



# Folk Art - Dolls

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Lesson Plan by Virginia Catherall, 2008

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### *Doll Making as a Folk Art Tradition*

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Male Storyteller with 5 Children by Helen Cordero

tradition represent the society and culture from which they originate. They are created out of materials that are accessible to a particular people and reflect the dress, style and values of that group.

By Aurelia Gomez, Director of Education, Museum of International Folk Art  
<http://www.internationalfolkart.org/eventsedu/education/girard/dollintro.html>

Dolls are a wonderful way to learn about various cultures around the world. By understanding the reasons and construction of dolls, we can begin to understand the people who made them. From the rich history of storytelling and pottery evident in the Pueblo storytelling dolls to the small recycled worry dolls of Guatemala, we can begin to see how life and culture are woven into the art of dollmaking.

Dolls have captivated the human imagination for centuries. Paddle shaped dolls dating back to 200 BC have been found in Egyptian tombs. Dolls have been constructed out of virtually every material known to humankind including bone, ivory, wax, wood, terra cotta, plastic, rubber, old socks and inner tubes. A baby doll on display at the Museum of Childhood in Edinburgh, Scotland is an old shoe, sole up with a face made out of thumbtacks and a piece of fabric for its blanket. Its worn appearance is a testimonial to frequent use and creates an aura of affection and significant play.

Play is key to the function of dolls and doll making. Children's play enables their developing bodies, minds and emotions to experience a constructive channel of growth and enrichment. As miniature humans, dolls automatically shift the power scale from the adult to the side of the child. Suddenly in control, children can manipulate their playthings and project their imaginations and longings onto their inanimate friends.

In some instances, dolls function in a parallel manner for adults. Dolls are used for magical or spiritual purposes as well as are representative of a playful or wistful side of adult life. Dolls created in the folk art

# Pioneer Handkerchief Dolls

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## **Background:**

During pioneer times (and at other times when supplies were scarce), dolls were made from handkerchiefs for little girls. These handkerchief dolls were called "prayer dolls." They were carried to church and did not make noise if they were dropped. Some mothers would put sugar cubes or candy in the head of the handkerchief doll for a youngster to suck on to keep the child quiet during the long church service. Other names for the handkerchief doll are: "church doll," "church babies," "pew doll," and "pew babies."

As time passed more dolls and larger dolls were made. The other dolls that were made at this early age were the pillow case doll (a larger version of the handkerchief doll) and the pioneer doll. The Pioneer doll had arms and legs made from material as well as the trunk and head. These types of dolls eventually became mass produced in the form of Raggedy Anne and Andy.



Monogrammed Handkerchief Doll

## History of the handkerchief

from: <http://www.historicalfolktoys.com/catcont/4705.html>

The pocket handkerchief is about 400 years old, but the history of the handkerchief begins as far back as Classical Greece and the Roman Empire. During Classical Greek times, a perfumed cloth was used by the wealthy. These were known as "mouth cloths," or "perspiration cloths." Throughout the Roman Empire, women carried a silk or cotton square handkerchief. Roman games were signaled to begin when a handkerchief was dropped. A handkerchief was waved by spectators at these games to show their sign of approval.

A handkerchief used during the Middle Ages was a sign of being wealthy and was clearly displayed as such. A knight would wear a lady's handkerchief to publicly show he had her favor. In the early Christian Church, the officiating priest carried a handkerchief in his left hand. This evolved into a folded band, which became known as the "maniple" by the 12th century. During the Renaissance, the handkerchief (now called a "napkyn") was made from silk, cambric, and lawn. These napkyns were usually embroidered and/or featured exquisite lace. These handkerchiefs were used by both men and women and were not only square but could be round or triangular as well.

The handkerchief saw dramatic change in Europe during the 16th century. It was richly decorated, adorned with various laces or fringed edges, and was meant to be displayed as a fashion item rather than as something useful. Marie Antoinette decided that the square form of the handkerchief was more aesthetically pleasing, and King Louis XIV published a decree ordering the length of the handkerchief to be equal to its width. In the 19th century, ladies carried handkerchiefs in their hands instead of hiding them away in bags or purses. They were so common that everyone carried a "hankie" everywhere they went. During the Victorian era, this made it possible for a young woman to make signals across a room to a young man with her handkerchief in much the same way romantic signals were done with the fan. Handkerchiefs were considered the perfect gift for anyone, young or old, male or female, good friend or mere acquaintance.

