

THE BOOK OF -COSPLAY MOTIVATION-

HOW TO REACH YOUR GOALS

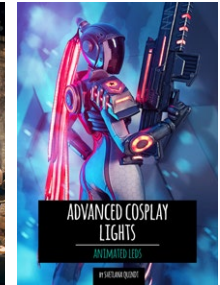
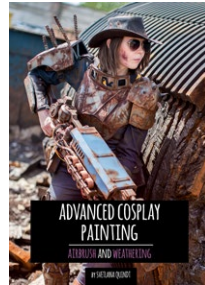


BY SVETLANA QUINDT

GO MAKE SOMETHING!

Please visit my website and check out my other books and patterns:

www.kamucosplay.com/books



In my previous books I showed you all kinds of different techniques and ways to bring your favorite characters to life. You learned how to work with Worbla or foam and how to use your new skills to build amazing armors and props. My books guided you through soldering and programming LEDs and showed you how to paint with airbrush and acrylics. I did my best to share everything I know about photography, 3D printing and sewing, and I truly hope it helped you on your journey!

This book, however, is a bit different. No crafting, no tutorials and no techniques. Scary, I know! In this volume I want to give you some tools for your mind instead of your hands. You can surely place all of your skill points into craftsmanship and agility, but it's also a good idea to keep some for stamina and charisma, right? So in the upcoming chapters I want to boost your motivation, buff your endurance and strengthen your focus!

No matter if you're a beginner or a pro, every artist struggles with creative blocks, lack of motivation, or maybe even a burnout. We also have to fight with harsh critique from strangers, our own perfectionism or just by being a public person on the Internet. It's difficult to always be creative and deliver new content on a regular basis, especially while also handling a full-time job, family duties and a very limited budget at the same time. I have been doing cosplay for almost two decades now, and I experienced all of those struggles as well. Being an artist is not easy!

Over the time however, I was able to pick up a few tricks that helped me deal with my own lack of motivation that pushed me through more than just a few artist blocks. I also figured out a way that helps me keep my creative mind fit, and lets me enjoy my beloved craft a little bit more every day.

So with this book I thought it would be a good time to give you, my fellow crafters and content creators, some tips on how to stay motivated during your projects, how to deal with insecurities, and especially how to be *and stay* a happy, healthy and successful artist!

This book can also be applied towards different types of art, including painting, writing, sculpting or, like in my case, cosplay. Creative minds can shine very bright, but they also tend to run out of fuel quicker. So while it's important to push yourself, it's also equally important to recover and recharge your batteries. Mastering this balance is part of the adventure, and I hope we can all enjoy this journey together!

One last note: This volume is very loosely based on my "[Getting Started with Cosplay](#)" book, so I don't expect you to be a complete beginner anymore. If you're looking for guidance to take your first baby steps into cosplay and costume making, this previous volume would be my reading recommendation!

But now let's dive in!



ABOUT KAMUI COSPLAY

We're Svetlana and Benni aka Kamui Cosplay. We create instructional books, video tutorials, armor patterns and hold panels at conventions all around the globe to help others get into cosplay, replica and costume construction. Cosplay is our life, our job and our passion.

We really hope this book will help you on your journey!

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Everyone starts small!

I think it's important to remember this. I obviously don't know you, my dear reader, but most of us don't start as master artists from the beginning of our journey – at least I didn't. My first costume was crappy and so were many more which followed afterwards. I picked all the wrong fabrics, my cosplays were held together by safety pins and when you saw my wig, you would think there was a dead weasel on my head. I literally had no idea what I was doing and just threw random materials together; hoping a wearable costume would come out at the end.



My second costume 2003



One of my latest costumes

Compared to my recent projects, my first costumes were quite underwhelming. However, time changes everything. The more I crafted and created, the less crappy my work turned out. I'm still far from where I want to be with my skills, but now, with 18 years of experience, I think I can write down some of the things I learned along the way. It might help you avoid many of the mistakes I made. Cosplay, and pretty much every other art, is a journey on a rocky road. You will fail, you'll make mistakes, and yes, your work will look like crap at first. Developing a skill does not happen over night and can often take years. It requires time, practice and stamina.

Just imagine you have to draw my corgi Zelda. Your first try will probably have a weird shape, deformed legs and wouldn't really look cute. Don't let this stop you! Look at your results, try to figure out what went wrong and do it again, then again, and again. Your 20th corgi will definitely look better than the first one. Just imagine your glorious dog drawing skills after you did this 1,000 times. This is what I mean when I say you need stamina: Do something 100 times and you will get better at it. That's a law of nature. You just need to decide if you are passionate enough to learn a new skill. You *will* achieve it, as long as you don't give up.

Getting through this process can be incredibly hard though, especially in the cosplay community. On social media we're constantly surrounded by these wonderful artists with their flawless costumes, their perfect makeup and their gorgeous photos. Will you ever reach their level? How long will it take? Is it even worth trying? What if you just don't have what it takes, or lack the time and money to even give it a shot?



What you don't see:
I bought the bodysuit, the gun was made with an expensive laser cutter, Benni painted almost all of it.



What you don't see:
I had to sew the skirt three times and also struggled a lot on comparably really easy fabric parts.

What's behind the glamour?

One thought that will help you stay focused is that the main difference between you and those cosplayers is probably either of those reasons: They have been doing this a lot longer than you, or they had very different starting conditions. Most artists on the Internet won't mention for how long they have been practicing, which pieces they commissioned, which support they got from friends and family or their struggles and fails during a project. Most of what people post online shows their accomplishments and the work they are most proud of. They surely don't want to talk about the pieces they don't like or gave up on. It's only natural that most artists hide their older, less appealing projects from the world.

While this behavior is understandable, I'm afraid it creates an unrealistic expectation for beginners and for those with low self-confidence. The Internet can make us believe that being "perfect" is the goal and that we should feel bad for not being able to achieve it. I've cosplayed now for almost 20 years and still fall for these false expectations from time to time.

My sewing skills are still just mediocre, I'm bad at wig styling and Benni often does the paint jobs for my armors and props. I need a lot of help, mess up the most easy tasks and I get frustrated by my own incompetence. Yes, even after 18 years, I still struggle, but I'm confident that I will get better at some point. It's just important not to give up!

At the end of the day, messing things up is just part of the journey in becoming good at something. Ultimately it's what makes this adventure so meaningful! You lose, reload, try again and again, eventually win and level up!

It doesn't help to compare yourself to others and ask why you fail here and there. A better way to spend your time is to search for inspiration and to set yourself achievable goals. Looking at the work of others can be the spark you need to try out a new technique and begin practicing a new skill. If you mess something up, keep on trying and learn

from your mistakes. You'll improve over time and might even surpass your idols at some point. I personally prefer extra challenging projects, since I know they will be the most valuable for my own journey. Plus, if you set yourself very ambitious goals, achieving only half of them is not a failure but still a huge success. Yes, I will mess things up, but that's fine. Easy wins won't teach you much, but a project where you have no idea where to even begin, might open up a door to a new, wonderful world full of exciting crafting techniques and unknown materials. You'll be surprised at what you can accomplish!

NOTE

Aloy's Shadow Stalwart armor from Horizon Zero Dawn was one of the most challenging projects for Benni and I. While I did all the sewing parts, Benni had to create every single armor piece in a 3D program, then 3D print, prime and paint it. He just started 3D sculpting and I was also pretty scared to sew something as complicated as Aloy's outfit. We both had no idea what we were doing. In total we worked 3 months on this project and failed quite a lot. Plenty of pieces had to be redone several times and we highly underestimated the difficulty level. Still, we didn't give up and kept on fighting even when we were tired and frustrated. Pushing through a tough project, *especially* when you feel like giving up, will help you grow the most.



We all have our own reasons for cosplaying.

However, everyone has a different background and what's important to me, doesn't necessarily mean anything to you.

Finding out what truly drives you may be the key in figuring out what your biggest motivations are to finish your projects!

What do you *truly* desire?

There are plenty of reasons to push yourself harder, to keep on fighting, and to accomplish your goals. Maybe you really want to bring a certain character to life, improve your skills, do a cool photo shoot or simply want to have a good time with your friends. Figuring out what truly drives you can become a long-lasting motivational boost. So, let's find out together!

When I first got into cosplay, my parents weren't really fond of my newfound hobby and called it a waste of time. I always dreamt of becoming a full time artist, but my career choice didn't line up with their understanding of a valuable, successful, and especially well paying job. We moved from Uzbekistan to Germany when I was only 5 years old. My parents sold all of their personal belongings just to afford the train and plane tickets. They were left with nothing except the dream for a better life so far away from our old home. It would be up to me now to use all these new opportunities they never had. My parents wanted me to be great at school, get a diploma in a highly respected field, and to find a well-paying job. I was supposed to become an engineer or a banker. Following my silly dreams and making a living from creating costumes was pretty much the exact opposite of what they had in mind for me. While I listened to my parents and tried to do my best at school and uni, I still wanted to prove them wrong one day. Generating a stable income through my art was always my clear goal and I never gave up fighting for this silly dream. Now, many years later, when I indeed became a self-employed artist and found a way to generate an income with my art, money is still an important evidence of my personal success for me.

It might sound weird to some people, but for me, personally, my art is most meaningful to me when it provides me with a good life and pays my bills. While I obviously wouldn't do it if I didn't enjoy it so immensely, I also don't know if I would be able to keep pushing my limits if my passion wouldn't pay for my expenses at this point. My childhood was strongly influenced by this goal and therefore I still can't let it go.

Success, however, means something different to everyone. Finding its true meaning for yourself can become a massive motivation to continue on this journey. Did you ever think about what you *really* want to achieve with your art? Is there some goal you want to work towards? Something that you want to accomplish in the next 5-10 years? Do you maybe even already have a clear ambition that keeps you going every day?





