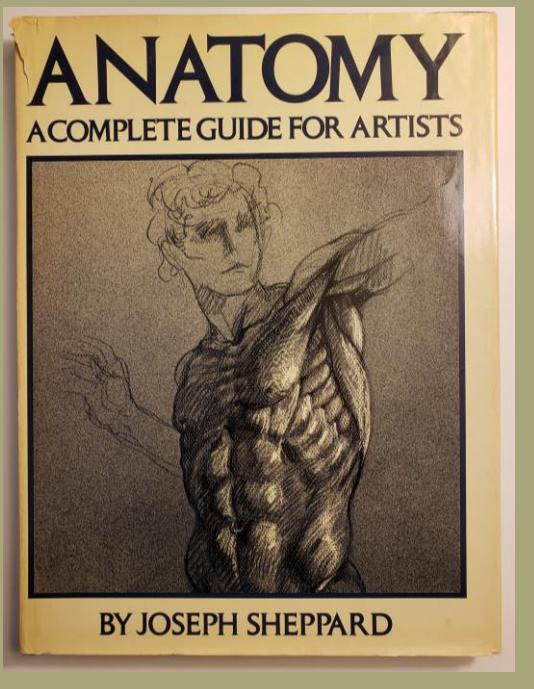


Needle Felting a Maine Coon Cat

Nancy Sullivan

Allow me to introduce myself.



My name is Nancy Sullivan. I was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in 1950, moved to New York in 1988, and have been here in Southern California since 2002. Yes, I am 68 years old!

My interest in art began in the 2nd grade when my teacher told my mother that I had talent. Because of that, my parents worked hard to give me as many opportunities for special art student programs as were available through my youth. Later, in high school, I entered a statewide competition in Oklahoma and won the first place prize, a small scholarship for college. Since then I have managed to work art into everything I do.

I started working in Medicine at age 26, and before long my first “secretarial” job included working in eye surgery, designing and editing medical publications and doing medical illustrations of surgical techniques and graphically presenting research results for journals, textbooks, and international medical symposia. My mentors paved the way for me to attend workshops and special courses in anatomy and illustration. I was very fortunate to be able to create a situation where I could get this education as a part of my job. I also had the opportunity to attend and observe human head and neck dissections with Ophthalmology Residents. I also designed training manuals for non-medical employees so they would understand the basics of ophthalmology.

I learned the most about anatomy from Joseph Sheppard, a celebrated sculptor and painter from Baltimore, who now lives in Italy. His training and publications gave me the knowledge to take my work to a higher level of accuracy. He teaches drawing human figures from the skeleton out – which is exactly how I approach the animals that I needle felt.

My History of Making Art

Needle felting is only the most recent of a life-long progression of crafts that I have enjoyed practicing. It started with making “outfits” for my Barbie doll when I was very young, which evolved into making my own clothes when I got a bit older. I used to make plastic car models with my oldest brother when we were young, and he was meticulous with tiny details, which seemed to rub off on me. My Grandmother encouraged me to take up quilt-making, which I did for many years with her, and continued to do on my own after she died.

In my career, most of my “craft” involved technical illustration, but I still managed to do some quilting and other projects on the weekends. While in New York, I was exposed to the most wonderful variation of arts and crafts, attending shows and Museum exhibits as often as I possibly could. I was surrounded with inspiration from all kinds of art and music.

The best time I’ve had has been since retiring, being able to choose how I spend my time – I have taken up genealogy of my family and created many volumes of information and images, and “scrapbooks” to be handed down to future generations. Paper crafts have taken over the landscape of my life, since there is no limit to the creativity you can translate into tangible pieces you can hold in your hands and share with others. Stained glass was also very exciting and rewarding. Recently I have enjoyed doing hand-bound books; stamping, mixed media and watercolor remain some of my favorite crafts. I make hand-crafted gifts for Christmas each year, and design greeting cards for all occasions.

Words an Artist Can Live By

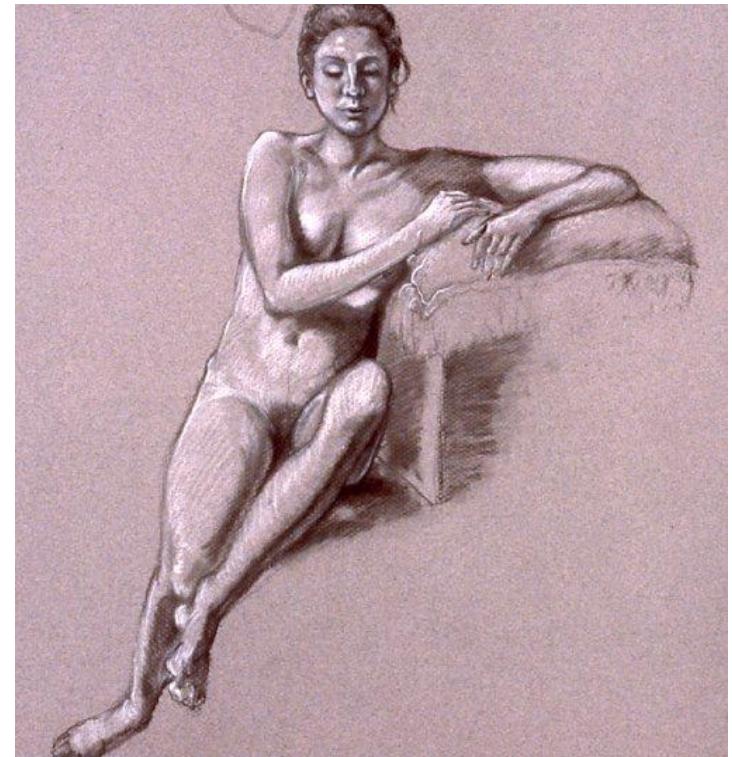
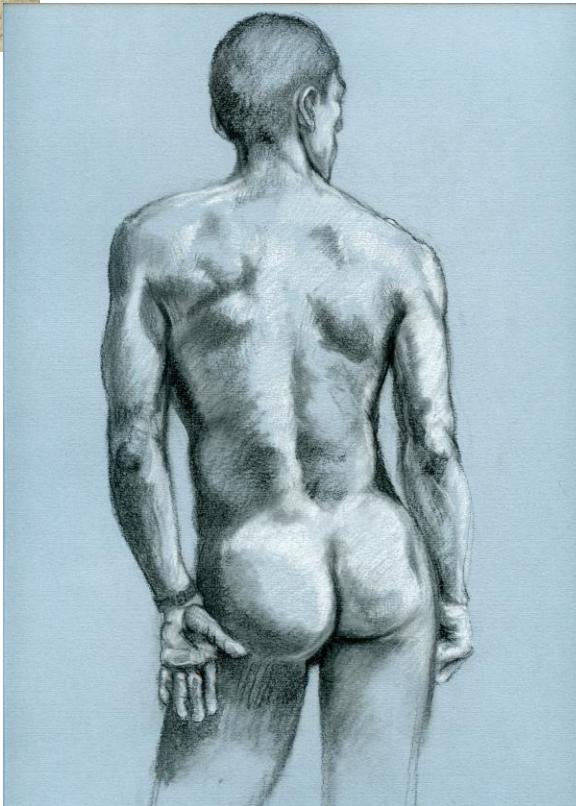
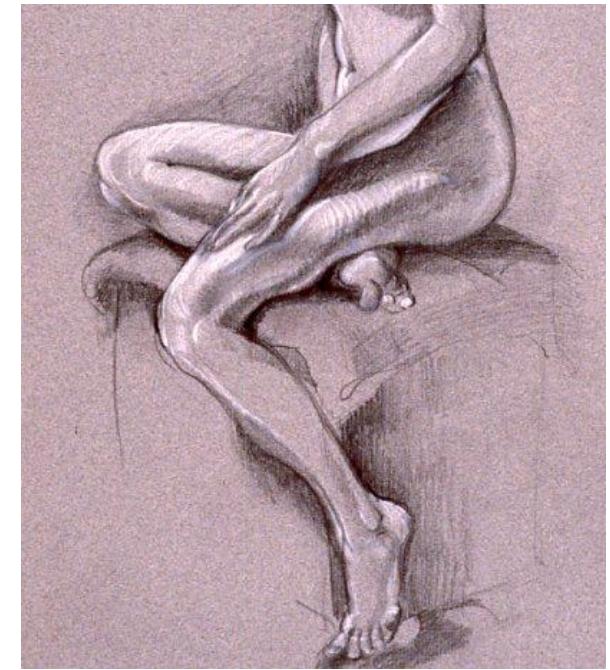
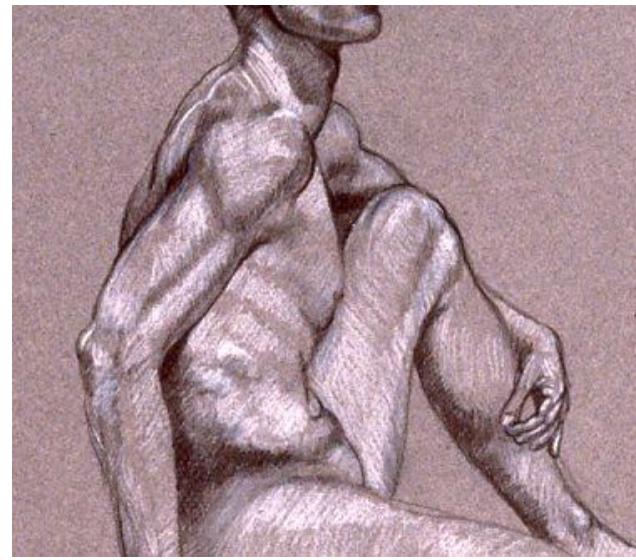
I'd like to share with you some words that I have learned are true enough to live by, and they are certainly relevant when you think of how our artistic endeavors can enhance our enjoyment of life... the older you get, the more meaningful these words become!

“We act as though comfort and luxury were the chief requirements of life, when all that we need to make us really happy is something to be enthusiastic about.”

Charles Kingsley

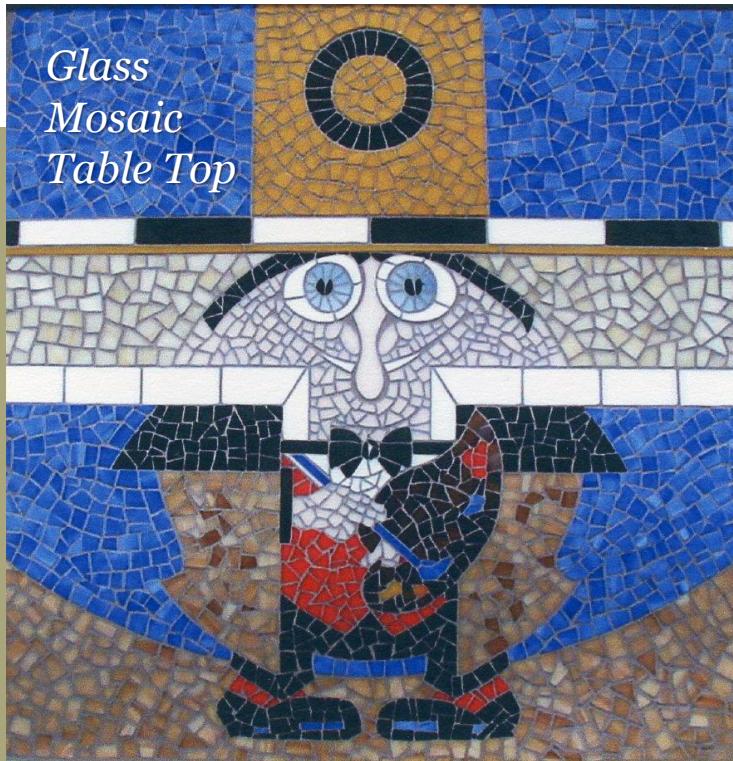
Thanks to Sandy at Lincolnshire Fenn Crafts, I have added needle felting to my growing list of interests, and enjoy it more than anything else I have done – wool sculpture – it's the best!

All these artistic endeavors have enriched my life enormously, and I am very pleased to have this opportunity of sharing that with you.



Some of My Previous Work in New York

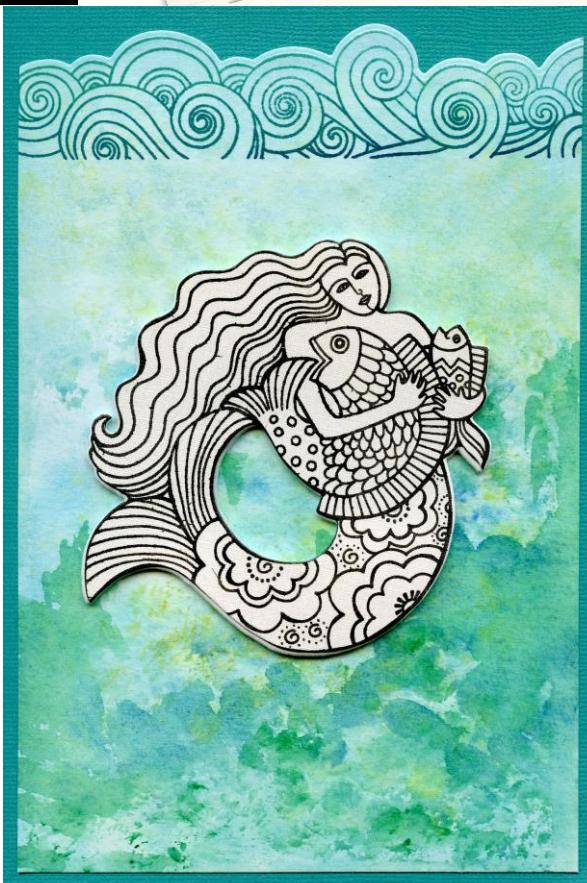
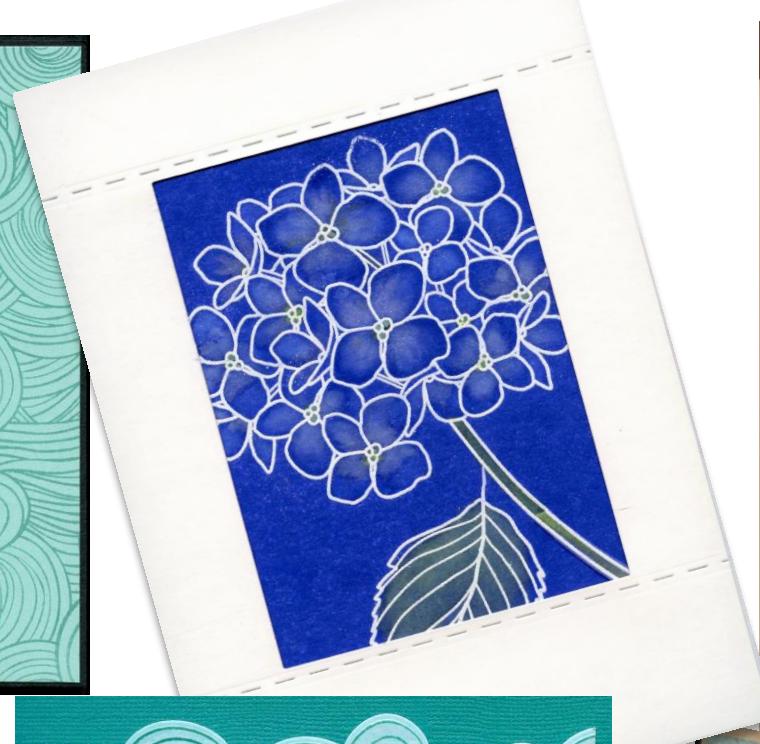
Some of My Previous Work in California





Some of My Previous Work in California





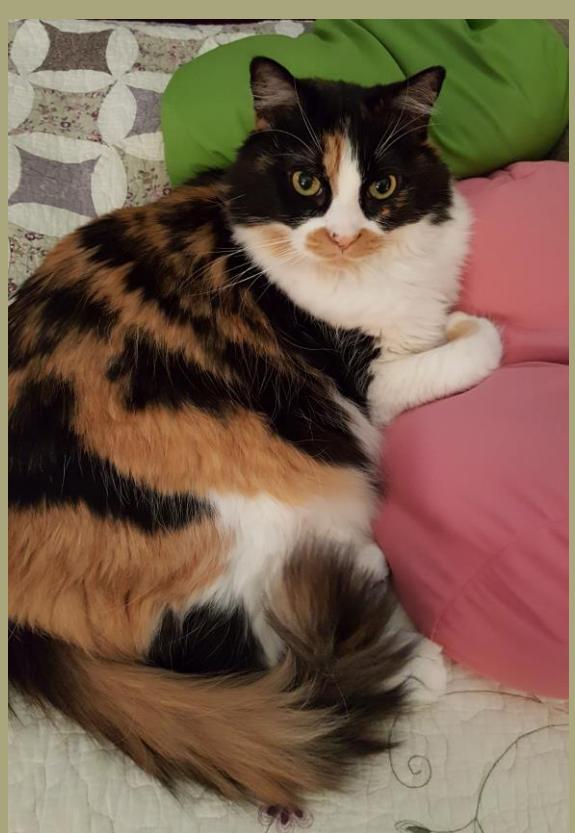
Some of My
Previous
Work in
California –
Greeting
Cards

Meet my cats, Ellie and Scout.

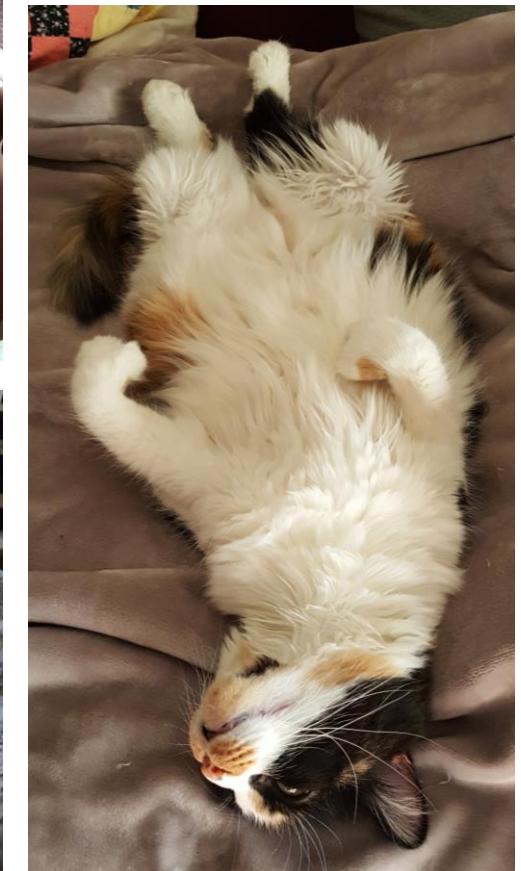
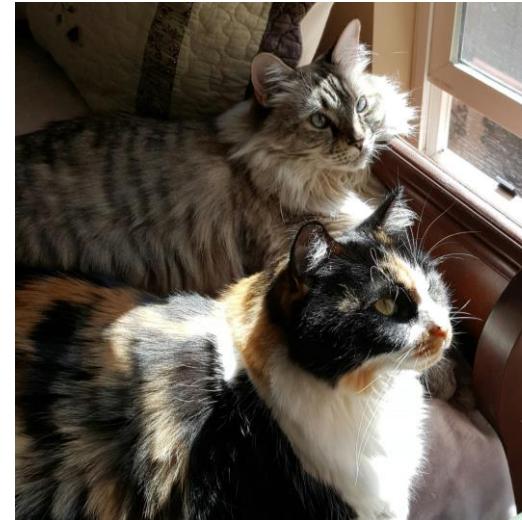


Ellie (left) and Scout (right) are sisters. They are polydactyl Maine Coons (in other words... Big Feet!) They are enormous – each weighs in at or above 20 pounds. They are sweet, loving, intelligent, and can be downright hilarious – especially Scout. As her name implies, she's a bit of a tomboy, and Ellie is a feline diva – no doubt about it.

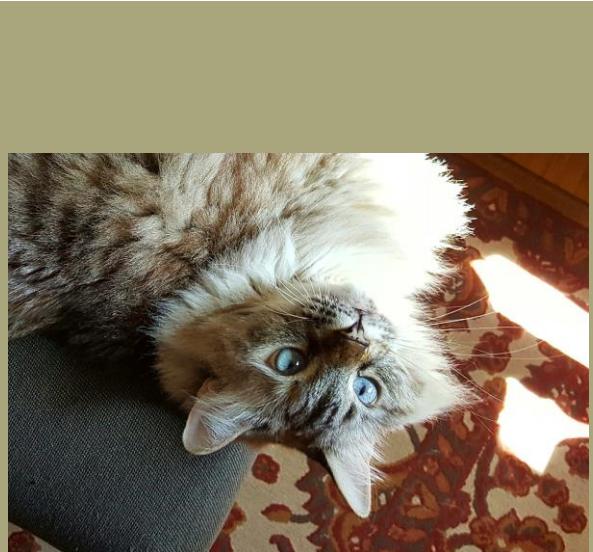
Ellie



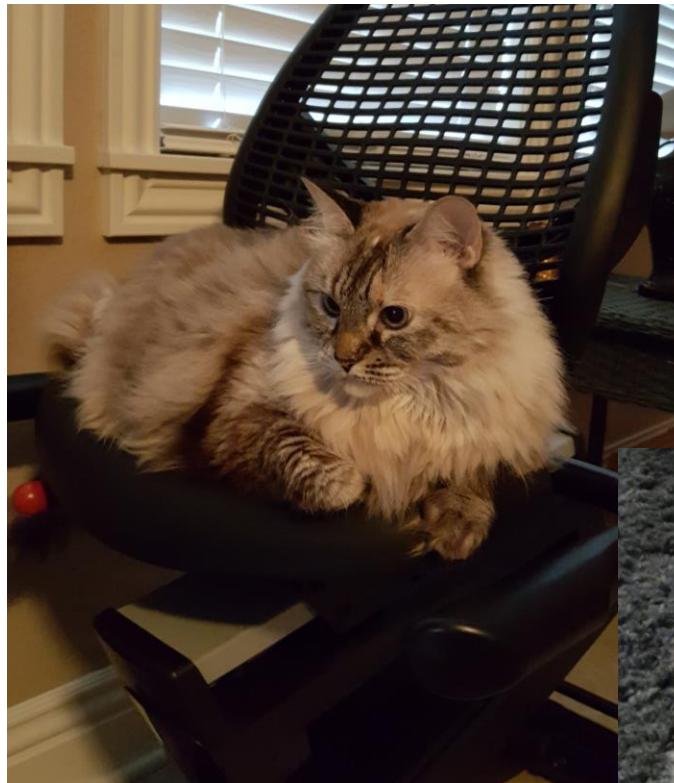
Ellie's specialties are eating, sleeping and sunbathing – she does all with passion, as if there were no tomorrow.



Scout is a very busy girl – she is curious and interested in everything, and loves to play while Ellie sleeps. If no one is available to play with her, she happily entertains herself, sometimes chasing her own tail like a dog. Her favorite lounging position is upside down.



Scout



Scout

It was hard to choose which cat to needle felt for this tutorial. I finally decided on Scout, because her coloring is so subtle and beautiful, and of course, she has those gorgeous blue eyes... and her luxurious lion-like mane.



IMPORTANT NOTE

I made a surprising discovery while doing the pelt for this project. *You should know about it before you start:* When constructing strips of long hair fibers for the pelt, at one point I added the step of sandwiching a piece of the spongy core wool between the prefelt strip and the layers of top coat fibers. I discovered that this additional step, along with thorough felting on both sides of the strip with the 7-needle tool, makes an enormous difference in how well the fibers remain embedded and attached.

So I suggest that any time you are assembling a strip of long hair for the pelt, include this extra step!



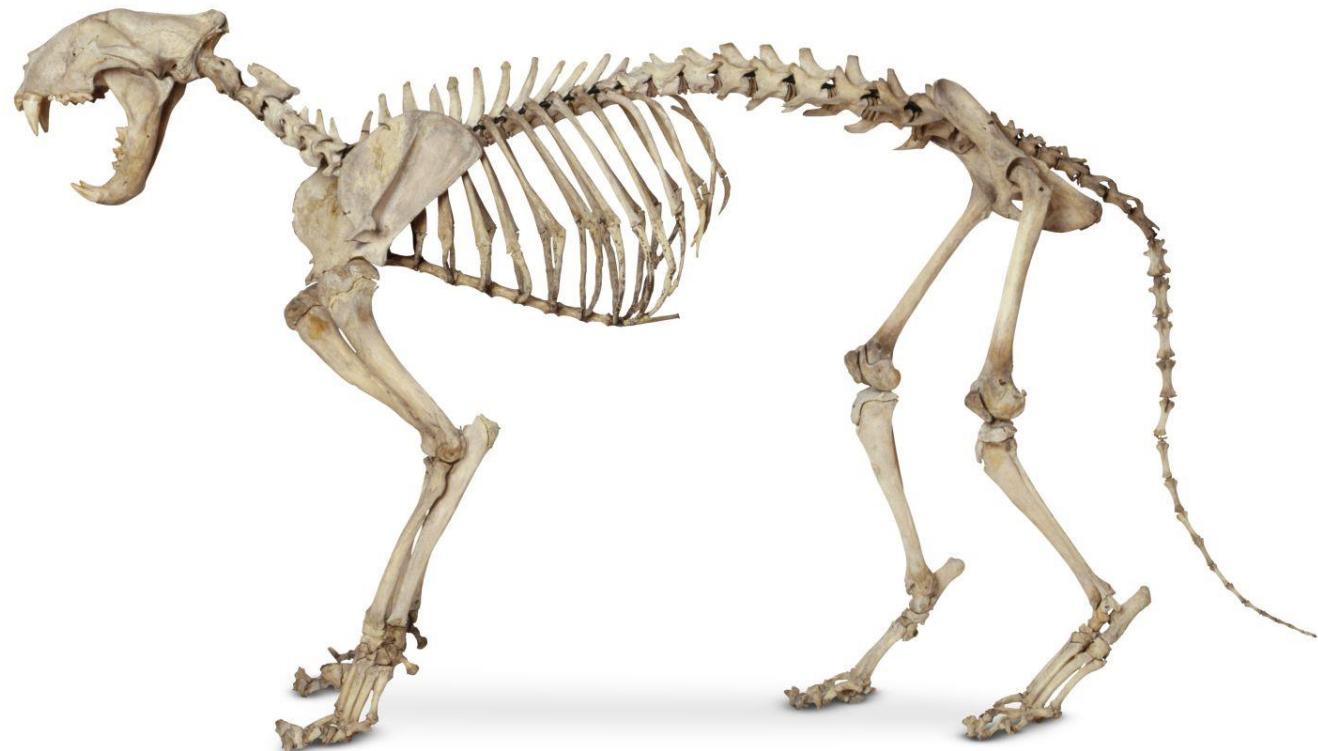
You will need:

- A **working space** where you can sit comfortably for long periods of time, with good light sources.
- Reference **photos** of the cat you want to create, taken from several angles, and close-ups of details such as face, eyes, paws, etc.

