

GETTING STARTED - WITH COSPLAY -

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE



BY SVETLANA QUINDT

GO MAKE SOMETHING!

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

www.kamucosplay.com/books



Throughout my previous books, I have showed you different crafting techniques for creating costumes. I wrote about armor and prop making, painting, how to work with LEDs as well as about sewing dresses, gloves, boot-covers and more. But for some strange reason, however, I've actually never talked about how to get started with cosplay. Not everybody wants to begin with elaborate armor or sewing projects. Heck, you don't even need to make your own costumes if you just want to have fun at a convention or take a few pretty pictures.

So this time I'll dedicate an entire book to all of you who are fascinated by cosplay and its wonderful community, but don't even know where to begin. I'll try to be your helping hand and show you everything you need for your very first projects and hopefully inspire

you to dress up yourself. It's as easy as picking a hero (or villain) and finding good references and crafting tutorials. I'll also introduce you to some basic tools and materials, show you my favorite techniques and even give you some ideas on how to set up your own little crafting corner.

Cosplay is so much fun and I hope it will give you as much joy as it does for me!

This book is a collection of tips and personal experiences, so don't be surprised if you won't find many step-by-step tutorials here. Once you've decided which costume you want to create and which techniques you might want to try out, please check out my other more in-depth cosplay crafting books!



ABOUT KAMUI COSPLAY

We're Svetlana and Benni but most of you know us as Kamui Cosplay. If you're into making costumes, chances are you've already stumbled upon one of our videos, tutorials or books before. We consider ourselves very lucky to be able to make our living by helping creative people like you with their crafting dreams. We're humbled by all the love you send our way and try to give back as much as we can.

Thank you for your support by buying this book! Hopefully you will find it helpful and inspirational!

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Be whoever you want to be!

For me personally, cosplay is a way to express my love for a fandom and the excitement to create something with my own hands. I was bullied in school and had no self confidence, but cosplay showed me that I can be proud of myself and don't need to be scared of challenges. Even if it starts as just a hobby, it can turn into much more really quick. It might even change your life and influence how you see yourself in plenty of positive ways!

I know how to sew, style a wig, wire up electronic parts, write code and I'm also capable of creating a costume which Hollywood would need a full team of costume designers for. Thanks to cosplay I discovered myself in a new light and turned from a shy and lonely teenager into a passionate artist, teacher, entertainer and public speaker. I met many new friends - even the love of my life - and found a passion that I turned into a living.

This is just my personal experience but I'm sure that once you get into cosplay too, you'll notice soon that it can be much more than just dressing up. It can change everything for the better and I honestly hope that it will be an equally positive experience for you as well! It's a journey well worth taking.

What is Cosplay?

In short, cosplay is a mix of "costume" and "play" and is an art form which involves wearing a costume to represent a specific character, style or idea. As long as you wear a costume and have fun, you're a cosplayer!

Your costume can be a casual outfit from your closet, or it can be bought, borrowed or hand crafted during months of hard work. A cosplay isn't defined by a specific quality standard and it doesn't even need to be self-made. There are a few people who would argue that wearing a wig with everyday clothes or a sexy bikini with a Mario hat isn't cosplay, but in my opinion it's nobody's business what this hobby means to you. No one has the right to tell you what's right or wrong. Everybody has different ideas and opinions. If you want to go crazy and build huge armors - that's great! If you want to do sexy boudoir pictures - that's great as well. Just have fun and enjoy what makes you happy!





NOTE

My Monk from Final Fantasy XIV is one of my more simple costumes and I actually thought about buying it online. Buying costumes is totally fine! I personally really enjoy creating something with my own hands and learn from the experience. So instead of ordering it pre-made, I built this costume by myself. There are many cosplay shops online and you can buy clothes for almost any character!

Mix to the max!

Many cosplayers also do altered versions of their favorite characters. They just follow their own wild ideas and inspirations. You'll find armored Warrior Sailor Senshis, humanized Pokemon, sexy Super Saiyans from Dragon Ball, Zombie Disney Princesses or even a Hello Kitty Darth Vader. Maybe the idea of creating a character that has already been done a dozen times sounds boring to you? Just give it your own touch! Imagine your character in a different universe, think of a new skin or outfit and experiment! In a world with many similar characters, the unique ones always stand out!

My Protoss Wizard (right) was an original design as well. I only had a very small and blurry portrait of the head as reference and built everything else based on my own ideas. The result was a mix of the Wizard armor from Diablo III in the look of a Protoss from Starcraft II. In addition I was also wielding an altered pole-arm from World of Warcraft. This costume was my tribute to all of the Blizzard games I loved and I even won the Grand Prize at the BlizzCon 2013 costume contest with it!



Cosplay is for everyone

Last but not least: Cosplay doesn't know gender, skin color, age or body shape. Don't let anybody tell you anything different. Cosplay your own way. It's not a contest. I dress up as both a muscular male super hero and a cute, young cat girl, despite of being a grown woman. You can be an amazing Wonder Woman even if you're a man and you can totally pull off a stunning Elsa from Frozen if you're a person of color! You don't need to be a Japanese schoolgirl to dress up as Sailor Moon and if you wish, you can even turn yourself into a cute fluffy animal! General rule: Don't listen to anybody and follow your heart! Only cosplay for yourself. That's all you need to know!