After Kleenex facial tissues became popular in the 1930s and 1940s, the cloth handkerchief was less used. But,

handkerchiefs are still fairly popular and sold in many stores.

**Resources:**

[http://www.hcsv.org/O\\_page/hcsvkids/handkerchief.htm](http://www.hcsv.org/O_page/hcsvkids/handkerchief.htm)

<http://www.historicalfolktoys.com/catcont/4705.html>

**Make your own Handkerchief Doll**



Materials needed:

- 1 Large. Man's Handkerchief
- 5 pieces of yarn or ribbon, about 6” long
- Small amount of stuffing. Head should be about 2 inches round after stuffing

Activity:

1. Lay the handkerchief out to form a square. Take the stuffing put it at the center of the hanky. Fold the Hanky in half with the stuffing sandwiched between the layers. Gather up the hanky under the stuffing to form a neck. Wrap ribbon around neck area.
2. Next take tips at the edges of the upper handkerchief at the fold and one at a time and gather about one inch down. Wrap a piece of yarn around the gather. This will make the first arm. Repeat for second arm. Now you have a doll with a dress. If you would like to make a doll with legs go to step three.
3. Take the bottom corners one at a time and gather about two inches up. Wrap a piece of yarn around the gather. This will make the first leg. Repeat for second leg.
4. The last step is to make a face or not. You can use a pen or a small piece of embroidery thread sewn on. Many times in old the dolls had what was call prayer faces. Closed eyes sewed on by hand with just a basic stitch.



Other ways of making a Handkerchief Doll:

Rolled handkerchief doll: [http://www.hcsv.org/O\\_page/hcsvkids/handkerchief.htm](http://www.hcsv.org/O_page/hcsvkids/handkerchief.htm)

Sewed handkerchief doll: <http://www.mtnlaurel.com/Crafts/apple.htm>

Folded handkerchief doll: [http://www.little-folks.com/hankytoys/hankytoys\\_04.htm](http://www.little-folks.com/hankytoys/hankytoys_04.htm)

# Russian Nesting Dolls

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## Background:



7-piece nesting doll  
"Fukurokuju", Japan. Late 1890s

Russian Nesting Dolls or *matryoshka* were first produced in Moscow in 1890. Sergei Maliutin, a painter from a folk crafts workshop saw a set of Japanese wooden dolls representing the Seven Gods of Fortune. The largest doll was that of Fukurokuju - a happy, bald god with an unusually tall chin - and within it nested the six remaining deities. Inspired, Maliutin drew a sketch of a Russian version of the toy. It was carved by Vasiliy Zvezdochkin in a toy workshop in Sergiyev Posad and painted by Sergei Maliutin. It consisted of eight dolls; the outermost was a girl in an apron, then the dolls alternated between boy and girl, with the innermost – a baby.

In old Russia among peasants the name *Matryona* or *Matriosha* was a very popular female name. The name has the Latin root "mater" which means "Mother." This name was associated with the image of a fat, robust, rustic Russian woman and mother of a big peasant family. A doll which represents an old woman is often called a *baboushka* or *babushka*, that which represents an old man a *dedoushka* or *dedushka*.



The first Russian nesting doll

Today Russian nesting dolls are made in a variety of styles and subjects. You can even make your own dolls from wooden blanks. Or you can make paper nesting dolls from the templates that follow.

## Resources:

<http://russian-crafts.com/nest/history.html>

<http://russian-crafts.com/nest/history.html>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matryoshka\\_doll](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matryoshka_doll)



Contemporary Russian  
Nesting Dolls

# Paper Nesting Dolls

Materials required:

- glue or tape
- scissors
- crayons

Instructions: (inspired by [myfantastictoy.com](http://myfantastictoy.com))

- Color the Dolls

- The dotted lines (----) are fold lines. To help fold the dolls better, score the dotted lines with the back of the scissor blades.

