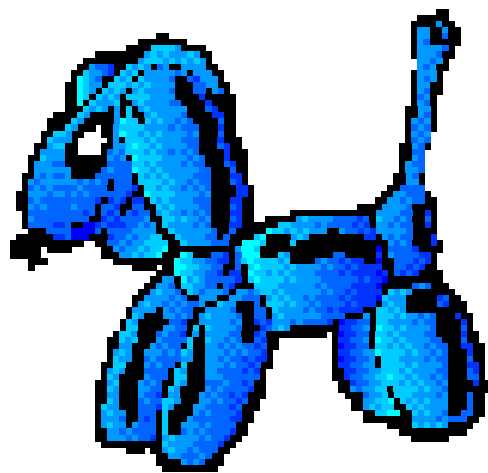


# Balloon twisting 101



August Learning events

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# basic info

## Balloons to be used

Most sculptures are created using 260 balloons (2 inches in diameter and 60 inches in length). This is the standard balloon for twisting but 160 and 350 (respectively 1 and 3 inches in diameter) can fit exactly your needs on a given sculpture. It is sometimes useful to have the extra-length of the 160 or to make "big" sculptures with the 350. Try them, you won't regret it. Other types of balloons can help you make beautiful creations. First of all, the standard round balloons can make realistic eyes. But also hearts for heads or donuts and blossoms just to add to your bouquets. We recommend 6-inch balloons because they can easily be added to sculptures based on 260.



160, 350 and 260



160, 260 and 350

## The manufacturers

In order to separate different manufacturers, the first letter of the manufacturer is usually added to the type of balloons. This way, 260s made by Qualatex are called 260Q.

- **Qualatex** is by far the world's first manufacturer of latex balloons. These are the easiest to find and that's great since these balloons are resistant and with an important color range and shapes.
- **Betallatex** are also very popular and they have a wide range of different shapes and colors.
- **Granger**, **Tilly** and **Prestige** are two other manufacturers. I have not tested these yet.

## Where to buy them

I have found bags of 260 at Party Stores. Oriental Trading also has a starter kit. There are also a few online shops which remains a good solution even with the post charges. I purchase the majority of my balloons & accessories from [www.tmyers.com](http://www.tmyers.com).

## Let them last longer

You might quickly become a balloon addicted person. You will then decide to order lots of balloons at the same time but keep in mind that there are a few rules to keep your balloons resistant and colorful.

Latex balloons don't like heat and light. To have them last longer, keep them in a fresh place and in a box. You can freeze balloons with no problems. Just let them come back to room temperature. But keeping them in a box at room temperature should be okay for several months. Do not forget to take care of the balloons. Do not stuff them in your pockets with a marker and a pair of scissors. Try to keep them in large pockets, one pocket for each color can be useful if you are often looking for a specific color.

## Blowing up a balloon

Blowing up 260s by mouth is not that hard, it is even quite easy with some practice. But health complications are for real.

**The pressure:** the most common risk is getting dizzy or even fainting while trying to blow a 260 up. It is the unusual pressure which makes the beginner getting red, feeling dizzy and finally fainting. This extra pressure on the eye can also have bad effects on your vision and not only for a few minutes...

**The explosion:** you never know if a balloon might explode with no warnings. Wearing glasses IS recommended to protect your eyes (it takes only one bad balloon...). The explosion sound can also have bad effects if it happens close to someone's ears.



I highly recommend using a balloon pump. A hand held one like this is great for beginners. If you really get into it you can purchase battery powered pumps. The talc, spreading germs and just teaching kids not to put balloons in the mouth are all good reasons to use a pump.

## How to Tie a Balloon

Once the balloon is inflated, it is time to tie the knot. This is difficult for some. If you are having trouble tying the balloon, try pinching off an 1 inch bubble and letting the air out of it. Hold on tight to where you pinched or you will lose pressure in your balloon giving it a “soft” feel. This will give you more slack to tie the balloon.