My own motivation has kept me busy for almost 20 years now. I always want to try out new techniques, want to learn new skills, and try to think outside the box. I probably also still do some of it to impress my parents. At the same time, I don't think I will ever reach the point where I'm completely satisfied with my achievements. Instead, I want to see how far I can push it. I have a strong and consistent desire to improve, to always go one step further, and to never give up. I'm always excited for the next day and full of energy every morning (mostly to my husband Benni's demise, haha). My professional career gives me endless motivation and I hope that you can find something that drives you just as much.

Sadly I can't really help you to find your own personal goal. Maybe you want to prove people wrong. Maybe a character means so much to you that you just HAVE to make the costume. It honestly doesn't really matter what your motivation is, it just needs to get you more excited than the other activities fighting for your attention. I for example, love playing video games. However, the urge to finish my costumes and get new products into my shop is much stronger, so that's what I end up spending most of my time on. It's also a goal that's never *really* fulfilled, so even after I finish a project, I can easily hop onto the next one. I try a lot and I fail a lot but every step brings me a little bit closer. I still remember the time when it was a huge achievement for me to

create resin gemstones with LEDs inside and sell them on Etsy. It was one of the first times I ever earned money with something I made with my hands. I was on the right track! Find a goal that is clear and tangible and you will never lack motivation. It can be something that makes you happy or proud. Maybe it's a new skill you always wanted to learn and that will force you to step out of your comfort zone. Maybe you want spend more time with your family and craft together, or maybe you want to work for a movie production one day. Try to find something that's worth fighting for. Try to find the spark that makes you happy and excited for the future. Finding it may take a while, but it will motivate you to wake up early and start crafting every single day!



Remember: You are not alone!

Cosplay is not only a hobby but also a colorful lifestyle that connects like minded people all over the world. Friendships are made on social media and conventions provide gathering hubs to bring all of us together. The community is incredibly supportive and inspiring. Being a part of it can be the biggest drive to tackle even the most insane projects!

I joined the online cosplay community quite early. Around 2007 I created my first online account on [cosplay.com](#), set up my Facebook page in 2009, my YouTube channel in 2010, my Instagram in 2013 and finally TikTok in 2021. Initially I was just looking for a place to share ideas, since locally I only had few like minded friends. But after spending some time with the online crafting gang, I was surprised to find some true companions. Following plenty of other artists myself, it now feels like second nature to take progress pics of my own projects, upload tutorials, organize meet-ups and record goofy videos with stupid inside jokes. As a cosplayer the world wide web became my second home, even if it is hard to meet online friends in person. I often saved all my money to visit international

fan gatherings and conventions just like BlizzCon and attended plenty of local events all over Europe. Visiting these events and meeting new friends and artists was always incredibly motivational and eye opening. Those new allies can give you a completely different view on an issue that you were stuck with and can help you with ideas you would never have considered. Building up such a network of creative minds and becoming part of a community is not only super fun, but can also be really helpful for all kind of challenges you may encounter - no matter if these are crafting questions, emotional support or just finding a great place to hang out during a convention.

NOTE

A great place to find crafting help and like minded cosplay friends is the Kamui Cosplay Community on Facebook! It's an amazing group of passionate crafters who support and cheer for each other. So if you have questions regarding any materials, tools, techniques or simply want to meet some cool people online, you are very welcome to join our group:

[facebook.com/groups/
kamuicosplaycommunity](https://www.facebook.com/groups/kamuicosplaycommunity)

Social media connects

While I totally understand why some people don't want to show their work online, for me, social media is just as important to cosplay as hot glue. Yes, there are trolls and other stupid people who leave hurtful comments, but 99% of the community is friendly and supportive. I personally follow hundreds of international crafters and artists and I am always blown away by their astonishing work every day. Their tutorials surprise and inspire me, their creations motivate me to push myself further and their stories of personal struggles show me that it's okay to mess up too. I obviously also feed my own social media accounts almost daily and am super thankful for every lovely comment or encouragement I get. It fills me with joy to see that so many people are interested in what I do and appreciate what I share with them. It's absolutely amazing that we can build communities with people from every corner of the world, no matter their culture,

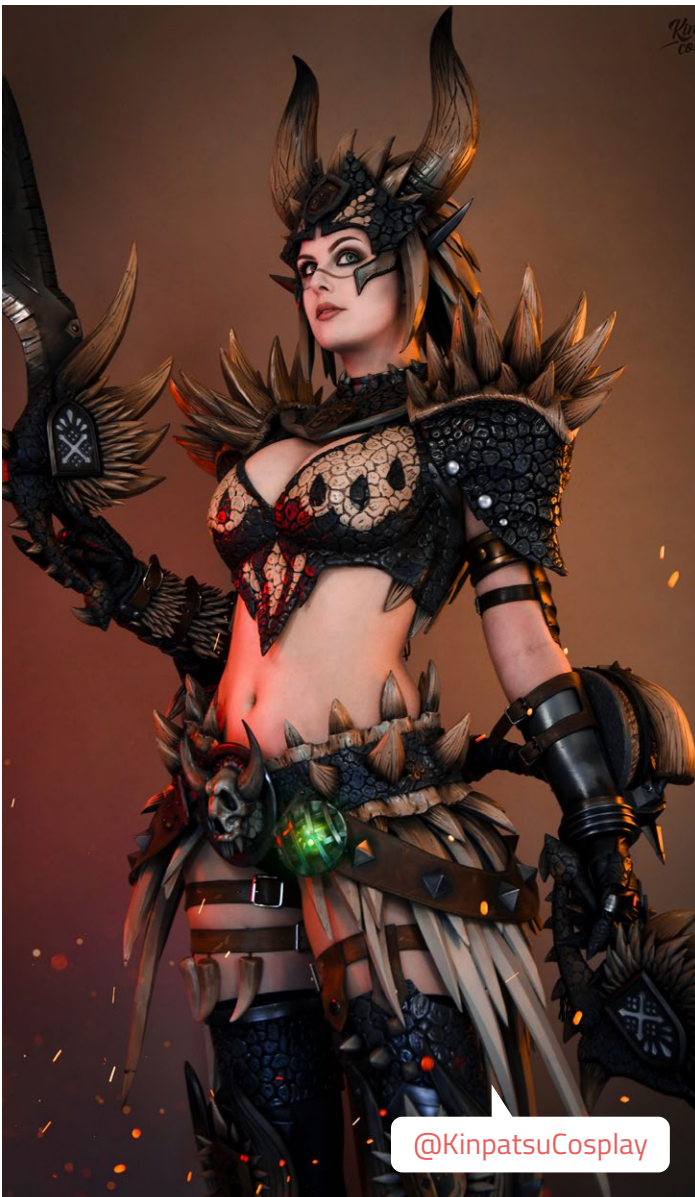
gender identity or religion. Cosplay connects people from all walks of life and I'm thankful that the Internet makes all of that possible.

While I could only connect with my peers at conventions in my early days, it feels just so much more rewarding to do this online now. For me, the digital cosplay community has become such an impactful motivator that I don't feel the need to wear my costumes at conventions anymore! These days, I enjoy creating the costume at home in my cozy crafting cave and interacting with people online more. And then, when I do hang out with my friends in person, we do this much more comfortably without costumes.

This is just my own personal opinion though. After 18 years of cosplay and conventions I might have become too old for this whole dressing-up at 5am in the morning game! Ah to be young again!

NOTE

My Nergigante armor from Monster Hunter was one of my largest projects ever. My friend Tayla from Kinpatsu Cosplay actually worked on a different Nergigante costume just at the same time. We really enjoyed following each other's progress, exchanged tips and tricks and boosted ourselves with compliments daily. The community cheered for both of us and our ongoing support not only motivated us during our projects, but also showed that making the same costume and lifting each other up is extremely motivational and fun!



@KinpatsuCosplay



Don't mind the numbers

I admit I wasn't huge fan of social media in the early days. Yeah, I am old enough to have seen a world where social media didn't exist yet. Back then the world was a barbaric and uncivilized place! However after some time I decided to jump into the cold water and registered an account on all the cool kid's platforms - which in hindsight turned out to be a good decision!

However, I get the feeling that too many people tie their self-esteem to their social media profiles. Your follower numbers honestly don't matter all that much. Sure it's nice to see that so many people "follow" your work, but the real human interactions you have with your community are what's really valuable. Having experienced a time before *anyone* had *any* followers, I know that you can also do cosplay just for the sake of it. Social media algorithms constantly change and trying to chase trends to grow your channels won't make you more happy or motivated to work on your projects. In fact, trying to feed your social media beasts can actually turn out to be the tipping point that finally drives all the joy out of your once loved hobby. So don't let that happen!

The people who love and support you through your social media channels are much more important than any surface level follower count. Some of your followers might become close friends or supportive allies on your page. You'll be thankful for their helpful advice, their fights against trolls and their uplifting messages on bad days. Their kind comments can clearly make a difference and can be just the motivational boost you need to finish a challenging project. Being an artist and a public figure isn't easy, but a kind and supportive community can make all the difference.



You can do it!
I believe in you!

DM me up if you
want to talk!

I would love to
meet up!

Hey I'm at this
convention too!

You want to join
our group chat?

You want to
cosplay together?

I have some
material left over!

I love your work!



Local maker spaces & mini conventions

It doesn't only have to be social media though! Cosplay has become so mainstream that local crafting clubs popped up everywhere – maybe even in your area! In my hometown there is a club with a public crafting space for around 50 members and schools or libraries often offer courses. You would be surprised what and who you can find if you just start looking!

Many smaller towns even have their own mini conventions! I already attended these events in my hometown 18 years ago and met my husband Benni and a few other new friends there. It does not matter if you are an introvert or an extrovert, there are plenty of ways to find access to the cosplay community. Leaving your comfort zone and opening up might be quite challenging at the beginning, but I promise, it's worth the effort! It felt weird to me as well! Over the years though I made so many passionate and inspiring friends that I am incredibly happy I took this step. Cosplay is already awesome on its own, but I think being part of a creative and supportive community pushes the hobby to a whole new level.

Especially for kids and teenagers, who don't really know where they belong yet, these places provide a great emotional support and something they can hold on to. Cosplay helped me during some of my most difficult years in my life and I'm sure it can do the same for you!