Symmetra from the game Overwatch (right) is a character of Indian origin and in the reference has much darker skin than me. I didn't change my skin color for this costume, since I don't think cosplay should be about race. It's for everybody and not only those who look like the character. You can always cosplay someone you love and be respectful and considerate of other cultures at the same time.





When I started

Don't compare yourself to others

Getting into cosplay these days might seem intimidating. The community is full of talented and passionate artists. They build amazing props with crazy light effects, larger than life armors, or sew elaborate dresses and style wigs on a Hollywood level. Their work seems to be flawless and achieving the same level of quality can feel like a very distant dream.

It's just natural to already compare yourself to these artists and it's really upsetting to figure out that you're not even close to their level (yet!). Especially at the beginning. Keep in mind however that we all start somewhere. My first projects looked awful and everything was held together with hot glue. My first wigs were spray paint on my own hair and my first make-up made me look like a beaten clown. Most cosplay beginners have been there and it's part of the journey to grow, learn and get better over time.



Today

Compare yourself to who you were before

We only get better through experience. Every single project is a new challenge and will inspire you to try out new materials and techniques. You'll get better with your sewing machine and gain more experience in prop making. What began as a simple cardboard costume, might end up as a fancy resin cast or a slick foam build a few years later. Cosplay is a very personal journey and every step brings you forward (especially when you feel like you're walking backwards). No good artist is ever truly happy with their quality. We always look up to those who are "better" than us, when in fact, they have just taken a few more steps already. Over the years you'll improve your skills and accomplish more. Every failure brings us further and every project will still be a new challenge. That's what keeps it exciting and fun - even after many years.

Choosing the right character

Finding a good character to cosplay is the first hurdle you have to take. A lot of people are interested in dressing up, but get lost in all the TV shows, movies, videos games, anime, manga and comics. The only good tip I can give you is: Pick something you really relate to.

When I first got into cosplay, I was (and still am) a huge fan of Dragon Ball and I especially loved the sheer stupidity and goofiness of Son Gohan dressing up as the "Great Saiyaman". I'm not male, but that didn't stop me. I simply bought all the fabrics, stole the old sewing machine from my grandma and started working on my very first costume. I had no idea what I was doing and already struggled just to pull a thread through the machine - but I didn't give up. I even managed to finish the costume after the machine broke half way through the project (sorry grandma). My cosplay still turned out pretty awful. It was mainly made out of shiny cheap satin and only held together by safety pins and hot glue. I was wearing thin ballerina shoes, that I tried to transform into fighting boots. To top it all, I didn't even wear a wig and was running around half blind since I had no idea contact lenses were a thing. And it was amazing. I goofed around, did silly poses and had a great time at my very first convention. I instantly fell in love with cosplay and haven't stopped since! I guess that's what this hobby is about: dressing up and having fun!

So, first step, pick something you have a personal connection to! Browse your favorite media and pick your favorite character. Having an attachment is the best motivation to finish a project. It can be someone who represents your dreams and ideals, whose face is close to yours, or somebody completely out of this world. It's also totally fine to just pick a design you think looks cool, even if didn't play the game or read the manga.

NOTE

I often get inspired by action figures that I discover while shopping online or at conventions. They not only provide you with a great view of the character from all sides, but also give you a pretty good idea of how you might look in your finished costume. These figurines are often pretty affordable too and definitely the best reference you can find for your cosplay.



Searching for references

Once you have decided what you want to do, it's time to go on the hunt for good reference images. Google image search should always be your first stop. Just type in the name of your character, add "costume" or "artwork" and hit search. With a little bit of luck you will be able to find close up images of every part of your characters costume or cosplayers who have already tackled the same project. They may have even uploaded some tutorials or progress pictures of their adventure! It might be easier for some projects and harder for others.

While a few video-games (like Overwatch) provide full cosplay reference kits on their websites - filled to the brim with different views and angles, detail shots, prop blueprints and other useful information - other sources barely have anything to offer. However, it's also quite possible to fall in love with a character that you only see in one blurry image on the Internet (like my Protoss-Wizard). In any case, keep in mind that it's highly unlikely that someone will come up to you at a convention and say "Hey you! I actually counted only eight buttons on your jacket, but

I know there needs to be ten! Explain yourself!" People look at costumes as a whole and don't pay attention to little details anyway. Also, you are doing this costume for yourself and don't need to explain to anyone why you made a costume the way you did. Just create it any way you want!



NOTE

Artbooks are great sources for references. These collections often include cool alternative outfits, previously unreleased designs, and sometimes also feature impressively detailed images of armor and prop parts you might have never noticed otherwise. Sometimes when I don't know what I want to try next (this happens way too often), I just open an artbook, browse through a couple of pages and instantly get a thousand new ideas.

Your first ever crafting tools

You've selected your character and collected as much reference material as you could! That's great! Now let's take the next step and get some tools to work with. Naturally, depending on your project, you will need different things. A sewing machine will not be much help if you want to build a sword. At the same time, a dremel will only get you so far when sewing a pretty dress. There are still a couple of tools you can start with that will no doubt be beneficial no matter what you want to do. You can always grow your collection from there.