	<p>For a quick tie, pinch the beginning of the balloon where the knot will be, making sure there is plenty of slack.</p>		<p>Wrap the slack around your first two fingers, those closest to your thumb.</p>
	<p>Then thread the slack behind the beginning of the balloon and through these two fingers, from the back of the fingers to the front.</p>		<p>Now pull these two fingers out of the loop you made with the slack, while holding on to the lip (end) the balloon.</p>
	<p>You should now have a tied balloon. This is an exaggeration for instruction purposes</p>		<p>. After some practice it should look more like this.</p>

## Proportions

You will quickly realize that the techniques are easy but the art of sculpting is proportions.

First you have to decide how much balloon must be kept un-inflated, and then each bubble size must be carefully chosen.

Some general points to help:

- ➔ Estimate the sculpture complexity : the more bubbles, the less inflated must be the balloon
- ➔ Try again! Your sculpture might not be nice at first but it is usually worth trying again
- ➔ Take notes. It takes only a few minutes now and will save you hours a few months later...
- ➔ Practice! The only way to master balloon sculpting

It is like a game so enjoy!

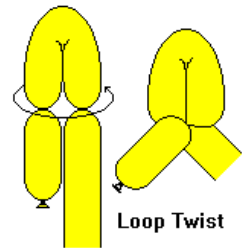
# BASIC TWISTS

Here's the scoop on some of the twists used in balloon sculpture. By combining these twists in various ways you can create thousands of figures from your balloons. More twists will be added as the need arises.



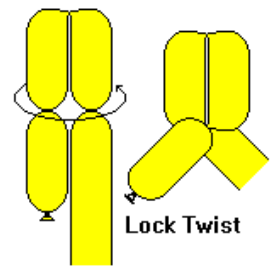
## Loop Twist (Fold Twist)

This is a lot like the ear twist, but it is done with a much longer bubble. Just take a long bubble, fold it back on itself, and twist the two ends together. This is good for large ears, hands or feet on multiple balloon figures.



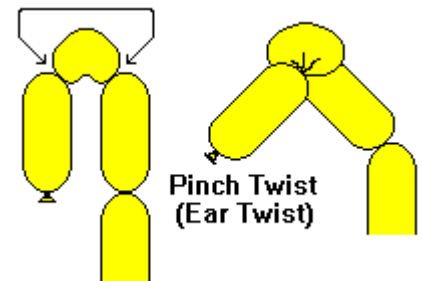
## Lock Twist

Twist two bubbles, usually about the same size. Bring opposite ends together so that the two bubbles are parallel and touching each other. Twist them together to lock in place. This is the most common method of making legs and ears on simple figures.



## Pinch Twist (Ear Twist)

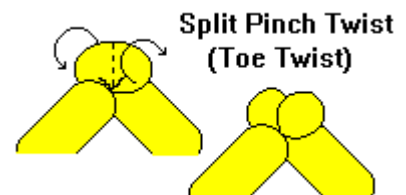
Twist a 1 to 1.5 inch bubble, leaving it a little on the soft side. Then twist the two ends of the same bubble together. This makes an ear-shaped bubble that is good for ears, lips, or sometimes to hold another bubble in place.


















## Toe Twist (Split Twist)

Begin with an ear twist. Grab the two sides of the bubble and twist it in two, making two bubbles about 1/2" or less in diameter. These are good for adding fine detail to faces or hands and feet.

Another method of beginning the twist is to roll it so that the center part attached to the adjacent bubbles splits the pinch twist in two. Then wind the two bubbles in opposite directions to make it hold.



	<p><b>COMMON DOG &amp; A SITTING DOG</b></p> 		<p>Inflate the 260 but not fully, leave a few inches that will be filled as you twist the bubbles.</p>
	<p>Pinch and twist,</p>		<p>here is your first bubble! Twist a few turns before making others.</p>
	<p>Here are 3 bubbles that will be "tied".</p>		<p>Bring bubbles 2 and 3 closer...</p>
	<p>... and twist those two bubbles together.</p>		<p>A few turns are enough and you have finished the dog's ears (called a <a href="#">lock twist</a>)</p>
	<p>Leave a bubble as a neck and make another lock twist for the paws.</p>		<p>here they are!</p>
	<p>Then again a lock twist.</p>		<p>Here is the common dog. You only need lock twists!</p>
	<p>But since we want a sitting dog, undo the last lock twist and make a big loop twist.</p>		<p>This loop must be large enough to put the forelegs inside. Here is our nice little dog.</p>



Leave a large bubble as a trunk by pinching and ...