NOTE

One of my biggest emotional supports in my early cosplay years was my cosplay partner Selina. We both played the same video games like World of Warcraft or Diablo or watched TV shows like Warrior Princess Xena. In addition we were also both passionate crafters and even participated in many cosplay contests together. It helped a lot to get a kick in the booty from your best friend to finish a costume and sharing materials and tools saved us both a lot of money. Find a reliable partner and cosplay instantly becomes twice as fun!

Don't chase trends - be persistent!

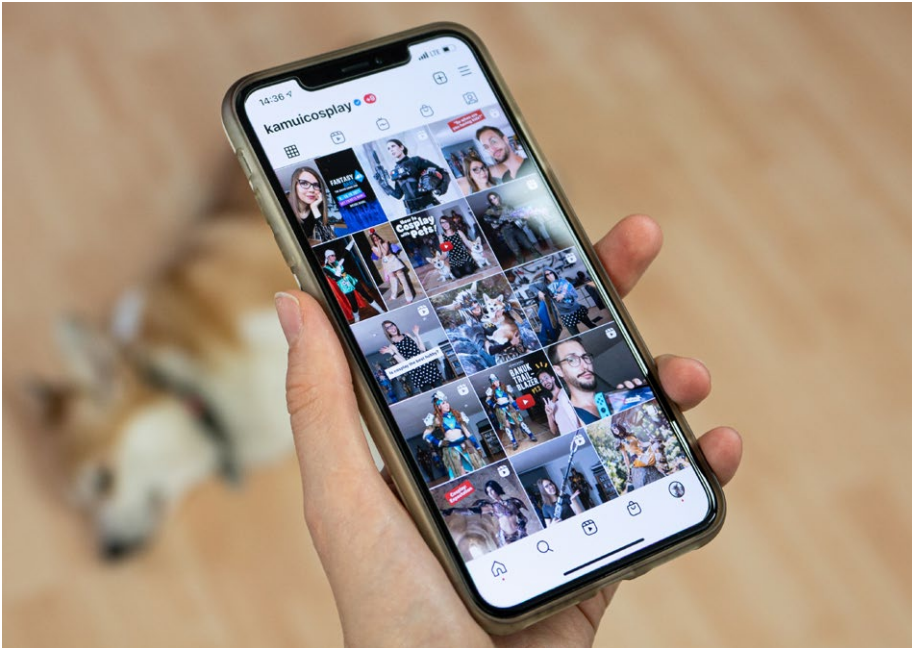
Creating popular content can surely help to build up a large following. It can be a trending character from a game or anime, a cool design from a recent trailer or a fresh new Netflix show. Personally, I am mostly too late to these parties or don't attend them at all, haha. Because I have been doing cosplay for a long time now, its simply too exhausting to try and keep up with the latest trends and put all my energy into trying to go viral.

Sure, it feels great to get your work shared on the Internet by thousands of people, but you can never really force it. If you try to chase this too hard, you might end up putting a lot of effort into something you don't even enjoy doing anymore. In addition, the opinions of other people regarding your work will suddenly become more important than your own fun and enjoyment. So for me this kind of motivation doesn't really work out.

Instead of fighting to get your 15 minutes of Internet fame, I think it's far more effective to just do what you love but be persistent in it. I post quite regularly for over 10 years now and some of my stuff also went viral. However, most of these projects weren't super trendy or popular at the time, but simply interesting builds with lights, special effects and just a lot of dedicated craftsmanship. I try to tell "crafting stories" and really show how I make my costumes from the very beginning. Everything from the first sketches, to my material choices and finally about how to turn everything into a wearable outfit. People who follow my page seem to really enjoy seeing how everything comes together and love to talk about materials and techniques. My character choices aren't really the main focus and my work mostly gets shared because of all the intense skills that were involved to create those elaborate costumes.

My Demonic Brigitte, which you will see later in this book, was shared all over the place, despite being based off a fan-art. In addition to that, my Protoss Wizard which won the Blizzcon grand prize in 2013, also got viral despite the fact that the design did not even exist in the Blizzard universes. I simply document my crafting adventures daily, and every now and then some of the content I post receives a high engagement. Due to this consistency, my average reach kept growing and more people became interested in what I do. Not all of these posts became viral; it's because I was persistent, and thats the key! I prefer to keep everything chill and don't like to put a lot of pressure on myself. This definitely helps me to keep cosplay fun and gives me a lot of energy to stay motivated throughout long projects.





Do you *really* need social media?

Working on costumes all day *and* feeding your social media channels at the same time seems like a lot of work, right? Do you really need it? I think, if you just want to do it for fun and keep it as a hobby, then that's a clear "no". But if you really want to push your art to the next level, it's kind of a must nowadays. I had so many awesome opportunities opened up to me simply because I spend a lot of time on all of these platforms. It's not "just" finding new friends and getting motivational boosts either. I got plenty of commission requests and business offers from awesome gaming companies like Blizzard, Riot, EA and SquareEnix and was invited to speak at events and conventions worldwide. These companies would not have known I even existed without me putting my name and work out there for people to see.

And even if the business opportunities do not come flying in right from the beginning, many social media platforms offer various options to monetize your own content. If you keep your eyes open and be smart about it, you can use these to build up a steady passive income and pay your bills without ever having to leave your house.

So while you don't need to use social media to have a good time cosplaying or to become a skilled artist, it *will* offer you a lot in return if you decide to put in the effort. Ultimately it's your decision to make.



NOTE

One of the most awesome jobs I got through cosplay as a student, was a part-time job playing trading cards as a raid boss. Yeah, you read that right! I was paid to create my own costumes and battle against players at official tournaments of the World of Warcraft Trading Card game all over Europe. Benni joined me as an official event photographer and together we traveled for a few years to some amazing cities like Rome, Paris and London. We spent a great time with the players and organizers and were well paid for doing all of that. Cosplay can open up plenty of opportunities and social media is an incredible amplifier to find them.

No need to hide!

I know it's probably scary, but your audience would love to meet the person behind your art! Instead of just filming your working table and showing only your art and your hands, letting people see you as a person can give your self-confidence a huge boost. No, this doesn't mean you have to start doing vlogs, share photos of all your meals or that you need to fill up your feed with selfies. However, discovering the artist behind the work can make your art far more relatable and personal. My community totally loves to hear why I choose a specific costume, what kind of struggles I had during a project, or simply which games or movies I enjoy during my free time. While my channels are obviously focused on cosplay and crafting, I also show myself often without make-up in videos, do little silly skits or share some everyday photos out of cosplay. My husband Benni, as well as my dogs Zelda and Midna also show up constantly and people always love when they take the spotlight.

I'm goofy, a bit weird and very passionate about my art. Some of my followers even say they read my posts in my voice which I think is very funny! At the end of the day, this helps to connect my art to me as a person, and makes my work and my struggles much more relatable. I'm still not really comfortable sharing too much about my private life, but just offering this glimpse definitely makes my channels more fun to follow and the same goes for you. It's always more interesting to know who made the artwork than just seeing a finished picture without context. I want people to see me as a real person with love and passion, but also as someone who makes mistakes and might mess something up.

Opening up to strangers online is a very personal decision though. Some artists prefer to let their art speak for itself, while others almost run their own reality show on social media. It's super important to figure out what you want to do and not to simply copy others. It's up to you how much personality you want to show and it's totally optional, just like the use of social media in general. While it's still difficult for me, opening up a bit helped me grow my online community which is very supportive, motivational and inspiring. In addition, I don't feel the pressure to constantly post new creative content. It's also fine to start interesting discussions, fill up my feed with leisure activities or post my corgis from time to time. It just makes posting on social media much more enjoyable.





NOTE

Cosplay doesn't mean you always have to dress up as a specific character, create a massive armor, or put a lot of work into a self-made costume. It's totally fine to just buy something, design your own character or take a different approach on an existing one! That's how my Hipster Aloy was born! I love Aloy, but I wanted a chill convention costume without the need to wear a huge armor and weapons. So I bought some color matching clothes and created my very own version of her: As a modern climate activist and with two cute corgis as her pets!

Don't look for excuses, but opportunities!

I cannot mention often enough how much cosplay means to me! What I probably like the most, is that it doesn't need to stop with creating cool costumes and taking pretty photos. In fact, getting into cosplay, or learning any other similar artistic skill, can become a life-changing event that might change your life path into a direction you could not have imagined before.

I often get comments like "I wish I would have the money for cosplay", "I don't have time to craft" or "I'm not that talented". There are plenty of people who are clearly interested in a hobby, but are mostly searching for excuses why they can't do this or that. It seems to be easier to argue why something won't work instead of actually trying to make it happen. Sure, cosplay requires resources like time and money, but there are even kids making costumes out of cardboard and duct tape!

Same goes for those who think you need a "god given talent" to create any kind of art, no matter if it's cosplay, painting, writing or music. As Bob Ross already said "Talent is pursued interest. Anything that you are willing to practice, you can do." It's true. I was not born with a hot glue gun and scissors in my hands and my first costumes were mediocre at best. In addition, there are actually people who lost their hands or never had any. I doubt many people would argue that "they had god given talent". Still, they are able to create the most stunning pieces of art! If they can do it, you can surely do it as well! You just need the will-power to make it happen! Finally making up your mind and overcoming your own doubts and fears is probably one of the hardest things anyone can do in their life, but it will be far, FAR more rewarding than you could have ever imagined.

So, instead of focusing on things you *can't* do and what things you *don't* have, try to change your mindset and think the other way around. What do you actually already have and how can you make the best out of it? Plenty of people are getting started with cosplay by making costumes out of thrift store clothes and even old blankets. Maybe your parents are into electronics and wood working and can help you with a really cool prop. Or you have some friends who are into Magic the Gathering and have tons of old cards they don't need anymore. How about making a truly epic armor out of trading cards? I mean it. Anything is possible if you just set your mind to it!

I do not have any talent!

I was born without skills!

I can't afford the tools!

I have no time to make art!

I tried it once but it didn't work!