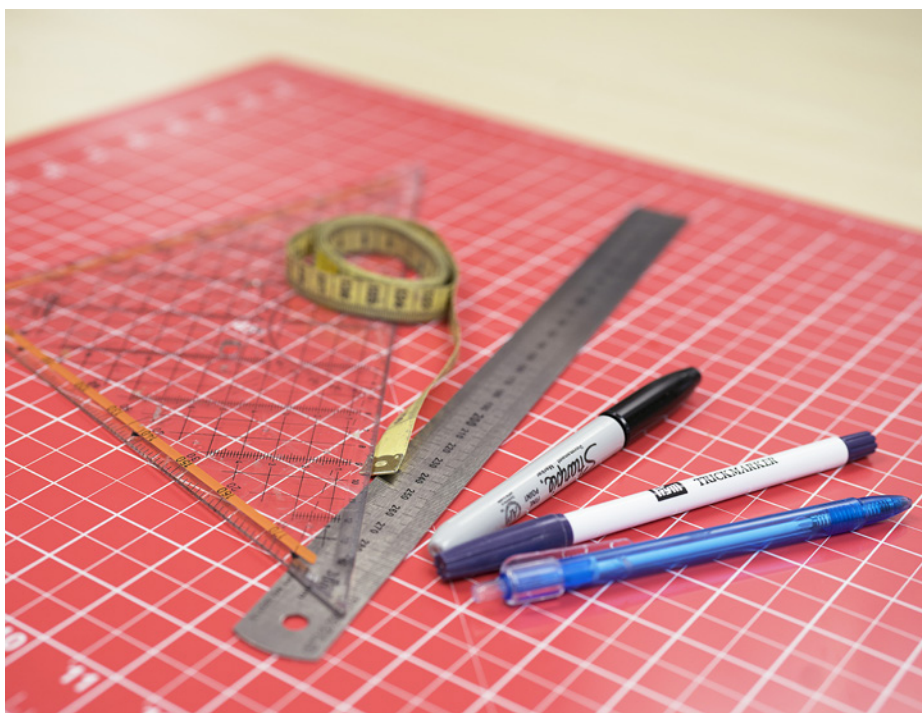
Scissors

A good pair of sharp scissors will be one of your most important tools, no matter if you want to create patterns out of paper, cut fabric for a sewing project or style a wig. There are a couple of different types to keep in mind. Strong leather scissors are the best to cut sheets of Worbla, high density foam, or plastic. Small round nail scissors are great for tiny details and ornaments. And fabric scissors are a must to (guess what?) cut out fabric! Just don't use them on anything else or they will get dull quickly. As always, you can start with cheap brands first. It's a good idea to get used to working with a tool without being afraid to break it and lose a lot of money. Or you can directly invest in higher quality and be set for the next couple of years. Your choice!



Pens and rulers

I am almost 100% sure there already is a pen and some kind of ruler somewhere in your house. Creating a costume means taking measurements of your body and transferring them to material. Can you guess how much 1/4 of an inch is without a ruler? I can't even do it with a ruler (we use real measurements in Europe). There are metal rulers, triangle rulers, round rulers, flexible rulers and many more. It's best to collect them in all shapes and sizes. Get a bunch of different pens and markers too. You'll need to draw on bright as well as dark materials. If you don't own them already, get some water proof and water soluble markers as well as fabric chalk in white and dark. I've collected quite a bit of stuff over the years and it comes in handy for every single project.





Hot glue gun

Your hot glue gun will save you countless times. It's definitely one of your most important tools – especially when you try to finish your costume at 2 am just before the convention (I try not to do that anymore). It can glue almost everything together in a matter of seconds. There are actually people who hot glue their entire costumes together! While this tool is a relatively cheap investment of only a few bucks, it will bring you joy (and pain) for many many years. Besides gluing, you can even use it to create raised up details, make casts and even build full costume props out of the melted hot glue sticks (it can look just like ice if you do it right). Just keep in mind to buy enough hot glue sticks and be careful not to burn yourself too often.