You will need:

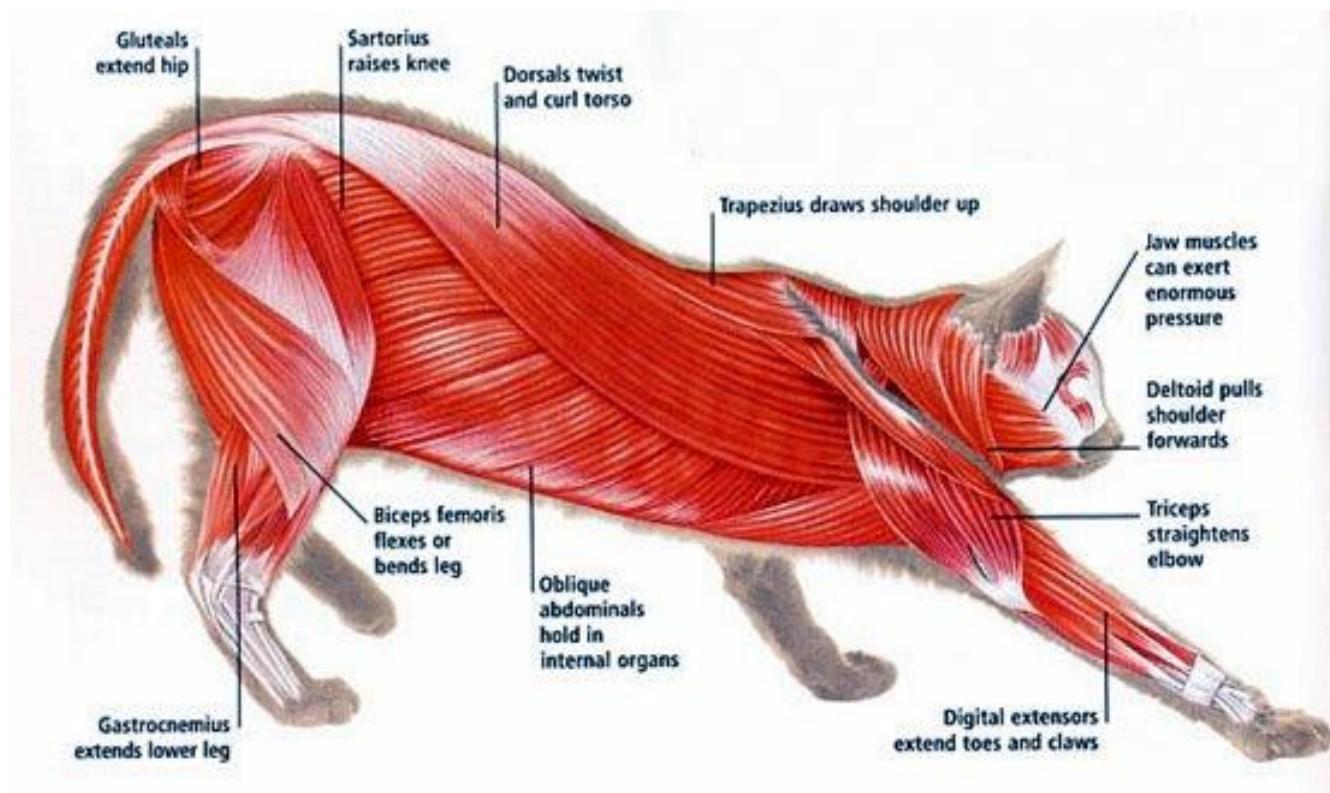
- Feline **anatomical chart**, sized to scale for the finished cat.

*(I found my chart on the internet with a Google search for “**skeletal** anatomy of cats” and used my copier to scale it up to size – (approximately 15 x 11 inches.)*



You will need:

- In addition to the skeleton, it's helpful to have a chart that shows the **musculature** of a cat – to use as reference while you are building the cat's basic shape.



You will need

- Aluminum **armature wire**

I use **12 gauge** for strength on the main armature, and **14 gauge** to help join certain pieces of the heavier wire.

- Small **wire cutters** to cut armature wire, and small **pliers** to bend it.

- **3M micropore 1" tape** to secure some attachments before wrapping with wool. Wrapping the joints where ends of wires protrude also helps protect your hands from being cut while handling the framework.

You will need

- **Pipe cleaners** (12 inches long) in a color compatible with cat's fur on the legs.
- Artificial **cat eyes** in your cat's color – mine are blue, 16 mm diameter (*search Google for “taxidermy glass eyes for mammals”*) I got mine from “Just Eyes and Taxidermy” on *etsy.com*, HandmadeGlassEyes.com, and there’s another shop named “Artisan Glass Eyes” on *etsy.com* with similar items.
- Your favorite assortment of **felting needles**, including a 7-needle felting tool.



- **Felting surface(s)** of your choice.

You will need

- **Core wool** in a neutral color.
- **Top coat wools** that most closely resemble the cat's color(s) and texture.
- A piece of **prefelt** to use as a base (strips) for the pelt – large enough to cover from back of head to the point where the tail begins on the lower torso. You may want to have extra as I did just in case you need a bit more – it can be pieced like a quilt if necessary.
- **Whiskers** matching the color of your cat's whiskers – you can use horsehair, nylon thread, heavy duty upholstery thread – whatever you can find that will go through the eye of an upholstery needle and remain rigid like real whiskers.
- **Beacon FABRI-TAC** or similar clear fabric adhesive.

Beacon Adhesives, www.beaconcreates.com

Psyche Yourself Up!

Here's my philosophy:

There's more than one way to felt a cat!

I think of needle felting as a form of sculpture. With clay, you just keep adding or taking away shapes until it takes on the right size, proportion and a likeness of your subject. How many ways are there to do *THAT*?! It's the same with wool. You just have to learn to manipulate it, just as you learn to manipulate clay. There are so many ways to do that – we all pick up little tricks here and there, but ultimately it's up to you to just get your own feeling for it. If you are able to accomplish the same thing with a different technique, that's great. Don't be afraid to try a new idea, even if you haven't seen anyone do it that way before. This is only a guided tour of my own personal journey – hopefully a roadmap for your own creativity.

Get ready to have some fun!

Hindsight on Head Tool, Part 6

After having completed the project, I want to give you the benefit of my hindsight about the head tool.

It worked well in some aspects, but overall, I am not entirely sure it was worth all the trouble of making it.

If you have used the method in the past of building the head on the body and finishing it there, you might want to just do it that way.

I think the next time I will do something in between.... I will try to build the form for the head onto the structure, without attaching it – that way it can be removed for working the wool on the felting surface until it's completely finished. Then it can be attached permanently to the body. Most of my directions are adaptable to this method.

I leave it entirely up to you – but I suggest reading this tutorial all the way through before deciding.

PART 1

Armature

There are many small needle felted animals that do not require an armature, but for a relatively large critter like this cat, it is essential. You want to be able to change the pose and use its physical position to help express its attitude.

The stronger your armature, the more accurate and flexible your resulting animal will be. I use a thicker wire than many people do, but I believe the end product will benefit from this. Aluminum armature wire is strong, but it's light and very easy to bend.

There are many methods of building an armature; this is just the way I have found that works for me. Feel free to do it your way if you are an experienced wool artist or sculptor.

Without the benefit of video, I have tried to make my descriptions as accurate and clear as possible. If you will read every step carefully as you work, I believe you will find it fairly easy to follow.

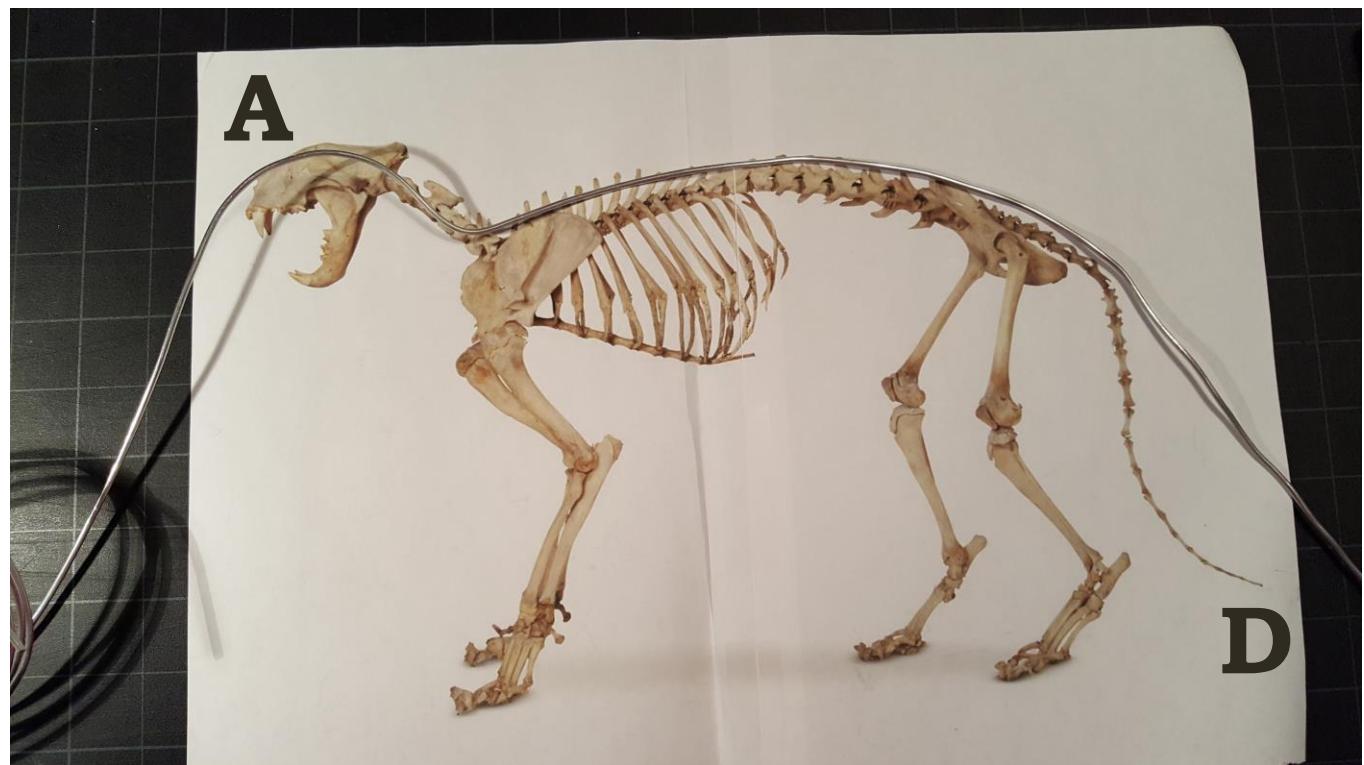
STEP 1

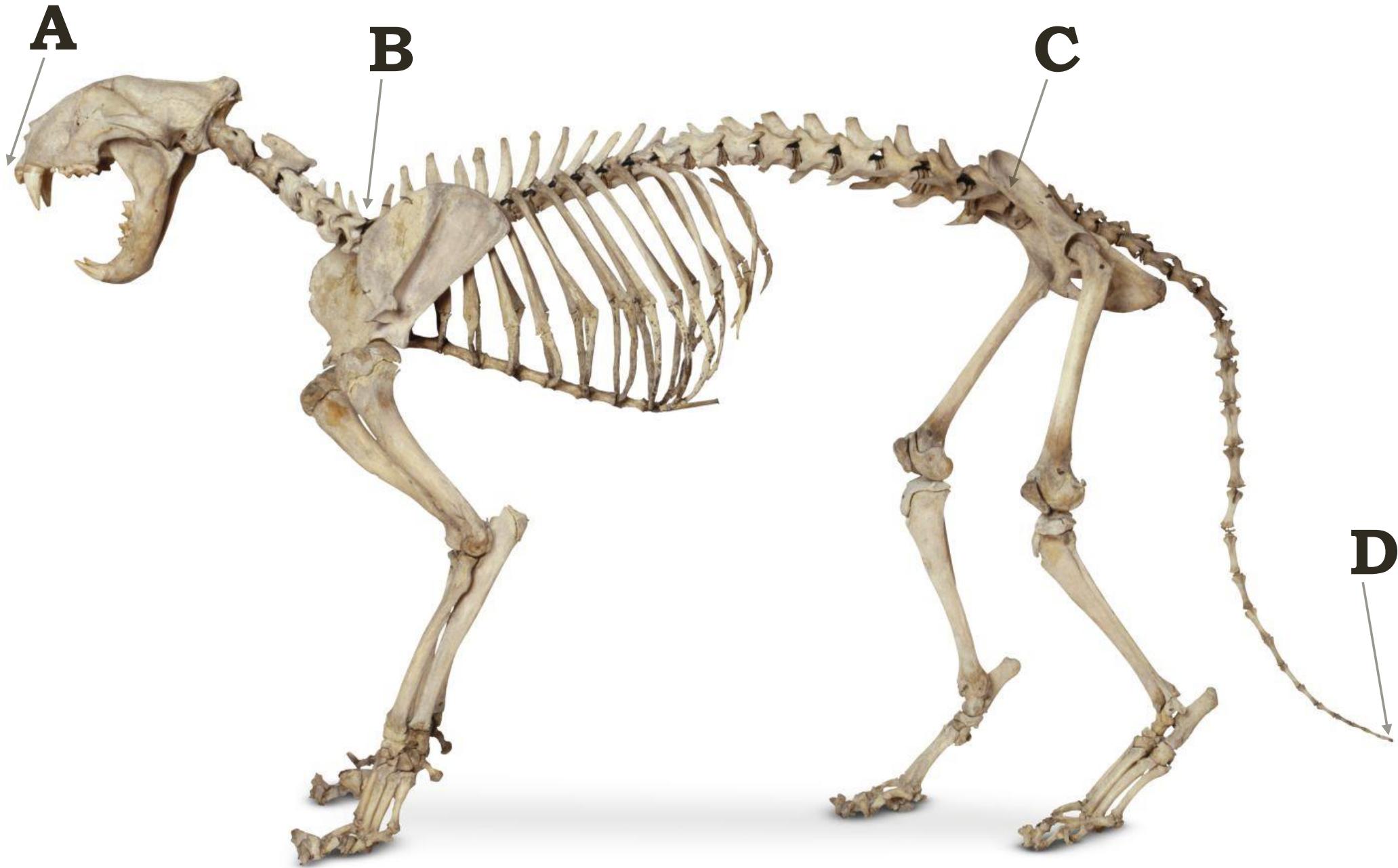
Armature

Start by laying out the skeletal chart, and gently stretch and shape a piece of armature wire (approx. 48 inches long*) along the upper silhouette of the spine, from the tip of the nose (**A**) to the tip of the tail (**D**). Scout has an extra long and luxurious tail, so I am making hers longer than it appears on the skeleton.

*How to distribute the 48 inches?

*Tip: there should be approx. 10" wire left beyond the tip of the tail (**D**).*





STEP 2-A

Armature

Before bending or cutting the wire, use a magic marker to identify the following landmarks along this stretch of wire:

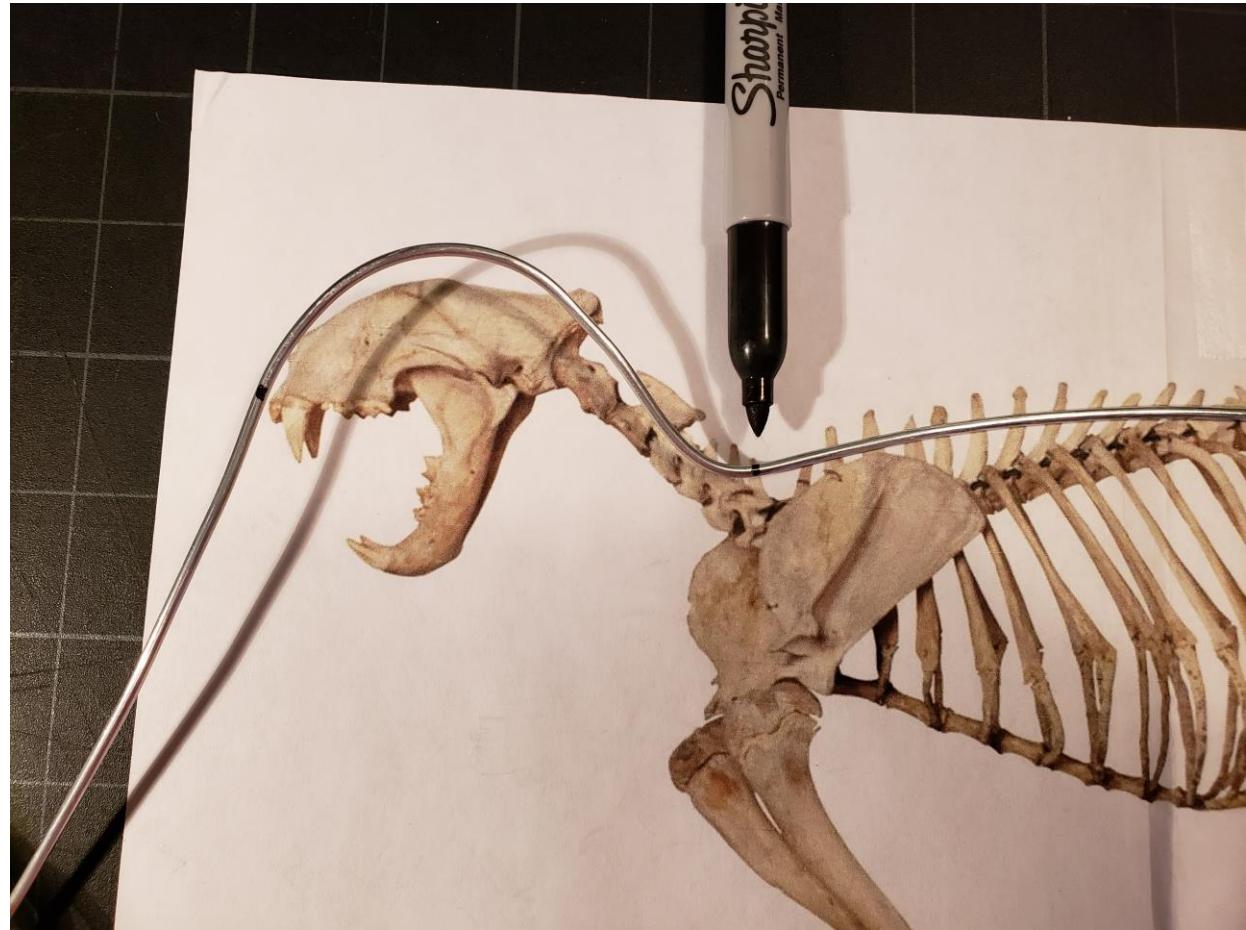
A tip of nose



STEP 2-B

Armature

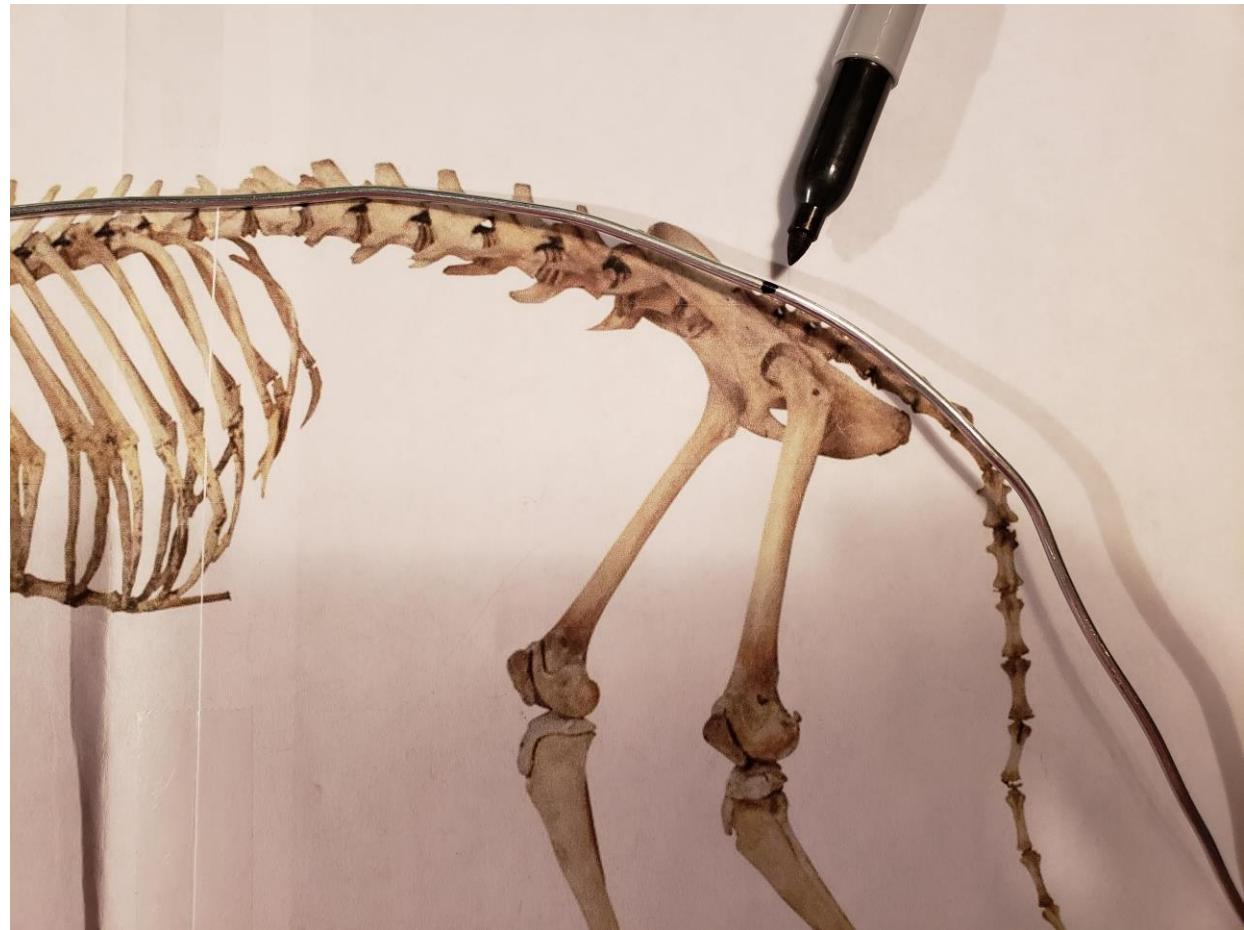
B point where neck intersects with shoulder bone



STEP 2-C

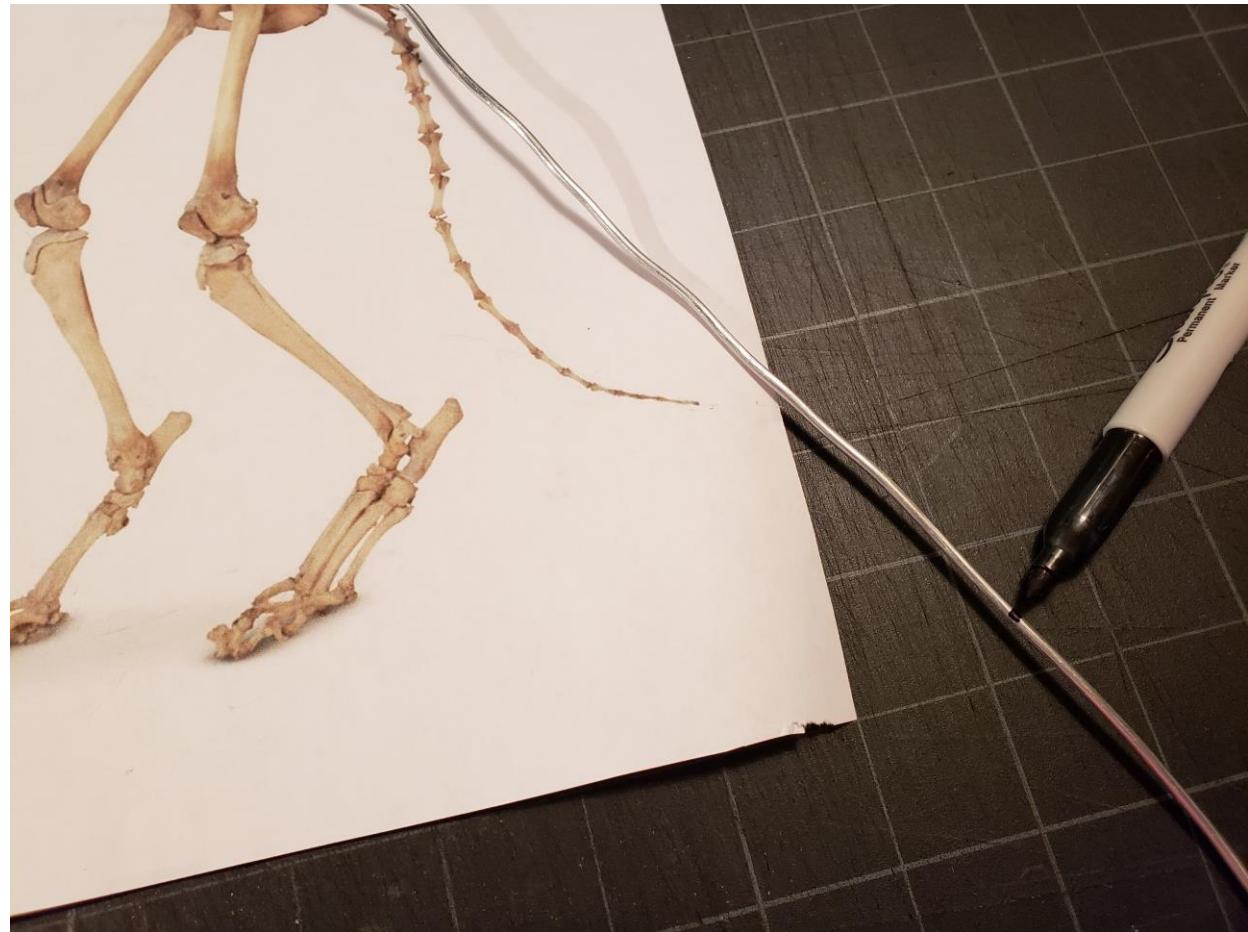
Armature

C insertion of the tail bone where the hind legs start



STEP 2-D Armature

D the point you estimate to be the end of the tail

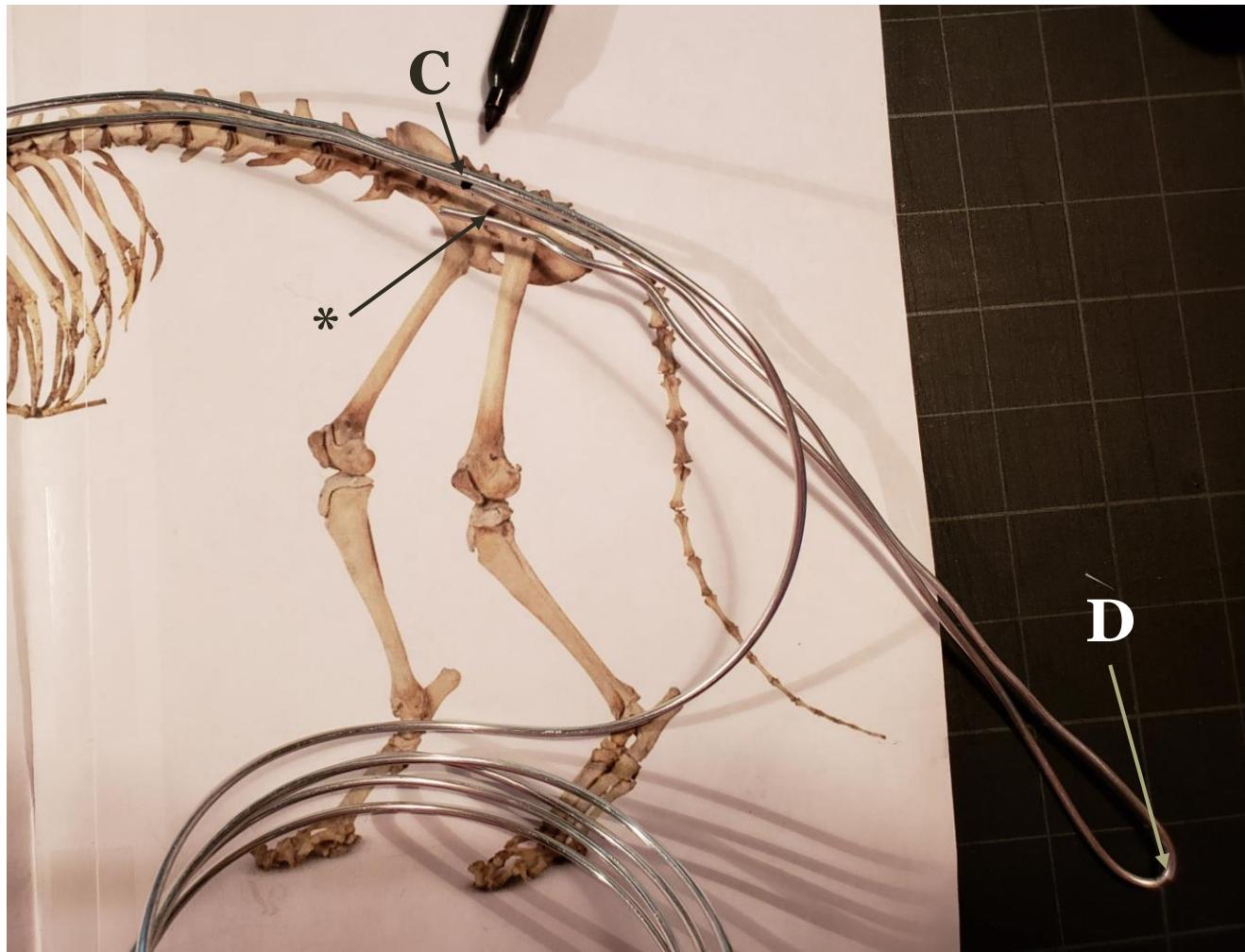


STEP 3

Armature

Bend the wire at the mark on point **D**, curve it back onto itself from the point of the tail tip (**D**), so the tail becomes 2-ply. The end of the bent wire should fall approximately at point **C**.