I live in a poor country!

I don't have space for crafting!

There is no school for this in my area!

The materials are too expensive!

I'm afraid to fail!

My parents don't support me!

Other people will laugh at me!



When I got into cosplay in 2003, it started as a geeky little hobby. However, over the years it became a life style, my job and my drive to wake up early every day. It taught me not to be scared of challenges and try out things I never knew I could do before. I learned new skills like sewing, sculpting, electronics, painting and so much more. For example, I barely passed my English exam in high school, but cosplay forced me to improve my language skills – otherwise I could never talk to all those amazing cosplayers I already followed online! After not being able to understand anyone at my first US convention back in 2009, I began writing tutorials in English myself, joined crafting forums and slowly improved my grammar and vocabulary. Nowadays I am fine to speak freely in front of a camera, give live talks in front of hundreds of people at conventions and now finished book number 16, which you're reading right now – all in quite understandable English - I hope!

I speak Russian (my mothers language), German (my native language) and now English (my cosplay language). I'm pretty sure that I will also add Japanese to this list one day. By having the confidence to talk with strangers (which is also a helpful cosplay skill by the way), learning a new language will be quite the adventure.

Which other hobbies can motivate you to learn so many valuable skills so quickly?

NOTE

Alexstrasza was one of my biggest cosplay challenges! She was actually one of the costumes I needed to wear for my job at the World of Warcraft Trading Card game. My previous costumes were all very "conservative" and I never really showed much skin before. Alexstrasza however was my very first "real cosplay job" and I obviously couldn't pass up this unique job opportunity. So even though I felt uncomfortable, I made the costume and finally wore it in public at one of the official WoW TCG tournaments. Being so exposed felt incredibly weird at the beginning, but the longer I was in costume, and the more events I attended, the less I cared about what others thought about my outfit. My doubts disappeared and the whole experience gave me a massive self-confidence boost. I cared so little that I actually began to like sexy and revealing costumes and still love doing bikini armor costumes up to this day. Alexstrasza is clearly one of the costumes that shaped my personality the most and I'm still super proud I managed that!

Cosplay changed my life

Self-confidence is also clearly an ability cosplay can help with, at least in my case. I was often bullied in school, running presentations in front of my class was pure torture and I often wished I would be invisible. Jumping around in a colorful costume during a crowded convention floor is pretty much the opposite of this though. The idea of dressing up, especially in public, clearly wasn't my idea of "fun" at the beginning. However, when I visited my very first convention, it took only a few moments to feel at home in this weird and strange, but also somehow familiar and welcoming place. Everyone was so kind and open that it suddenly felt okay to be seen. I began running panels in front of small, but quickly growing audiences, performed elaborate skits for cosplay contests and was able to finally open myself up. The cosplay community helped me so

much that I was able to keep this newly discovered self-confidence even outside of conventions. I had far less trouble doing presentations at my university, could more easily interact with classmates and teachers and had no fear during job interviews. Last but not least, it was child's play to get my first full time job just before I canceled it again to become self-employed. With cosplay I understood that learning a new skill is just a matter of time. It was okay to make mistakes and have flaws. With cosplay I became a strong, capable woman who can reach everything I want if I only fight hard enough to get to my goal. If I am able to create an amazing looking armor just from plain foam mats, some glue and paint, then learning anything else would also just be a matter of time!

I could actually mention plenty of other cosplay related achievements, but I think you already get my point. Cosplay can be so much more than just a hobby. I found my meaning in life, my husband Benni, made plenty of new friendships over the years, turned my passion into a self-employed job and even got a reason to work out and keep my body fit and healthy. If you want to jump into this crafty world of wonders, it can be so much more than just spending some time and money to create a costume for a weekend. Cosplay can be a way to discover your true self and help you find happiness, fulfillment and friends.



Cosplay can be so amazing in so many ways and I'm truly thankful that I discovered this hobby.

However, it's not always all sunshine and flowers. Plenty of people also have to deal with harsh criticism, negativity and even online bullying. While I mainly want to focus on the good things in this book, I think it's also important to give you some advice and tips on how to deal with annoying comments, trolls, and especially haters.

So, let's kick some booties!

How to deal with bullying and hate

There are over 8 billion people on this planet and it's simply impossible that everyone will like your work or you as a person. And that's okay! There are plenty of ways to deal with negativity. Let me give you some tips!

Since I joined all those social media platforms in 2009 and 2010, I've experienced plenty of crap, stupidity and negativity. While I grew a thicker skin over those years, I still have my weak spots. For example, I am easily annoyed and not a fan of unsolicited advice, especially when I show work that is still in progress. Posting unfinished projects is difficult enough as it is, but it's extra frustrating when people try to give me advice for a problem I already know how to solve. I'm aware that people just want to help me and be nice, but

comments like "You should do it like this or that" often upset me. I already had quite some heated discussions about this on my socials, ha ha. I'm totally aware though that unsolicited advice is super harmless compared to what *many* other artists go through on their platforms.

I'm a young, white woman and I'm aware of my privilege. This means, I don't get any hateful comments about my race, my age or my appearance. I never experienced any homophobia or racism

and I only heard about these horrible things other artists have to deal with every day. Sure, I get some sexist nonsense here and there, but even these rare comments are usually quite harmless. So, I'm probably not the right person to give you advice about negativity and hate. Still, I want to give my best to cheer you up a bit and hope I can at least help you to get a different perspective in some of these difficult situations.

You have the wrong skin color!

You're too fat to wear this!

This doesn't fit you at all!

This looks so cheap!

You have no talent at all!

This is sooo cringe!





Communication is key!

I personally believe 95% of all negative comments are posted without any bad intentions. Just like the “crafting advice” I receive. The same goes for silly questions, or maybe comments that were published before thinking. “This part of your costume didn’t even mean any harm. This is a far better option than leaving an angry reply and maybe even start a public shit storm.” The commenting person probably didn’t even consider that your costume is already done and you deliberately chose to leave your piece like this. They might be just curious and want to be helpful, but don’t understand that comments like these can be really annoying, discouraging and hurtful. I might also often come off as rude, since English is only my third language and my German mentality doesn’t really make space for sugar coating in conversations. People who have followed me for years know that, but others might see many of my replies as nasty and passive aggressive. The Internet makes communication difficult as well, since it is limited to written words and emojis. Without seeing a person’s face or hearing their voice, it’s difficult to tell if a comment like “This is great!” is honestly positive or sarcastic.

So in the case of doubt, always do your best to stay polite in your replies, even though the comment might come off as disrespectful. If you reply in a kind way, it mostly turns out that this person did not mean any harm. This is a far better option than leaving an angry reply and maybe even start a public shit storm.

However, there are obviously also angry, dumb, and bored people in the world and it doesn’t help anyone if you try to discuss with them or give them any kind of attention. All social media platforms have functions to delete comments and ban users. It’s surely not the remedy for all negativity, but at least a good tool to filter out the biggest problems. I don’t think there is anything wrong with deleting and banning people, especially since your social media account is supposed to be a safe place for yourself and your followers. Mostly those people just want to get attention. It doesn’t help to argue with them and they are simply not worth your time and energy. So swing that ban hammer like the mighty Thor you are!

NOTE

The Grim Marrow from Outriders was one of my most challenging props ever. While I posted my progress like always, its construction was apparently so incomprehensible that I constantly got advice from strangers on how to improve it. I know, they only wanted to help me and cared about my work, but it was still unsolicited advice. I was in the middle of the process, had already planned the construction all the way through and knew exactly what I was doing. Still, some of my followers felt the constant urge to criticize my progress, especially in the early stages. You can imagine that it was incredibly annoying and I posted quite a few sarcastic and sassy comments. At the end though, the Grim Marrow turned out just the way I planned and even the critics were finally convinced.

It's not the community

It's also important to keep in mind that these trolls and haters are usually not part of our cosplay community. If you get a negative comment, it's often because social media opens up your work to people who have absolutely no clue about cosplay or fan art. They don't know you as a person, have no idea how much work and passion is involved in your creations and simply don't get the concept of dressing up as a fictional character. Many of them don't value art or creative hobbies and talk down everything they are not interested in. I already heard so often that cosplay is just a "waste of time", "cringy af" and also "doesn't make any sense or serve any purpose". And yes, really nasty comments go even further, especially if you are a person of color or if your interpretation of a certain character doesn't look exactly like the reference. Most of those commentators wouldn't say anything bad directly to your face, but the safety of the Internet gives them the feeling they can post anything without any consequences. Many of them actually apologize if you

reply to them, but some of those people simply want to see the world burn. Sadly, the Internet and social media platforms in general don't do much to stop racism, sexism, body shaming, homophobia and hate against minorities simply because outrage generates clicks and therefore money. It's just how social media is structured. In this case banning people and deleting comments is often the only solution. However, keep in mind that the vast majority of people in our community is actually super nice and supportive.

Hold on to the good things

In general, I think the Internet is just as wonderful as it can be awful sometimes. It just totally depends on where you choose to spend your time. While meme and image boards are probably some of the worst places you can stumble upon, forums or other hobby focused platforms are mostly positive. Facebook and Instagram comment sections can also quickly turn to drama. On

the other hand though they are also a big motivation to keep on working on my projects every day. Currently I'm discovering TikTok and it looks like a fun a place so far! At the end you'll find kind, but also toxic people on all of those platforms and it's almost impossible to avoid negativity in general. That's simply part of posting your work online.

It also surely helps to avoid politics or other controversial topics or at least be prepared for these discussions. At the end of the day, you simply shouldn't give negativity more attention than necessary. Instead, focus on the amazing and supportive people who follow your work and spread kindness and love yourself. The cosplay community can be truly incredible and inspiring and there is no need to waste energy on a few people who are having a bad day. I'm sure you are a wonderful and passionate person and your art and your hard work deserves to be seen, shared and admired. I personally would love to see what you will bring to life!