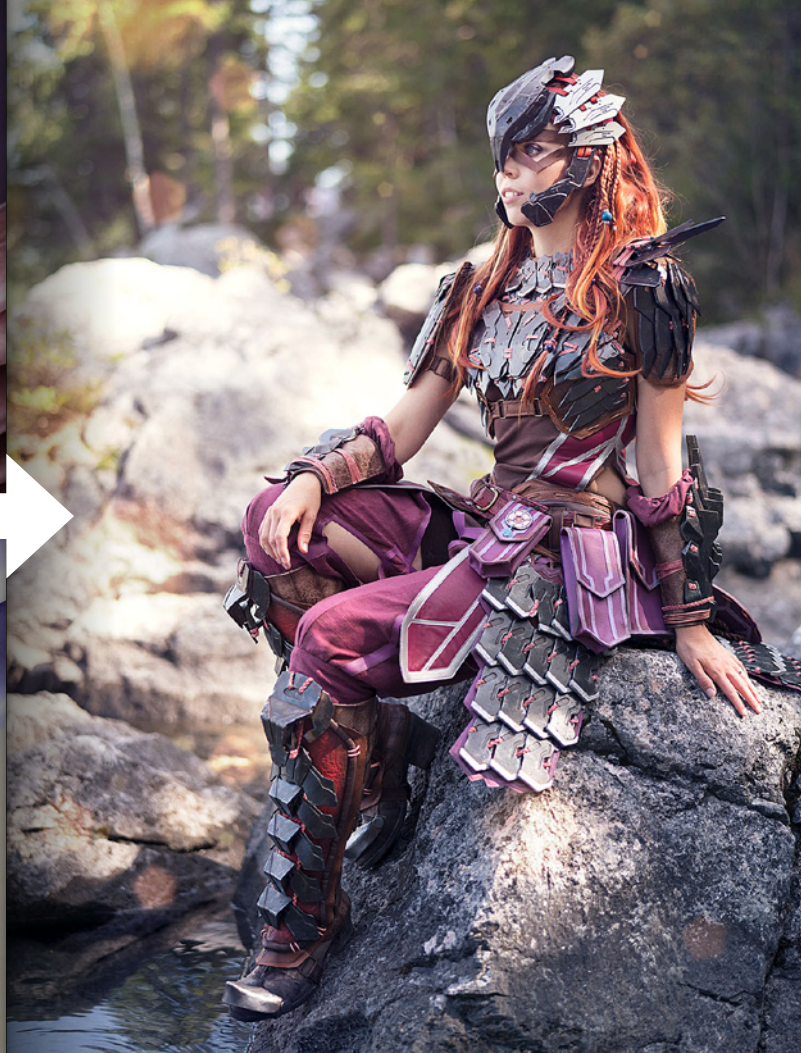
Hot air gun

A hot air gun is basically a stronger and hotter hair dryer. Aside from heating things up, it's necessary for turning Worbla and EVA foam into armor and props, repair broken hot glue spots or bend PVC pipes. Yeah, I used it as a hair dryer as well (on lowest settings of course)! You'll get this super versatile tool for around \$20 (17€) at the hardware store, however it's worth it to invest a little bit more in a more durable product with a higher power output. I actually have a second one to heat up my materials even faster and save some time.



Sewing machine

A good sewing machine is the most expensive tool on this list and for many people undoubtedly a pretty hefty investment. However it's also one that you don't want to avoid for too long. If you get into cosplay, you'll have to sew something at some point. Sure, it's possible to do it by hand or to use pre-bought pants and shirts, but building a high quality costume will be quite hard this way. Luckily there are sewing machines for beginners, which already start at merely 30\$ (25€). After I tried to sew a costume by hand myself (and failed miserably), I also finally invested in a 120\$ (100€) machine and it served me well for a very long time. Amazon is a good place to get helpful reviews and find a machine that fits to your budget. Just make sure it offers a zig-zag and a stretch stitch. If you can't afford one yet, this is your chance to drop some accidental hints for your birthday or holiday wish list.



What materials are the best?

Choosing the right materials for your project is always challenging. That's not only true for your first projects, but also every time you have to create something you've never made before. Experimenting with strange new materials and techniques is really fun though and – at least in my opinion – one of the best things about cosplay.

Fabrics

Now let me give you a few tips. First of all, think about what you want to create. Does your costume look like it requires a lot of sewing? Then it's time to find the right fabric and additional supportive materials like buttons, lining, zippers, laces and more. If you've never touched a needle before and want some guidance, just check out my [Book of Cosplay Sewing - Starting at Zero](#). I wrote it for people just like you. Sewing a simple costume is one of the easiest ways to get started with cosplay. When trying to choose which fabric to use for your character, it's always a good idea to check your local fabric store first. Just go in there and touch everything. At the beginning it will be difficult to distinguish between wool, satin, cotton, lycra, taffeta, jersey and the like. Try to get a feel for the differences and you'll get better in no time. Try to pick something that might fit to your character. Think about what

type of materials he or she would encounter in their world and don't just pick what looks pretty.

For my Aloy costume (above) from the video game Horizon Zero Dawn for example, I bought several meters of wool and faux leather. She is supposed to be a hunter, living and surviving in the harsh wild. I tried to imagine what kind of fabrics she would wear and even did a bit of research about different indigenous tribes. In the end, the only logical answer was to pick those that looked natural and rough. I chose linen, plenty of (faux) leather and a little bit of jersey. I really like animals so I don't want to work with real leather. Faux leather (or pleather) is a great alternative but requires a bit of additional work to get it the same strength, texture and feel real leather has. I guess I don't need to explain why thin shiny satin or cheap, crushed velvet wouldn't be a great fit for this costume.

If you want to sew a blouse, check out what real blouses are made of. You want to do a fighting suit, check out what real fighters wear and if you wanna do a pretty gown, visit stores for wedding dresses or check out the departments for evening dresses in your favorite fashion store.

NOTE

If you have no clue what different types of fabrics there even are, order a sample box! Many fabric stores (or fabric printing websites) offer sample packages (swatches) with dozens of different types. It's just a small piece each but enough to get a feel for the texture, thickness and stretchability.



Worbla

EVA foam

Armor materials

When it comes to creating armor and props there are a ton of different materials you can use too. Luckily it has never been easier to find inspiration on the Internet. With only a few search terms you can find useful tutorials for pretty much every material imaginable. There are thousands of amazing step by steps pictures or YouTube videos for pretty much everything you want to build. Even if you are not able to find exactly the project you are looking for, the work of others is always the best source of inspiration.

The two most common cosplay materials are the thermoplastic **Worbla** and **EVA foam**.