**Leave the wire end loose for now.*



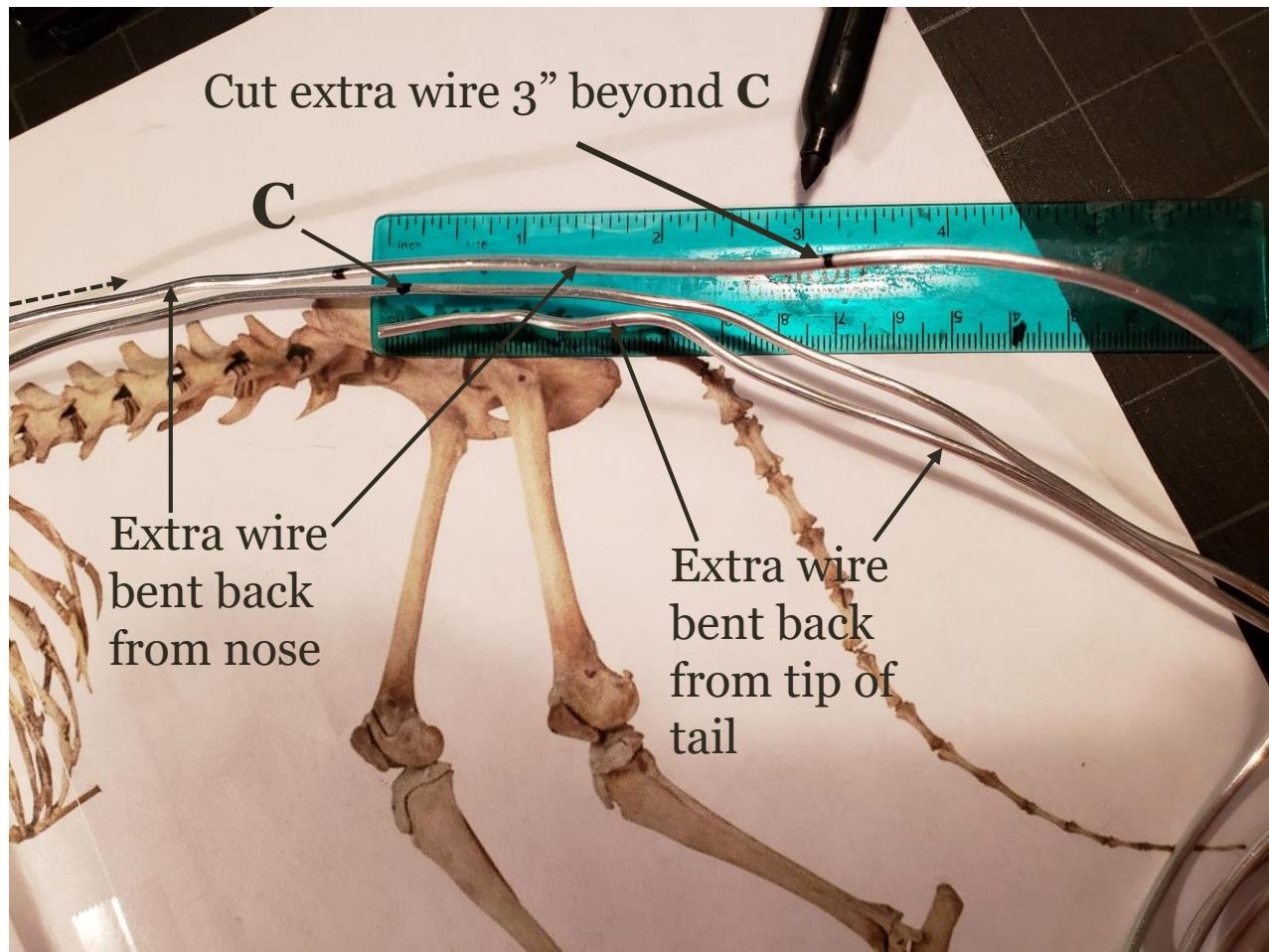
STEP 4-A Armature

On the other end of the body, curve back the wire at the point of the nose tip (A), forming a loop that's curved, with the open part of the loop facing the top.



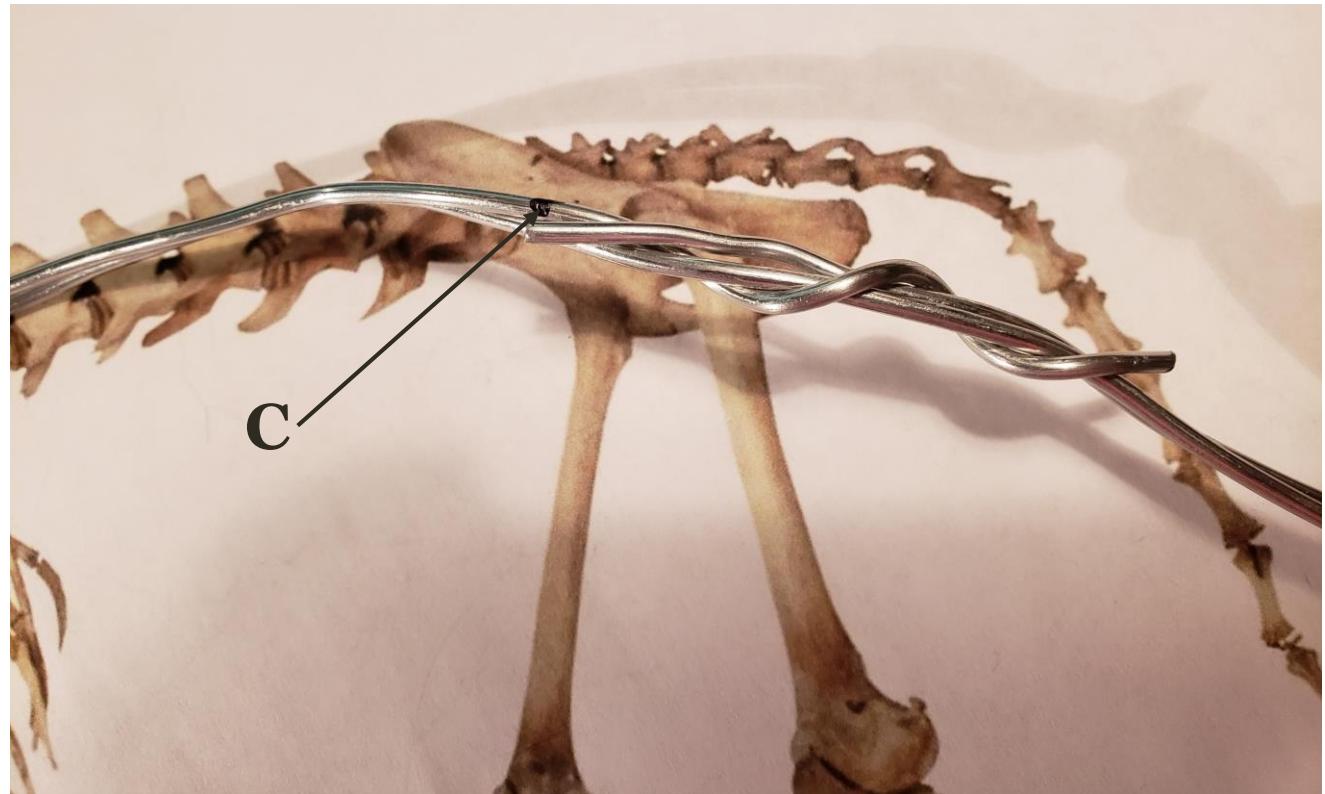
STEP 4-B Armature

At the other end of the nose loop, lay out the remaining wire back along the spine, making it 2-ply, cutting it about 3 inches beyond the mark on the spine for the base of the tail (C).



STEP 4-C Armature

Finally, wrap the extra 3 inches around the base of the tail to strengthen it.



So our spine is ready to become a whole skeleton!

Armature

STEP 5

Now we have to build the limbs out from the spine. First, we need shoulders, which on cats are not very broad, but necessary for attaching the front legs, as well as for portraying their general body shape.

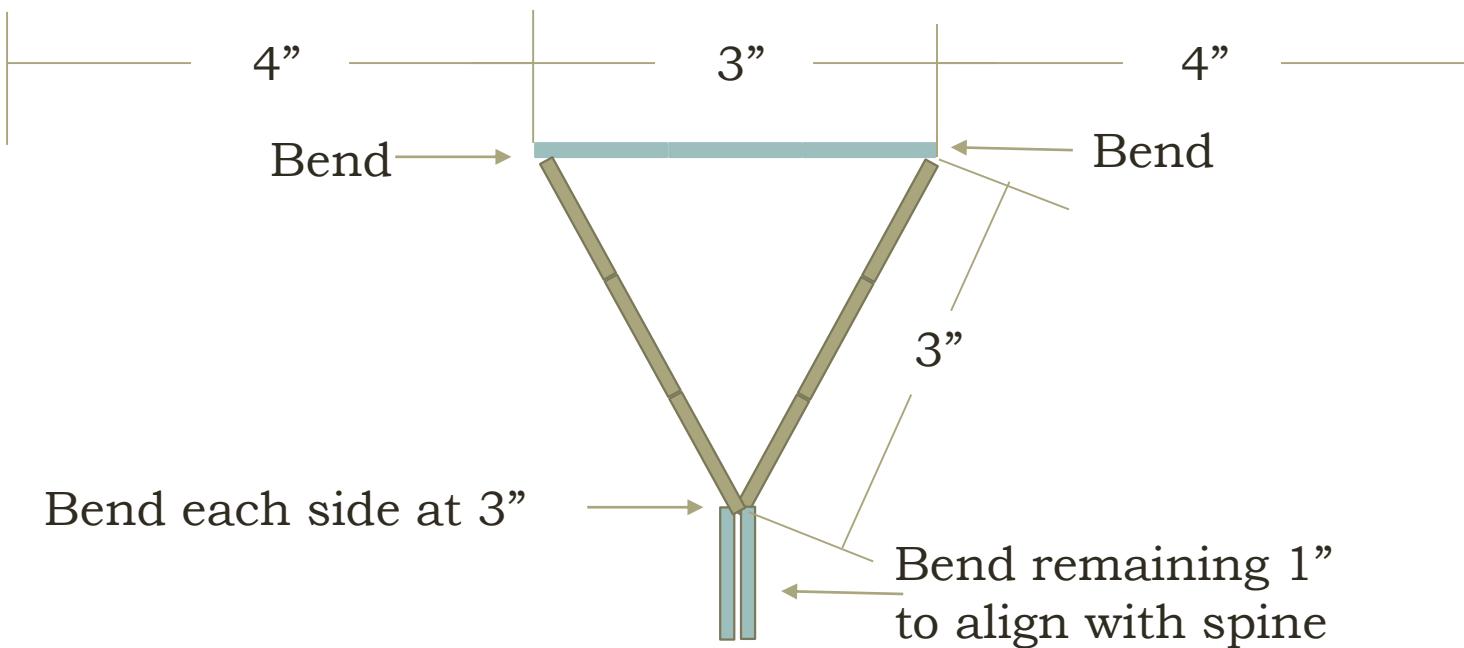
Bend an 11-inch length of wire into a triangle, with the base of the triangle representing the breadth of the shoulders. I am estimating about 3 inches for the base of the triangle, with the other two sides of the triangle joining together at the point where the shoulder bones meet the spine (E).

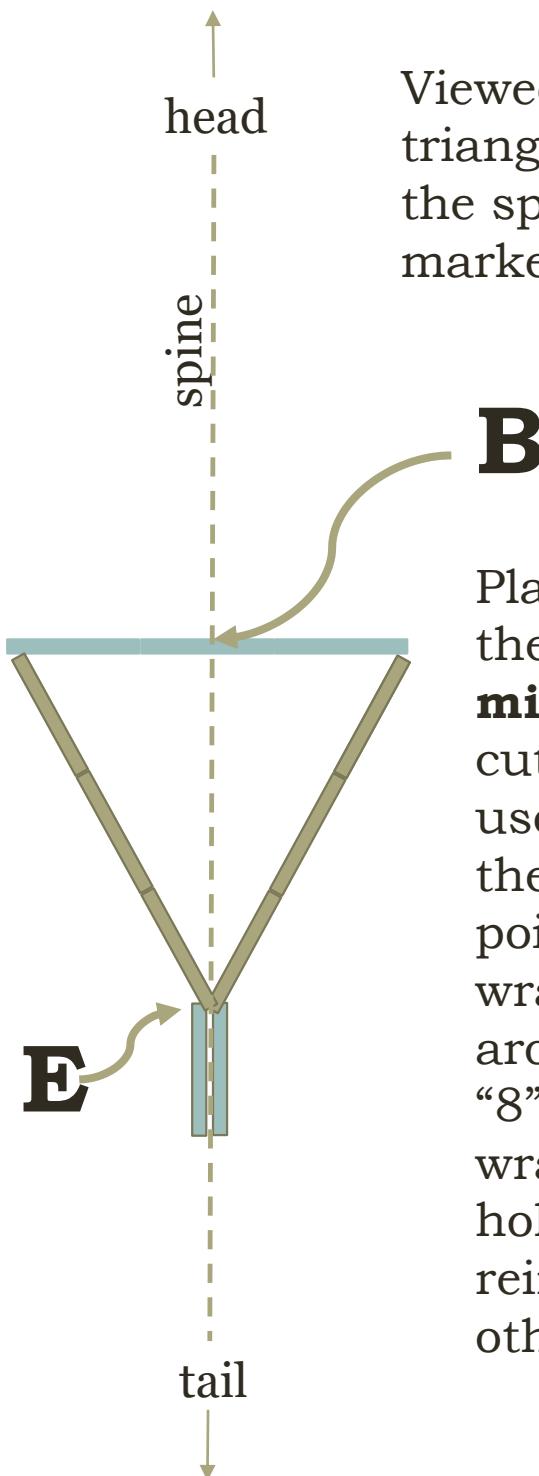
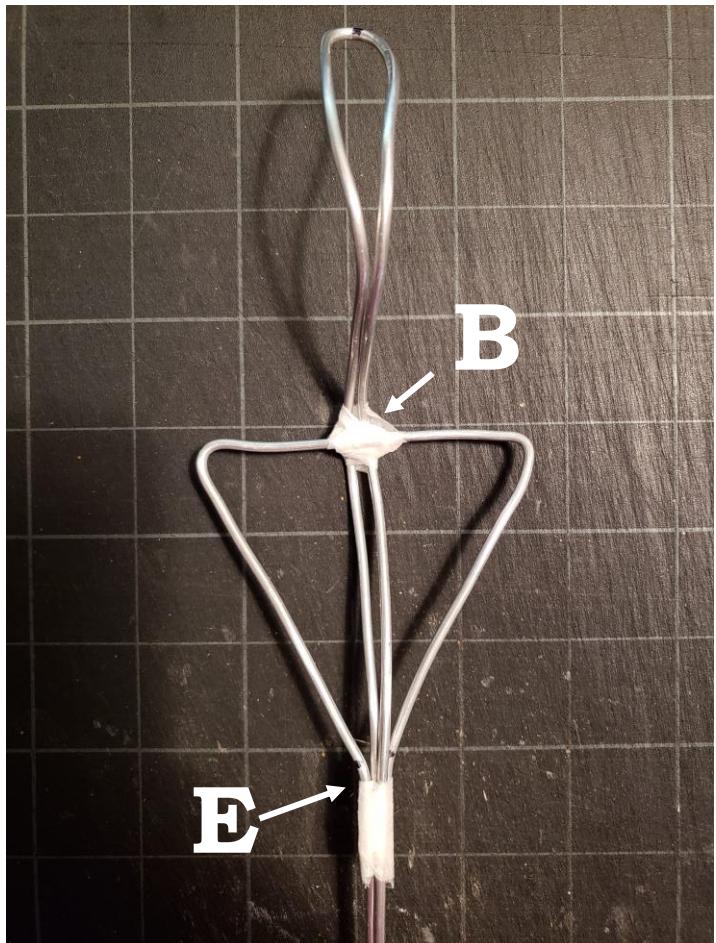
(see following diagrams and photos for clarification before you start)

11" total length of wire:



Bend into triangle:





Viewed from above, the triangle should attach to the spine, matching markers as shown:

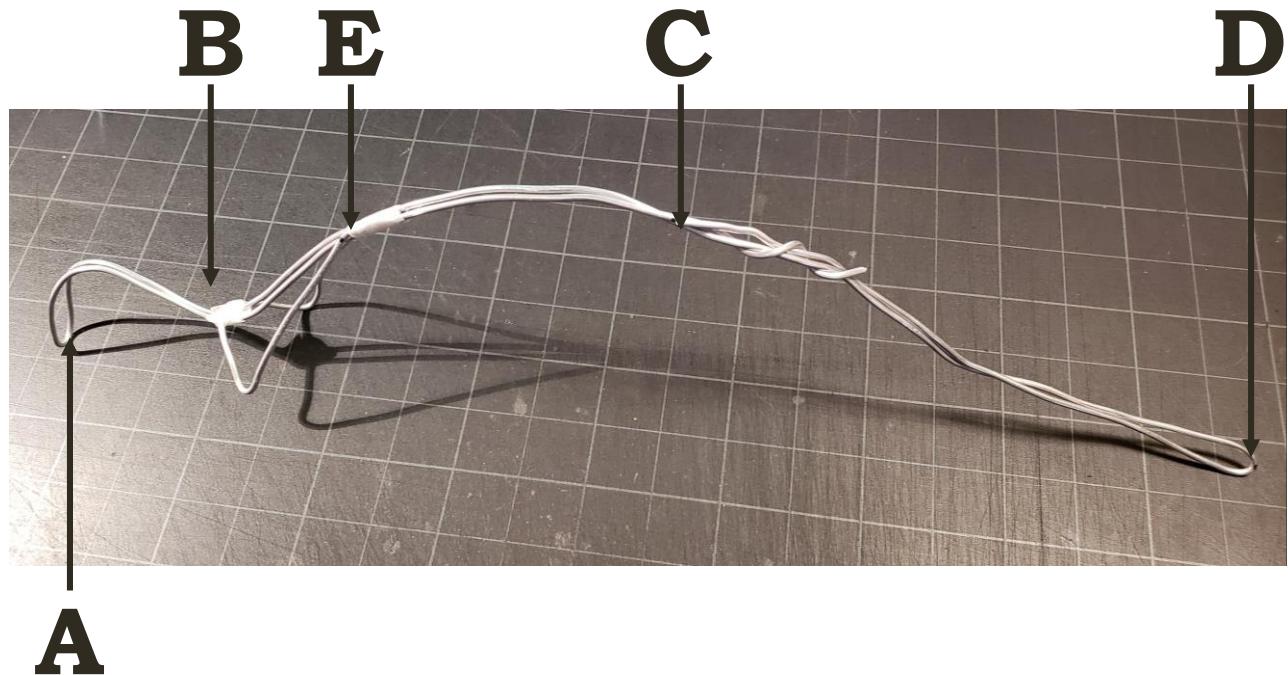
B

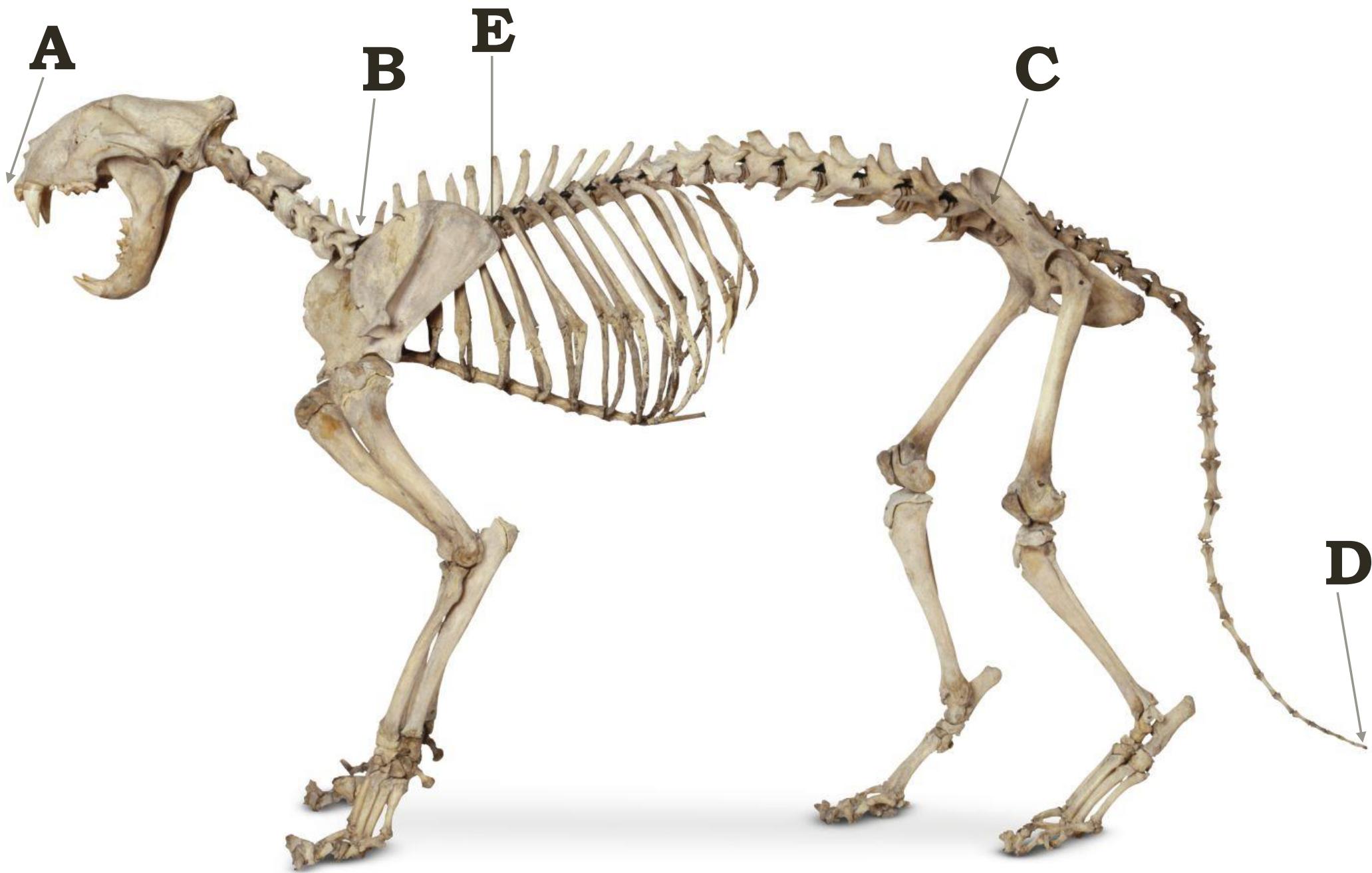
Place the triangle on top of the spine. Cut a 4" piece of **micropore tissue tape**, cut in half lengthwise, and use these pieces to affix the triangle to the spine at points **B** and **E** by wrapping each tightly around the joint in a figure "8" at **B** and in a straight wrap at **E** – this will just hold it in place until we reinforce it further by other means.

STEP 6

Armature

Once the triangle is secured in place, curve it downward to create the gentle curvature of the shoulders. The installed triangle should look a little bit like a saddle at this point.





STEP 7-A

Armature

FRONT LEGS

This is going to be one of those “fly by the seat of your pants” kind of steps.

For this step, it’s difficult to tell you exactly how long this one piece of wire should be, since I did this flying by the seat of MY pants! However, if you estimate that it has to be twice as long as BOTH front legs (2-ply each) plus enough to wrap around the triangle and to wrap back around the rest of the spine to reinforce it, this will give you a pretty good idea of how much wire to start with. (And maybe even a few extra inches for good measure – better to have too much than too little.)

It’s better, I think, to do both legs with one piece of wire, because it will make the skeleton more solid and strong, allowing for re-positioning the cat without weakening the skeletal structure.

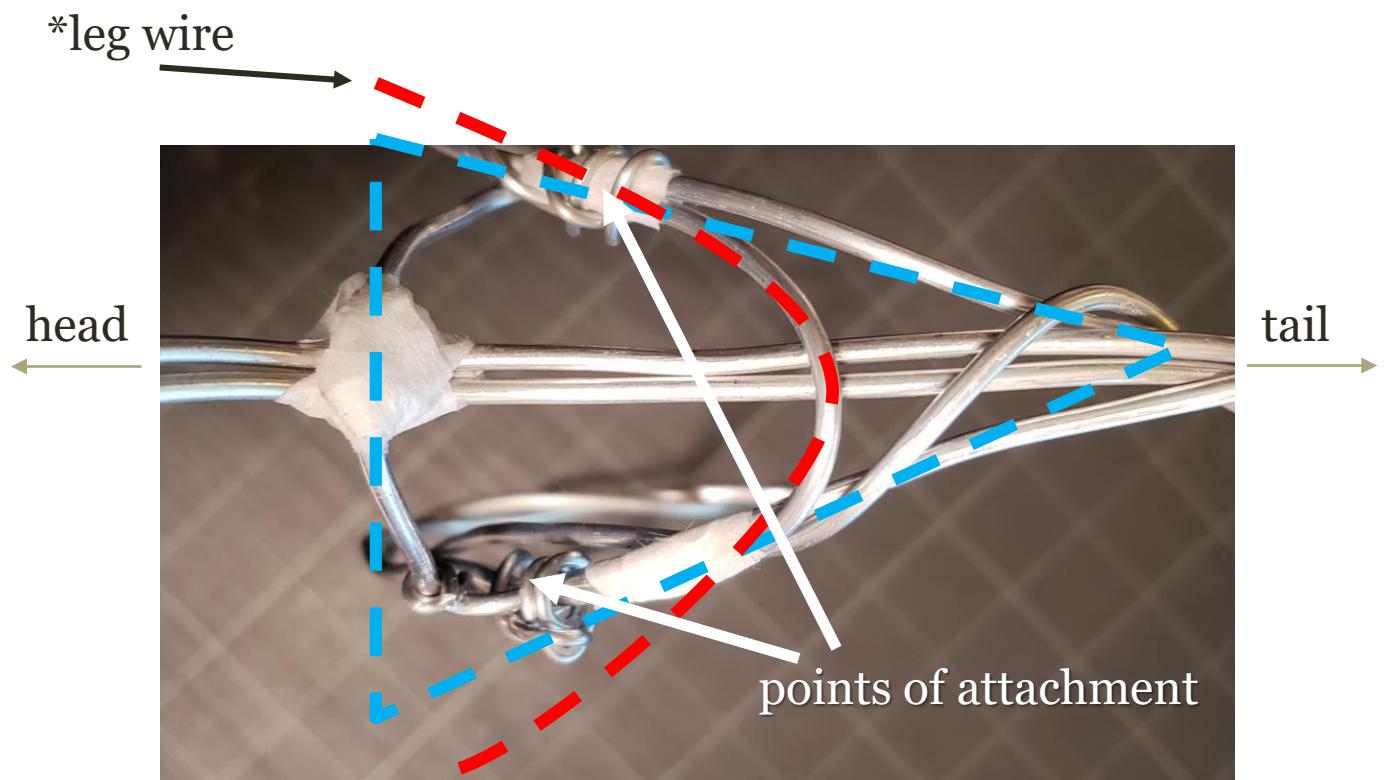
Caution: Please keep your cat(s) away from your working space while manipulating the long wire!