NOTE

My Outriders costume was a commission by SquareEnix Germany. Making the Grim Marrow as well as the outfit was an official social media campaign to promote the release of the game. It was incredibly fun to make the costume as well as the prop, even though I got quite some difficult comments during this project. Apparently some people didn't like the type of game it was. Staying professional and polite is the key to running a successful social media channel and turning your hobby into a business one day though. So no matter what kind of comments I got, I always reminded myself that plenty of people will see my replies. So I decided to reply patiently and professionally. It always turned out to be the better option in the end.

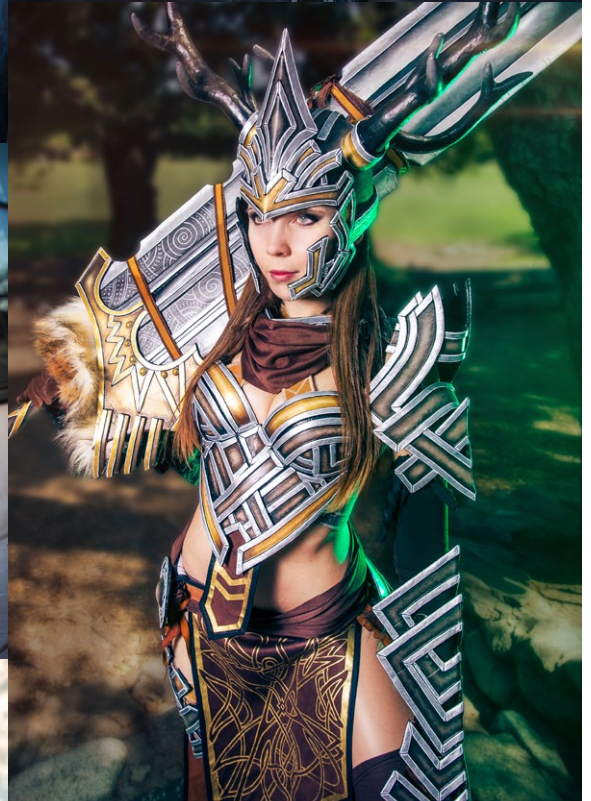
If you love something, don't do it 24/7

Hobbies are supposed to be a chill and well-deserved creative vacation from your exhausting day job. However with convention deadlines, last minute crafting sessions at night, dealing with haters and constantly pressuring yourself to get better, it can be... sometimes quite the opposite of all of that. So, how can you avoid burning out too quickly?

Personally, I think a bit of stress can be a good motivator. It's normal for most of us to work with tight schedules, manage social media, maybe run a little commission business on the side and then also somehow handle a 40 hour day job and social life at the same time. I personally only attended university and had a student part time job before I became self-employed. However making costumes at the evening after uni was still challenging. I have no idea how others handle it with far more responsibilities!

I hoped that turning my hobby into a business would actually help me here, but it turned out that having unlimited time for crafting also meant that I suddenly had no more reason to take breaks. In the first year of my self-employment I didn't have any steady income to pay my bills. So I pushed myself as far as I physically could. In my very first year as a full time cosplayer I attended 18 conventions all over the world, spent a lot of time traveling and threw out massive armor costumes in just a few days in-between those events. After an exhausting convention day I even worked on new costumes in the hotel. I barely spent any time at home anymore. While this may sound fun and exciting, I noticed far too late that it was more stress than my body and my mind could handle. I got sick, my body was filled with constant pain, and for a few days I couldn't even leave my bed anymore. Being paralyzed so suddenly and losing control over my situation felt horrible, but it was a good lesson on how to deal with stress in the future. This would not happen again.

I think the most important aspect you should remember, is that cosplay should always be exciting. The moment you feel obligated or even guilty for not being productive, this *wonderful thing* suddenly starts draining you out. You might not notice it at the beginning, but constantly pushing yourself over your limits can actually make you sick and depressed. I often hear from people who lost the love for the craft and even stopped completely since cosplay became such a duty it simply wasn't a fun hobby anymore. I was very close to this as well at my lowest point.





One solution that really helped me was getting my corgis Zelda and Midna. I walk my dogs three times a day which helps me remember to take breaks from work. They distract me from my duties and are often so needy, that I just have to stop working and give them cuddles. Now I'm also doing long hikes with my girls so they don't get bored – and I totally enjoy them as well!

Recharging your batteries multiple times a day, definitely keeps the stress away. Getting pets might obviously not be an option for you, but I think it's still important to find something that brings you joy outside of cosplay. This could be playing video games, making music, reading, working out, hiking, traveling, cooking or meeting up with friends. Find something that is equally important to you, so you don't spend all of your free time with only one hobby. I personally also really enjoy writing.

Once I finish a costume, I often begin writing a new book, a blog entry for my website, or do

wall-of-text posts on my socials. I often even jump between different projects so I am not completely overwhelmed and especially stressed by doing just one task for too long.

I also don't really work with super tight deadlines anymore. At least when I don't have to. Yes, it's super exciting to finish a new costume for a convention or photo-shoot, but it also creates artificial pressure that might end up making you hate a project. While pushing yourself towards a deadline can be extremely motivational, it can become very exhausting to finish each of your projects this way. Working for hours during the night before a con and especially at the hotel is extremely stressful and will completely ruin your fun. At the end you might be so tired, that you'll end up spending your convention day sleeping in bed instead of even dressing up in your finished costume.

While I think it's important to set yourself realistic goals, just keep in mind that nobody forces

you to reach those. It's okay to not finish something in time, to attend an event in casual clothing or even drop a costume completely. You are doing all of this for yourself and don't owe anybody anything. I also failed and canceled certain projects. I even took month long breaks from social media. After getting sick from stress years ago, I gave up trying to brute force my way to the top. I heavily reduced the amount of cons I attend in a year, and attend the ones I like without feeling obligated with wearing a costume. I also don't set stressful deadlines for my personal projects anymore. These days, I take my time and enjoy the process of creating something instead of trying to rush everything in a few weeks. I also play a lot of video games, take time off frequently and switch between different projects if I need some change. Even though cosplay is a full time job for me, I still want to keep it joyful. I think this is the only way to keep it fun for many more years. This way I might even still dress up in my 60s, who knows!

Don't make it perfect, get it done!

As an artist you are always your own worst critic. I know how it feels to have a very specific goal for your art and want to meet your own quality standards. Already at the beginning of the project, you foresee yourself in a glorious costume, perfectly crafted and presented. What happens though, if you are not able to fulfill your own lofty goals?



So what exactly happens when you set your goals so high you can barely keep up? Well, first you probably start to question your results and therefore lose motivation. Then you may begin to rebuild already finished costume pieces, stop working on it entirely or, in the worst case, even refuse to show off the final project at all. After spending so much time on it, your almost finished costume might even land in one of your crafting corners, never worn, never shown and never appreciated. You put so much time, sweat and money into it, but simply because you set your own expectations so high, you never got it done. Does any of this sound familiar to you?

I honestly think most artists struggle with this especially. They don't give up on a project because they lack skill, time or money, but because of self-confidence. They cannot meet their own expectations, begin to dislike their work and

start something new rather than trying to salvage what they've already done. Believe me, even after 18 years of crafting I struggle with this as well. I spent time redoing silly details nobody would notice and couldn't sleep because I wasn't able to find the exact right color for a wig. So often I'm close to redoing a completely finished costume and get little anxiety attacks every time someone mentions an imperfection in my creation that I OF COURSE already know about. It's like an endless fight against myself and no matter what I do, I can only lose.

While I personally will probably never overcome these inner doubts, at least I managed to control them – somewhat! Every time I start to hate something about my costume, I think about how much time and money it would cost me to fix it. Is it really *so important* to me that I should stop my current progress and do the work again? Can I maybe solve the issue with photo

editing later? Is there perhaps a compromise that would calm me down, but would require less effort? I also try to remember how awesome it will be to wear the costume and to show off all my hard work online once it's finally done. I begin to look forward to the first fitting test, the photo shoot, the making-of video and all of what goes hand in hand with finishing a big project. In addition, I also think about just chilling on the sofa, being done with crafting for a few days and having time to think about my next exciting project.

Is it worth it, just because of my own stupid quality expectations, to move all these glorious moments further into the future? At the end, the answer is mostly "nope". Being a really lazy person definitely also helps here.



While I obviously don't know if my technique will help you personally, I hope you'll find a way to overcome your own perfectionism. As I mentioned before, I think every artist has insecurities to some degree. If we wouldn't criticize our own work, we would never improve. It's important to constantly question your results and try to do it better when the next project comes around. How would your skill set look like if you thought your very first costume was already a flawless piece of art? There wouldn't be any reason to improve and you might as well just stop there. Self-critique is a massive motivation, but the key is to find the right balance between pushing yourself to improve and being too harsh.

So, if you just got into cosplay and have already started to compare yourself to all those experienced artists around you, keep this in mind: There will ALWAYS be someone who is better at cosplay than you. But who really cares? The person you're admiring probably feels the exact same way about someone else they follow. No amazing artist truly thinks they are the best. Our self-doubts however will push us to improve. Practice, patience and persistence are what make us better, but this requires time. Don't expect to meet your expectations with your first project. See your life as a journey, an adventure that constantly gives you more abilities and skill points. Just like in a video game! Accept that you'll start at level one and won't be able to beat the boss on the first try. Instead, keep on trying, gain experience points and expand your skill tree. As long as you keep on fighting you will grow from your defeats! It's all good and I am proud of you!

NOTE

My Protoss Wizard was an original character design that gave me plenty of doubts and insecurities. I'm not great at designing my own costumes, but I was so in love with the idea of this character, that I really wanted to try it. As my own worst critic though, I constantly remade parts of the costume and tried to please myself. I redid the shoulder pieces and especially the fabric part several times and drove myself completely crazy. The costume needed to be done for Blizzcon, but I was not able to stop myself from redoing parts constantly. At the end though I finally stopped questioning myself and focused on just getting it done. The convention deadline helped me to stay sane and accept that it will never be *truly* perfect. I promised myself to learn from this lesson and just make it better next time though!