- Cut out the dolls on the solid lines.

- Fold along the score lines

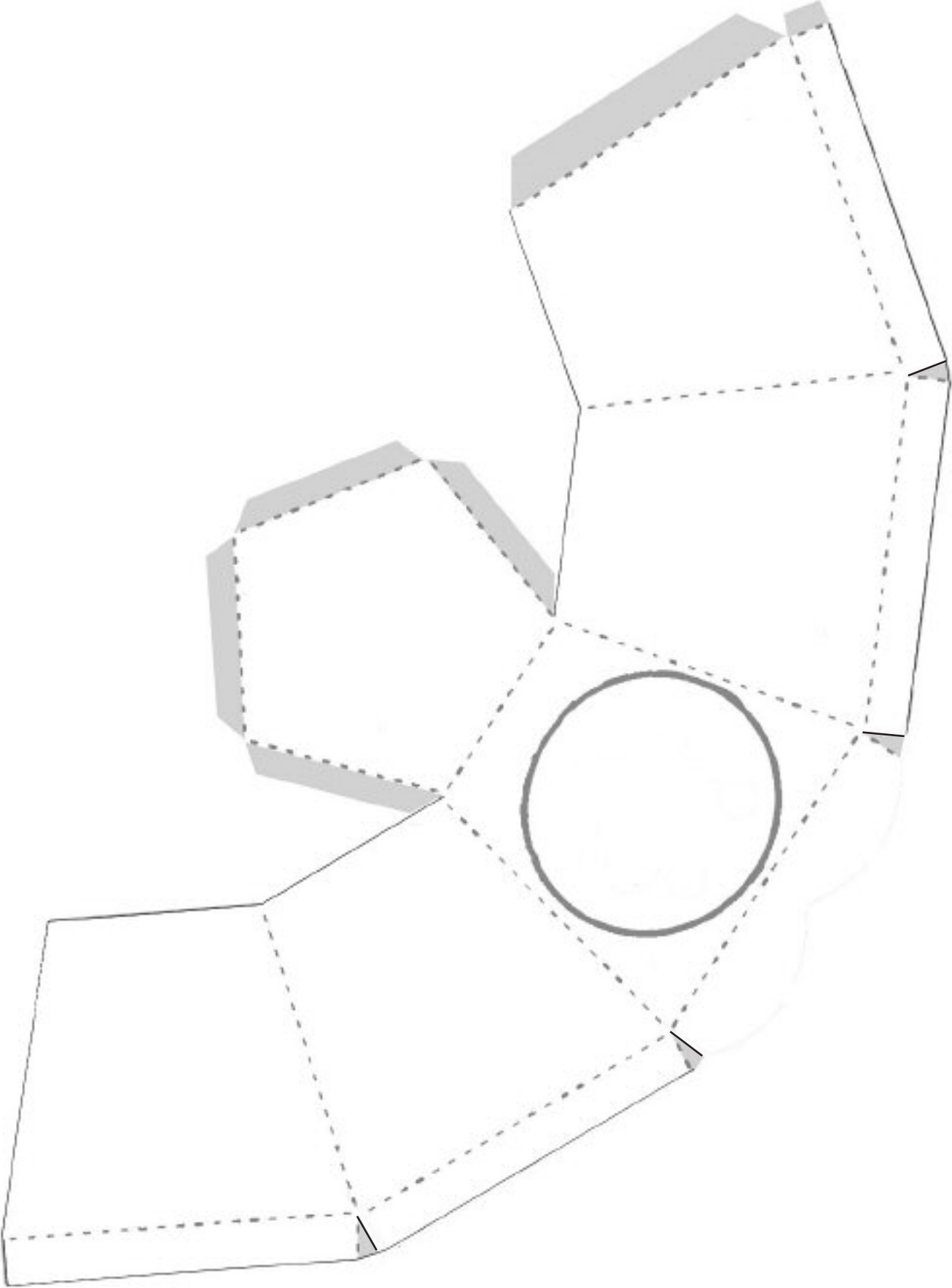
- Assemble the largest nesting doll first.