STEP 7-B Armature

Front Legs – Left Leg First

This will make more sense if you read all steps, 7-B, 8-A through 8-D before starting.

Start with a fairly long piece of the heavier wire* (12 g), bend it in half, forming a loose loop in the middle (red). Place the loop on top of the triangle (blue) with loose ends pointing towards the front of the skeleton – towards the head - like this:



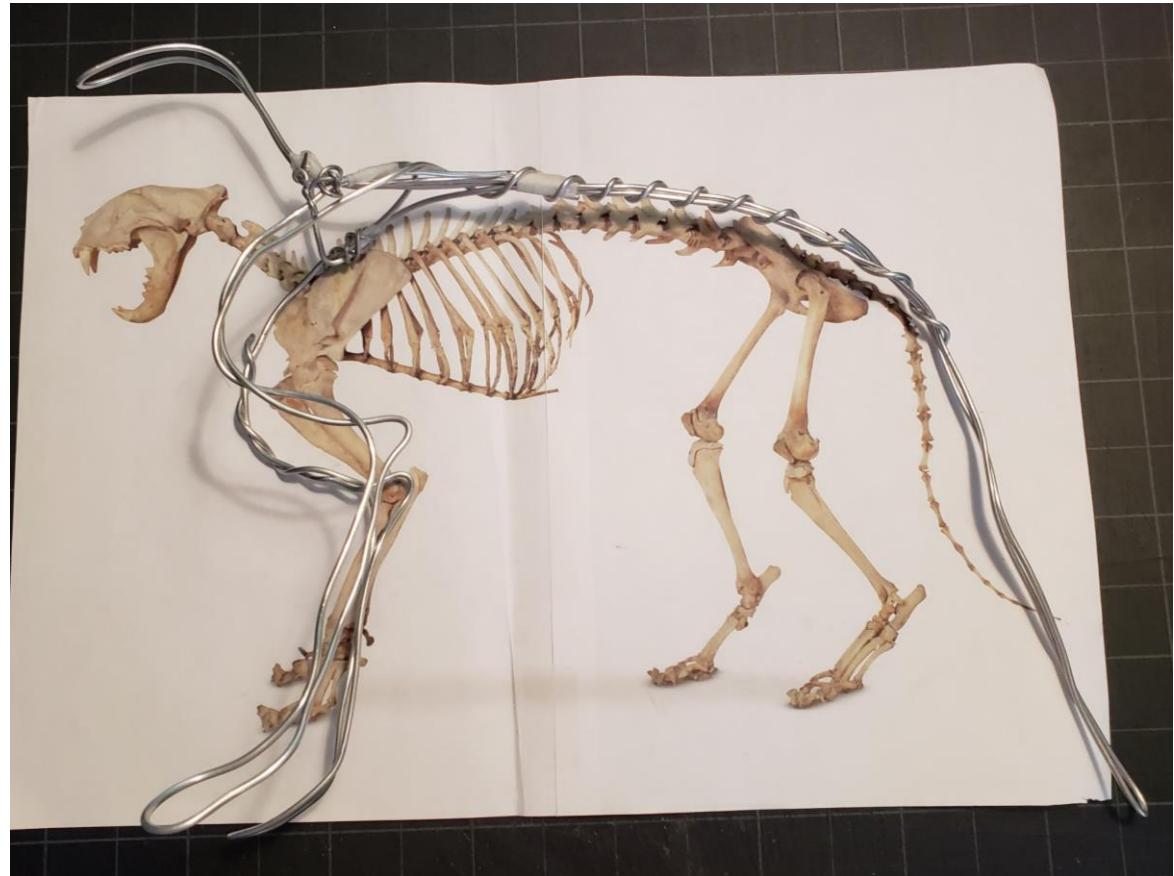
STEP 8-A

Armature

Front Legs – Left Leg First

Now we will wrap that **wire** around the shoulder (**triangle**) on each side to form the front legs.

After the loop (mid-point) is in place and secured, the easiest way is to lay your structure down on top of the skeleton chart, matching them at points A, B and E, and then gently curve the wire down the LEFT leg to somewhat match the skeleton.



STEP 8-B

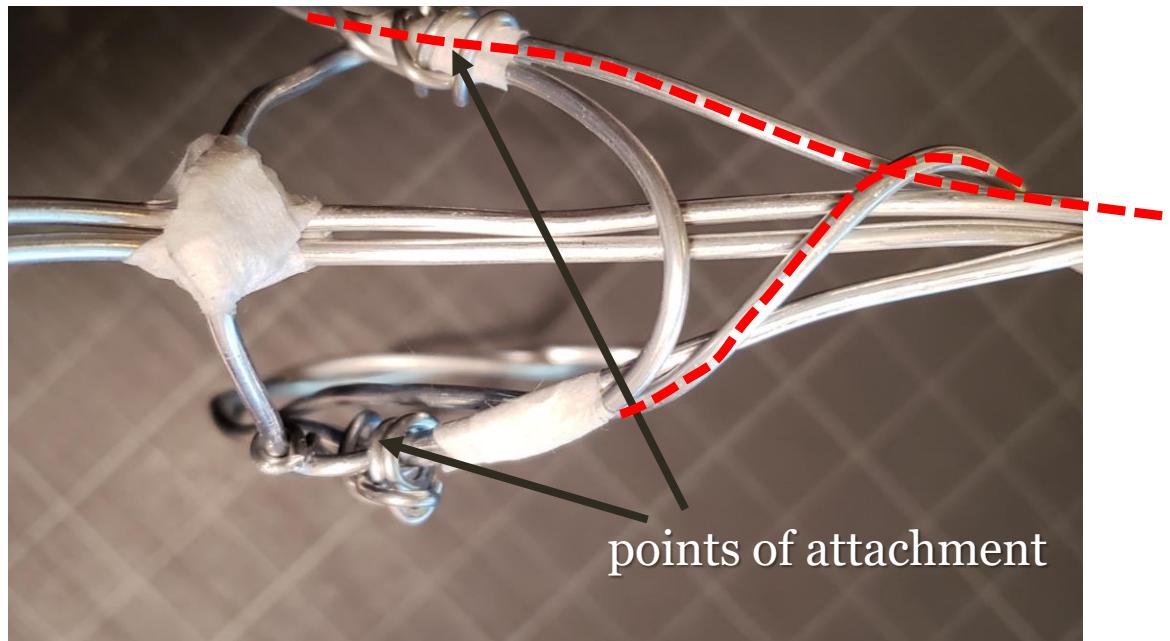
Armature

Front Legs

Once you've made the loop for the left foot, work the rest of the wire back up along the same lines to form a double ply structure for the leg – (*see *note on next page*) Once the extra wire reaches the point of attachment on the triangle, make a new attachment of this wire over the original one (either with a small piece of thinner wire, or with the tape just to hold it in place). Then, wrap the rest of the wire (red dashed lines) around and beyond the loop, further reinforcing the spine

head

points of attachment

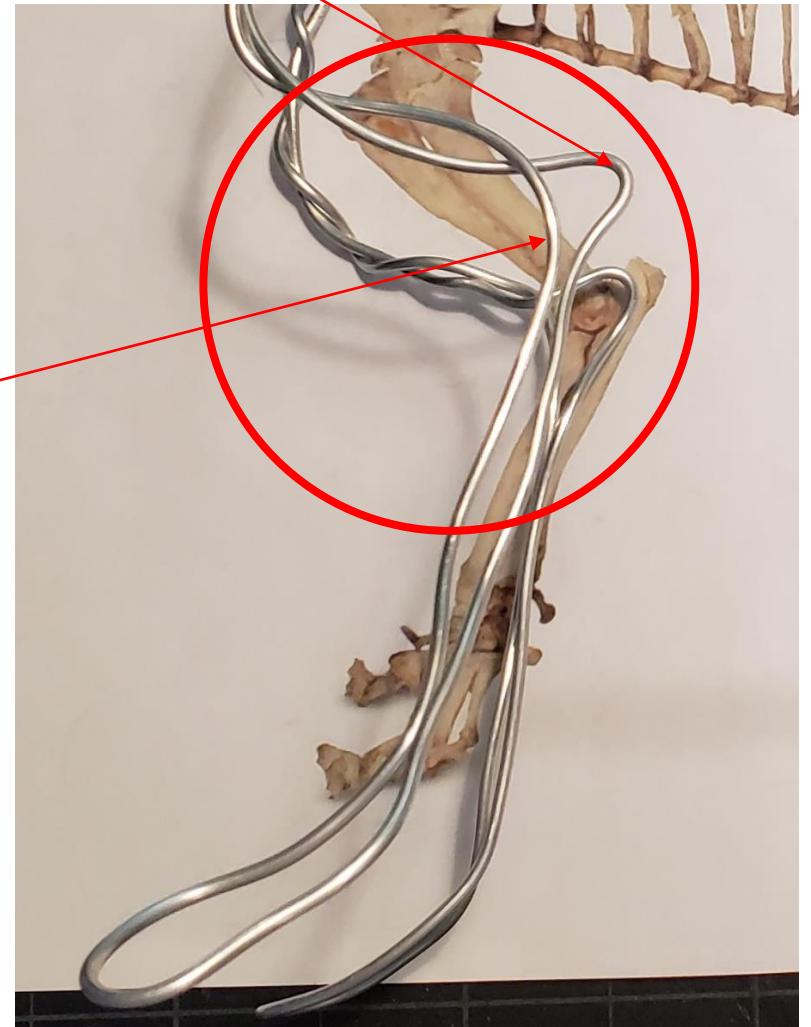


Armature

© Nancy Sullivan 2019

*NOTE on 8-B

- As you wrap the wire downward for the first ply of the leg, create a “crook” as the diagram shows. On the second ply, as you bend the wire going back up to finish the leg, leave out the extended crook, and simply follow the gentle curve around the basic profile of the leg. Once wrapped, this will result in a functioning joint which will be strong and easy to maneuver.



STEP 8-C

Armature

Right Leg

Because the cat on your skeleton chart is pointing toward the left, you will now need to use your LEFT LEG as a guide to bend the wire on the right side into a symmetrical RIGHT LEG.

Turn your structure over, and proceed as if the wire already bent for the LEFT leg serves as your chart for the RIGHT leg.

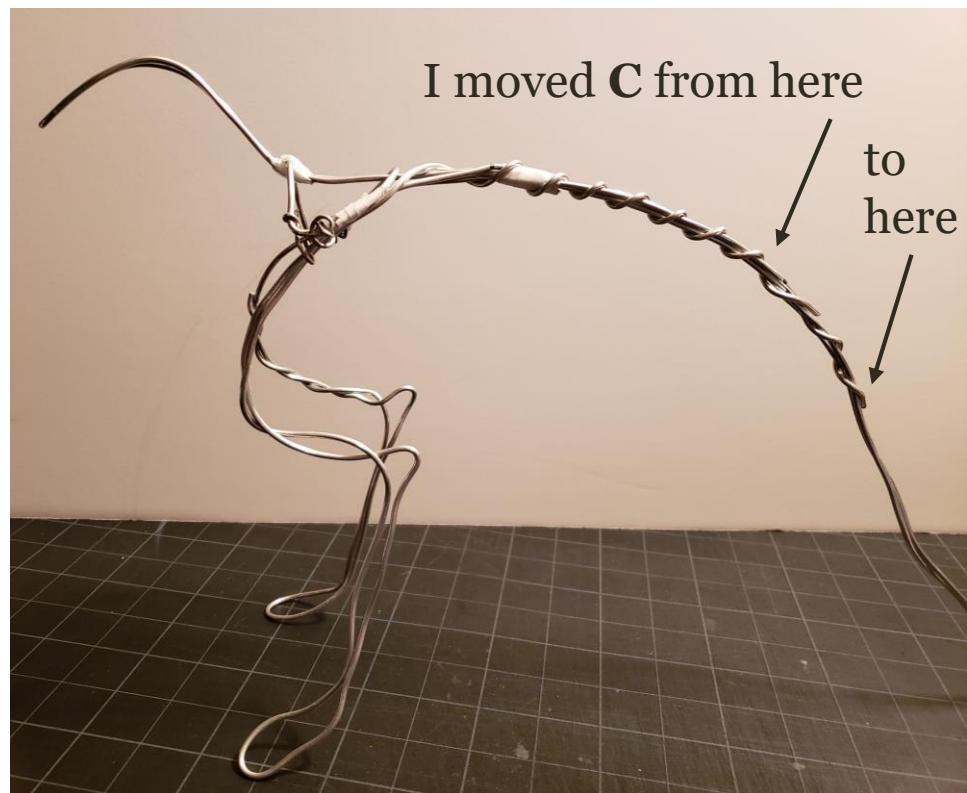
Repeat all left leg steps for the right leg.

STEP 8-D Armature

Front Legs

You may have noticed that I made several adjustments on my skeleton to account for the size and shape of my cat. I made the legs a bit longer, the loop for the foot rather large, and I am going to extend the length of the spine, moving point C back by about 2 inches in order to elongate the body. Fortunately I had made the tail extra long, so there is still plenty of tail to work with. You may either use the original marks, or change them as I did – your choice. This will be the Maine Coon model!

Your
structure
should look
something
like this:



STEP

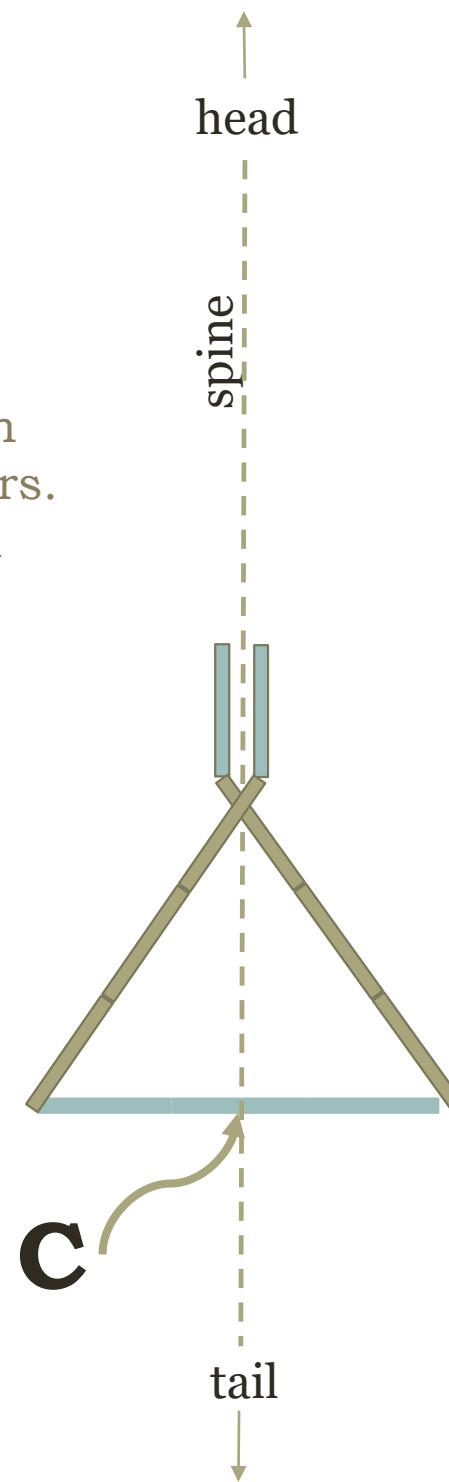
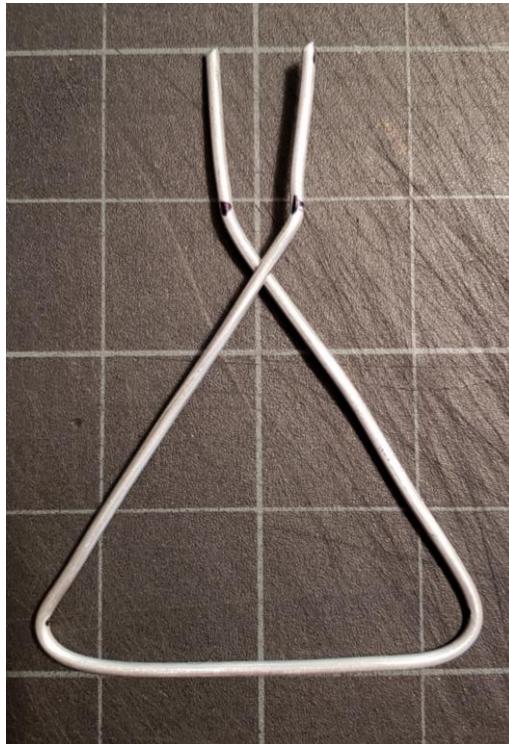
9-A

Armature

Attachment for Hind Legs

- Set your skeleton on a level surface and bend and adjust it until it is totally symmetrical, viewing it from all angles. The front of the skeleton should be straight and level when the two feet are touching the ground.
- Now we need to create a place for the hind legs to “grow” out of. For this we will go back to the instructions for the shoulder “triangle” – repeat the process for cutting and bending it into shape, with the following difference:
 - This time we will install the triangle in the opposite direction on the lower spine, as shown in the following illustration:

(1) Looking down from above the structure, the triangle should attach to the spine, matching markers as shown. This time the triangle will be pointing the opposite direction of what it was for the shoulders. This time, let the 1" extension cross over to create a gap, like this:



(2) Place the triangle underneath the spine this time, matching the center of the triangle base to point **C**.



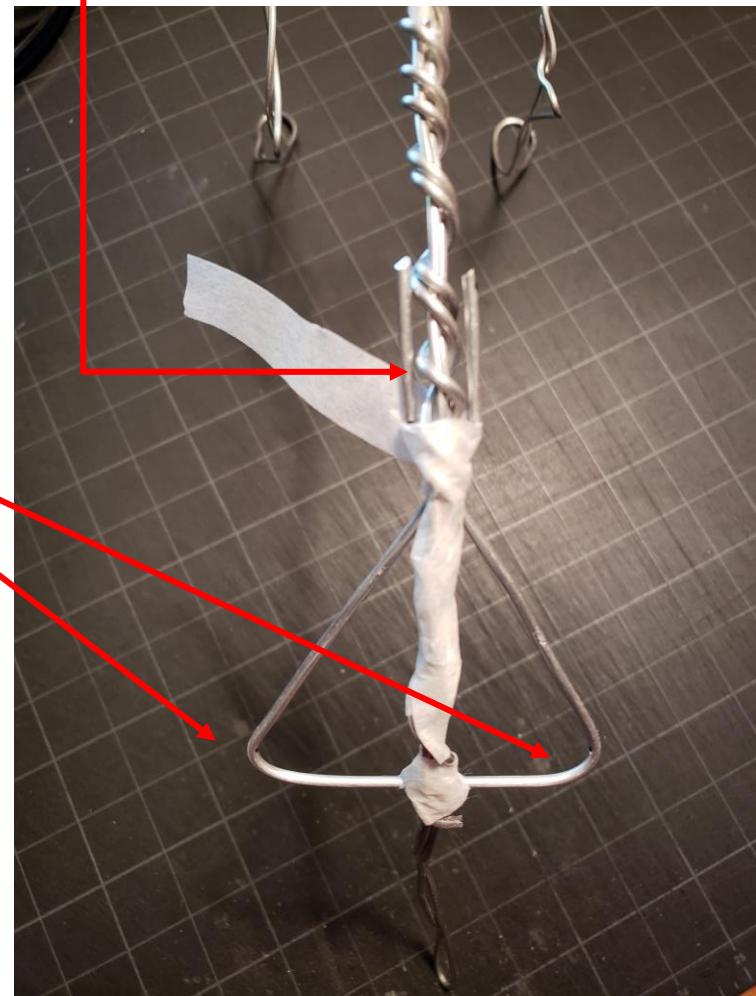
(3) Cut a 4" piece of **tissue tape**, cut in half lengthwise, just like before, and use one to affix first the triangle base to the spine at point **C** by wrapping it tightly around the joint in a figure "8."

STEP 9-A

Armature

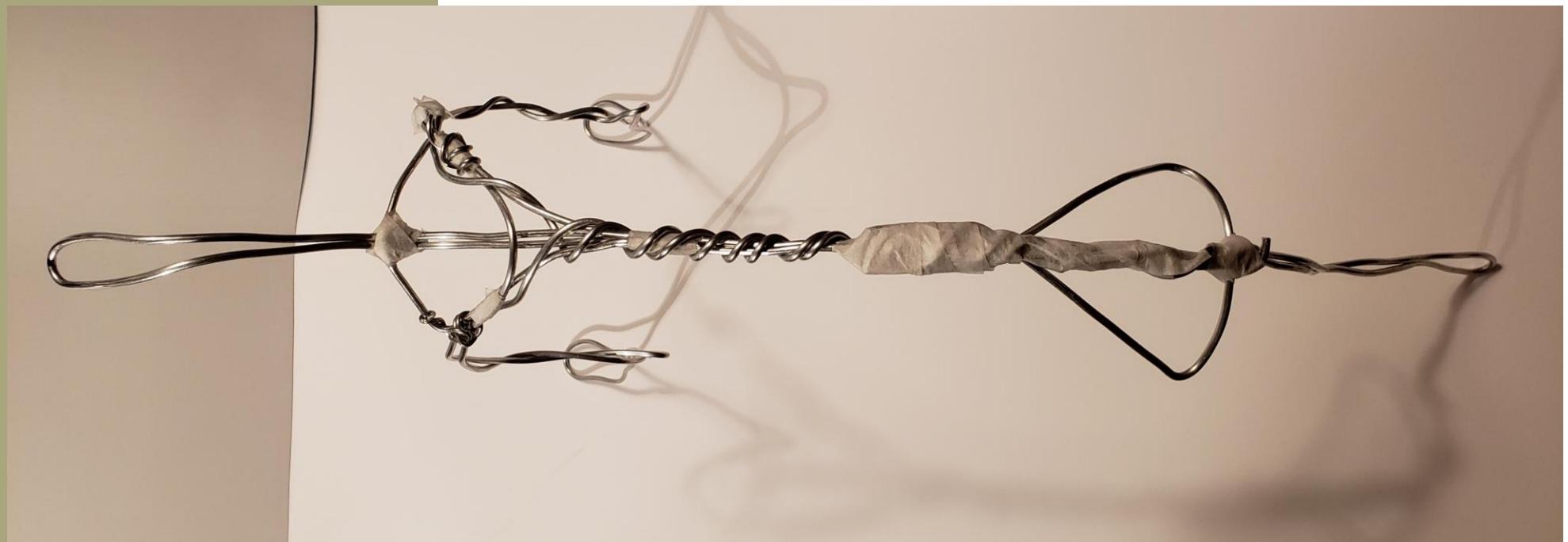
- Now attach the bent ends to the spine, wrapping the other strip of tape in a straight wrap.

- Finally, bend down the open corners of the triangle to shape them into a gentle downward curve.



Attachment for Hind Legs:

Viewed from above, your structure should look something like this:



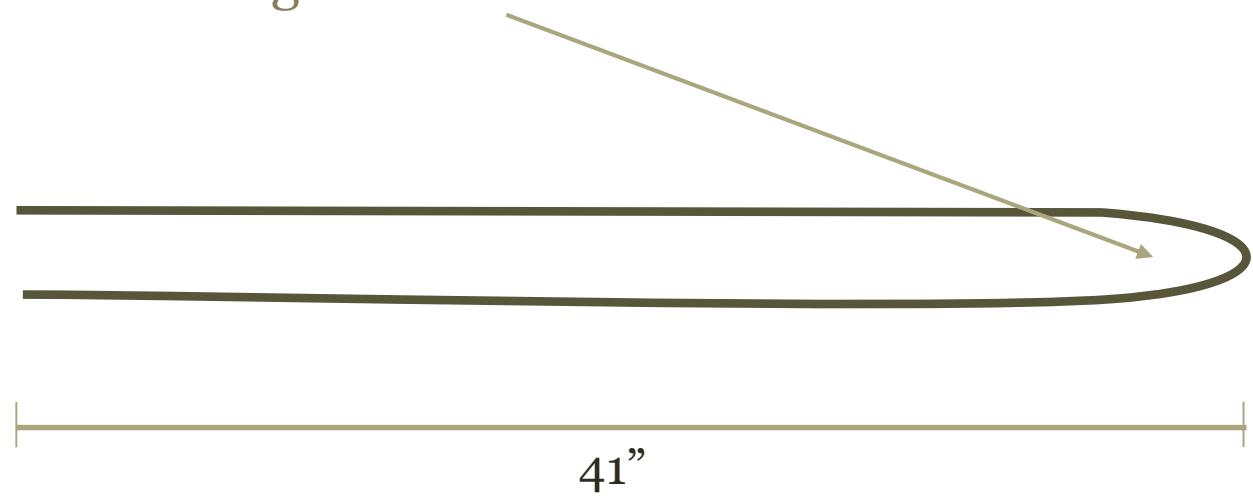
Armature

STEP 9-B Armature

Hind Legs

- Just as before, we will create both legs from one length of wire, for the same reasons – sturdiness and flexibility.
- Cut one very long piece of the 12 gauge wire, total of 82 inches. Find the middle, at 41 inches, mark it at the halfway point, and bend.

Now you have a 41 inch long double piece of wire with a gentle curve at one end.