Make your work profitable (if you want)

I think it's super important to understand that it's 100% cool to keep cosplay or any art that you pursue as a hobby *forever*. However, many cosplayers and prop makers out there dream about turning their passion into a business one day. That's fine as well! It doesn't need to be full-time commission work though. Just covering your material costs can already have a large motivational impact. So, let me give you some ideas!

My dream was always to make a living with my art. I was a very artistic child and even when I got into cosplay I never lost sight of this goal. Sadly there wasn't really a guide that showed me exactly how to turn my creative passion into a business though. All I could do was trying to figure out what people would like to spend their money on. I still remember, I sold custom made resin gemstones with LEDs, tried commission work for small props and accessories, offered cosplay photo prints, worked at conventions and far more. I tried out a lot, but unfortunately nothing really stuck.

While most of these ideas brought in *some* money, it simply wasn't a stable and reliable enough income to cover my bills every month.

Still, I didn't give up and kept on experimenting. Finally, after 10 years of cosplay, a friend of mine, Bill Doran from Punished Props, convinced me to publish a crafting guide including all my already existing armor making tutorials. I had a hard-drive full of images, text and tutorials and already spread a lot of it over social media. So this didn't sound like a bad idea. After so many failed attempts I didn't expect much though. I sat down and smashed out my first book with the help of Benni in only a single week. This time though something unexpected happened: "[The Book of Armor Making](#)" suddenly became a great success! The sales exploded! Just a short time later my husband Benni canceled this job so he could support me full time as well. It was crazy!

After trying so much we finally got lucky. I was already writing my next book only weeks later and also began working on digital costume patterns. Over time I also added further income streams like YouTube ad revenue, Patreon, affiliate sales, commission work, social media content monetization and much more.

I am really proud of what we achieved and I know this may sound like I am boasting, but if you put it into perspective, Benni and I only became self-employed after trying *really* hard for 10 long years! That is a lot of time.





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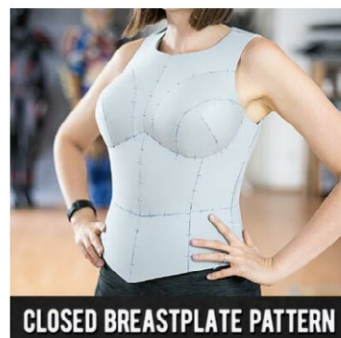


The Book of Foam Props – Lightweight & Affordable



BIKINI BREASTPLATE PATTERN

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Sure, if you're really lucky you can immediately land a cool gig or get great opportunities just handed to you, but it's not something you can force. Just waiting for success won't work out either though. You actually have to fight for it!

This means that you will fail, you will lose valuable time and money and especially might even start doubting yourself or the path you're on. Don't get discouraged though! Sure, it's very unlikely that someone with a suitcase full of money will appear at your door, but you can still lure those people closer to your house by putting up signs. Many people tell me that I was just lucky or at the right place at the right time. However, if you don't constantly try your luck, you can also never get lucky. You first have to take the risk, try out every crazy idea and do all those stupid things people will laugh at your for. Sure, most of it won't work out, but if you only search long enough, you'll find something that will lead you in the right direction.

I think if you only try long enough, success is just a matter of time. Luck only speeds up the process. Even if my first book would have failed, I'm convinced that I would have found another way another time. Back then I hated the idea of working a regular day job and giving up cosplay for a 40 hour week at the office was always my worst nightmare. Therefore I never stopped dreaming and fighting. I also still had to prove my parents and everyone else who didn't believe in me that they were wrong.

So, the most valuable tip I can give you, is to not expect success over night and to keep on fighting. There is no right or wrong way. If I can make money by telling people how much I suck at making costumes, you'll also will find a way to make your work profitable. If this is something you *really* want to achieve, then it's worth fighting for. I will be cheering for you!

NOTE

Our online shop on kamucosplay.com is our biggest success story so far. We generate most of our income through the sales on this platform. However, it took Benni and I a long time to write all the books, design all the patterns, and especially to build up the website to the quality it has right now. It was an incredible amount of work and sleepless nights, but in the end it was worth every minute we spent on it.

Finally, I think it's important to talk about you!
Yes, you! I don't know you personally and
I don't know your story, but I'm sure
you are an awesome person!

We always compare ourselves to others, search for personal flaws and tend to focus on all of those things that we failed at. However, when I think about who you might be, I don't see *any* of that. When I look at the cosplay community, I see so many wonderful, creative, and passionate people. I see stunning costumes, kindness, support and I see pure love and joy for the craft and the fandom.

It's absolutely amazing that cosplay is able to give us a welcoming home and a family that accepts us just the way we are: weird, colorful, geeky and completely insane. You are perfect the way you are. Be proud of yourself and everything you have accomplished. Make mistakes, fail, stand up and try again. That's what we cosplayers do.

Nova became a hero *after* the storm

I mentioned this costume already in plenty of my other books, like **Advanced Cosplay Lights** or the **The Book of Foam Armor**. However, I think Nova is also the perfect example to show you how I dealt with my own motivational issues. She forced me to experiment with new materials and techniques, made me fail, cry and I even almost canceled her completely. Not giving up on her was one of the best decisions ever though!



In 2015, Benni and I moved into a new studio apartment where we suddenly had enough space to get some fancy new tools like a laser cutter and a 3D printer. Back then I mainly used the thermoplastic material Worbla for my armor projects. Now however, I thought, it was finally time to get into EVA foam. Nova's Elite Agent skin required bulky armor, lights, a custom printed bodysuit and a full covering helmet with a visor. I thought she would be just perfect not only to try out our new crafting toys, but also to learn plenty of new techniques we never used before.

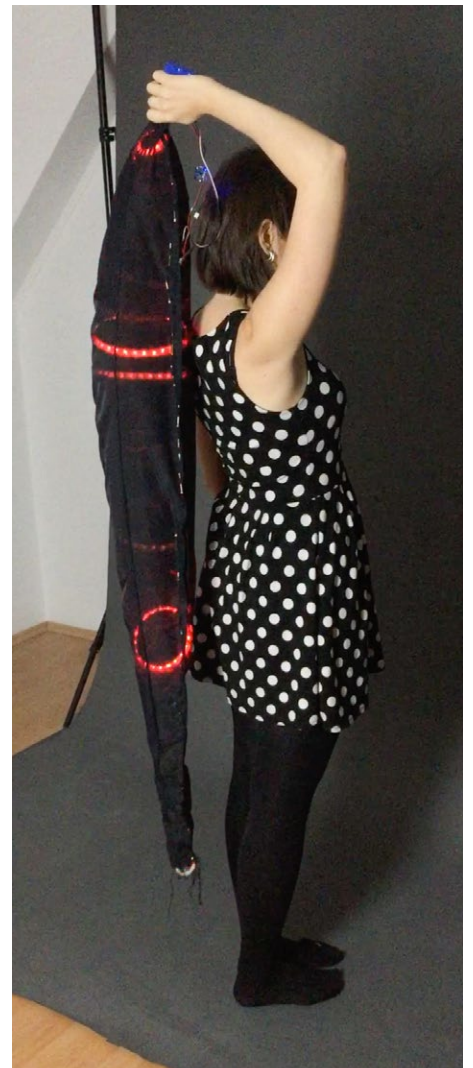
I was just as excited as I was nervous. Benni, who was responsible for the 3D printed helmet, the design of the body suit and the laser cut pieces, never did any of this before. In addition, I had no experience in working with EVA foam and figuring out the programming and installing LEDs would be incredibly challenging. And if all of that wasn't already enough, Nova's crazy lit-up ponytail was yet another costume part I didn't even want to think about. In short, we both had no idea what we were doing and just hoped we would figure all of that out – somehow! While there were some helpful guides, tutorials and resources available, it was still very difficult. Benni and I experimented and failed a lot, worked through night-shifts and BlizzCon 2015, the event Nova was planned for, was coming closer and closer.

Just before the convention, the bodysuit was finally done and we were super happy with the result. I learned in quite a short and stressful amount of time, how to work with foam, contact cement and spray primers and improved my electronic and programming skills. Yes, it was intense, but it also taught me a lot.



By that time, the foam armor was also almost completely finished and the 3D print of the helmet was mostly done. We even “vacuum-formed” a visor out of a thin acrylic sheet, just with the help of our oven in the kitchen and some blankets to protect our hands from the heat. Only the ponytail was still left. I initially chose to tackle this project mainly because of this really cool looking design element, but once everything was almost done, it slowly dawned on me that I would not be able to build the ponytail the way I wanted.

I experimented so much to get the holographic effect of the light-up hair. My setups included different arrangements of my LED strips, just with the help of our oven in the kitchen and some blankets to protect our hands from the heat. Only the ponytail was still left. I initially chose to tackle this project mainly because of this really cool looking design element, but once everything was almost done, it slowly dawned on me that I would not be able to build the ponytail the way I wanted. I experimented so much to get the holographic effect of the light-up hair. My setups included different arrangements of my LED strips, just with the help of our oven in the kitchen and some blankets to protect our hands from the heat. Only the ponytail was still left. I initially chose to tackle this project mainly because of this really cool looking design element, but once everything was almost done, it slowly dawned on me that I would not be able to build the ponytail the way I wanted. I experimented so much to get the holographic effect of the light-up hair. My setups included different arrangements of my LED strips, just with the help of our oven in the kitchen and some blankets to protect our hands from the heat. Only the ponytail was still left. I initially chose to tackle this project mainly because of this really cool looking design element, but once everything was almost done, it slowly dawned on me that I would not be able to build the ponytail the way I wanted.





Accepting defeat

It all turned out less bad than I had anticipated. Attending BlizzCon out of costume was the best decision ever! I finally had time to hang out and chill with all my international friends, enjoy the show without being stopped for photos, eat and drink like a normal person, and do so much more. In fact, I enjoyed this BlizzCon so much, that I keep my really big costumes now only for photo-shoots and began to attend conventions mostly in casual clothing. In addition, I got over Nova. The world didn't end.