... twisting!



Now a loop twist.



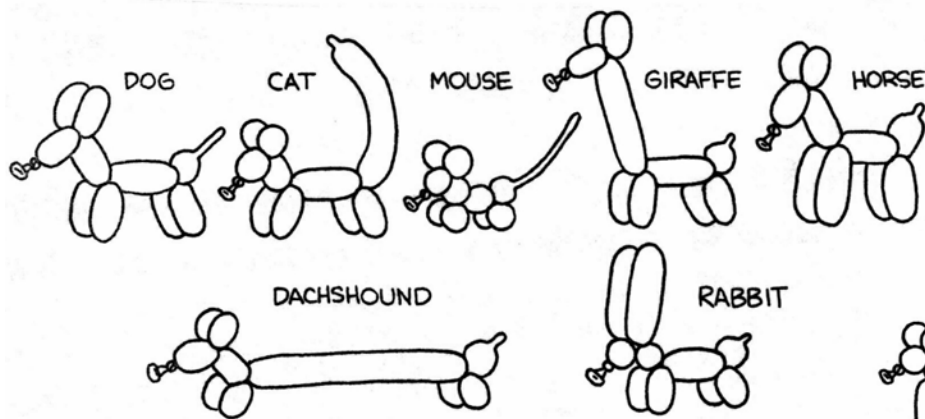
That is to say a bubble twisted on itself.



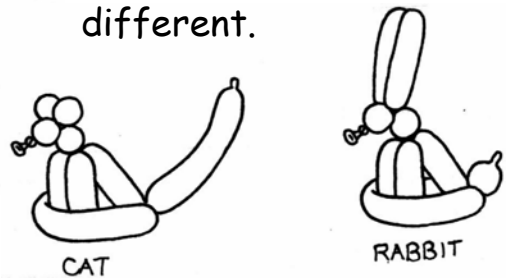
Two loop twists and the head is already over!



The legs and body are lock



The twists involved with these are close to that of the dog, but the bubble lengths are extremely different.



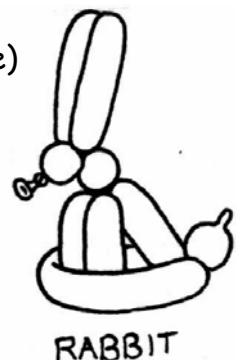
## BALLOON GIRAFFE

1. Blow up the balloon. Leave about two inches at the end.
2. Twist one 2 inch bubble and two small 1 inch bubbles.
3. Lock twist the two small bubbles together. Now you should have the giraffe's head and ears.
4. Now, twist 1 really long bubble for the giraffe's neck & 2 large bubbles for the giraffe's front legs.
5. Lock twist the two large bubbles together
6. Make a 1inch body, and 2 large bubbles for the giraffe's back legs.
7. Lock twist the two large bubbles together. You should be left with a small 1 inch tail
8. Using a marker pen, draw eyes and a mouth to your giraffe.

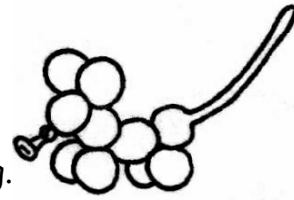
## THE RABBIT

The rabbit is a bit more specific in the tail length, and depending on how much you twist, you will learn how much tail you need to leave.

1. Blow up your balloon, leaving a 3 inch tail (4 inches if you are trying to be safe)
2. Make a 2 inch bubble, and two longer bubbles (maybe 4 inches each)
3. Lock twist the two longer bubbles - face and ears of rabbit
4. Make a 1 inch bubble and two 3 inch bubbles
5. Lock the same as dog (above) - makes neck and front legs
6. Make a 2 inch bubble - body
7. Force the air into the remaining tail of the balloon & make a 1 inch bubble from the untied end
8. Lock the bubble in step 6 with the last twist - back and back legs
9. Push the front legs in the circle made by the last twist.