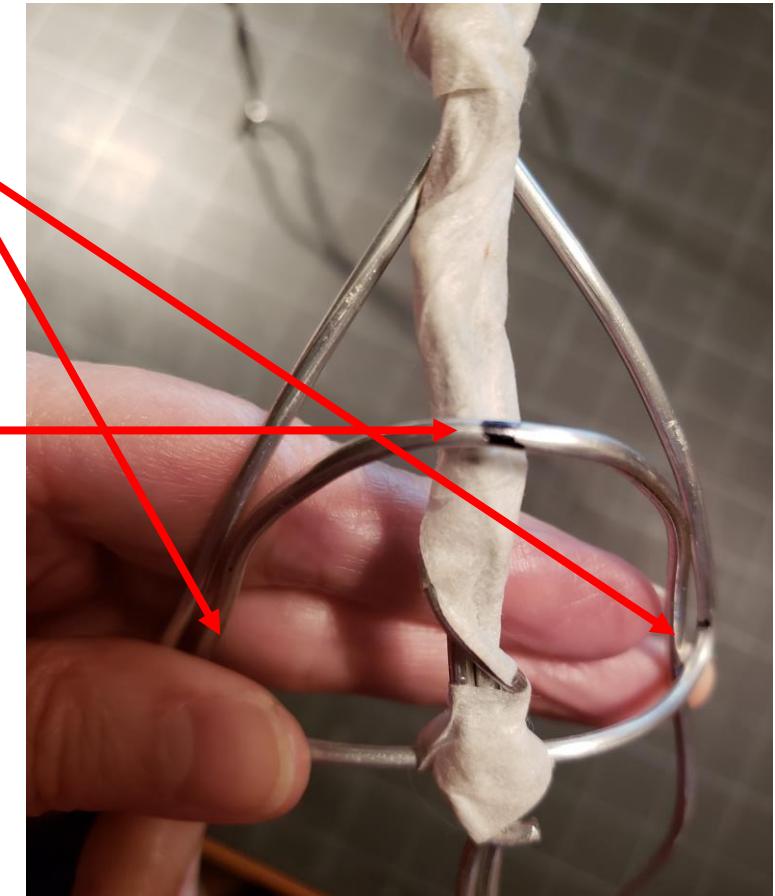


STEP 9-B Armature

Hind Legs

- **CAUTION:** Be extremely careful with the ends of this LONG wire – it bounces around as you manipulate it, and it would be very easy to injure yourself – especially your eyes. And PLEASE don't let your cat hang out anywhere near where you're working on this step: as Scout wanted to "help" I realized how dangerous it was for her to be within range of the sharp ends of the wire, and escorted her out of the room!

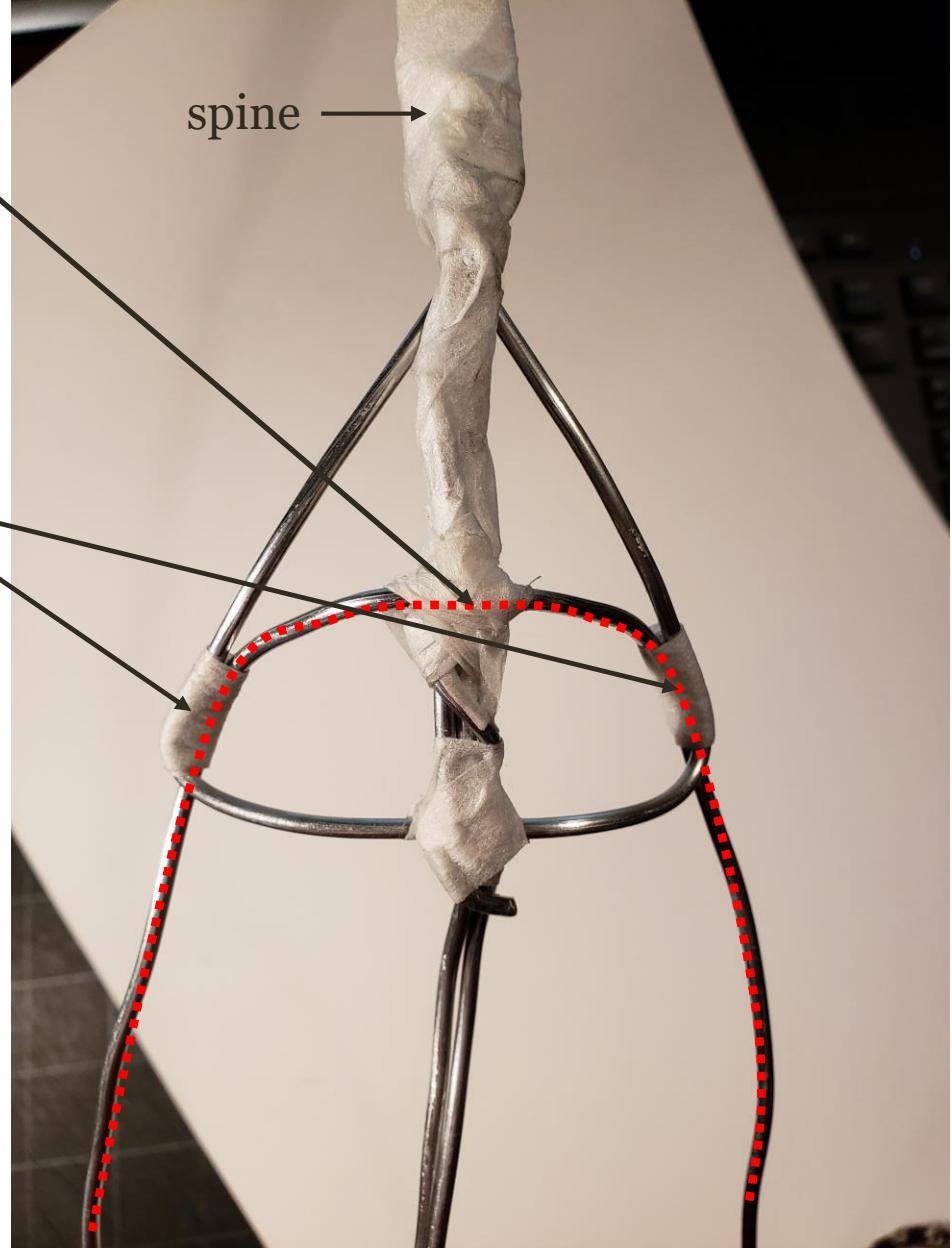
- Thread the 2 ends of the long wire through the triangle, over the spine, aligning the midway point at the curved end onto the spine, as shown:



STEP 9-B Armature

Hind Legs

- Attach to the spine at the mid-point, using a strip of tissue tape.
- Attach the sides of the **loop** where they touch the triangle, as shown:



STEP 9-B Armature

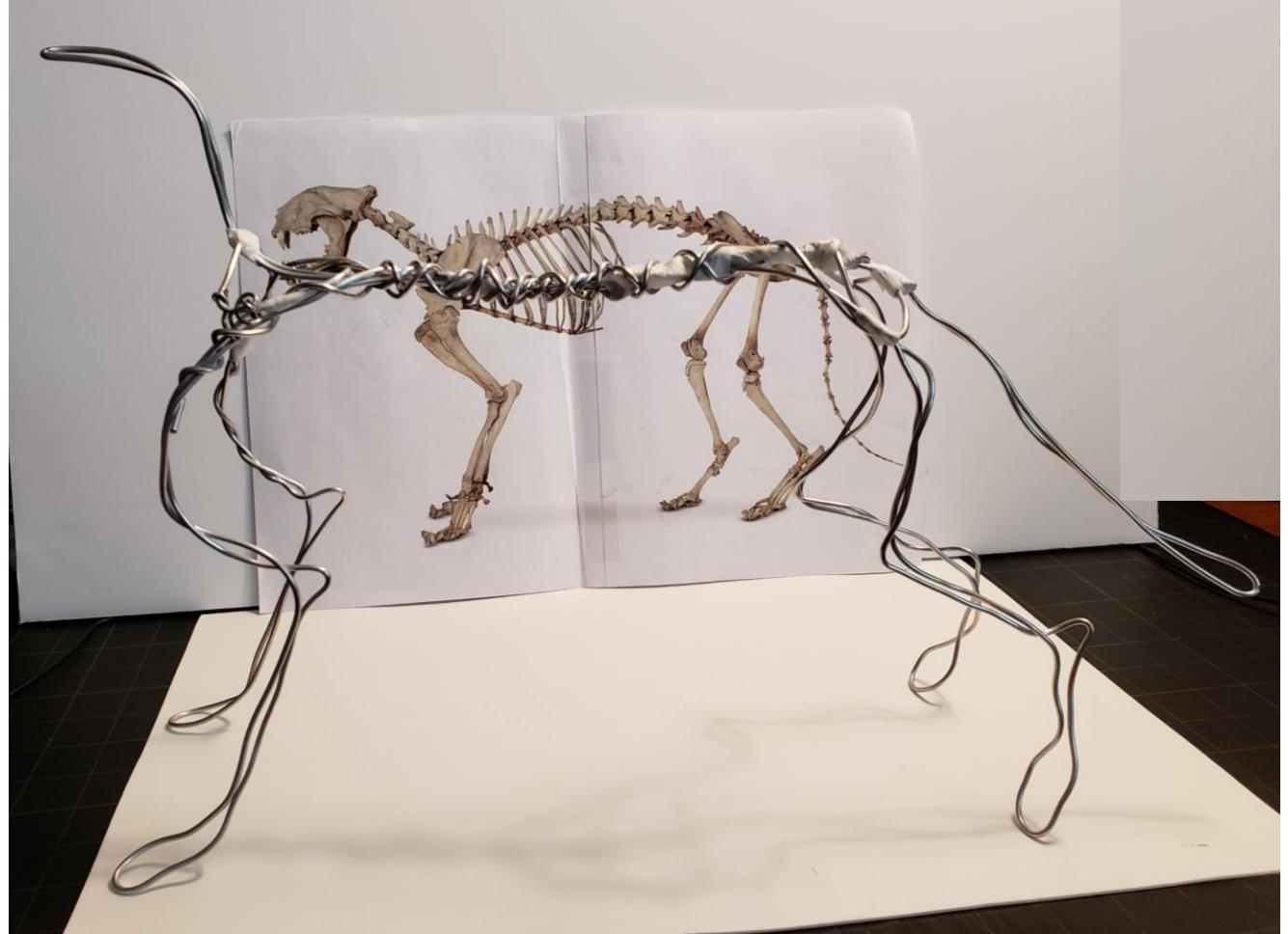
Hind Legs – Left Leg First

- Just as before, work over your skeletal chart, using point C as your placement landmark. Start with the left leg, bend the wire over the illustration, making whatever adjustments you feel are necessary to match your cat's size as you go.
- Handle the heel of the foot the same as you did the crook in the front legs, forming a crook (or sharp curve) on the first pass, and then forming the other side (2nd ply) more gently around the curve.
- Once back up to the spine with the second wire, check the length of the leg to make sure it's right, and then wrap the remaining wire around the triangle and back up along the spine, reinforcing it – any additional length remaining can be used to reinforce the shoulders.
- Repeat the process for the right leg.
- Make any corrections for symmetry now, since it will be difficult to change once we start wrapping the skeleton with wool. Make sure your cat can stand up straight and level, with all feet on the ground.

STEP 9-B

Armature

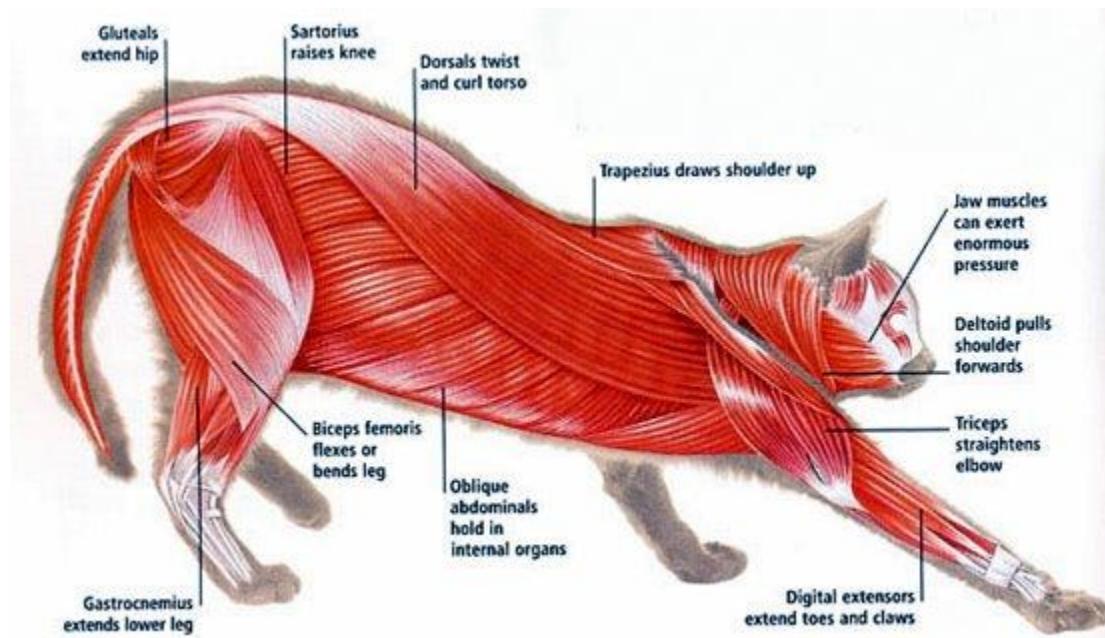
Armature is ready for wrapping!



PART 2

Armature Wrap

As you no doubt already understand, the purpose of wrapping the body first with a core wool is to create a body shape that represents the animal without its coat. I think of it as a hairless representation of the muscle mass – which is why I like to use the feline muscle illustration as a basic guide, along with, of course, the subject itself. While petting my cats, I find myself feeling the musculature and thinking of how to create the shapes accurately.



STEP 1-A

Armature Wrap

Core Wrap – Pipe Cleaners

Since wool does not attach well to naked wire, the first step is to wrap the armature with pipe cleaners.

- There's no big mystery to this step, just start with the spine and work out to the extremities. Any technique that covers the wire with pipe cleaners is a good technique – use your imagination. Just try not to restrict the wire's flexibility and movement by wrapping too tightly, especially at the joints. Tuck the sharp ends into the structure in between loops of wire so they won't protrude and cut your hands.
- I chose to wrap the entire triangle areas (front and back) rather than just wrapping the outline wires that form them. I believe this will help form the shapes needed for the finished animal.
- I wrap closely, as opposed to very loosely as some do – I think it's beneficial for attaching wool later. You may choose whichever method you like better.



STEP 1-B Armature Wrap

If you don't find your own way to accomplish this, I can offer the following steps that I followed as a guide:

After wrapping the length of the spine, I started working on the hind triangle and tail as follows:

- Wrap the top half or so of the triangle all the way around the structure, stopping where the base of the tail will be.

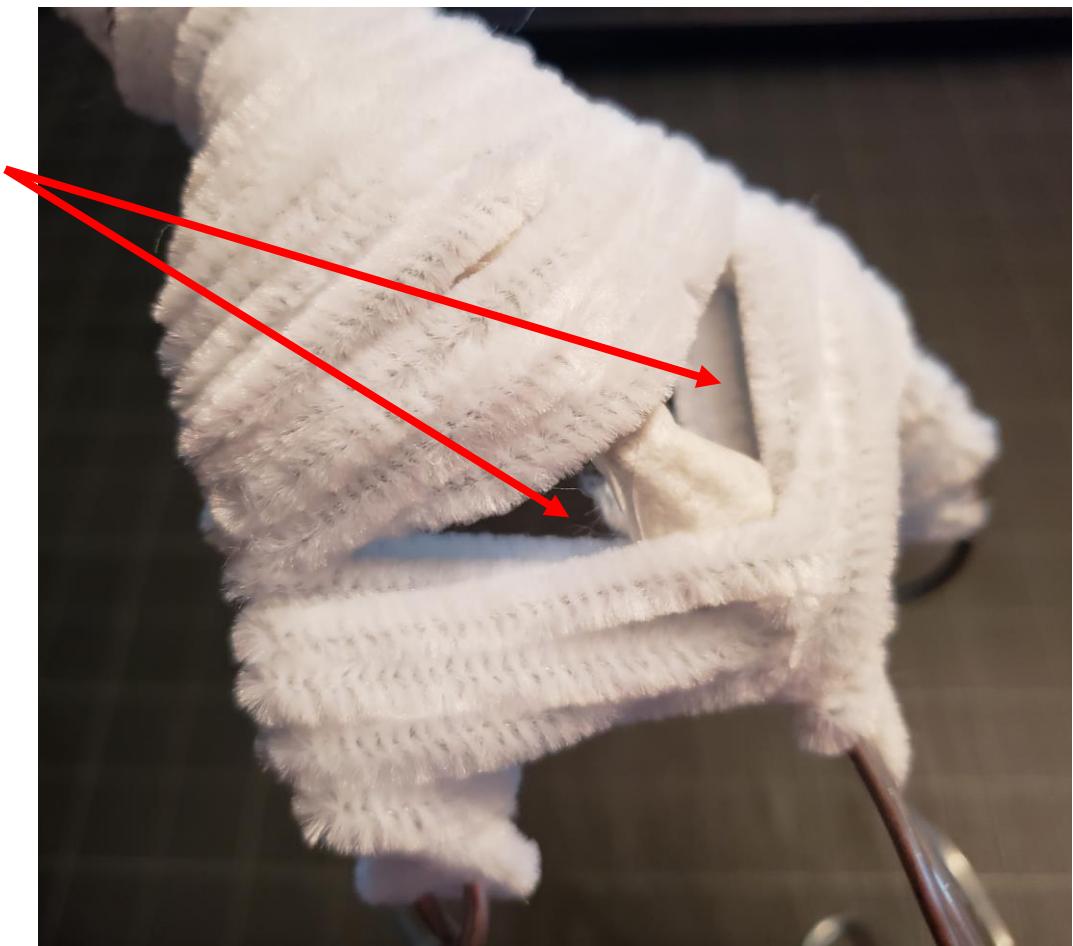


STEP 1-C

Armature Wrap

- Finish wrapping the remainder of the triangle separately on each side of the tail, and continue the wrap down the leg. This will roughly mimic the gluteal muscles. Like this:

We will use these gaps later to insert ribbons of core wool, further defining muscle groups.



STEP 1-D Armature Wrap

- Once you've wrapped down the length of the leg, leave the loop at the lower end open, like this:

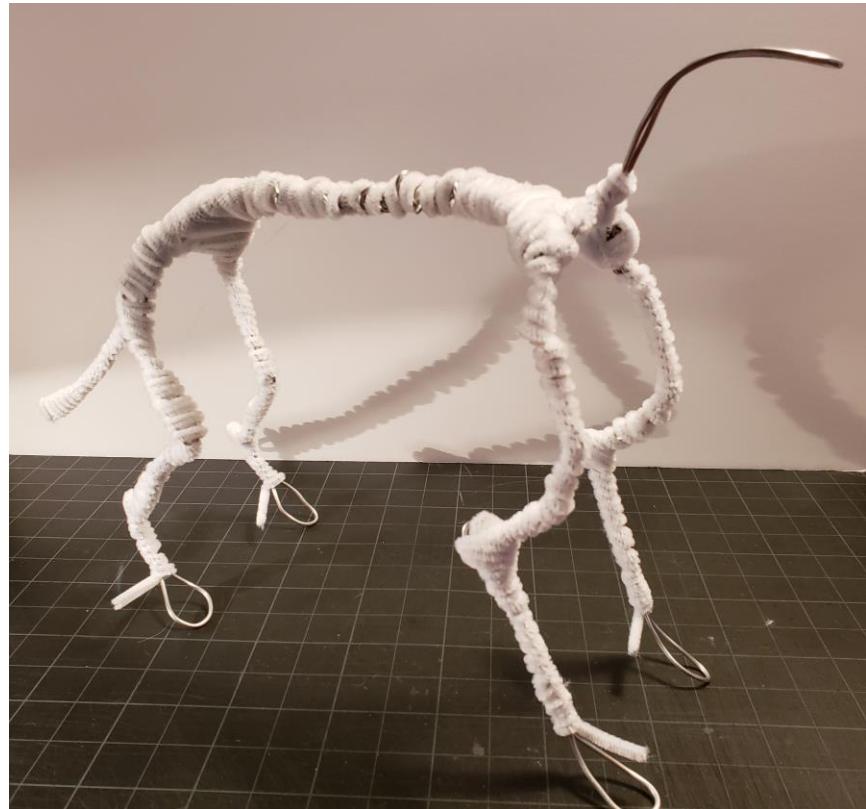


STEP 1-E

Armature Wrap

- Wrap down the length of the tail.
- Wrap the front triangle and legs in roughly the same manner as you wrapped the hind legs. Add extra wrapping in any area that seems weak or where the wire seems to still be fairly exposed.
- Leave the neck loop mostly unwrapped, except at the very base – this is going to insert into the head which is made separately.

Your
structure
should look
something
like this,
ready for the
core wool.



PART

3

Core Wool Wrap

Now the entire armature must be wrapped with the first layers of core wool. Of course, if your cat is “skinny” you might not need as much of an initial layer of core wool, but my cat is built like a Sumo wrestler, so I want to make the armature sturdy.

If you are already an experienced wool artist, you should proceed to wrap the entire armature with ribbons of core wool in whatever fashion you desire.

Refer to the muscle group illustration as you go to help determine which areas should be thicker, and which should be tapered.

However, if you need some guidance in this step, here’s the way I did it:

STEP 1-A

Core Wool Wrap

I am using a natural color core wool.

I start by separating a 13-14" length of core wool into 4 fairly fat ribbons. This size will be good for most of the wrapping, so you might want to just go ahead and create several before you start, for convenience.

In this initial wrap, there will be very little needle felting required. When you approach the end of a ribbon, stretch it out

into a thin consistency that will attach easily to the end of your wool wrap by smoothing it with your fingers. I would only needle felt where it seems it might not be secure, since these layers will be covered later by other strips of wool.

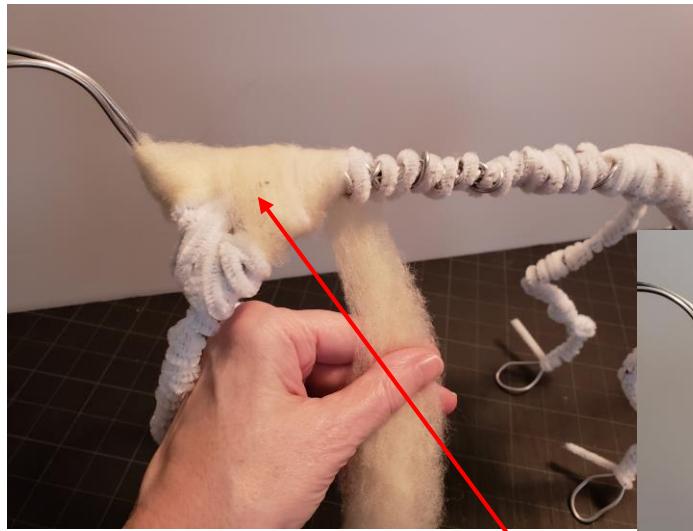


STEP 1-B

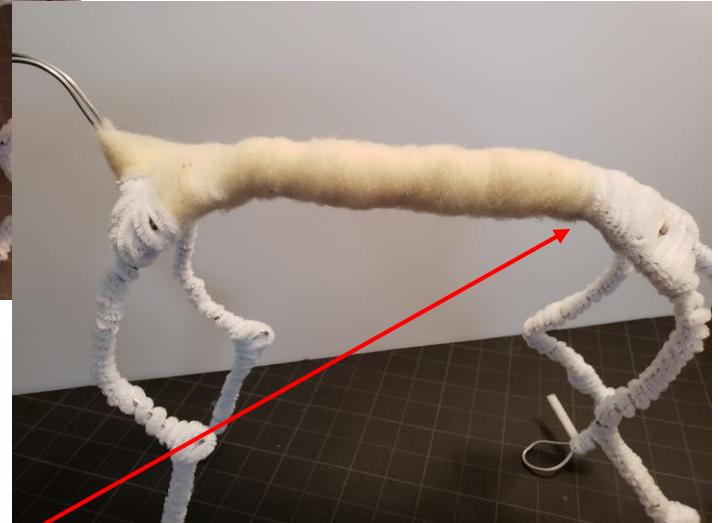
Core Wool Wrap

I begin at the neck and wrap all the way down the length of the spine, and then back in the other direction to make two layers.

Each time you start a new ribbon of wool, stretch it out slightly as you make the first wrap – this allows for a stronger attachment. Similarly, feather out the wool at the end of the wrap. Usually you can encourage the attachment just with your fingers, without using the needle.



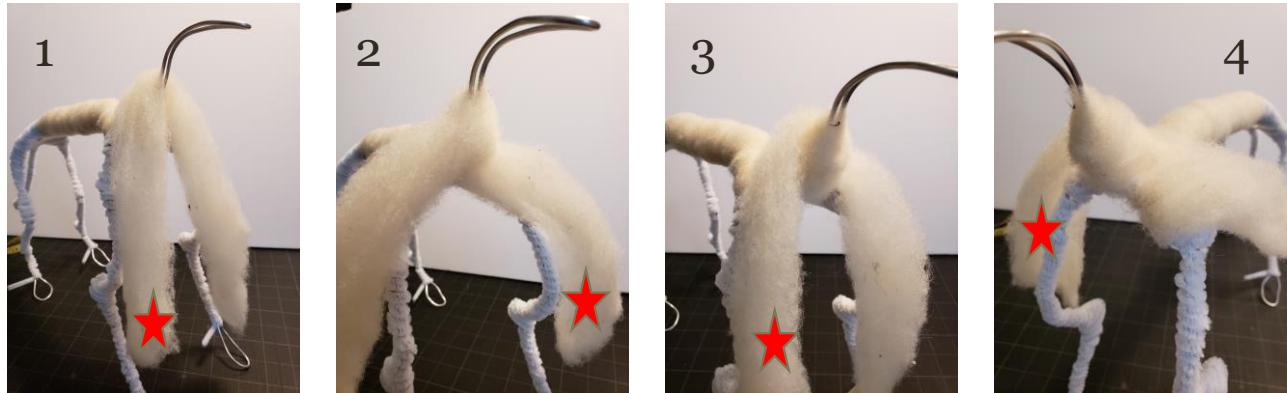
Starting at the neck, I loosely went over the front triangle, but stopped at the tip of the back triangle.



Core Wool Wrap

STEP 1-C

With one ribbon gently stretched out to about 17-18" I lay the midpoint over the neck, like a muffler (1).



Pull each end firmly around the neck once (2) and then again (3). One at a time, pull each end forward, back around the shoulder, and then back up to top of spine (4). Smooth the ends and lightly felt into place with a needle using shallow stabs. Now with another core wool ribbon the same size, repeat the same wrap over the first one. (★ marks right side of ribbon)

Now the
chest/neck
area
should
look like
this:



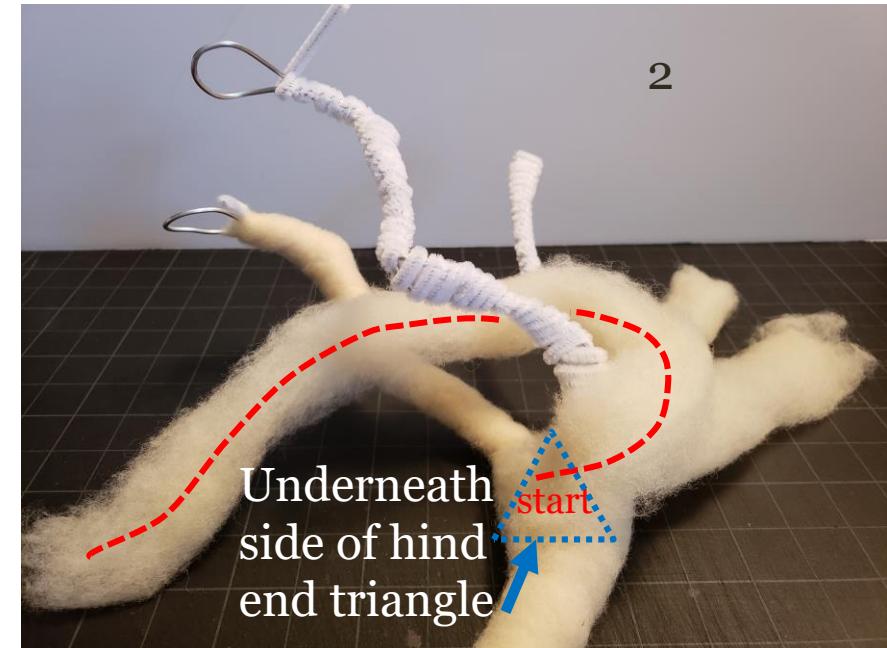
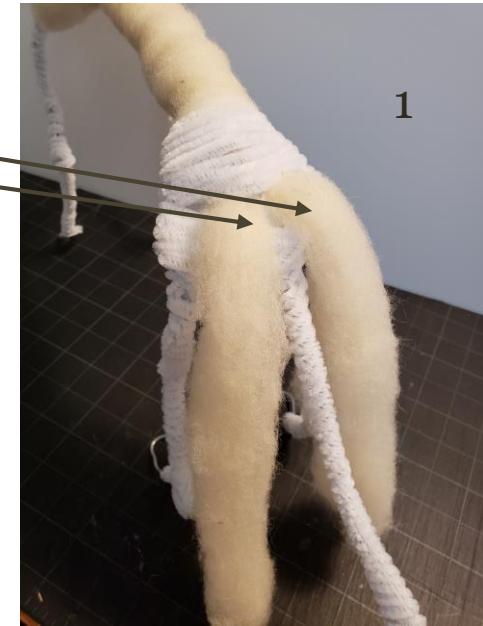
STEP 1-D

Core Wool Wrap

(1) Now for the other end: lace one long ribbon of core wool through the open space in the triangle, pull through (with the tail in the middle) so the ends are even, and just leave there for the moment.