- As you fold you will see your doll begin to take shape.

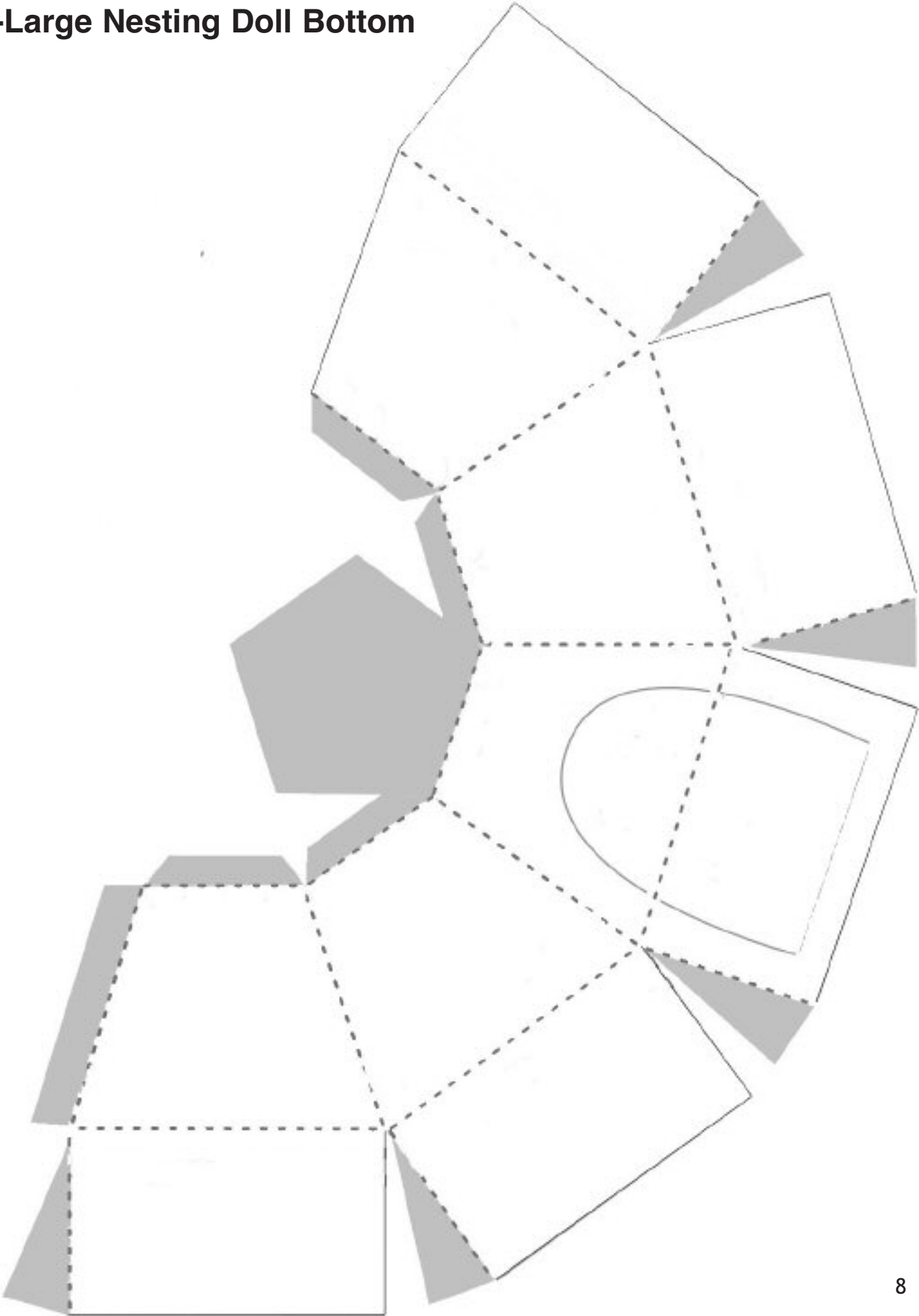
- Glue or tape the shaded tabs to the inside of the doll to create the nesting doll shape.