Worbla is sturdy, flexible, very beginner friendly and easy to find since there is a good network of resellers all over the world. It's a thermoplastic material that comes in rolls or sheets. When you heat it up (with your new hot air gun) it becomes flexible and sticks to itself. Cut it, shape it, squish it and mold it while it's warm. Once it has cooled down, it will stay in this shape. You won't need any glue to work with it, just a heat gun and

a strong pair of scissors. If this sounds interesting to you, please check out my [Book of Cosplay Armor Making](#) to get an in-depth introduction on how to work with thermoplastics. The only downside is that Worbla projects can get quite heavy and uncomfortable and the material itself is not really the cheapest option on the market.

EVA foam on the other hand is lightweight, versatile, comfortable and affordable. Since the material is not as forgiving as Worbla, you need to work a little bit more carefully. Once you've accustomed yourself to the work steps however, you'll create amazing armor pieces in no time. A big advantage of foam is how lightweight it is. While you'll definitely feel the weight of thermoplastics on your body (especially for big pieces), you can create massive foam armor constructions without having to worry about wearing it all day. Check out my last book [The Book of Foam Armor](#) if this materials sounds like the right choice for you. Don't be surprised when you find many different products when searching for EVA foam. Unlike Worbla, which is

a trademarked product, EVA foam comes in many different names, densities and thicknesses. One downside is that you can't use the leftover pieces anymore (with Worbla you can squish them together and use them like clay) so you create a bit more waste. Also foam insulates very well. So if you live in a warmer climate, you'll definitely sweat a lot. But hey! At least your armor won't deform and melt off your body (looking at you Worbla)!

No matter what you choose, there are advantages and disadvantages you just have to keep in mind. In addition to Worbla and EVA foam you can also create costumes out of cardboard, plastic sheets (sintra and styrene), 3D print them or alter pretty much any other household item from the hardware store. I strongly believe that you can create anything out of everything if you're creative enough. Don't limit yourself to the materials other people have used before. Try out new things whenever you get the chance. Who knows, maybe you'll be the one to discover the next big thing?

Easy details with Worbla

Even the most elaborate costumes start small. In fact it doesn't even require a lot of skill or talent to create something that looks impressive - just a little bit of patience. My Malthael cosplay from Diablo III did not have many complicated shapes, nor did it have a lot of large and impressive armor pieces. The base shapes were actually pretty simple. However, it made up for this with very intricate details, swirls and ornaments spread all over the costume.

I started by building all the easy armor shapes like bracers, shin armor and a breastplate. Then I cut out thin stripes of a double layer of Worbla (to make it thicker). After that I took a pen, drew on where I wanted my details to be, heated up the surface as well as the stripes and carefully added them piece by piece. No glue needed.

This part took me far longer than creating the armor itself, but it gave the whole costume a lot of depth and plenty of interesting highlights to look at. This is a really easy technique and something Worbla does very well. Of course it also works with other materials and hot glue, puffy paint or scrapbook sticker decals.





Foam armor for cheap

While Worbla is a great material for beginners, it is a bit more on the pricey side. In contrast, my Zinogre armor from *Monster Hunter* is a great example that elaborate cosplays don't need to be expensive. The whole costume is made out of simple EVA foam mats, which are not only very affordable, but also don't need a lot of tools to work with. A box cutter, a heat gun, contact glue, a few paints – and you are good to go! Adding up the material costs for the foam, primers, paints, glues, varnishes, attachment and fabric, this huge and elaborate costume was made for only around \$120 (100€)! Keep in mind that this was not a one time fee too but spread out over several months of time (or however long you need for your costumes).

Compared to Malthael (from the previous page), this was definitely a bargain and shows that there is no need to spend a fortune on a fancy project. You just have to be smart with your material choices and invest some of your time, sweat and tears.



Cosplay shops and where to find them

Everything can be turned into a crafting material. It doesn't have to be high density EVA foam, Worbla or shiny dupioni silk. You don't need to be rich to create great costumes too. A skilled artist isn't defined by the canvas, brushes or colors s/he uses either. The cheapest floor mats, cardboard and even old blankets can do the job just as well, especially when you are forced to work with a tight budget. It's surely easier to work with "proper" materials, but don't get discouraged and try to see it as an extra challenge instead! Keep your eyes open and don't feel forced to create your cosplay the "default" way.

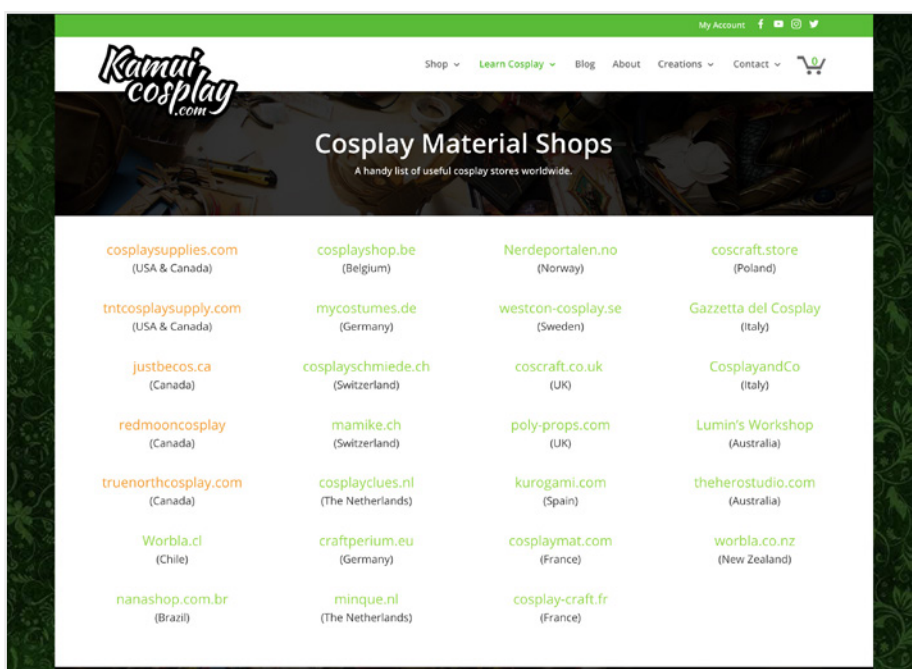
Besides budget friendly household materials, there are also plenty of products made especially for the cosplay community. Dedicated cosplay crafting stores offer EVA foam in different thicknesses, densities and sizes as well as thermo-plastics like Worbla, Wonderflex or sintra. You'll also find wigs in all colors and shapes, glues, sealers, primers, paints and even electronics as well as molding and casting materials. Please check out the list of crafting stores on my website. I also mention all of my personal favorite materials and tools on this page. All these products are naturally a little more pricey than cardboard or simple craft foam, but you'll definitely notice the difference in quality.