Starting a new ribbon by lightly attaching to the underside of the lower triangle, loop the wool around the outside of the leg, and continue to wrap all the way down to the top of the foot loop.

(2)
You may run out of length toward the end of the foot like I did, so I took half of another one to finish each leg.



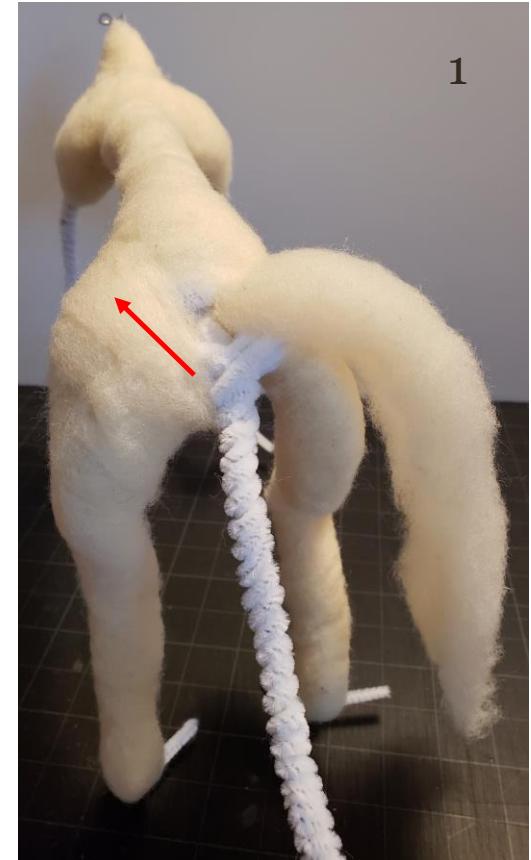
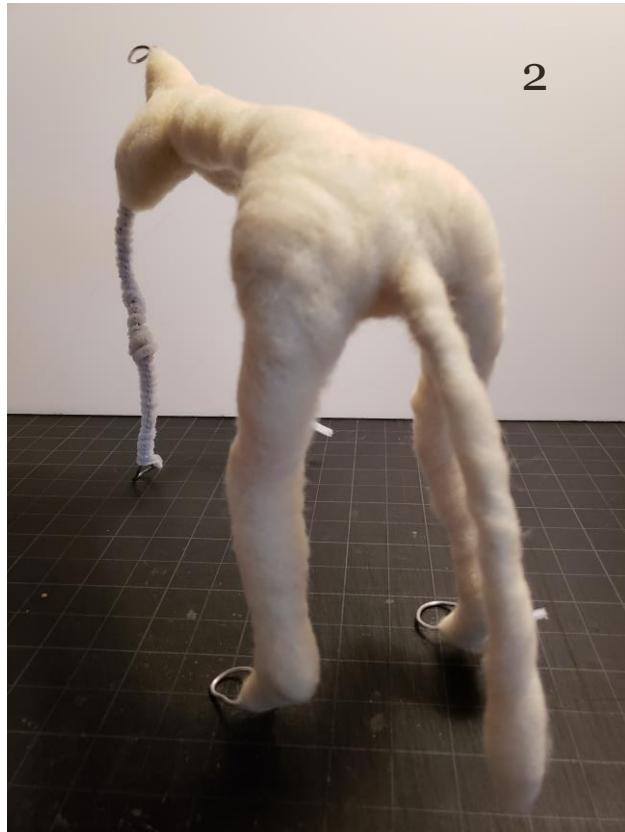
Core Wool Wrap

STEP

1-E

Wrap the loose ribbons on either side of the tail, first forward and then back around the top of each leg. (1)

Then wrap the tail, starting at the base, ending at the tip. Wrap back up the tail for a second layer if you need a thicker tail. (2)



Now wrap the front legs in a similar fashion. Then examine the whole piece, adding bulk with more wool wherever necessary. Try to create overall symmetry of size and shape by making small adjustments.

STEP 1-F

Core Wool Wrap

After wrapping the front legs, and then filling in with more wool where it's needed, making sure the body is symmetrical, this is roughly what your headless structure should look like:



PART

4

Core Wool Sculpting

Now that we have a solid structure to work with, we need to add some core wool shapes to help fill in, or “sculpt” the rest of the body.

After we have a life-like profile with the added shapes, we will then build:

1. The paws
2. The pelt
3. The head

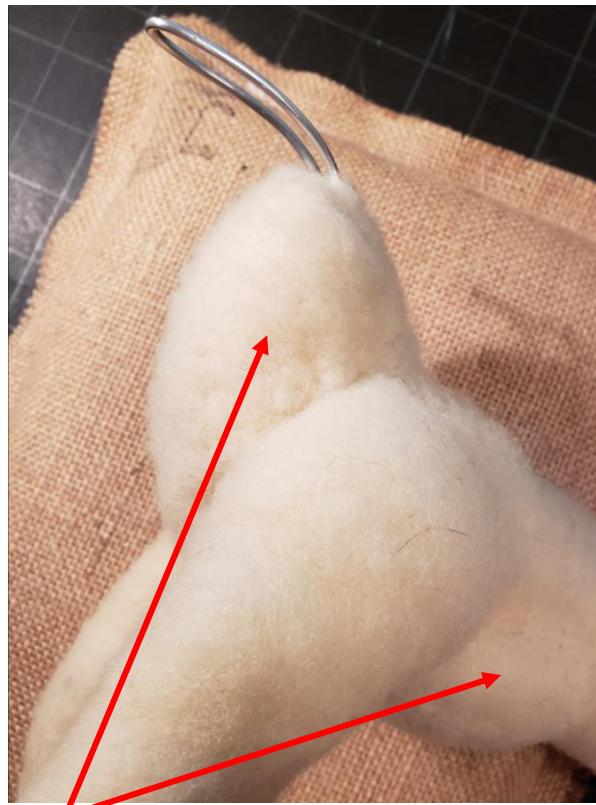
STEP 1-A

Core Wool Sculpting

© Nancy Sullivan 2019



1. Tear off a piece of core wool approx. 7" x 7".



3. Felt the shape onto the neck and down to the chest as shown.
Do not felt the shape onto the legs, just on the torso.



2. With needle, outline a rectangle roughly 5" tall and 3" wide, folding in the edges & lightly felting it into a pillow.

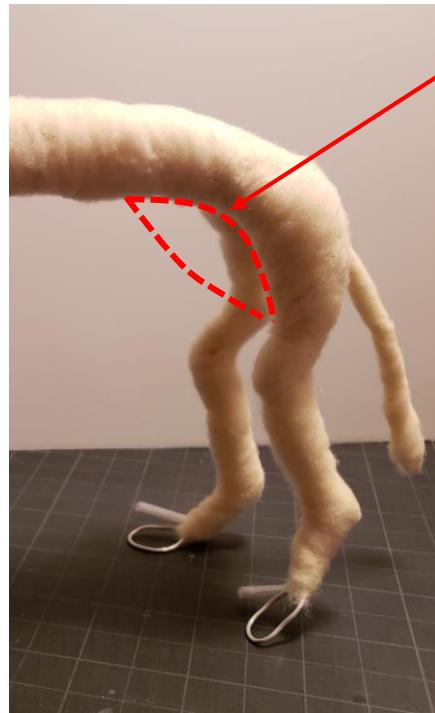


Core Wool Sculpting

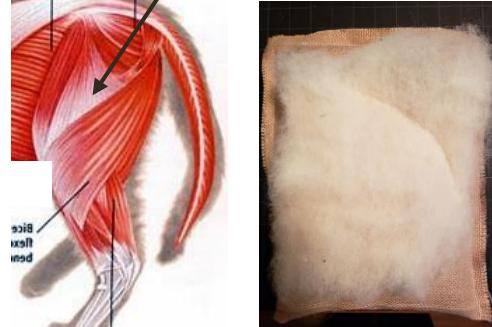
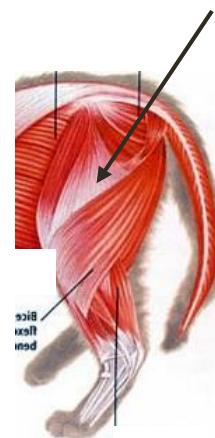
STEP

1-B

1. Create shapes to fill in the space indicated below, onto the hind legs.



2. I started with a piece of core wool approx. 7"x 8" and rolled it into a crescent shape, cut it in half, then felted one half onto the contour of each hind leg along this line. Referring to the muscle diagram, note that the hind leg looks a bit like a chicken drumstick. Try to mimic that shape.

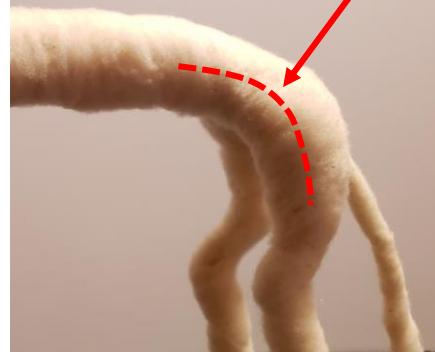


STEP 1-C

Core Wool Sculpting

© Nancy Sullivan 2019

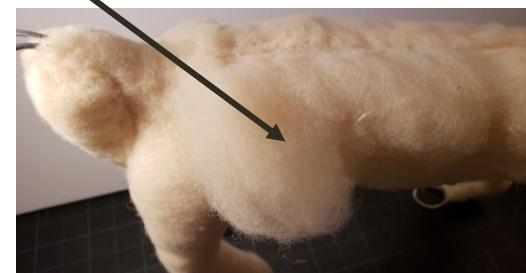
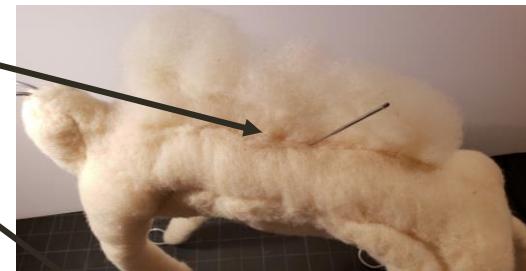
3. Feather the cut edge, then position as shown, and needle felt it along the **curve**, down to the top of the leg. Underside.



4. Make a pillow to attach along the underside of the torso – the belly. Keep adding more shapes until the bulk of the torso looks right for your cat.

5. Once the belly looks right, make two more pillows the same size. Attach these to the top of the spine between shoulders and hind haunches:

First, attach just one edge of each pillow along spine, then smooth down and attach the rest along its contours. Attach the other side in the same manner.



STEP 1-D

Core Wool Sculpting

© Nancy Sullivan 2019

6. Examine your creature from every angle. Remember that none of the core wool layer will be visible after the pelt has been added, so don't be too concerned about the smoothness of the felting surface. Instead, judge it for strength, shape, and overall symmetry.
7. Once you are happy with the weight and shape of the torso, consolidate all the shapes by wrapping ribbons of core wool around the torso, and extending down over the top portions of the front and hind legs. This will now make a good base on which to attach of the pelt.

Remember, my creature looks a bit “chunky” compared to most cat bodies. This is because of the large, muscular build of the Maine Coon breed.

Notice that I added a tab of wool at the tip end of the tail so there will be enough of a base on which to build the very long and full tail.



Core Wool Sculpting

STEP

1-E

Paws

First, we will “mass produce” a bunch of toes. Using wool matching the color of your cat’s paws, create about 25 of these structures. Scout has one paw that is mostly beige, the others are a smoky brown, so I will make different colored toes accordingly.

Cut 25 pieces of pipe cleaners, length of 5”, then bend each one back at 1”.

(Make 4 more toes with a larger tip for the dewclaws.)

Wrap each toe with thin ribbons of wool, making a larger shape over the bent end, then just closely wrap the rest of the length of the piece. Lightly needle felt each end to hold the wool securely - like a cotton-tip applicator.



I found it easier to start wrapping at the small end. Rub each toe shape between the palms of your hands to encourage a tighter, smoother surface.

Core Wool Sculpting

STEP

1-F

Make 4 little spheres, then flatten them slightly. Each should be large enough to fit under each foot loop with a bit left around the edge, like this:

For each paw, line up and assemble 5 toes with a slightly curved front edge, and secure them together with a small **ribbon of wool**, like this:



STEP 1-G

Core Wool Sculpting

Remember when I encouraged you to not be afraid to do something in a way that you haven't seen anyone do it before? This is one of those times when I am going to stray from the norm in order to create a better paw!

The little flattened spheres represent the pads on the bottom of the paws. Because of the way I propose to attach the paws, I am going to stitch the sphere onto the wire loop so it will stay in place perfectly. Yes, "stitch" - with a regular needle and thread. This is not going to be visible on the finished piece, but I would still try to use a thread that doesn't stand out from the color of the natural wool. I will use a contrasting color simply to make it easily visible to you.

If you have a small bit of pipe cleaner left at the base of each loop, let it sit on top of the sphere and use it as an additional anchor for the shape.

Here's how I did it, using an upholstery needle and heavy duty upholstery thread:

STEP 1-H

Core Wool Sculpting



Core Wool Sculpting

STEP

1-I

Scout has one hind (right) paw that is a light color, the others are dark. I will demonstrate with the light one to make it easier to see.

Install the toe assembly on top of the leg, so the toes curl gently down over the front curvature. Use a ribbon of core wool to wrap and felt the top of the assembly into a tight fit:



Fit the dewclaw in place on the inner side and use an additional ribbon of core wool to wrap and felt it firmly in place.



Core Wool Sculpting

STEP 1-J

Do one final wrap with core wool to secure the remaining section of the toes (leaving the parts of the toes that are curled down in front of the sphere shape) and cover and secure the part of the stitched wire frame that's still visible. Wrap around the dewclaw so it remains exposed.



In the next steps we will try to use colors of top coat wool that most closely match the colors of each foot – this one is a mix of cream, caramel, and a touch of the grayish brown that is predominant in the other 3 paws.



Scout's right hind paw

Core Wool Sculpting

STEP 1-K

© Nancy Sullivan 2019



Make a pancake shape big enough to fit over the top of the foot and extend down and curve over the bed of the foot. Layer and stack a combination of colored wools that will give an impression of the cat's natural coat. Put the color you want to show on top at the bottom of the stack. Then felt with a 7-needle felting tool, pull it up, turn it over and felt again, leaving the edges wispy and feathery. Attach this "sock" with fibers going side to side, as shown:



Tear a hole for the dewclaw to go through so it won't be wrapped into the foot.

Stab between toes to accentuate the anatomy below the fur.

Core Wool Sculpting

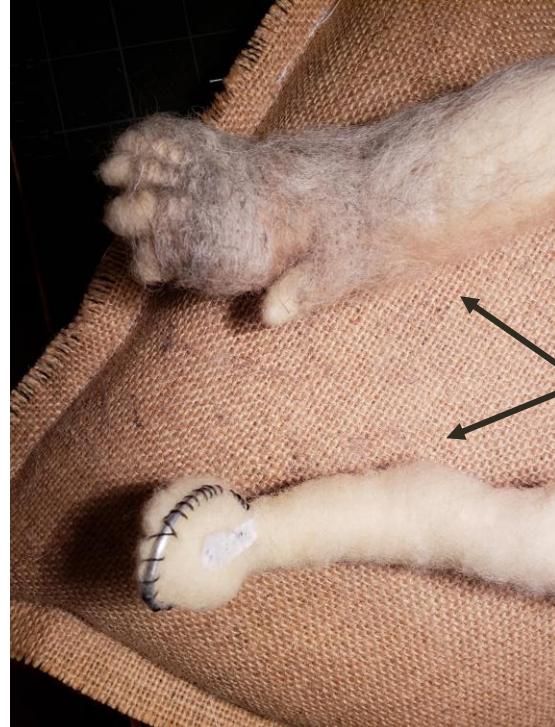
STEP

1-L

© Nancy Sullivan 2019

Since the top parts of the legs will be mostly covered by the long-haired pelt, we only need about the bottom half of the legs to be finished.

According to the colors of your cat, felt on some wispy, thinnish areas of top coat all the way around the leg. Leave the lower edges loose like a feathery fringe.



Compare right and left hind legs: you can see how the wrapping of the toe assembly has brought the breadth of the leg up to where it needs to be – this is why we left the legs skinny to begin with.

Core Wool Sculpting

STEP 1-M

Once you have finished these steps for all 4 legs, you can add the finishing touches. To make the pads on the bottom of each paw, you will definitely need a core wool, as opposed to top coat. Choose the appropriate color for your cat – for Scout, I am using chocolate brown core batting. Technically, I should have a little round pad for each toe because Scout has extra toes, but I will stick to the normal number for simplicity's sake. My cats are very touchy about their feet, so I had to find a photo on the internet:

Create 4 little spheres about the appropriate size for each paw, and one larger one for each shaped like this:

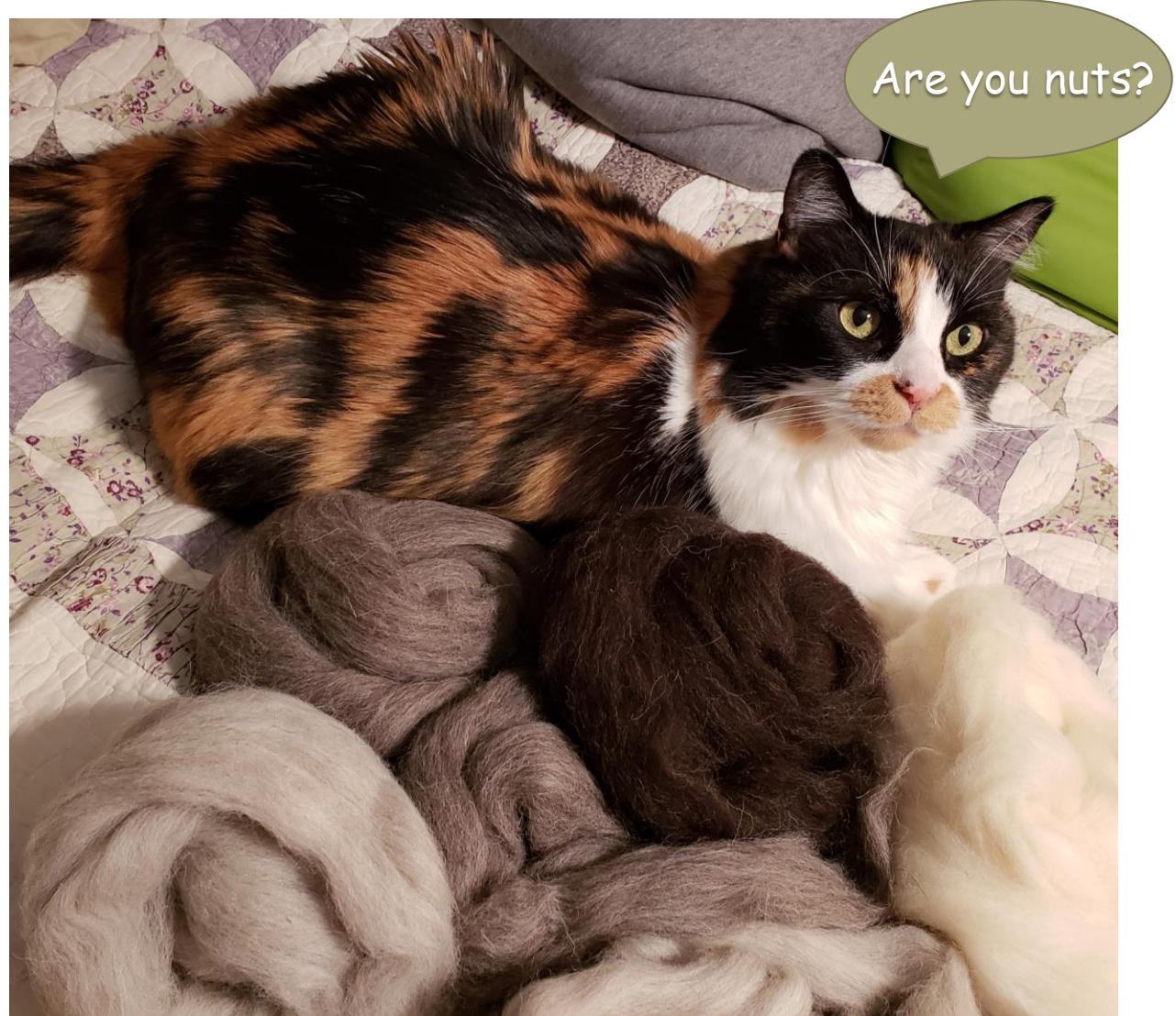


Since Maine Coons have long and luxurious wisps of silky fur between their pads, felt in some fibers under and around the pads as you attach them.

PART 5

Pelt

Ellie inspects the wools I have chosen to re-create her sister. She makes it clear that she thinks I would have had an easier time had I chosen HER!



STEP 1-A Pelt

The Pelt

As you can see, Scout has a magnificent coat. The Maine Coon's fur is water-repellant and extremely warm. The coat is dense due to the multi-layered nature of it. This fact gave me the idea of how to re-create it.

I chose one particular wool to use as an undercoat, a core wool that has more linear fibers than most core wools, but still has the spongy body of a core wool, making it easy to attach to the body. The light brown color will blend well with all the colors of Scout's coat.

The process is simple, which is a great surprise since I had expected the long, fluffy fur to be the greatest challenge.

Here's my method:

STEP 1-B

Pelt

Materials



1/2 to 1"
wide
strips of
prefelt



Making Strips

STEP

1-C

Pelt

We will make a bunch of strips that will look like this on the back side...



...and roughly like this on the front side



Making Strips

REVISION for STEP **1-D** Pelt



Read Step 1-P on
next page (belly)
before proceeding
with
Step 1-D, for
additional step (*add
layer of core wool*)
that will make the
pelt better!

Attaching Strips

STEP

1-P

Pelt

Belly:

I assembled the strips a bit differently for the belly, using a strip of the light colored core wool as a reinforcement for attaching the wool. I measured the width to be covered and cut the strips to that length. Lay out the prefelt strip first (1), a strip of core wool the same size on top of it (2), and then draft and place about 3 inch lengths of the top coat, mixing colors as needed (3). The layer of core should make the felting much stronger. Felt well on both sides of the strip with the 7-needle tool.



Making Strips

STEP 1-D

Pelt

Get Step 2
from 1-P

- (1) Place a strip of prefelt in the center of your felting surface.
- (2)
- (3) Pull off a chunk of Wool #1 about the length you want the fur to be (different strips may be different lengths depending on where you will use them.) Draft off little sections and lay them out along top edge of the strip, leaving no gaps.



Making Strips

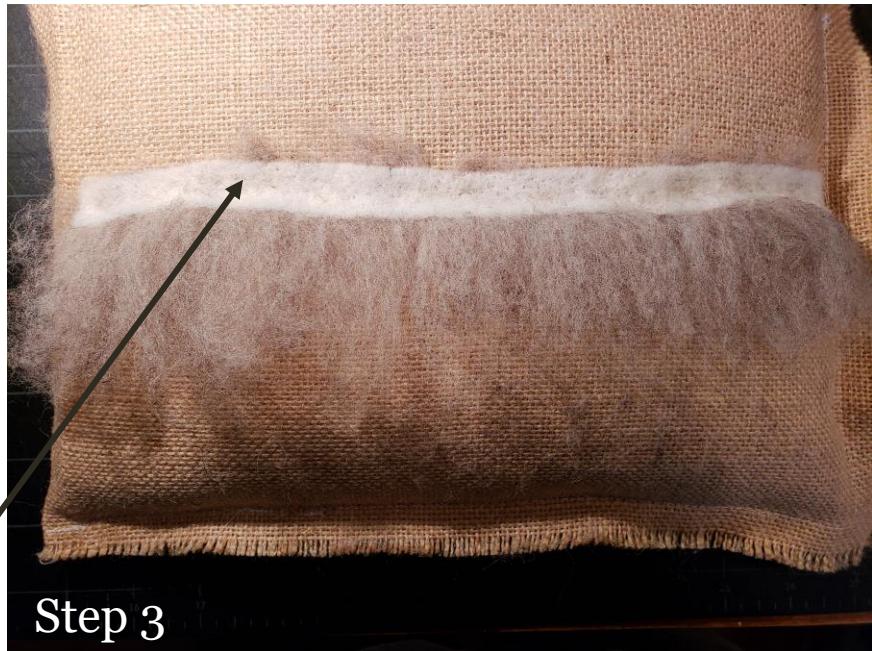
STEP

1-E

Pelt

(3) Gently
felt the top
edges to the
strip of
prefelt with
the 7-needle
tool, then
carefully pull
the strip up
from the
surface, turn
it over and
felt along the
strip on the
back side.

Then pull it
up again and
turn over
right side up.



Making Strips

STEP 1-F Pelt

There will be different colors of top coat on the finished strips, but this layer of core wool will be the base for all strips – this bottom layer will give the coat its body and volume. Use any combination of colors that will produce the desired effect.



(4) Start with the same length chunk of top coat* of the appropriate color, draft out sections with naturally uneven margins, and lay out directly on top of the core layer. Then follow the same steps to attach it to the strip.

*Top coat chunks may need to be cut, due to the nature of the fibers. Drafting will create the feathered edges we need.

Attaching Strips

STEP 1-G Pelt

If you've ever watched a roof being shingled, you know they always start at the bottom and work upwards. In the same way, the strips must go onto the body in this same manner. The closer you position the strips to each other, the fuller the fur will be. The only part you should felt onto the body is the strip itself.

When applying the strips, first be sure there's a good bond between the long fibers and the strip of prefelt – this will ensure that fibers won't fall out once the strips are installed.

I recommend attaching strips in the following order :

1. Top of front legs
2. Top of hind legs
3. Tail
4. Belly
5. Back

Attaching Strips

STEP

1-H

Pelt

Front legs: (*think “Carmen Miranda”*)

After the layers have been secured up to the armpit (1), add one strip across the top to consolidate the fur at the chest (2).

(When the head goes on, the mane will cover the bare neck and upper chest.)