# X-Large Nesting Doll Top

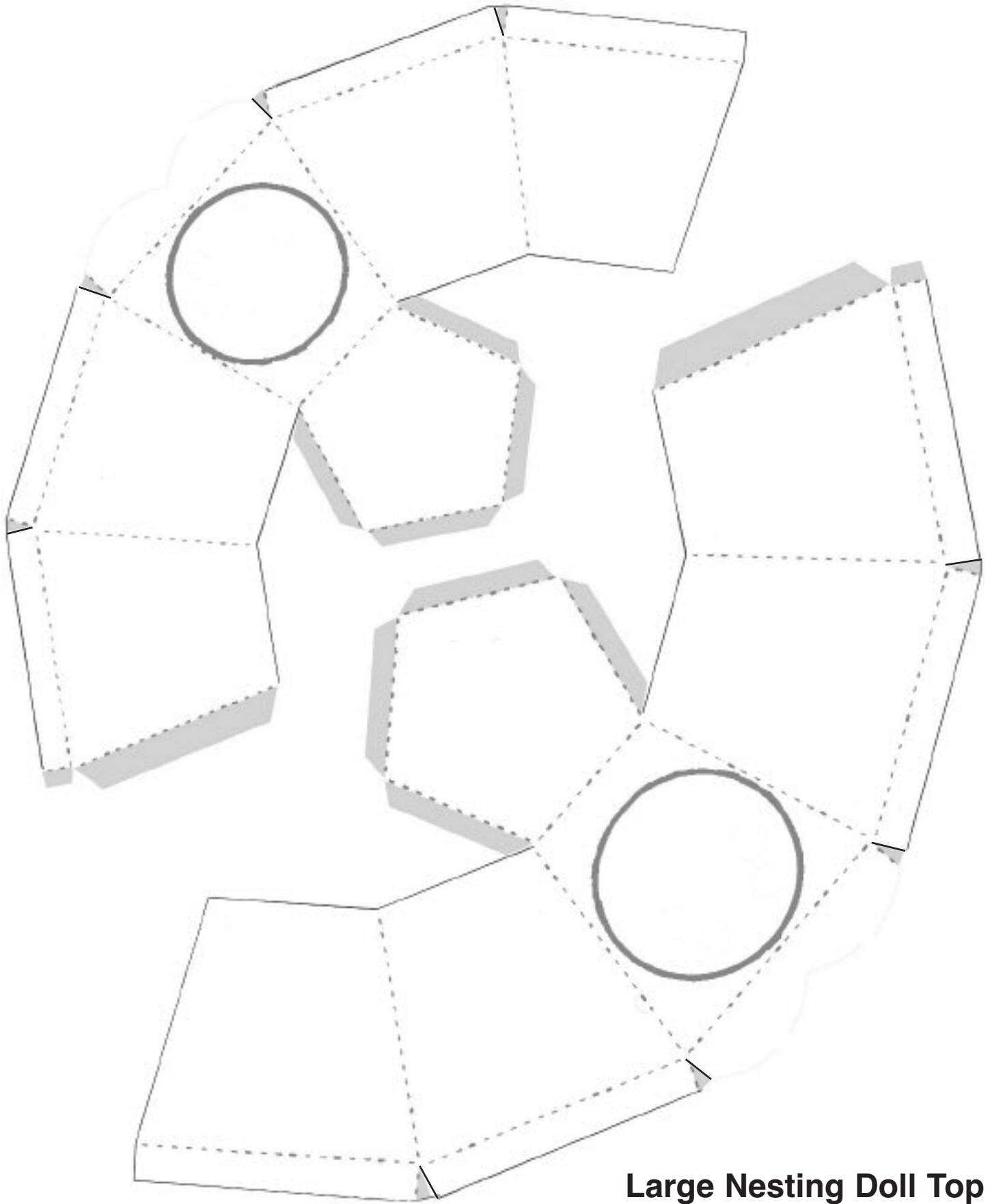


**X-Large Nesting Doll Bottom**



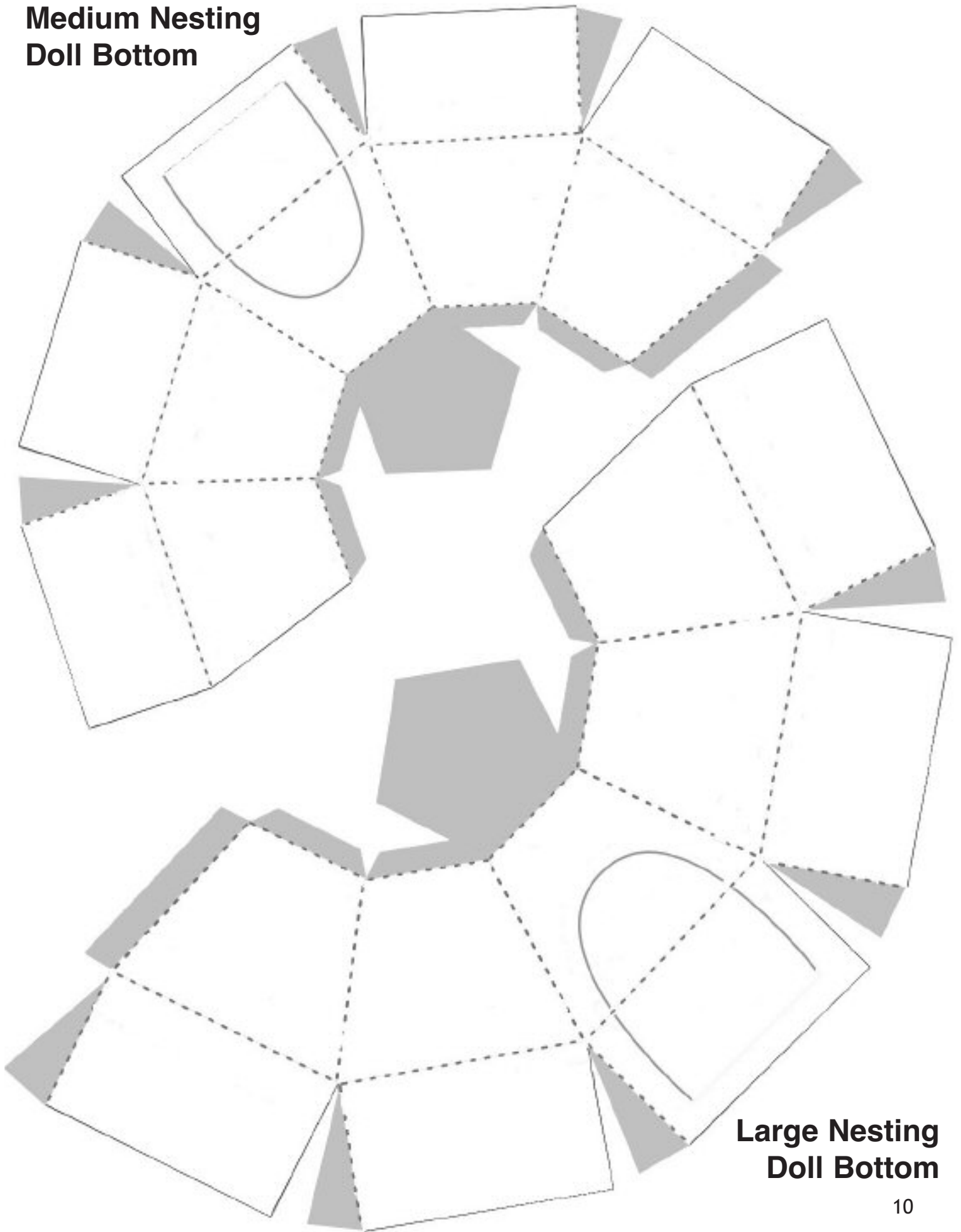


# Medium Nesting Doll Top



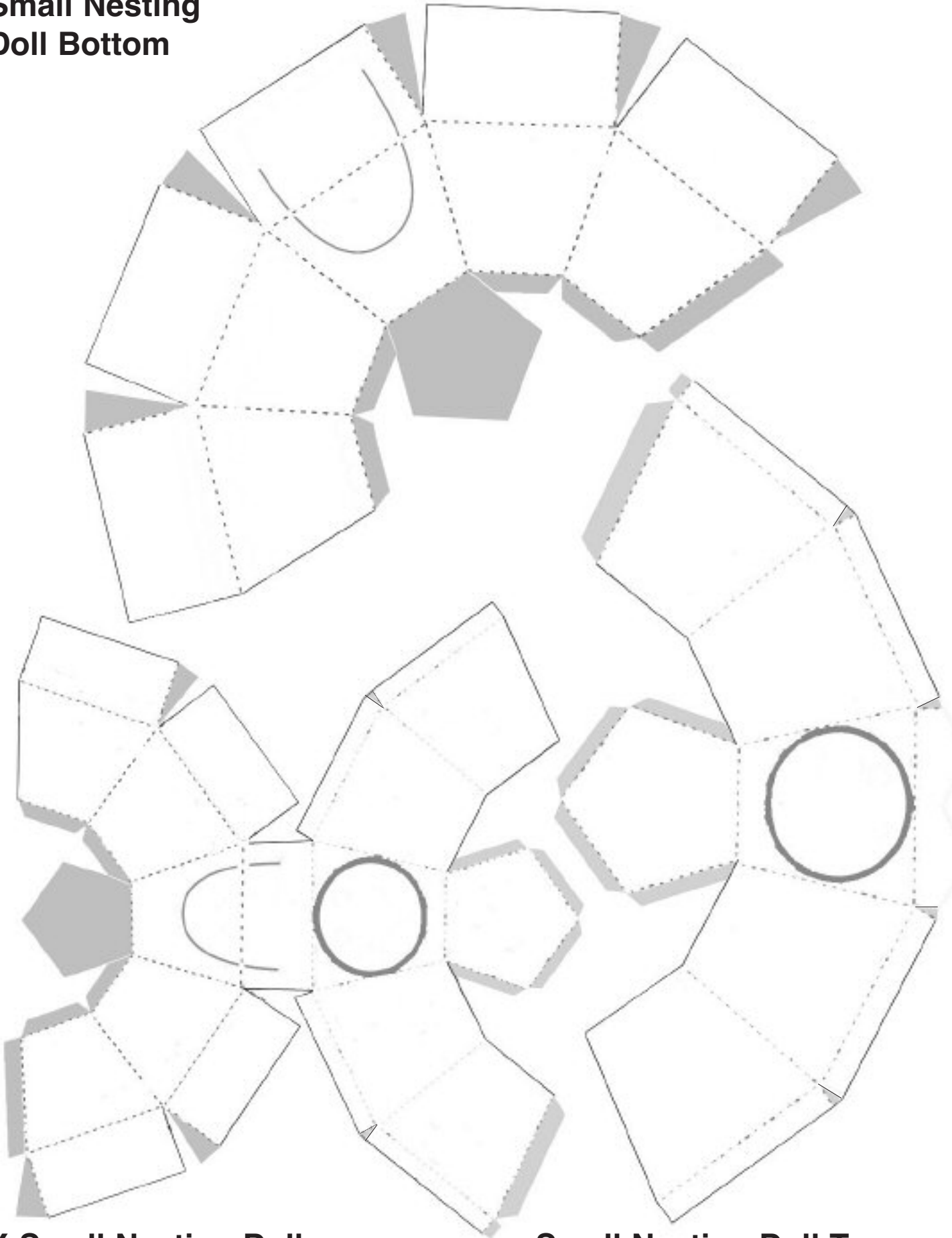
# Large Nesting Doll Top

**Medium Nesting  
Doll Bottom**



**Large Nesting  
Doll Bottom**

**Small Nesting  
Doll Bottom**



**X-Small Nesting Doll**

**Small Nesting Doll Top**

# Pueblo Storytelling Dolls

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Peruvian Storyteller Doll

## **Background:**

Working with clay and telling stories are two time-honored American Indian traditions. In the early 1960s, several artists began merging these traditions into a new art form by creating images of seated storytellers with small children clustered around them. These "storyteller dolls" have become world-famous collector's items. A few elements are common to most of the dolls. The large figure, no more than 12" (30 cm) high, usually has closed eyes and an open mouth, and wears traditional clothing patterns and jewelry motifs. Squash blossom necklaces, moccasins and hair tied in butterfly knots are common. Some storytellers have as many as thirty children modeled around them. Each pueblo village has its own specific design, sometimes a reptile or woodland animal. You can make a storyteller doll to be a man, woman, or animal. Other cultures around the world, especially in South and Central America, have adopted the Storyteller Doll motif to acknowledge their own storytelling traditions.

