy to use and not very springy. It does have a beautiful soft feel, though, and could be used for certain types of toys.

Foam chips are not recommended as filling for toys. It is difficult to obtain a good smooth surface to the toy, and tiny particles of foam can be inhaled by small children.

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### THREAD

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A strong sewing thread is the best for the seams. Choose one that contains man-made fibres, as it will stretch and give a little when the toy is being turned and filled. Button thread, or the thickest thread available, is necessary for sewing the heads or limbs in place. The colour range is not as wide as for sewing thread, but this is not too important as most of the stitches should be hidden. Cotton embroidery thread, the non-stranded variety, is very good for embroidering the noses and mouths.

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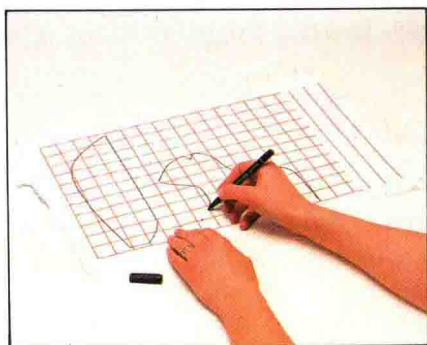
## PATTERN PREPARATION

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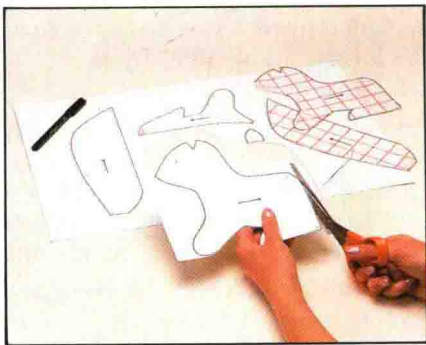
The patterns in this book have all been reduced in size to fit the page. If you look at one of the patterns, you will see that it has been drawn on a grid. Each square on that grid represents 2.5cm (1in). To enlarge the patterns you will need scissors, cardboard, dressmaker's squared paper, a felt-tip pen and a soft lead pencil. The dressmaker's paper must be divided into 2.5cm (1in) squares in order to reproduce the pattern at its full size. If such paper is not readily available, or simply if you wish to save money, you can easily draw up your own grids on some large sheets of thin paper. A long ruler and set square will prove useful for this purpose.

To begin, first lay out a large sheet of the squared paper, flattening it out if it has been folded. Select a starting point on the pattern and look at the square that part of the pattern occupies. Note where the pattern line enters that square and mark the position on one of the larger squares of your grid, making sure you have left lots of space all around. Now examine the same square on the pattern in the book, and note where the line leaves the square. Again, mark that spot on your paper. Next, join the two marks together, noting what happens to the line in between the two points. Follow the line exactly, copying it onto the larger square.

Work around the whole pattern shape in this way, constantly checking and rechecking the general shape of each piece. With a little practice and patience it becomes much easier. Remember, too, to mark the eye positions and slits for the ears, as well as any letters or arrows on the pattern. When you have completed the whole pattern, cut it out very carefully. Now mark around this outline onto pieces of cardboard, copying down all the relevant points. Cut out the cardboard



*Following the book pattern, draw the full-sized pieces onto the grid.*



*After drawing the pattern onto cardboard, cut out the pieces.*



templates. These will be firm enough to draw around without buckling or tearing, and can be used several times. Keep the paper copy in an envelope in case any of the cardboard pieces are lost.

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### MARKING AND CUTTING OUT

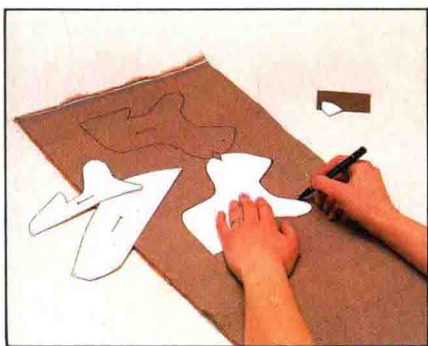
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Lay out the piece of fabric you have selected and check which way the pile goes; mark an arrow on the reverse side of the fabric to remind yourself of the direction of pile. (This is important, as the direction of pile will affect the whole appearance of the toy.)

Lay the cardboard pattern pieces onto the reverse of the fabric, putting the pieces against a fold where indicated. Make sure that the arrows on the pattern pieces point in the same direction as the arrow marked on the fabric. Hold the pattern down with one hand and draw around the shape of the pattern onto the fabric with the other hand. If two asymmetrical fur pieces are required, for instance two body sides, turn the pattern over to get a mirror image for the second piece, but still making sure that the arrow is pointing in the same direction.

Once all the pattern pieces have been marked out, check to make sure that nothing has been omitted. Carefully cut around the outline using your fabric scissors. Where slits or holes are noted, use the small pointed scissors instead.

When using very long fur fabric, for Santa's beard for instance, snip the back carefully without cutting through the actual pile of the fabric so that the fur maintains its length. Felt, velvet and ordinary fabrics can be marked out and cut double thickness; fur fabric should always be marked and cut using a single thickness only.



*Outline the pattern pieces onto the fabric using a felt-tip pen.*



*Cut out the material, making sure to use the fabric scissors.*