Attaching Strips

STEP

1-I

Pelt

Hind Legs:

This is basically a repeat of the front legs, but you should include some longer layers that will match her long, fluffy “petticoat” when seen from behind.



The uppermost layers should be extra long, and applied in one long piece along the contour that dips underneath the base of the tail, and then forms a “droopy” profile around to the front of the leg. This forms the classic Maine Coon “petticoat.” Once up this far on the hind legs, wait to finish the last layers until the tail has been formed and attached so the final leg layers will cover the point of attachment.

Reference Photos for Tail and Coat



© Nancy Sullivan 2019

Attaching Strips

STEP

1-J

Pelt

Tail:

I cut a piece of prefelt twice as long as the tail, and wide enough to wrap snugly around it and still have a bit of overlap. Your tail may be a different size, but for mine the piece is about 3" wide and about 17" long. There will be extra length to cut off when your tail is finished, but it's good to have extra on both ends just in case you need it for some unforeseen reason.

Start at the bottom and work up. The prefelt, once the wool layers are attached, will wrap around the tail and you will close the wrap along the underside center of the tail. Leave a small margin on one side or the other (the long side) so you can attach this margin to the tail and then overlap the side that's covered with the layers of wool, hiding the "seam" underneath the tail. Apply the colors as closely as you can to match the colors of the actual tail. I will put an under-layer of the same core wool as for the layering of the body, so it will add volume to the tail, but only show the long fibers on the top layer. Place layers very close together.

Attaching Strips

STEP 1-K Pelt

Tail:



NOTE: When making the strips of “fur” don’t forget to add the extra layer of core wool between strip and top coat, as in 1-P.

Attaching Strips

STEP 1-L Pelt

Tail:



Position the tail with the extra prefelt extending up over the back. I decided to not cut it off, but rather felt it onto the back for extra strength. Felt the base of the tail (by the prefelt around it) to the body.

Once I had felted the tail edges together down to the end of the tail structure, I decided to slip stitch the rest with a very fine transparent thread. (My tail pelt is longer than the armature tail.)

I patched the bare spot at the base of the tail with a section of wool already attached to a piece of prefelt.



Attaching Strips

STEP 1-M Pelt



Before reaching the end of the tail with the slip stitching, I stopped so I could insert two long tapered bunches of fur so the end of the tail would look right...



...one inside the prefelt, and one between the prefelt and the outer layers of fur.
Then I finished stitching the rest of the tail together, and patched any areas that were a bit bare on the whole tail.

Attaching Strips

STEP

1-N

Pelt

Tail - Finished:



Attaching Strips

STEP 1-O

Pelt

Belly:

Start at the bottom and shingle the layers closely together, up to the chest where it should meet the backside of the strip that went across the chest between the front legs. Scout's belly is mostly a light color, so I will use the light wools predominantly.



Attaching Strips

STEP

1-P

Pelt

Belly:

I assembled the strips a bit differently for the belly, using a strip of the light colored core wool as a reinforcement for attaching the wool. I measured the width to be covered and cut the strips to that length. Lay out the prefelt strip first, a strip of core wool the same size on top of it, and then draft and place about 3 inch lengths of the top coat, mixing colors as needed. The layer of core should make the felting much stronger. Felt well on both sides of the strip with the 7-needle tool.



Attaching Strips

STEP

1-Q

Pelt

Belly:

Lay Scoutie on her back and spread out her 4 legs to expose the areas that need to be covered.

Start just above the tail with a strip that will close the gap, then start attaching strips close to each other, all the way up to the chest.

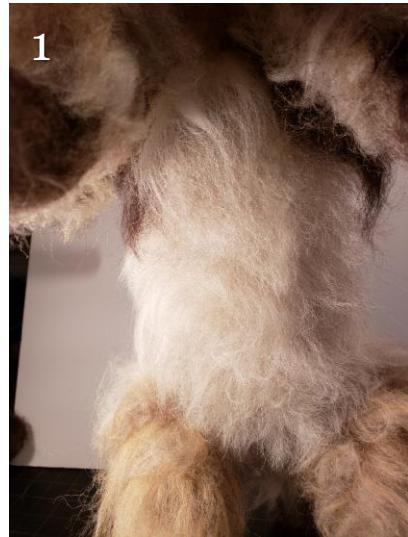


Attaching Strips

STEP 1-R

Pelt

Finished Belly:



I added some brown streaks behind the front legs (3,4)

Attaching Strips

STEP 2-A Pelt

Back

The back is all that's left to finish on the pelt before we create and attach the head. Follow the same steps detailed in **Step 1-P** and **1-Q**. I've discovered during this project that the extra measure of adding core wool between the prefelt strip and the fibers is **VERY** effective, and holds the fibers much more strongly. This will help prevent "shedding."



Attaching Strips

STEP

2-B

Pelt

Back

I just caught Scout sleeping in her “meatloaf” pose for a reference photo:



The lighting makes it look a little dark, but I think we can use this as our guide in designing strips that will look like this once assembled and applied.

Attaching Strips

STEP 2-C Pelt

Back

First I want to soften the transition from the belly into the back, so let's make 2 long strips, same coloring as the belly only with longer fibers, that will go all the way from the center of the neck to the tail on each side:



On my structure, that would be 15 inches long for each strip. You can piece a strip of prefelt if yours isn't that long – just overlap it a bit and felt it together. And don't forget to use the extra core wool next to the strip.

Attaching Strips

STEP

2-D

Pelt

Back

1. Make the two 15" strips, full and long, with a bit of dark brown that will line up with the brown at the back of the front legs (about 4-5 inches from the front of the strip.)



Attaching Strips

STEP 2-E

Pelt

Back

Cut a bunch of strips that will fit the bare back from side to side – lay them out close together to find out how many strips will be needed. You will need 2 strips for the area closest to the tail that are shorter than the others.

Leave bare the front part of the back/
neck, because the mane will cover it once the head is made and installed.



Viewed from above

Attaching Strips

STEP

2-F

Pelt

Back

This is where your artistic flair comes into play. Study the coloring of the fur on the back, and try to recreate it one strip at a time by mixing and positioning the different colors so they will appear life-like when the strips are felted on close to each other.

I am going to use the light brown core for the base coat, and then try to mix these colors appropriately:

Top Coat



Light Gray



Ivory



Chocolate Brown

Attaching Strips

STEP

2-G

Pelt

Back

When constructing your strips, don't forget to include a layer of a light colored spongy core wool and felt thoroughly on both sides of the strip.

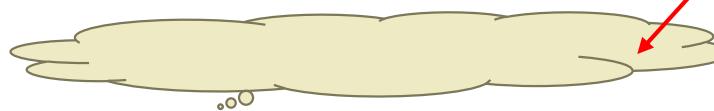
Sandwich like this:

Prefelt strip:



Bottom layer

Core wool:



Middle layer

Drafted fibers:



Next layer

One more
change:

add another
strip of prefelt
on top of the
fibers



Top layer

Attaching Strips

STEP

2-H

Pelt

Back

The dark chocolate brown shows more on Scout's back at the top (close to the head) and not quite as defined toward the tail. These layers show how I mixed the colors to achieve this effect:

Lower sections,
brown mixed in
smaller, shorter
amounts



Upper sections,
brown has to be long
in order to be seen –
mix in longer and
thicker sections



Attaching Strips

STEP

2-I

Pelt

Back

It's best to assemble each strip as you go, and attach it before assembling the next one. That seems to be the only way to be sure of how the colors are going to show up. Also, watch for spaces that seem bare as the layers go on, and be prepared to make little patches, as you go, so it will be easy to tuck the patches into the space before the top layers go on. I had to patch in the areas shown:

You may need to apply extra patches in the triangular area between the strips on the top of the back.

I had to add a couple of strips along this line, just above the ones that were already there to avoid having a "ditch" between the two areas.



Attaching Strips

STEP

2-J

Pelt

Pelt Complete!

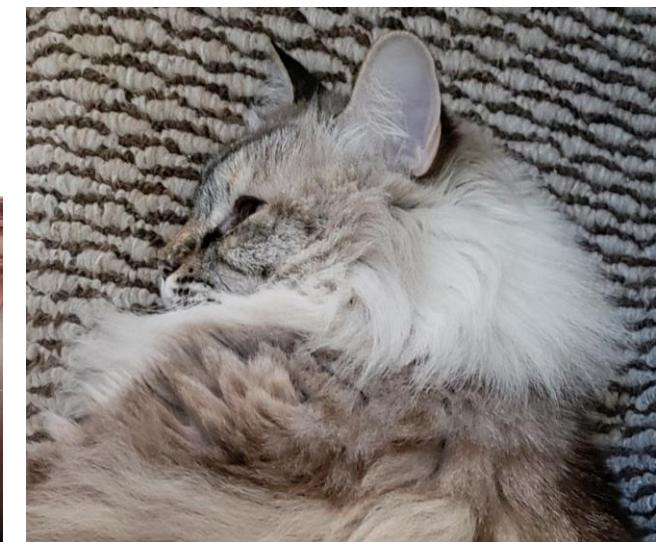
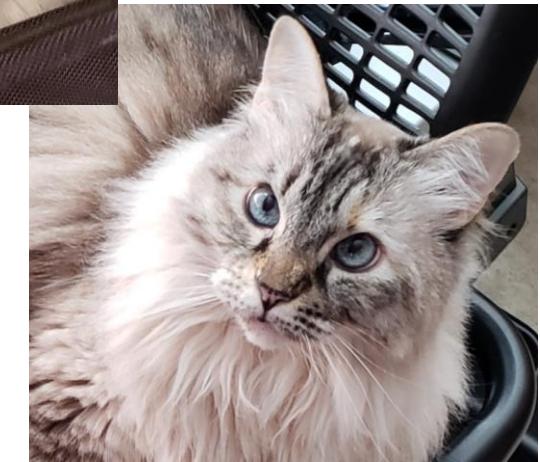
Scout is ready now
for the most
important part –
her beautiful
face.



PART 6 Head



Scout



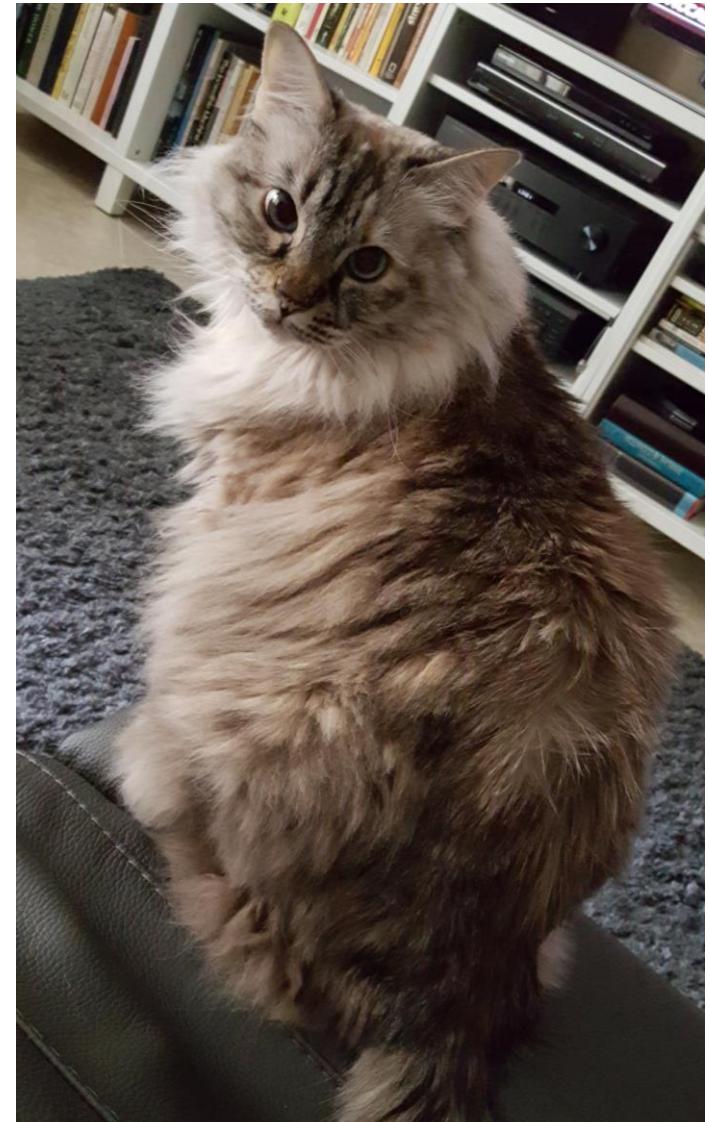
STEP 1-A

Head Tool

Some people make the head first, and I considered doing it that way. But when you think about it, you realize that the “naked” structure looks a LOT different than it does with a full coat. I thought it would be easier to get the size of the head in proper proportion to the body after it is completely filled out with fur.

So, let's hope my theory holds true...

- Use this photo to get some feeling for the proportion of the head as it relates to the rest of the body.
- Notice that the mane presents a bit of an optical illusion – it is a great deal broader than her actual neck.
- We will create the head as a separate piece, and attach it to the body once all the detail work has been completed, rather than wrestling with the body while working on the head....



OPTIONAL:

You may choose to build the head without the tool, on or off the body. If so, skip to **Step 2-A**.

STEP

1-B

Head Tool

Remember that the base of the neck is already formed around the armature, with the loop at its core, waiting for the head to be attached. So I want to try to build the head around (or on top of) a structure that will be ready to fit right over the loop when it's finished.

Once again “flying by the seat of my pants,” I will try to recreate the top part of the body to build the head upon.

When the head is ready to install, we can simply lift it from the neck replica and it should fit perfectly over the loop, ready to attach to the body.

Try to measure the “neck” and the loop, and build a replica as closely as you can. I would also build out the lower part so it will have something you can hold on to while working on the head.



STEP 1-C

Head Tool

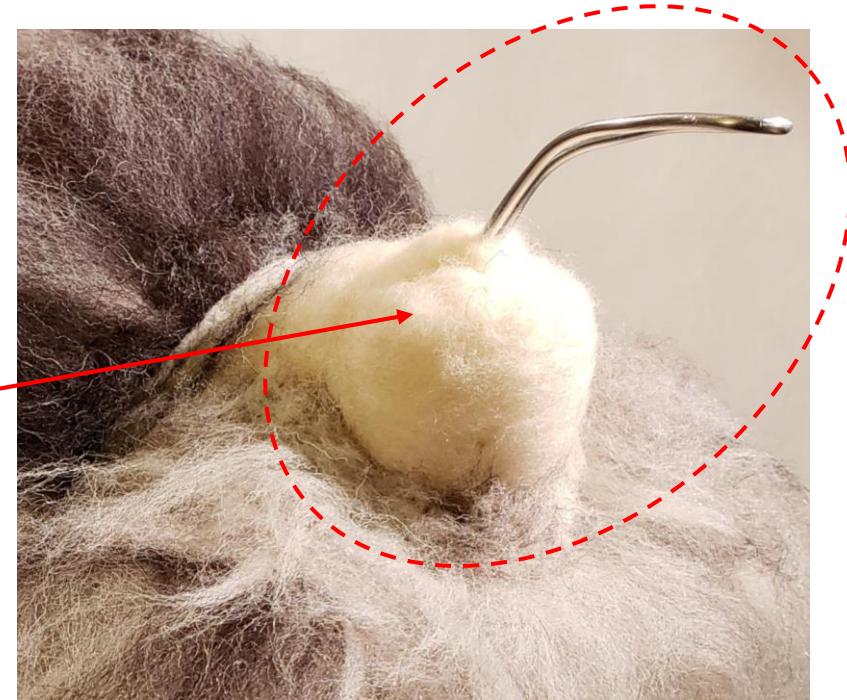
I started by cutting a piece of the armature wire, about 16 inches long, bending in the middle to form the loop (at 8") and marking the wire at $2 \frac{1}{4}$ inches from the top of the loop, wrapping it together below that marking, and then just loosely wrapping the rest of the wire together. Like this:

The top 4" of this piece will be a "temporary" neck to build the head onto. The rest of it, the lower portion, will be simply a "handle" to hold the head while working on it.

This is the structure we want to try to reproduce. Think of it as a "male" and "female" electrical connection. This structure would be the male, and the reproduction on a handle would be the female.



Loop is the "top end"



STEP 1-D Head Tool

Since I plan to make more cats using this same armature size, I want to make this “handle” to last, so I will have it ready to use on another cat in the future. This will save a lot of time in future projects.

(1) Curve the whole 8” piece of wire to match the gentle curve of the neck of the structure. Add a mark on the wire at 4” from the tip of the loop, to represent where the neck will end and the “handle” will begin.

(4) Wrap some core wool around the bottom portion and try to create that handle, designing it specifically for comfort in your own hand.

Felt the handle firmly and keep adding wool until you can hold it very comfortably in your hand.



(2) Wrap these sharp ends with the Micropore tape, as before, to avoid cutting your hands.

(3) Then wrap the portion below the 4” mark with pipe cleaners, before wrapping with core wool.



(5) Be careful not to let the “handle” creep up over the 4” mark and hide it.



STEP 1-E

Head Tool

The object now is to create the exact shape and size of the cat's neck and attachment loop, so we can build the head on it – instead of directly onto the cat's body, because doing that would most likely destroy the fur and all the work you've put into making it look perfect. It would be difficult to manipulate it into so many different positions in order to work on the head's details.

We need to build the head onto the neck end of the handle, and once it's done, remove it from the handle, and install it onto the cat's body. This will keep the fur on the body unscathed by so much manipulation and handling.

Thinking through this process, I realized that it's not going to work if the neck shape on the handle is made of wool, because our head would become felted onto it, and would not be removable. The neck shape on the handle must be made of something that won't be susceptible to a felting needle.

After dreaming up several brilliant but ridiculous methods, while brainstorming with my husband, we came up with the idea of creating a separate little armature on the handle that would match the structure on the cat's neck where we must attach the head. Building the head around this structure would keep the head from becoming attached, so once it's done, removal from the handle should be easily achieved.

STEP 1-F Head Tool

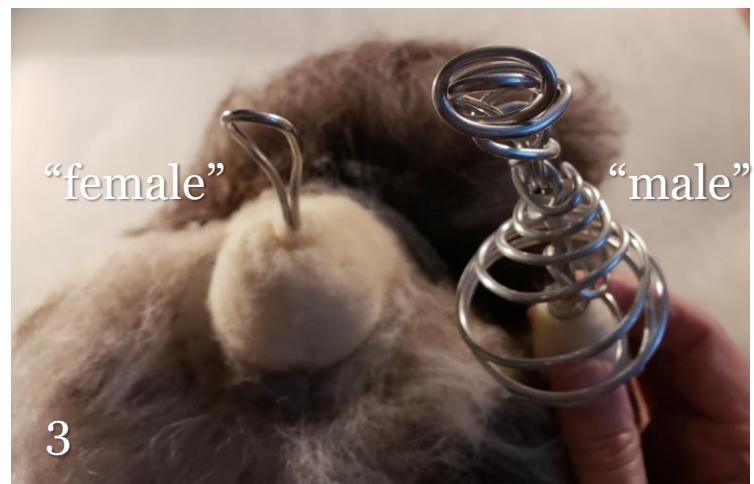
So, here's what I came up with:



- (1) Begin coiling some armature wire around the base of the neck where it protrudes from the body structure.
- (2) Continue contouring the structure up to the tip of the loop, then attach the contoured wire to the handle, matching up the appropriate markings.



(3) Looking now at the "female" next to the "male" component, it should start to make some sense. But now we must turn the male structure into a smooth, solid shape, so there won't be any way the wool being formed and felted around it can get tangled up with the structure itself.



STEP 1-G

Head Tool

(4) Here is the handle with its “male” component.



(5) I wrapped the outer wire structure with several layers of heavy duty aluminum foil, and tried to smooth it out as much as possible, forming a shell. Now it is basically a hollow shape – (kind of like an ice cream cone). (6) I wrapped the foil shell with the tissue tape to smooth out the surface and avoid snagging the wool. Once the head is built around it, the handle “tool” should be easily withdrawn, leaving the perfect size and shape cavity inside to fit right over the neck/loop structure on the body.



STEP 1-H Head Tool

I tested the tool by forming a layer of heavy duty aluminum foil around it, releasing it gently from the tool, and placing it over the neck/hook on the cat's body. It was a perfect fit! I also put a black mark on the tool itself to show where the center of the top of the neck should be, to keep the head straight as it's being created.

Now come the most fun, most demanding, and most important steps in creating our cat – the head, neck and face. “The eyes are the window of the soul.” If you can get a likeness, especially through the eyes, your sculpture will come alive and reflect the personality and the heart and “soul” of your cat.

Many hours have gone into the building of this lovely creature, but at this stage, we must be careful and patient. Everything we've done so far has been just so we can finish it off with the magic of a perfect face! Observe carefully, take it “slow and easy.” This will be the most fun and rewarding part of the entire project.

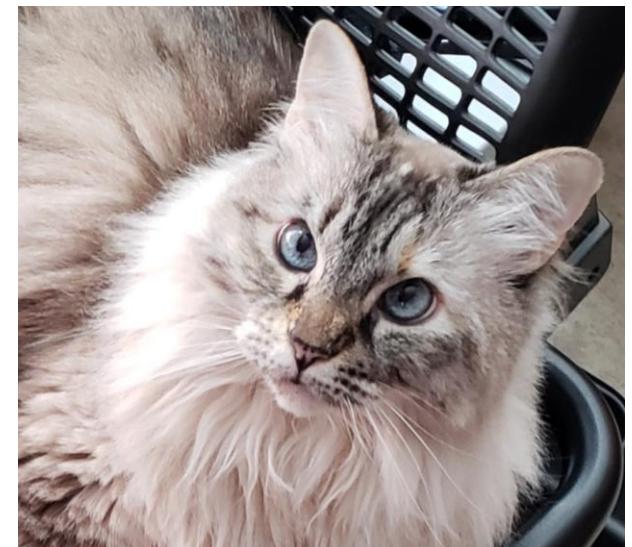
STEP 2-A

Head

Always begin by just observing. You can use reference photos to organize your thoughts in preparation for creating the head and face.

Shape of the head

- From the side
- From the front
- From above

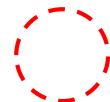


STEP 2-B

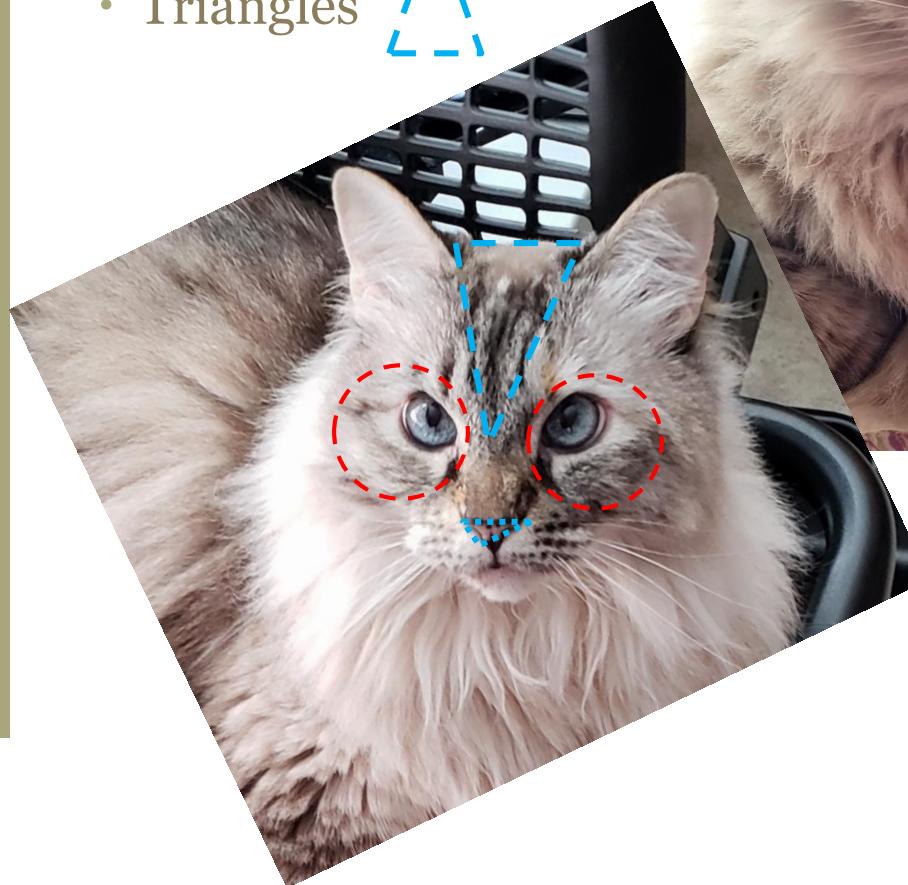
Head

Shapes in the Face

- Spheres

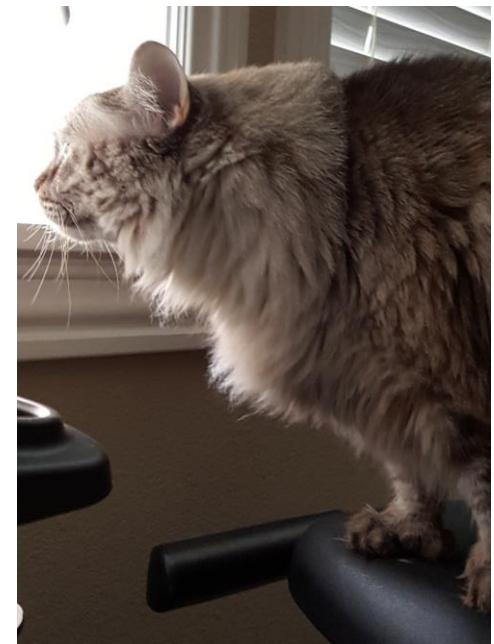


- Triangles



STEP 2-C Head

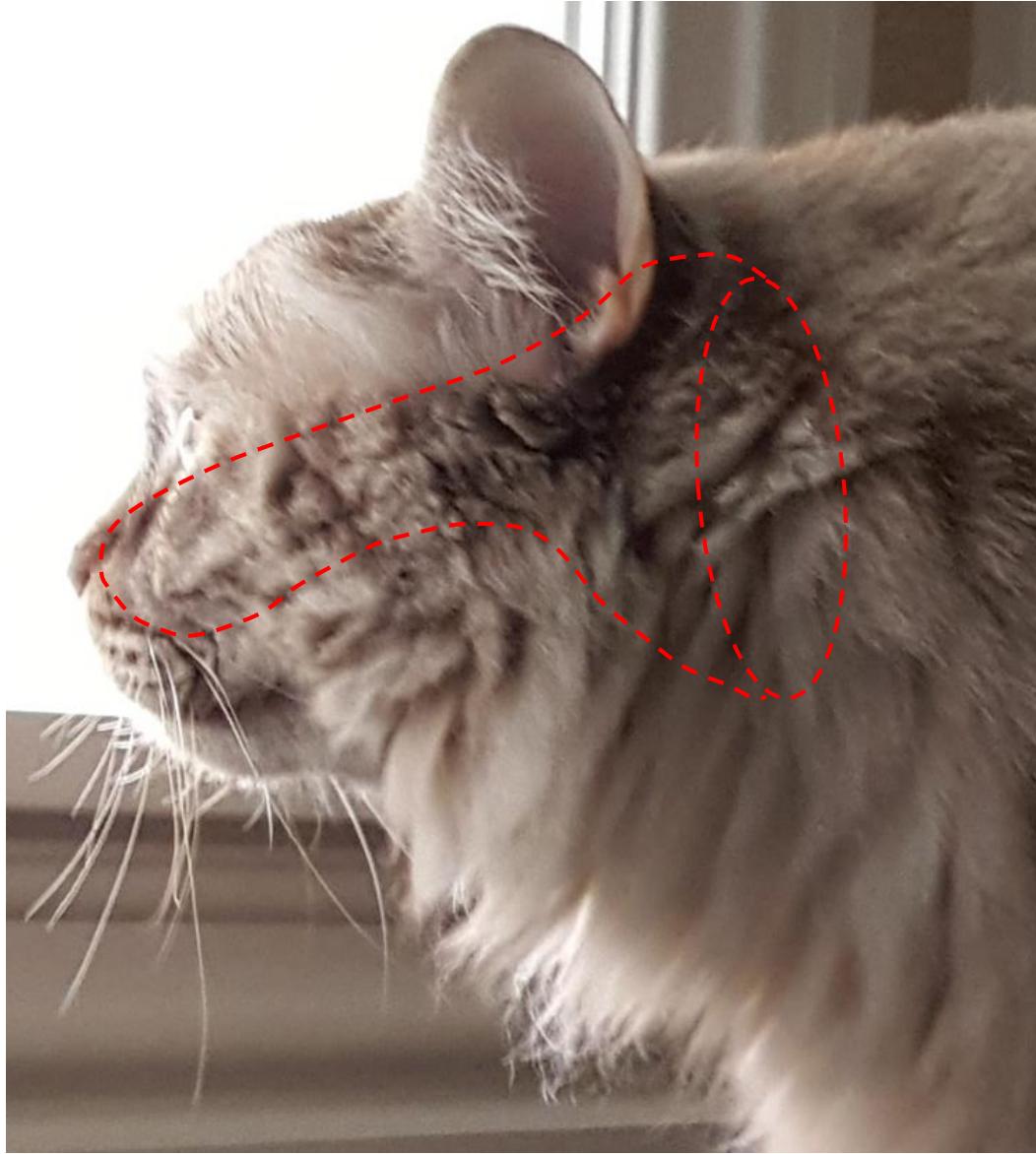
Profiles



Having as many different views of your cat will be very helpful, giving you a way to check your work as you go along, by comparison.