kamuicoplay.com/links

Buying online gives you a lot more variety and better prices than any local shop can offer. Depending on your country, certain fabrics will be difficult to find. While I still enjoy to browse through small fabric shops in my country, I mostly end up buying my sewing materials online for just a quarter of the price.

NOTE

The downside of ordering materials online is that you cannot see and touch them. Luckily a lot of the fabric shops and cosplay crafting suppliers offer material samples (swatches) for free or just a few dollars. So instead of investing a lot of money in a material you are not sure you can use, order a sample collection of everything that sounds good. If nothing fits, just order more samples from other shops! A good collection of material samples will make choosing the right materials for your upcoming projects a lot easier too!



Working with a tight budget

Materials and tools cost money and no matter if you're a poor student, have a low income job or are just flooded with bills every month - cosplay can be quite a strain on your budget. Better plan ahead!



I started creating costumes when I was 17 and still in school. Since I had no money to spend on cosplay, I actually got a part time job just to earn some extra income. I know, I'm weird. While others use their hobbies to get away from their job, I instead searched for a job to afford my hobby. Don't worry, you won't have to take it this far if you're clever and plan ahead. Consider which materials and how much of them you need and don't just buy everything that you see someone else use on the Internet. A good armor doesn't need to be made out of Worbla or be sculpted, molded and casted. EVA foam or even cardboard might be a better option for you.

Create your patterns first and use them to calculate how much fabric or foam you will need for your project. Order a little bit more than you need because it's very likely that you will mess up at some point and need to order more. Foam is really cheap but shipping can become expensive. Try to avoid ordering too little and too often. Instead find other cosplayers in your area or country and buy together to save massively on transportation! Keep your eyes open for coupons, storage sales or even give-aways. If you start early and wait patiently, you might end up paying only a fraction of the original price.

Last but not least, don't buy everything at once. Order materials and tools only when you really need them for your project. This way you don't have to pay everything at the beginning and your costs are spread out over a longer time. It won't hurt as much.

NOTE

All prices in this book are in US Dollar and Euro. Tools and materials cost differently in every country and I know it might be upsetting if you can't afford some of them because of this reason. Keep in mind however, that there are always alternatives that might fit better to your budget. Just keep your eyes open and try things out.

Everything needs its place

Many cosplayers are excessive hoarders and that's totally fine (don't tell anyone). Everything will be useful one day and you'll be super happy about not throwing away that one special fabric you bought years ago. Collecting so much stuff that you don't even need to buy new materials for a new project is every cosplayers dream right? How to store and organize so many things, though? Here are a few tips!

Not everybody has the luxury of living in a big house and having lots of space to work in. This makes it very important to use the space you have in a smart way. I was stuck in a tiny corner of a room for many years and desperately tried to find ways for proper storing my tools, materials and finished projects. Large closets with big drawers and space for boxes were a good solution - at least to put away the finished costumes. In addition I bought a lot of plastic containers and translucent sorting boxes, all of them labeled and filled for specific occasions or work steps. I made a box for wig styling, one for LEDs, one for sewing and so on. This makes it very easy to find the necessary materials and tools when you need them for your current work step.

I actually really enjoy cleaning my work area and putting everything in its right place. It provides me with inner peace and allows me to completely focus on my work without having to search for stuff all the time. This is especially useful when working in a small environment or if you are searching for something specific to finish your costume at 3am the morning before the convention.





Organizers

Plastic organizers with little compartments are amazing for small pieces like beads, LEDs and electronic parts, buttons, dremel tips, rivets and more. I got several of them and they don't only help to keep things organized! When I'm on a shopping tour, I simply take a photo of my bead collection and look at it in the shop to avoid buying stuff I already have. It's super useful!



Fabric samples

I like to organize my fabrics in IKEA shelves. You might not have enough of them to justify a whole shelf yet, but nevertheless, it's still be helpful to get at least a few boxes and cut off samples of the fabrics inside. I attach all these scraps to the outside of the box with a safety pin and use them see directly where all my fabrics are. Just like with the bead collection photos, I can take these with me on my shopping tours and avoid buying the same or similar fabrics again by mistake.