## **Resources:**

<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Storyteller+dolls+express+tradition-a09378452>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storyteller\\_doll](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storyteller_doll)

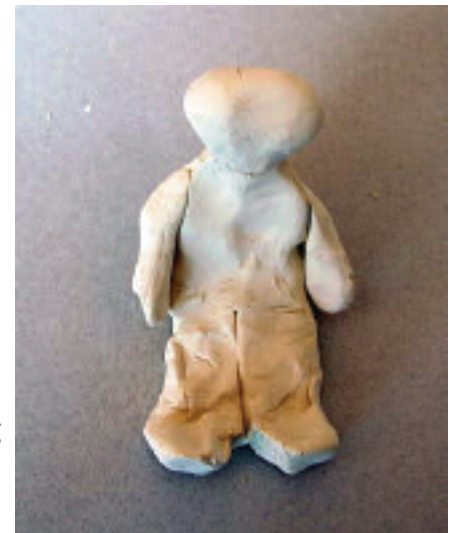
## **Make Your Own Storytelling Doll**

### Materials:

Self-hardening clay  
newspaper  
acrylic paints  
brushes

### Activity:

1. Spread out the old newspaper on your craft or kitchen table before you begin. With the self-hardening clay or other type of clay, attach the pieces of the storyteller doll together by scoring the parts to be attached. Make a big ball for the body and a small one for the head. You will need four smaller, longer pieces for the arms and legs.
2. Form the body of the storyteller doll. The storyteller should be in a sitting position with the arms and legs open.



3. You can make two or three children's bodies for the storyteller by making smaller versions of the storyteller. Attach them to the storyteller's lap or arms.
4. You can add clothing and accessories with extra clay here if you wish. To make your storyteller doll authentic, leave the eyes closed and the mouth open.
5. Allow the storyteller doll figures to dry for up to a week and then paint them with your acrylics or poster paints.



# Guatemalan Worry Dolls

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## **Background:**



Guatemalan Worry Dolls

Worry dolls, or trouble dolls, are very small dolls originally made in Guatemala. Mayan tradition tells that a child who cannot sleep due to worrying can express their worries to a doll and place it under their pillow before going to sleep.

According to folklore, the doll will worry in the person's place, letting the child sleep peacefully. The child will wake up without their worries, which have been taken away by the dolls during the night. The dolls come in sets of six and the Guatemalan tradition is to use one of the six worry dolls each night. After six nights the worry is gone. The dolls are usually about 1/2 to 2 inches tall and handmade using wood or wire as a frame and cotton fabric and thread for clothing.

## **Resources:**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worry\\_doll](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worry_doll)

<http://www.sciencejoywagon.com/kwirt/mayan/>

<http://www.wisegEEK.com/what-are-worry-dolls.htm>

## **Make your own Worry Dolls**

### **Materials needed:**

A piece of wire about 10" long

Various yarns and threads

### **Activity:**

1. Shape the wire into a small human form about 2" tall. Be sure to make a head, torso, arms and legs.
2. Choose a color of thread for the face and begin wrapping the yarn around the wire head. You can tuck in the ends when you start and tuck in the ends when you finish. If you want, you can leave a tail and tie the ends together when you finish wrapping.
3. Choose a color for the shirt and the pants and begin wrapping. If you want, you can make hair and tie to the top as well.

See the visual steps on the next page:



Worry Doll  
Step 1



Worry Doll  
Step 2



Worry Doll  
Step 3



Worry Doll  
Step 4



Worry Doll  
Step 5