

## WIRING AND STUFFING FELT TOYS . . .

corners almost up to the line of machining, and inward curves should be snipped in several places. If this is not done, the shape will be spoiled when the animal is turned inside out.

A space should be left in the seam for stuffing the animal, preferably underneath, where the stitches sewing it up will not show, or along the back, especially if the animal is to have a saddle or cover over its back when it is complete.

The ear of a small animal is usually sewn in with the seam between the head gusset and the side of the head. For this short distance the seam is sewn with stab stitch. Ears usually look best if folded double at the base, with the fold backward.

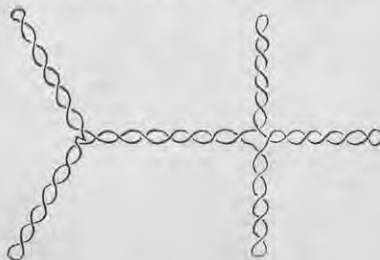
### Wiring and Stuffing

Small animals with short legs need no wiring, but an animal with long legs, whether they be thin like a giraffe's or thick like an elephant's, must have wire or papier mache supports, or with use the legs will soften and bend. Wire is best for the slim-legged animals, and papier mache cylinders for thick ones.

Fine hat wire may be used, doubled and twisted—one piece for all four legs, and perhaps for head and tail too—or thicker wire (No. 20 galvanized) when two separate pieces are necessary, each bent into a hoop. Single fine wire is sufficient for quite small animals. If the legs are to be made so that children may bend them (to make the animal sit down, for instant), electric flex is excellent as the support. It should be the fairly thick one-cord type, which can be bent easily but will hold its shape well however it is arranged. It is also good for long tails.



Bending and padding the wire supports. Above—Leg and tail supports made of single fairly thick wire and the padding of the loops at the ends. Below—A support for all four legs and head made from thin twisted wire. Another section for a tail support could be added if necessary. The ends should be twisted well into the centre piece.



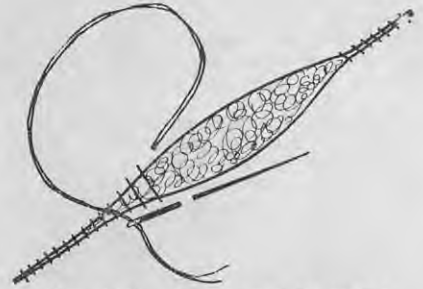
The correct way to bend the wires is illustrated in the preceding columns. In each case the loop at the end should be padded with a small piece of stuffing tied in place with cotton. The wires should be long enough to go well up into the body of the animal so that stuffing may be put in all round them.

Papier mache cylinders for elephants' legs are made as follows: Take a rectangular piece of strong paper, paste it well all over, and roll it round a thick knitting needle until the cylinder is thick enough to be firm. Slip out the needle (this is easier if it has been lightly greased beforehand) and leave the cylinder in a warm place to dry. Cut off pieces long enough to reach from the sole of the foot well up into the body, using a razor blade rather than scissors, as these would squash the roll. Before use stuff the middle of the cylinder firmly.

To avoid unnecessary mess when stuffing a toy lay a cotton cloth or newspaper over the table and sit close to it. Pull the stuffing into pieces the size of a marble and push each firmly into place before adding the next. Begin with the parts furthest from the opening, and if leg supports are being used, stuff the head and neck before the legs. To get the stuffing well into corners push it down with a stuffing stick; a blunt-pointed wooden meat skewer or pencil, a paste brush handle, and a strong, fairly thick knitting needle will make three good stuffing sticks of different sizes. Each narrow part must be filled completely before moving on, because it is not possible to force more in later without straining the seams. To form a well-shaped forehead keep one finger or thumb flat across the face, usually just below the eyes, while stuffing; especially with dogs this helps to give the typical profile. In all cases it is better to hold the casing in the hand while stuffing it, for holding it on the table tends to produce a flattened, shapeless toy. Remember the shape of the animal, and if necessary have a picture to follow, for much of the good shape of the limbs depends on careful moulding during stuffing.

If the wire support goes into the head and tail, it must be put in before stuffing is begun and the padding pushed in all round it. To keep it in position in the legs use four strong safety pins, passing one through the sole of each foot and into the padded loop at the end of the wire support from the outside. Stuff carefully all round the wire right up each leg. Do not remove the pins until the wire is completely covered with stuffing.

Papier mache cylinders cannot be held in this way, and each must be held down carefully by hand, pressed right against the sole of the animal's



Ladder stitch, which is used for sewing up the opening when a toy has been stuffed unless overcasting is suitable. Very strong double thread should be used for the final sewing up and all stitches pulled tight.

foot and retained in the middle of the leg, while the stuffing is being put round it. At the tops of the legs put plenty of stuffing on the outsides, or when the toy is handled the stuffing tends to wear loose and flabby so that the legs become wobbly. Stuff the back legs after the forelegs, and finally the body. If the animal has a tail, this should be stuffed before the legs; a kangaroo's tail should have a wire support.

**Do not stuff the toy so much that it is hard, but let it be gently firm when pressed, without loose places. Too hard a toy is not cuddly; too soft a one rapidly loses its shape with use and becomes uninteresting.**

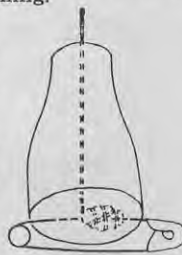
When stuffing is completed, hold the toy between the knees, opening uppermost, and begin sewing it up in ladder stitch, or with oversewing if this was used for the rest of the seams. Use a long, strong darning needle and very strong matching cotton, double or even in four thicknesses. After the first stitch or two pull the thread very tight. As the sewing advances push in small extra pieces of stuffing so that the animal is quite firm at the seam yet the worker is not troubled with pieces of the stuffing working out and getting in the way while she sews. Finish off with two or three firm blanket or buttonhole stitches, run the needle through the animal somewhere, pull the thread tight, and cut it off close. The end will disappear back into the toy if the thread has been pulled sufficiently tight.

### Finishing

When the animal has been stuffed and sewn up it is by no means finished, though the biggest part of the work has been completed. Carefully-done finishing details make all the difference between an attractive, satisfactory toy and one that is unrealistic or ugly.

### Legs

First, the legs must be braced and drawn in close to the body if the animal is to stand on them, so that even with use the legs will remain firm and will not sag outward. There are two ways of bracing the legs, the first being better for felt and the second for cloth animals. For either, strong thread and a long, strong needle are necessary; a curved upholsterer's needle may be an advantage for big animals.



To hold the wire support in place while a leg is stuffed, a safety pin is passed through the sole of the foot and the padded end of the support.