Yes, it was painful, but it still helped me to grow as an artist. It showed me that I still had *a lot* to learn. Years later, I actually went back to the costume and finally felt ready to tackle her again. For this new attempt I didn't stress myself anymore and took all the time I needed to solve the last issues. I finished the armor, painted everything and even found a completely different way to create the ponytail. Instead of pushing myself to be as close to the reference as I could, I used some "artistic freedom" and made some light-up

dreadlocks instead. They turned out absolutely amazing and you cannot imagine how proud I felt after finally putting on the costume for the first time. I just wasn't ready for her in 2015. It was a good idea to let the project rest and return to it later again – without any pressure. This experience showed me that it's totally fine to fail and that I still had a lot to learn. Even the most challenging goal can be accomplished, if you just give it the time it needs! Fail, get up, try again and level up!

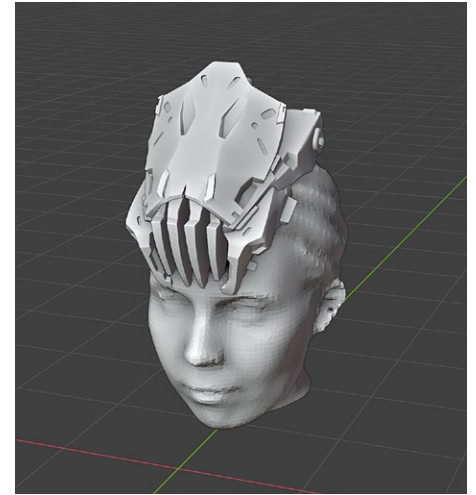
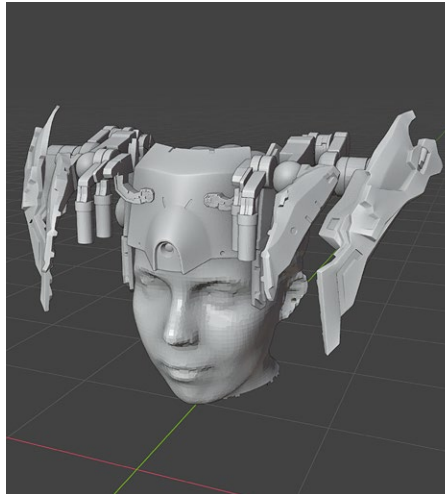
Fail, adapt and finish anyway!

My Banuk Trailblazer costume was a close collaboration with my husband. While I did all the fabric and leather work, Benni challenged himself to create the very elaborate armor pieces in 3D. This time though he might have slightly overestimated his skills.

Sometimes you are just not ready for a certain project or technique and only notice it while in the middle of the crafting process. Benni is *super* into 3D modeling and 3D printing and was especially excited about creating the headpiece of the costume. It's an incredibly complicated and intricate designs with dozens of tiny, technical looking pieces and his reference was only a few screenshots. Still, Benni gave it a go and did his very best.

I already sewed a lot of costumes in the past and used my experience to quickly get some good progress on the costume. Benni at the same time, focused on the armor. He used the free 3D modeling software Blender to sculpt the shoulders and leg armor digitally on his computer. Afterwards he then sent them over to our 3D printers to print out. However, once everything was done and only the head piece was missing, his real struggle began. He tried really hard, but his skills just weren't advanced enough yet to finish this complicated piece in time. It may look great in the image above, but there were still so many more parts missing and unfinished. This headpiece was just insane! Since this was now the only part left and I couldn't really help him anymore, we wondered how we could actually finish the project. After a while, he decided to build another but more simple headpiece and use this one for the final photo-shoot.

The resulting photos turned out amazing and Benni and I were both super proud! Yes, the original "antlers" are still not done and maybe never will be, but at the end of the day cosplay is about having fun and we clearly had a lot of it while working on this costume together. Sometimes you're just not ready yet for a certain challenge. And that's okay. It's important to be able to let it go and find a solution that makes you happy instead.



Watch the full costume video tutorial:
<https://youtu.be/-Xv9XK3ejvk>



Finishing Brigitte took me 1.5 years!

Demonic Brigitte was by far my largest, most draining and also most expensive costume in 18 years of cosplay crafting. Bringing her to life was not only a challenge physically, but also emotionally. I stretched the costume over 1.5 years of construction and had plenty of moments where I just wanted to give up. So, I thought it's the perfect project to talk about!

This version of Brigitte was based on a custom design drawn by Zach Fischer, a talented illustrator specializing in Blizzard cosplay creations. I asked him for a new concept artwork of Brigitte, a character from Overwatch, but in a Diablo themed armor set. I gave him some ideas for a few elements and he turned them into cute demon skulls, teeth, claws and an absolutely amazing armor. The result was a line art illustration and a full color front and back view. I also got a version of the artwork with and without the shield in her hand. With all of these references, I got a pretty good idea of the whole costume.

Initially, I estimated to take around half a year of work for the project. Needless to say, I already failed pretty hard at this first estimate. I did very fast progress at the beginning, but the project became more and more draining over time. While my motivation level was at 200% when I started, the costume included so many huge parts and tiny details that it quickly became exhausting to keep up this speed. Many of the armor parts needed a similar construction and doing the same work steps over and over again really deflated my excitement. In addition, I began the project in the summer. The lovely weather, some conventions and holiday trips as well as a few smaller projects in between made it very difficult to focus only on Brigitte. The costume grew and I continued to make progress, but it was quite frustrating to see my original deadline come and pass without me being significantly closer to my goal.

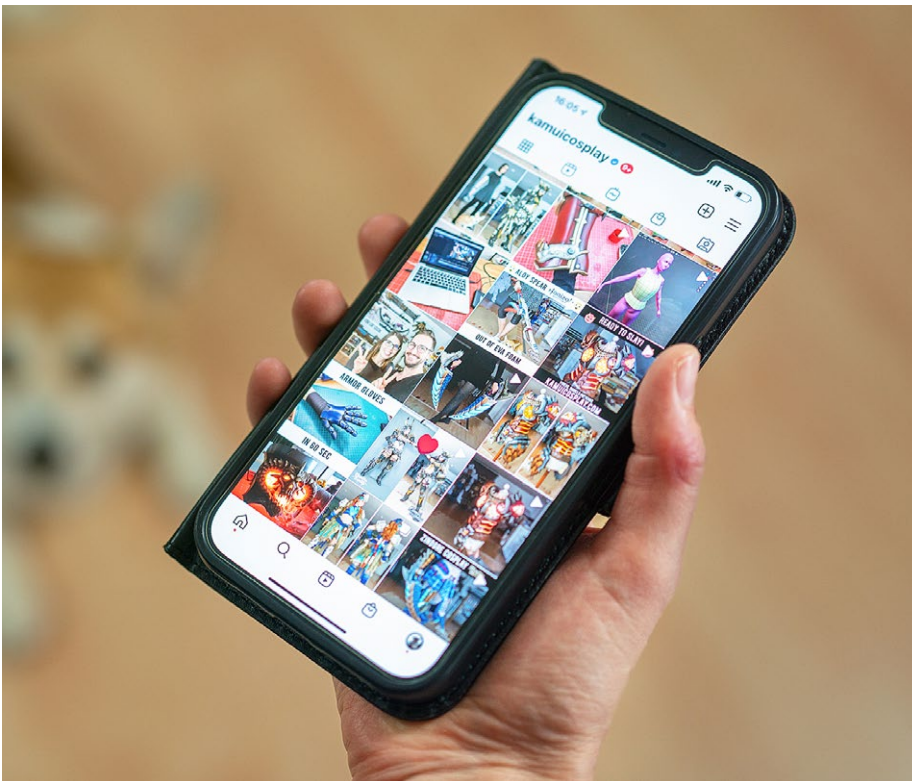


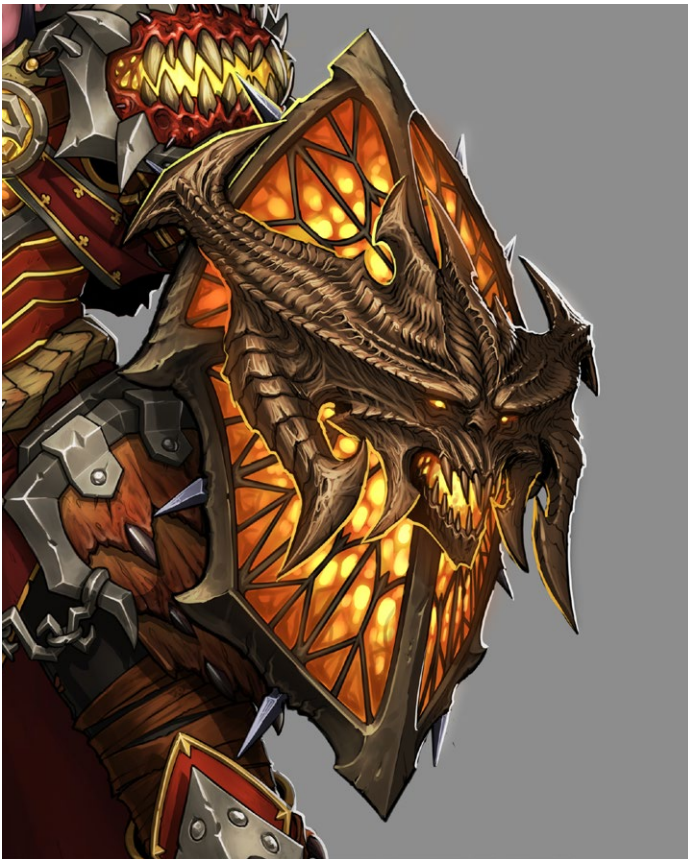
Community boost

The costume itself was also quite challenging, but really fun. I made the whole armor out of low and high density EVA foam, included lots of foam clay and built over 1000 LEDs into it. I shared every single progress step on social media and my community really enjoyed seeing everything come together slowly. Even at days I wasn't in the mood to craft, they pushed me harder and asked for new progress on the costume. It felt like they wanted to see every tiny bit of Brigitte and that was really sweet. I did plenty of step-by-step collages, progress photos, tutorial videos and just silly behind the scenes stuff. My comment sections exploded and my motivation was constantly boosted by all these kind comments I got every single day. Demonic Brigitte was honestly one of my most intense projects emotionally and I'm not sure if I would have ever finished it without the support of my amazing followers. Thanks a lot to everyone at this point!