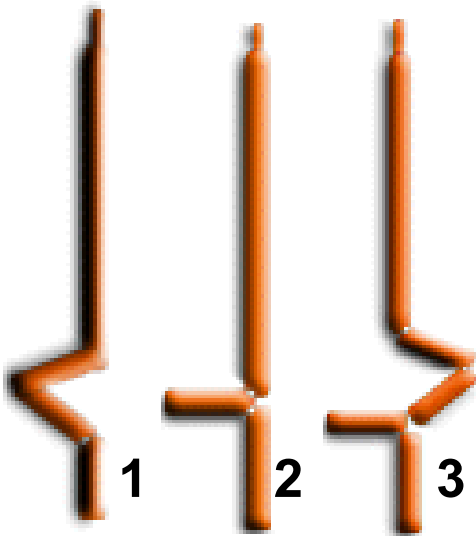


# BALLOON Mouse



1. Blow up the balloons that the balloon is only 5 - 6 inches long.
2. Twist three small bubbles.
3. Lock twist the last two small bubbles together. Now you should have the mouse's head & ears.
4. Now, twist 1 extra small bubble for the neck & 2 small bubbles for the mouse's front legs.
5. Lock twist the last two bubbles together. Now you have the nose, ears, neck & front legs.
6. Make a medium sized body, and 2 small bubbles for the mouse's back legs.
7. Lock twist the two small bubbles together. You should be left with a long 4-5 inch tail
8. Using a marker pen, draw eyes and a mouth to your mouse.

# Sword Excalibur



Step 1--Blow up the balloon leaving a 3 - 4 inch tail.

Step 2--Start at the beginning with the knot and twist a 4 to 5-inch bubble or 1 hand wide. Make sure you hang on to both ends of balloon, otherwise it will untwist. Twist it around 2 or 3 times.

Step 3--While holding on to the twisted balloon, make 2 more bubbles the same size. Do not let go. Twist lock the last two bubbles together. This is one side of the hilt.

Step 4--Repeat the step 3 This is the other side of the hilt.

Step 5--Twist balloon joints around so that the first lone bubble is down, the two lock twists on either side and the remaining balloon is up. If there is still inflated tip, gently squeeze the air from the near the hilt towards the tip.

To make the sword *FANCIER* you can add a 1-inch bubble between the long bubbles in step 3. Then on step 4. I make three bubbles in between. Remember if you do this you might need to leave your self more tail to start with.

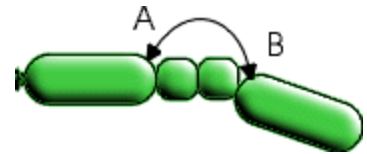
# Crocodile

**Step 1**--Blow up the balloon half way.

**Step 2**--Start at the beginning with the knot and twist a 3 to 4-inch bubble or 3 or 4 fingers wide. Make sure you hang on to both ends of balloon, otherwise it will untwist. Twist it around 2 or 3 times. Do not worry it will not break. Why didn't it break? There is space at the end of the balloon for the extra air. That is why we only blow the balloon half way.

**Step 3**--While holding on to the twisted balloon, make another bubble 1 to 2 fingers in size. This will be the one eye. Do not let go.

**Step 4**--Make another balloon bubble the same size. This is the other eye. Look at picture.

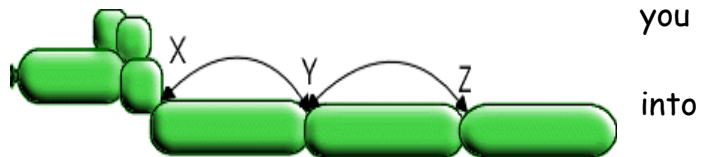


**Step 5**--Twist balloon joints A & B together. Twist 2 or 4 times all the way around. The balloon will not break, and they will stay together.

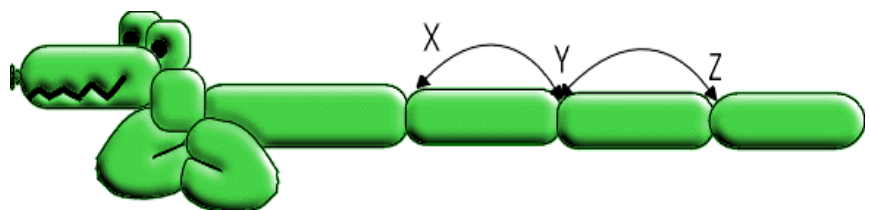


**Step 6**--Now for the neck. Twist a 2 to 3-inch bubble or 3 or 4 fingers wide. This is the neck. Make sure you hang on to the balloon, both parts.