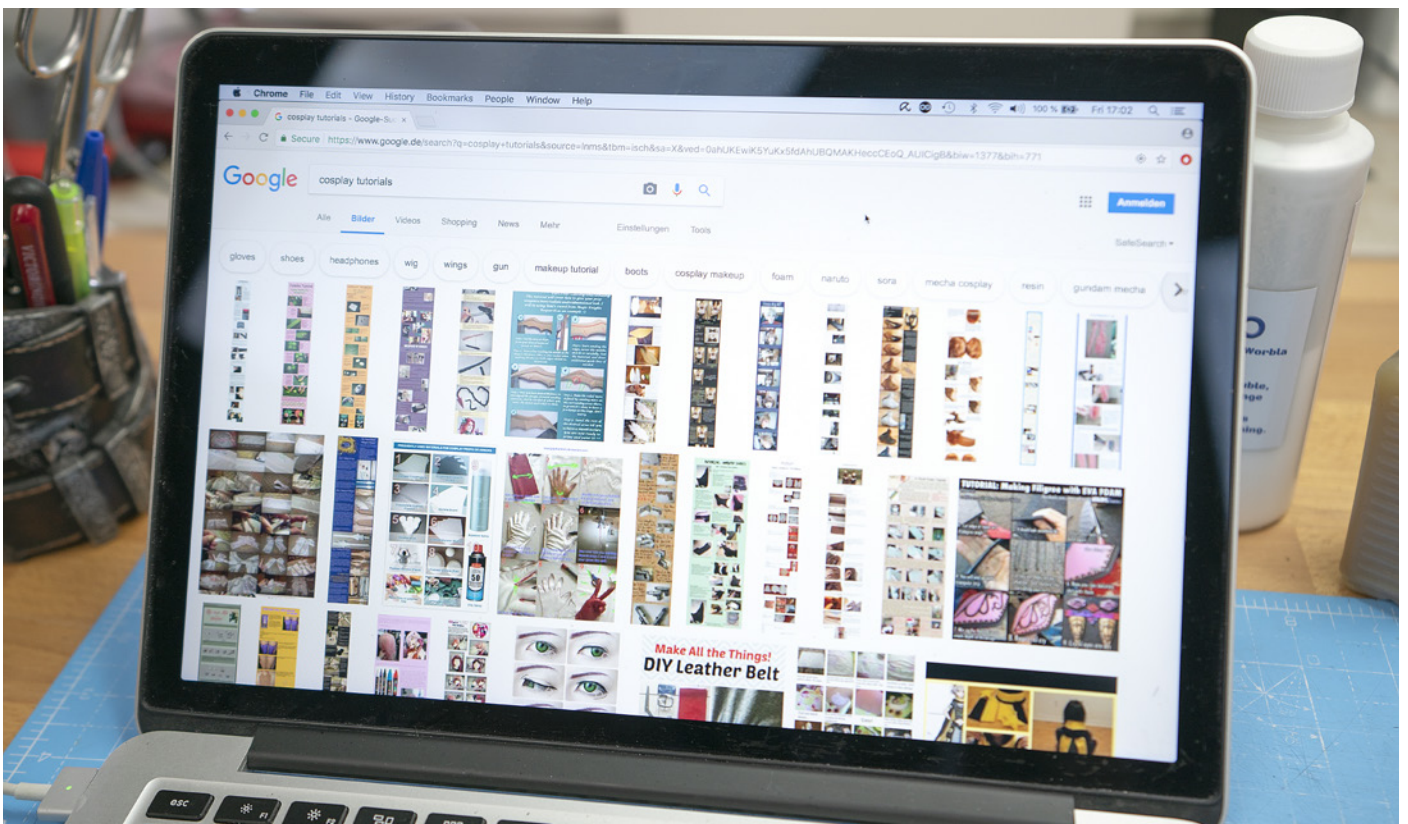
Closets and drawers

The furniture chain IKEA is also quite helpful when it comes to storing finished costumes. Especially the huge PAX closets, containers, drawers and boxes are just perfect to give your costumes a safe, dry and properly organized home. When it comes to finding all pieces of an old costume, these closets allow you to keep everything together and easy to find any time. I actually own two of them: One for my old costumes and one for my more recent ones.



A tutorial for every occasion

Over the last couple of years cosplay has risen from a niche hobby to mainstream appeal. It's in newspapers, in television and the first thing you think about when someone says Comic-Con. When I started creating costumes in 2003, cosplay was still very underground and tutorials were hard to find. Now, after the rise of Social Media, we are a gigantic family, full of passionate and cheerful members, willing to support and educate each other. Finding knowledge about materials and learning new techniques has never been easier! It's a great time to start!



Still no idea which materials to choose? Scared of styling a wig for the very first time? Don't know how to create the shape of a specific dress or how to build a sword from scratch? Don't worry; the all-knowing hive mind of the cosplay community can help you out! You just need to find the right tutorial! In fact, almost everything you want to build or sew has already been made by somebody at some point. Just check out Google, type in "Spider-Man cosplay tutorial" or anything else you want to create and be amazed by the amount of creativity and support the cosplay community has to offer.

Do your homework, search for tutorials and follow the progress of other artists on Social Media. Learning from others will help you save time, money and nerves. You might even discover something you haven't even considered before.