While Brigitte turned out to be quite interesting to my audience, working on something so massive for such a long time fills you with doubts. The more months passed, the less I actually liked what I had already done. Yes, I was proud of my work, but I also noticed flaws that bothered me more and more over time. I unintentionally flipped the bracers for example, wasn't 100% satisfied with my wig and really, *really* didn't like my small leg and shoe armor. There were so many messed up parts and they stabbed me like tiny needles in my creative mind every time I looked at the costume. The urge to redo certain things grew in me, but I knew this would drag out the project unnecessarily longer. Every time I had these thoughts, I went back to my cheering community, soaked in their motivational boosts and tried to ignore my own doubts. I knew I was probably the only one who saw all these flaws and it would simply be insane to go back and redo these things just to silence my inner demons.

Watch the full costume video tutorial:
<https://youtu.be/FzMHJQ7jl1s>





Another huge motivation for me was the shield. It was by far my favorite part of the project and I was extremely excited to build it. Despite of that, I kept it for the very end of the project, just like a delicious cake after a long day of work. I knew this incredible design of Zach would be really fun to bring to life, but I had to earn it first. Only if the costume was completely done, I could dare to touch this insane, but ridiculously cool looking shield. So every time I thought about taking a longer break, I had the shield in mind and it pushed me harder to finally finish the costume. I didn't want to wait any longer for my dessert!

Finally, after 18 months of work with plenty of breaks in between, I was able to show the complete Demonic Brigitte costume. The first fitting test gave me an incredible confidence boost and even though I could barely move in all that armor, I was so proud that all my inner struggles suddenly disappeared. This was the moment I worked so hard for! I had *earned* feeling good about it! Even though the final costume was made completely out of foam, some people actually thought it was a 3D rendering! I was so proud of that!

Now, if you are curious, I uploaded 7 different making-of videos about the project to my YouTube channel. Working on these videos was always a welcoming break from all the crafting and still felt like I made some progress. In addition, all the video but also photo footage gave me plenty of content to fill up my social media accounts and now have become a nice memory of all my hard work. I honestly don't know if I would ever dare to tackle a larger project than Brigitte! I guess time will tell.



In the end it's all about being happy!

The Bone Armor from Monster Hunter is one of my most recent projects and was heavily influenced by a new mentality I developed after 18 years of cosplay. I probably just became too tired of tight deadlines, crafting stress and the pressure of being self-employed. So this time I wanted to create something solely for myself and get rid of any restrictions!

Cosplay is supposed to be fun and should bring you joy. I think many of us forget that, especially when we compare ourselves to others, set far too high expectations for our personal success and feel obligated to constantly create new content for our social media channels. We tend to set ourselves very tight deadlines when we don't have to, pick far too elaborate costumes, squeeze out as much content out of our work as possible and simply force ourselves to do things even when we're not feeling like it. I did this far too often in my cosplay career and finally wanted to take a step away from all this pressure and responsibility towards my social media appearance. I wanted to pick a project just for myself and take my time to fully dive in and enjoy the crafting process - no deadlines, no stress, and no obligations. Just for myself.

I began working on the Bone Armor back in May 2021, collected all my references, bought my fabrics, my foam and my faux furs and slowly started crafting. While I made some good progress, I didn't share a whole lot of it on social media. I showed some stories and posts here and there, but it's not like I created little vlogs about how I made this and that - something I did quite often in the past and which created a lot of extra work. I shared my content when I was in the mood and it actually felt really good. It also helped me a lot to not compare my work to others. There were already plenty of amazing cosplayers, who did the same costume but I didn't mind at all. I obviously still looked at their work, picked some details I liked about their Bone Armors and used their wonderful photos as inspiration to give my very best as well.





All the time in the world

It turned out that this particular design would require quite some work, even though I thought it would be a simple project at the beginning. Creating over 150 separate bones out of foam clay was incredibly time consuming and exhausting. Working with fake leather was also quite challenging and all that hand stitching for the decorative seams destroyed my fingers with countless blisters. On the contrary, working on the helmet, which was completely made out of foam, and adding all the fluffy fur and hair was

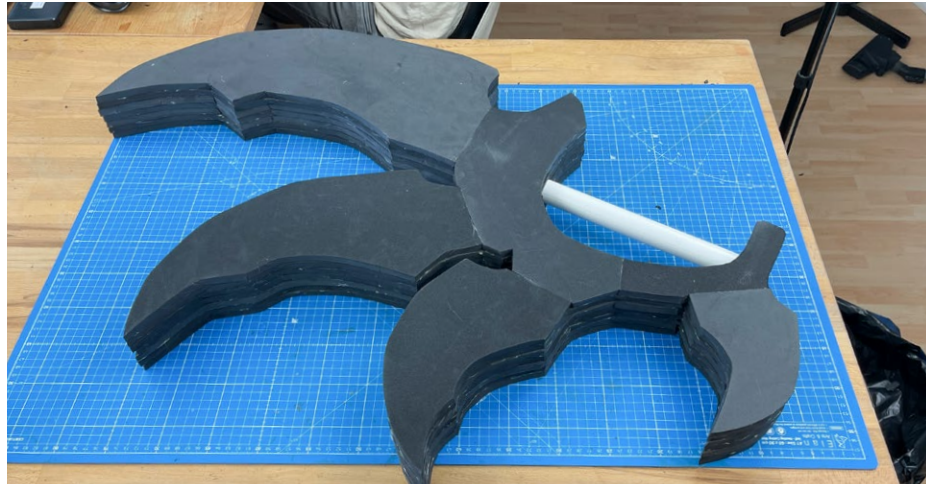
really satisfying. Just as always, I experimented with new materials and techniques and learned quite a few new tricks during the creation. The most important part though was that I had a lot of fun. It was a welcomed change not to spam my social media feed with new progress photos and try to answer all the comments and questions 24/7. I was able to focus on what I truly enjoyed and just took my time. Months passed and while my progress was pretty slow, I felt totally okay with it. And yes, I admit, I pushed

myself a bit at the end to finish the massive Dual Blades and the whole project until mid of September. However, I set this goal just for myself. It became cold quite early this year in Germany and I didn't want to freeze myself to death while wearing this pretty revealing costume for the photo-shoot. This deadline was for no convention though, not for Patreon or my followers and it was also not requested by a customer. And this felt amazing!

I don't think you can force yourself to have fun. I really love everything about Monster Hunter and creating the Bone Armor was a pure passion project for me. It wasn't rushed, it didn't bring much money to my business, and I barely showed it on my social media channels. It simply made me happy and this is what truly mattered.

If you ever struggle with motivation, maybe it's time to figure out why you don't enjoy your once loved passion anymore. The reason might be that you put yourself under too much stress, have too high expectations or feel obligated to do something because you think other people expect it of you. Creating my Bone Armor, however, showed me that the love for creating cosplay and art is still rooted deep inside me, no matter if anybody ever sees my work or not.

I really and truly enjoy crafting, but after finishing so many huge projects, I feel like I want to do a few smaller projects again for a while. I really want to build some awesome props and do something that doesn't require months or years to finish. You know, for a change! I just try to follow my heart and at the end, all that matters is that we are all happy. It might just take some time to figure out what you truly desire.



Watch the full costume video tutorial:
<https://youtu.be/OyaLQ2del4o>



We really appreciate you!

Well, you finally reached the final chapter of this book. I hope that after reading these very personal pages, I was able to give you all the motivation you were hoping to find. I talked a lot about the different reasons why we all get into cosplay, why we enjoy creating, and how we can try to reach our goals. I mostly hope though, that you understood that cosplay is about you and you alone. It's not about being born with "god given talents", having a ton of money or the luxury of free time and it's also not about getting lucky. It's about your own passion and love for something you truly enjoy doing. Don't search for excuses for why you can't achieve something, or listen to other people telling you what you can or can't do. Appreciate what you already have and

use it wisely. You will only grow and get better if you take on challenges and accept that mistakes and failures are part of the journey. Only fighting and not giving up will bring you closer to your goals, but it's also what makes your hard work so meaningful and valuable. Every single project will expand your skills and teach you something new. So, don't compare yourself to others, only look back onto your younger self and be proud of what you've accomplished already. The only way is forward.

My dear lovely reader, I hope that this book also showed you that you don't owe anybody anything and all that matters is that you have a great time. That's what cosplay is all about!

And yes, social media can be difficult, but it can also be an incredible source of motivation, inspiration and friendship. It brought us together for example! So just focus on the bright side, try to be a force for good, help others where you can and we can all make this wonderful community a better place for everybody. Cosplay is an incredible adventure and can completely change your life. So, don't let your dreams be dreams. Just do it! ;)

Benni and I believe in you and we are sure you can reach any goal you want! Fight and never stop believing in yourself! You are awesome!



Thanks for everything!

After writing 16 books in total about cosplay now, I also have to tell you that this book will *probably* be my last one. At least for a while.

I truly hope you've enjoyed all the knowledge, the lessons and also the funny crafting adventures I shared with you. I hope they were all helpful and inspirational and I cannot wait to see what

amazing things you will create by yourself. For me however, it's time to focus my energy on a new and exciting project. I have something very cool in mind and hope you'll be joining me on this new path as well. Until then, thanks so much for following me for such a long time, no matter if this is your first book or if you've already read all the others.

Benni and I truly appreciate all your support and want to let you know that you are the reason why we are able to help and inspire the cosplay community every single day! Thank you very much from the bottom of our hearts for this!

See you all on social media!



This concludes book number sixteen!

I really appreciate that you read all of it.
Hopefully you found some tips that were helpful!

Check out my website for more tutorials, write-ups and videos.

www.kamuicosplay.com

Do you have a question about a costume or prop you want to create? Join our community group on Facebook:

facebook.com/groups/kamuicosplaycommunity

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