STEP 2-D Head

Be sure you understand the concept:



STEP 2-E Head

1. Wrap a piece of prefelt around the “cone” of the tool, trimming and tacking together with shallow side-ways stabs, until you have formed a little sleeve that fits nicely over it. Put a black mark on the edge of the sleeve, directly over the one on the cone itself.
2. Once trimmed to fit and tacked on, slip it off the tool and place it on your felting surface in such a way that you can felt the long edge together, from inside, as shown.
3. Twist and felt together the tip end, and leave a small margin of the prefelt – like a tied balloon. Now slip it back onto the cone, lining up the black marks.



STEP 2-F Head

The purpose of step 2-E is to make the inside of the head (the part that will fit over the body for attachment) very smooth and easy to remove from the tool when finished, as well as easy to slip on over the structure on the cat's body.

4. Holding the tool (with sleeve lined up at the black marks) begin to wrap some core wool around the base of the cone, felting as you go, to build some firm wool that we can felt into. Felt slowly and carefully at first, with a sideways stab, in order to avoid damaging your needle on the cone itself, and you will begin to appreciate the beauty of the little sleeve: it will allow you to remove your work periodically and slip it onto the cat to check the size and proportion, then slip it right back over the cone of the tool. Just remember to always line up the black marks to keep “center” in the right place.

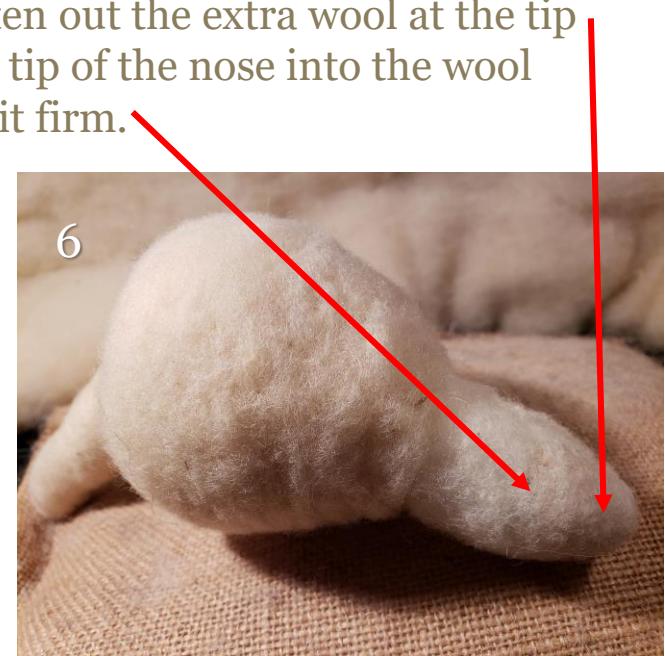
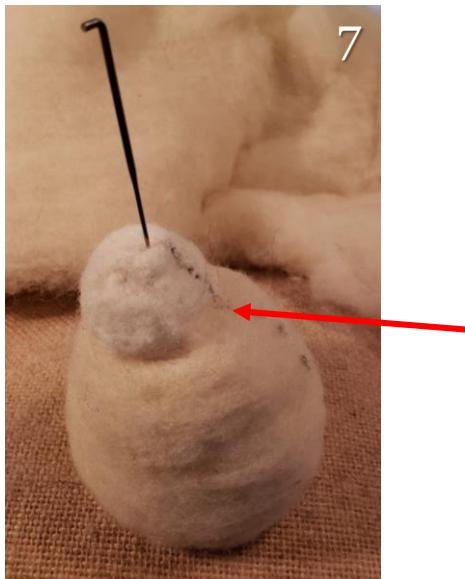


STEP 2-G Head

5. Because of the structure built around it, the sleeve is longer than the actual loop on the cat. Remove the sleeve from the tool, stuff some core wool down into the tip of the nose.

6. Put sleeve back on the tool, flatten out the extra wool at the tip and felt it down, felting also the tip of the nose into the wool that was stuffed inside to make it firm.

7. Since the sleeve has stretched out a bit because of the structure that's built around the hook inside the tool, remove it from the tool, set it "face up" and felt it down into a shorter shape, like this:



Felt it down all the way around the top of the shape until it protrudes about half as much as before. Also, extend the center mark from the inner rim of the sleeve all the way down the front of the shape to the tip end – lightly with a magic marker.

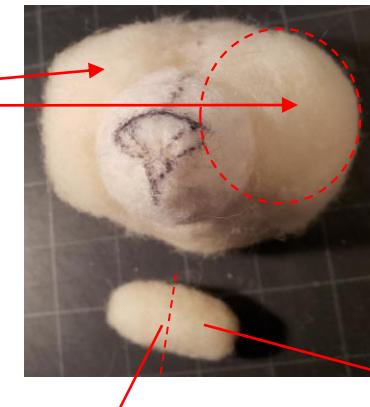
STEP 2-H Head

After slipping the developing sleeve onto the cat, I have determined that it's just about ready for building on the shapes that will make up the head and face. It should look something like this:

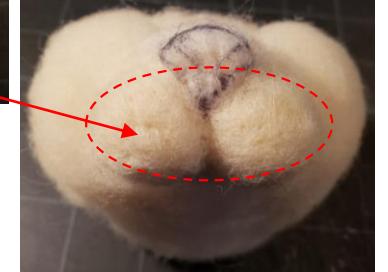


Referring to photos on Step 2-B, start building structures in the correct proportion to make the parts of the face and ears. Put the sleeve back onto the tool and begin to sculpt the head and face. (Since we squashed down the tip of the sleeve, it will now not fit down all the way inside the hook, but the tool still serves the purpose of holding the sleeve while you turn it into a head – it will also protect your fingers from being stabbed. However, *there will be times when it's easier to just set the sleeve on top of the felting surface & work on it separately* – use any method that works for you.

I start with the two round shapes that cover the cheekbones, just loosely placing shapes until they look right – kind of “sketching” with wool. I draw a shape where I think the nose will go, and then create a little roll of wool that will form the upper part of the mouth.



Felt a line down the middle & attach to muzzle, adding wool until size, shape and symmetry are right.





STEP

2-I

Head

Now let's add the chin, attached to extra wool that we will felt on as the underside of the throat and neck. I started with a piece of wool about 1 1/2" by 2", roll up one end into a sphere, attach it under the upper muzzle. Keep adding wool until the proportions look right, viewed from all angles.



Using the photo as a guide, start adding wool to build the basic shape of the head and face, remembering that it will fill out when we add the top coat of fur, and much of the neck will be added as a way to attach it to the body. Keep comparing and adjusting.





STEP 2-J Head

The ears are unique in that they must be finished before attached, so let's do them now, and then work the fur of the face around them.



Notice how far back on the head the mid-point of the ears' base are, and how much curve there is to where they should be placed. Felt in and around the base using photos as the guide.



Cut the ears from a freehand pattern, keeping track of which one is RT and LT – I used the yellow pin to designate Scout's left ear, and this is the BACK side. Using the photos, apply top coat wools to match her markings. Do the inside surface first.





Head

Lay down areas of color with wisps of wool, felting down gently, to get the markings of the fur life-like. It may take several layers to get it to look right. Always place the fibers going in the same direction as they do on the cat.

From here it's just a matter of being observant and trying to reproduce what you see in the face. As the shapes develop, and you match the colors of the fur, use the photos of different angles to check your cat's head, making corrections as you go. I think you probably have enough experience to do that on your own....

I had the perfect pair of blue eyes sitting on my desk, after a thorough search, it looks as if they have gone the way of the wastebasket by falling off into the abyss. Consequently, I am temporarily using the green eyes I had bought for Ellie until I receive the new blue ones I ordered.

STEP 2-K

Head



Here's what I have done so far – and the comparisons I have made with photos:



STEP 2-L

Head



Some notes about details:



Nose: My nose is too long, so I kept jamming it back into the inner wool, pushing the nose upwards while felting deeply. I used a little piece of prefelt to make the nostril shape, adding touches of chocolate brown to create shadows, and the dark rim at the top edge of her nose. I still need to work on toning down the color of the nose itself.

Eyes: I created the sockets by felting deeply into the area, making sure there was a brow ridge above, which probably will have to be built up during the finishing process – check profile views. Put a thin rim of chocolate brown around the eyes, then a halo of white around that.

General Shape: You would be surprised how much adjustment you can actually make with wool. I was about to decide I would have to start over on the head, because it was just too large for the body. But I persisted and kept “smashing” and felting it in, refining the shapes, until now I believe it is close enough to work.

Tweak, tweak, tweak! Now it will be an almost endless process of adding fur, correcting shapes, etc. until the head is ready to install onto the body. Let the tweaking begin!



Head

After Tweaking:

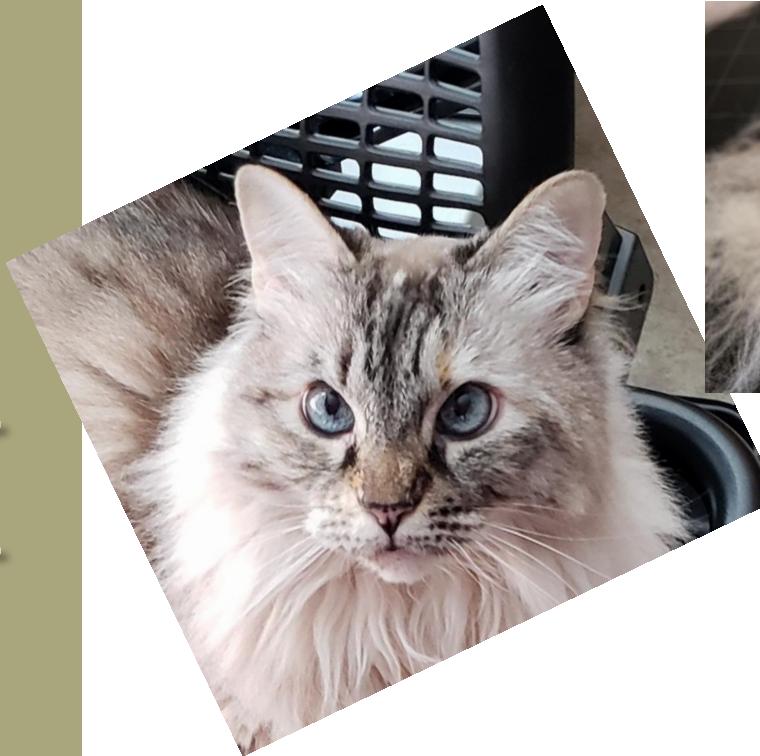


Waiting for her blue eyes, this is what Mini-Scout looks like.

STEP 2-M Head

Markings for Whiskers

Try to copy the little dark spots the whiskers grow out from. I start by making those dark dots with a brown felt tip eyeliner. When you're ready to put the whiskers on, at the VERY last, you will have a map for their placement.



The dots will become more diffuse, less hard-edged as you pull the thread through them, so don't worry if they look too stark at this point.

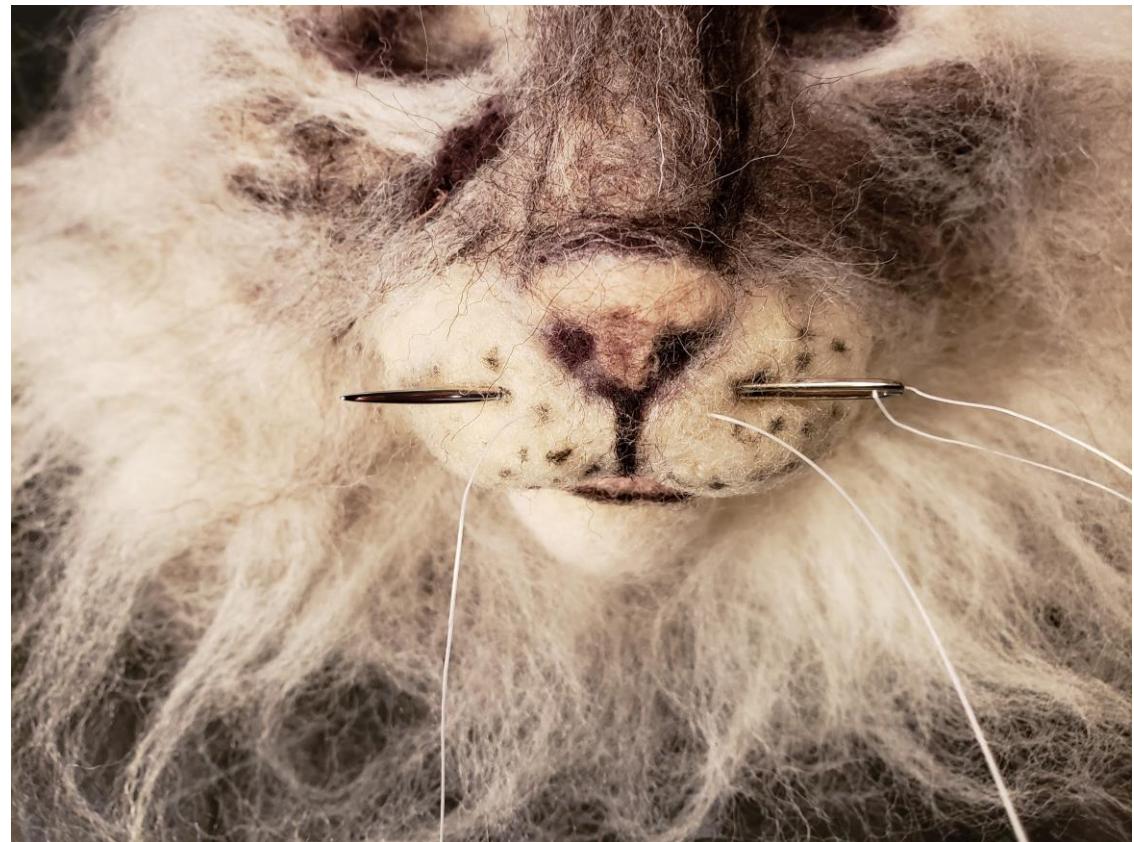
I added a tiny bit of pale pink wool on the bottom, just above the dark line of the lower lip.



STEP 2-N Head

Installing Whiskers

I used 0.008 in. (0.20 mm) diameter white bead weaving thread and a long upholstery needle. Load the needle with only enough for two whiskers – one on each side in the matching location. Pull the thread through only far enough to catch one side of it and pull it through, leaving equal lengths on each side. Repeat for each pair of whiskers. Leave a little long so you can trim them later.



STEP 2-N Head

Installing Whiskers

Don't forget to add a few shorter whiskers above the brows. I just took a single short stitch, pulled one end of the whisker through and then trim to the desired length. You don't need more than 2-3 stitches on each side.



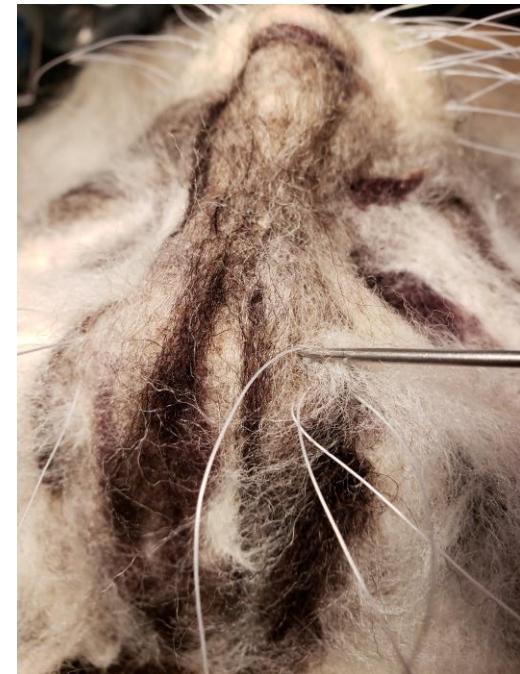
STEP 2-O Head

© Nancy Sullivan 2019

Adhering Whiskers

Good news: I have found an adhesive that works much better for whiskers than superglue, probably because it dries more slowly so you have time to wipe off any globs that might get tangled in the wool fibers. Instead of using the bottle's applicator, I use my old dissection probe from high school biology class(!) Dip the probe into the bottle to get just a tiny drop on the tip, then carefully isolate one whisker at a time (starting with the ones least visible) touch the point where the whisker is in contact with the surface wool, then carefully withdraw the probe and press that point with your finger, making sure no glue is left where it will be visible. Wipe the probe point and your finger clean after each whisker. Once all whiskers are secure, then trim them to the correct length with very sharp scissors.

Don't do this step when you are tired – it takes concentration and patience, and it's so easy to make a mess and ruin all your hard work on the face. I would suggest practicing on a scrap of wool first.



Finished Head (except for the blue eyes)



STEP 3-A

Attach Head

Attaching Head to Body

Now we need to build up a neck and the back of the head as we attach it to the body and finish our cat!

First, determine how far out your head needs to go from the body to look the most natural.

As you can see, the “neck” is much too short. The first thing to do is to build out the neck with the light, spongy core wool, and add to the loop so it will fit snugly inside the head’s cavity, allowing for a strong attachment. Then, we will need to finish it off with fur.



STEP 3-B Attach Head

Extending the Neck

Start wrapping core wool around the little stub that houses the wire loop. Try to follow the contour of the neck as it curves up into the back of the head.



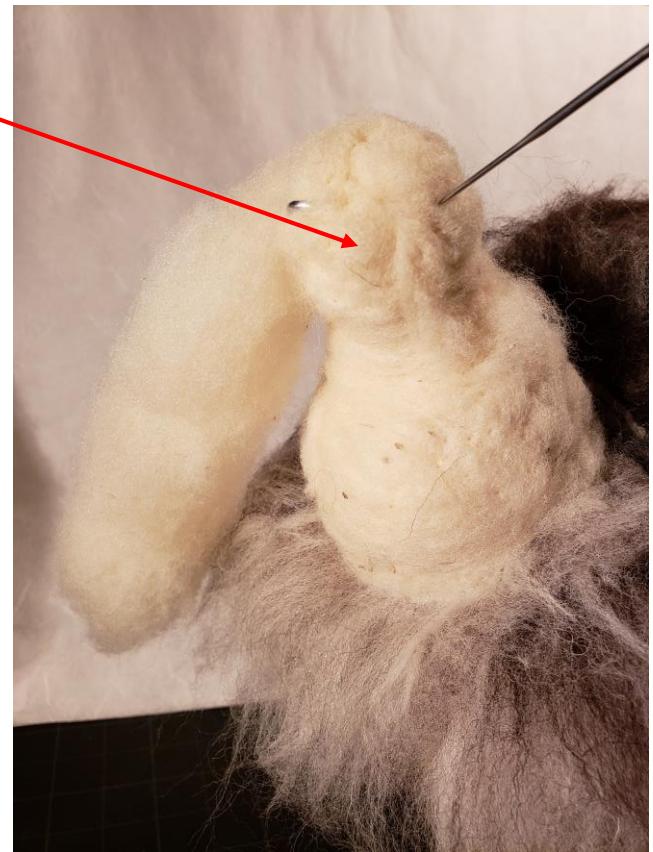
Keep wrapping until there is only a little tip of the loop still uncovered. Since we need to extend the neck a bit more, I have a plan for that little loop.....

STEP 3-C

Attach Head

Extending the Neck

- Pull a thick length of core wool through the tip of the loop
- Tie it in a big knot
- Start wrapping one side of the core wool and felting it around the knot, then pull off the excess after one full wrap
- Then wrap the other side around the tip of the neck (the knot), felting as you go, forming a sphere that will fit inside the head's cavity snugly



STEP 3-D Attach Head

Extending the Neck

The finished neck should look like this, something like the horn of a saddle.



Now you can carefully attach the inside of the head to the surface of the top of the neck. Insert some extra core wool inside the head if the fit is not tight enough – you don't want a floppy head!



STEP 3-E

Attach Head

© Nancy Sullivan 2019



1. Start with chunk of core wool about 6" x 2".
2. Felt the outline of a triangle on the center of the wool.
3. Fold over the right side onto the triangle, felt loosely together.
4. Fold over the left side onto the center and felt loosely, remove from the surface, turn over and felt lightly on the other side. Leave it fluffy like a pillow.

Building Back of Head



STEP 3-F

Attach Head

5. Apply the triangular pillow to the top of the head, as shown. Felt it down around the edges, but don't flatten it too much.

Building Back of Head



6. This triangular flap will make it possible to fit the head's cavity over the top of the neck, and once it is attached, you can add top coat wool to continue the markings of the fur from the top of the face, back onto the top and back of the head.



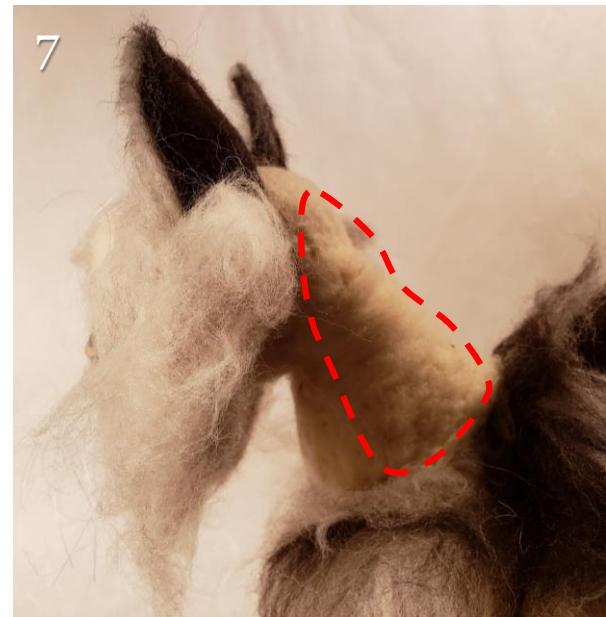
STEP 3-G

Attach Head

7. Make a rectangular “pillow” with core wool to fit over the back of the neck, thick enough to create the proper profile from the side. Felt it onto the neck.

8. Now begin to create and apply strips of fairly long fur to fill in the neck and back. Apply top coat on the top of the head (the triangle) and create a continuation of that fur so there is continuity from the top of the head (between the ears) down the center of the neck to finish off the coat.

Building Back of Neck



STEP 3-H

Attach Head



Finishing the Coat

Finish filling in the gaps between the neck and the back, add a bit more to the mane in the front if necessary, and then go over the whole body and patch and perfect to your heart's content.

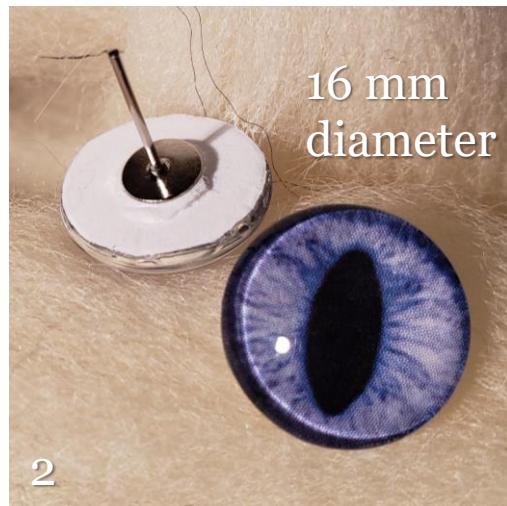


STEP 3-I

Attach Head

© Nancy Sullivan 2019

1. If the eye socket is too deep, felt in some spongy brown wool to build it out to fit the eye, and also to create a nice dark outline around it.
2. Test the placement of the eyes, and adjust the brown wool accordingly. Once you have a good fit, carefully apply a strong fabric or craft glue to the back of the glass eye and position it. If any glue goes where it shouldn't, wipe it up very quickly so it won't ruin the face. You can get away with a spill if you clean it up very quickly.



Finally Mini-Scout gets her blue eyes!

Affixing the Eyes





Scout Meets Mini-Scout





Mini-Scout Meets her Family



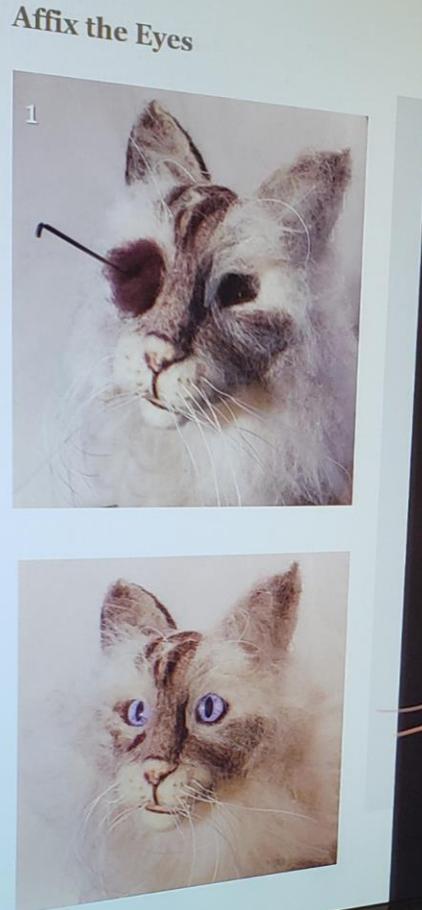
© Nancy Sullivan 2019

Mini-Scout Checks Out the Furniture



1. If the eye socket is too deep, felt in some spongy brown wool to build it out to fit the eye, and also to create a nice dark outline around it.

2. Test the placement of the eyes, and adjust the brown wool accordingly. Once you have a good fit, carefully apply a strong fabric or craft glue to the back of the glass eye and position it. If any glue goes where it shouldn't, wipe it up very quickly so it won't ruin the face. You can get away with a spill if you clean it up very quickly.



Mini-Scout helps me edit the tutorial.