**Step 7**--Let's make the front legs, after all--we want your crocodile to stand. Start by twisting a 3 to 4-inch bubble. Hang on to the neck as you twist the balloon, and do not let go of the leg. Twist point Y into point X, then twist point Z into point X.

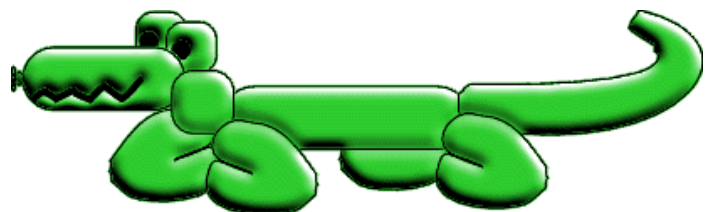


**Step 8**--Back legs, same as the first. Twist a 3 to 4-inch bubble. Twist those two parts together just like you did with the other legs. Remember twist around each other 4 or 5 times. Twist the parts together to look like the drawing.















**Step 9**--Have a lot of balloon left over? That's the tail.

Congratulations, you just made your first Crocodile!



**SNAKE**

		<b>Only two balloons are needed. You don't have to use the same color at all!</b>		<b>Let's start with the head. No need to inflate a lot since the remaining part will be the long tongue</b>
		<b>A standard loop twist which will be the upper lip</b>		<b>Now two rather big ear twists to create both eyes</b>
		<b>Now make the other lip with all the remaining inflated balloon. This is again a standard loop twist</b>		<b>Here is the head. You can notice the tongue going in between the lips</b>
		<b>No remaining doubt when the eyes are drawn</b>		<b>If you want to make a curved body, first inflate and let all the air go out. This will make the next step easier because the latex is then softer</b>
		<b>Roll the balloon around your fingers</b>		<b>Now the difficult part is to inflate again the balloon by forcing it to turn around your fingers</b>
		<b>The balloon then keeps this shape</b>		<b>Now fix the body on the head using the knot</b>
		<b>Side view</b>		
		<b>And zoom in other possibilities</b>		

**- using different colors or make the lips on the "body balloon" and, with a different color, the eyes and the tongue. It is really nice as well!**

# Antenna Hat

Step 1--Blow up two balloons half way to 3 quarters.

Step 2--Start at the beginning with the knot and twist a 1 inch bubble about 1 - 1 1/2 fingers wide. Make sure you hang on to both ends of balloon, otherwise it will untwist. Twist the same size bubble in the second balloon. Now, very carefully twist the bubbles together.

Step 3--Make the next bubble about 1 foot in size or big enough to fit around your head. You will then twist the balloons together at this point.

Step 4--Make a small bubble about 2 inches, or 3 - 4 finger width in length. Twist the balloon to make a bubble. Loop the bubble back into the two twisted balloons. The balloons are twisted together and should stay that way.

Step 5--With the other balloon twist another bubble the same size (2 inches, or 3 - 4 finger width in length) and twist the balloon back in to the loop.

Step 6--Now twist the balloon antenna to face up.

Step 7--To make the bubbles on top; twist the balloon about a inch from the end and push the air to the top of the balloon.



# Jester's Hat

- Step 1-- Blow up the balloons again to about half way to 3 quarters.
- Step 2-- Take the first balloon and pinch & twist a 5-6 inch bubble.
- Step 3-- Attach the second balloon at that twist.
- Step 4-- On the second balloon, leave 5-6 inches & attach the third balloon.
- Step 5-- On the third balloon, leave 5-6 inches & attach the first balloon an inch away from the knot.
- Step 6-- Bring the three balloons together and leaving about a 5-inch bubble, twist them together.
- Step 7-- Hold the remaining section of the first balloon in one hand and the uninflated tip in the other.
- Step 8-- Gently squeeze the air from the bubble close to the twist into the end. You have to hold on to the uninflated tip pretty tight to force the air into the end.
- Step 9-- Repeat Steps 7 & 8 for the second & third balloon.



# Baseball Cap

	<p>Blow up one balloon 3 quarters. Start at the beginning with the knot and measure 6" to 6 1/2" and make a twist.</p>		<p>Take the nozzle of the balloon and twist them together. Make sure you hang on to both ends of balloon, otherwise it will untwist. Make another loop the same size and twist into the other loop.</p>
	<p>Take a second balloon and blow it up to its full length. Slip the ends of the new balloon through the loops of the first balloon. Should look like the picture.</p>		<p>Twist 1/2" bubble on each end of the balloon and then twist these bubbles together</p>

# BALLOON Books

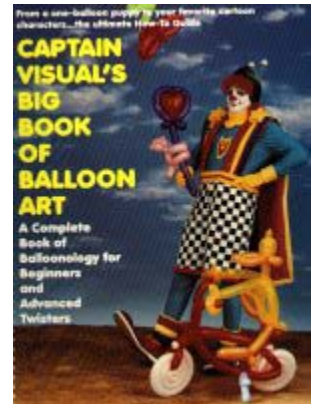
Here is the selection of books on balloon sculpting.

Go to your local shops to find the one that better suits your level. But you can also click on the covers below to have some comments from online shop customers.

This is the best book to learn balloon sculpting!

Not only will you find easy-to-follow drawings, but you'll also quickly create multiple balloon sculptures.

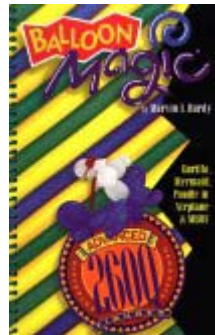
Note that a second book exists "big book of **Holiday** balloon art" if you need some more sculptures.



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Two great books written by Marvin Hardy.

Might not be the best book for beginners but the black & white photos will help you to create the sculptures. There are basic sculptures as well as new techniques which will help you become a great balloonier

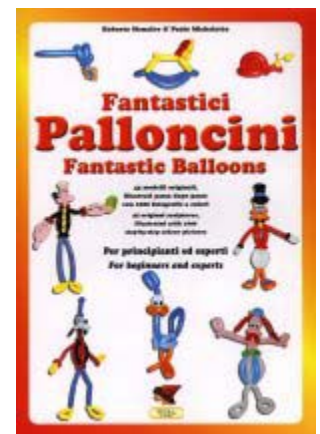


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You love Disney's characters? Then this book is for you!

The balloon techniques are quickly explained before making big sculptures of well known characters.

Instead of writing text instructions, the author preferred to use lots of color photos with only a short comment (English + Italian).



# BALLOON LINKS

Okay, you need more photos & more instructions to become a great balloon artist. Here is some great web links:

## → BalloonHQ, The #1 reference in balloon sculpting.

- a complete guide on ballooning created from thousands of professional artists messages
- a discussion list where you'll be able to ask any questions on balloon sculpting
- a huge photo section

[www.balloonhq.com](http://www.balloonhq.com)

## → Balloon Hat.com

See what happens when two guys travel to different places in the world to make balloon hats for people and take photos of them. Great source for ideas.

[www.balloonhat.com](http://www.balloonhat.com)

## → Pam's Place

Online pics and instructions for a variety if animals.

[www.angelfire.com/hi3/PamsPlace/balloons/balloons.html](http://www.angelfire.com/hi3/PamsPlace/balloons/balloons.html)

## → Magical Balloon-Dude Dale is a Master Balloonist

Features a Kids Stuff Section with instructions.

[www.mbd2.com](http://www.mbd2.com)

## → Multihobbies - Marvelous Balloons

Where many of the photo instructions in this packet came from.

[www.multihobbies.com](http://www.multihobbies.com)

## → Twist-em-Up

"Creating custom aprons, bags, and accessories for Clowns, Twisters, and Decorators..."

[www.twistemup.com/product.htm](http://www.twistemup.com/product.htm)

## → T. Myers Magic, Inc -

Specializes in balloons, pumps, supplies for face painting, and clowning.

[www.tmyers.com](http://www.tmyers.com)