I watch a lot of YouTube tutorials, follow many inspiring people on Instagram and Facebook and own a collection of in-depth books about sewing, embroidery, electronics and special effect make up that I found on Amazon or in a random book store. I try to keep my eyes open at all times.





The community helps

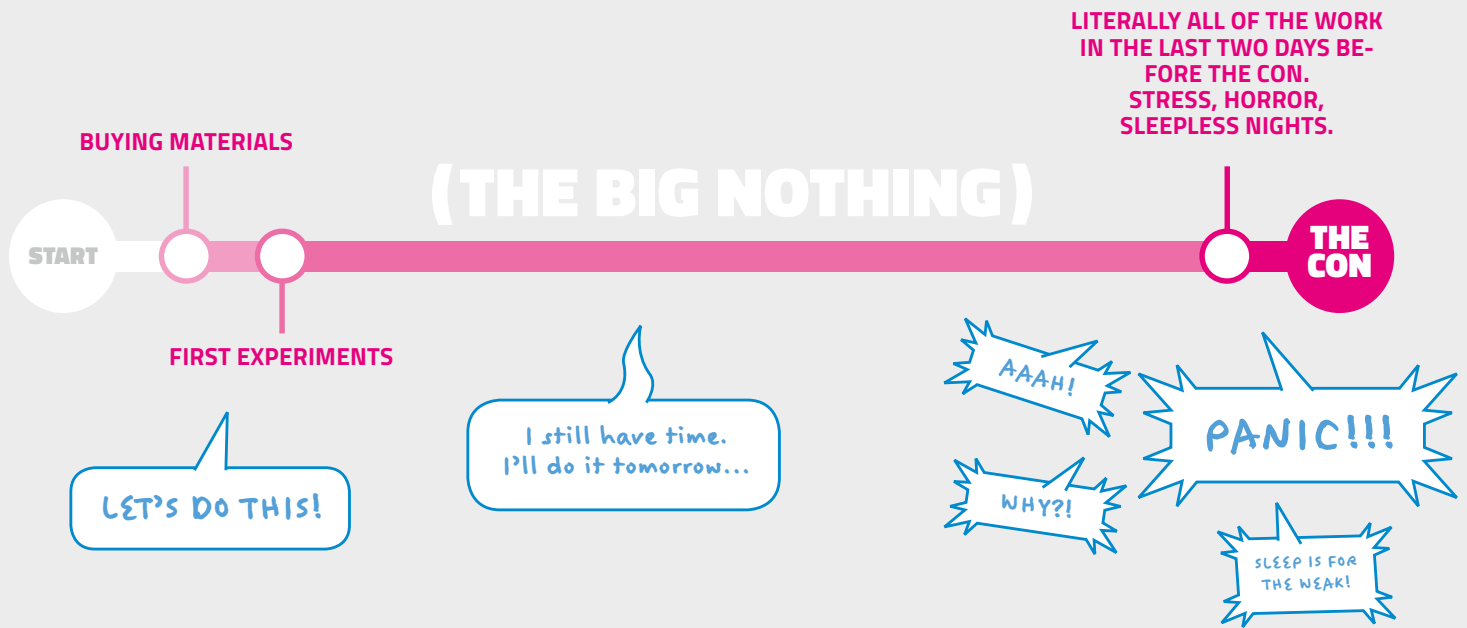
A few cosplayers (myself included) write detailed step-by-step guides, covering all kinds of different techniques. While most of this info is available somewhere on the Internet for free (like all knowledge), having a nicely gathered and structured collection at home is a big plus. Supporting your favorite artist at the same time is also a nice gesture. It's not necessary to reinvent the wheel and while it might be super fun just to try out different things without getting results (we do it all the time), it definitely costs some time and money. Always keep your eyes open for new ideas and interesting tutorials!

Helping others and getting help is an essential part of the cosplay community. A tutorial by someone else might be the reason why you are even able to create your costume at all. The same is true if you do it for somebody else! Post progress pictures and step-by-step guides yourself. What you do might not be special to you, but it might help out someone else who is stuck at this work step. The community will love it and you will not only get more attention for your work if you're helpful, but might even find new friends who are attracted by your work and kindness.



NOTE

Nova was one of the projects I couldn't have done without the help of others. My husband Benni and I did a lot of research into printing fabrics and creating custom bodysuits. We ended up asking a friend for help who sent us his pattern. We still had to edit it heavily and print it several times to get it right. Without his help however, I'm not sure how far we would have come. This costume was also the very first time I worked with EVA foam, so I followed several tutorials I found online about how to create patterns, work with glue, shape the material as well as how to prime and paint it. Adafruit.com was an amazing resource for the light effects too. I experimented a lot and found out new ways that worked better for me, but without the tutorials and help of others, this project would never have turned out the way it did.



Manage your time (who am I kidding?)

Cosplay is a very social hobby and most costumes are created for a special conventions or other fan gatherings. It's natural to have the urge to show your new costume to a huge audience at your favorite event. Time management can be pretty essential to get everything done.

You know how it goes: you start early, full of energy, buy the materials and begin crafting. Somehow, however the initial energy evaporates and you end up doing a little bit here and a little bit there. It's still so much time until the event right? Then, without a warning, it's already a few days before the event and you're not even half done with your costume! Now every hour is precious and sleep becomes a luxury. That's probably the biggest paradox of cosplay. A hobby that is supposed to be a fun and relaxing way to escape a stressful life creates even more stress! For some reason however, this kind of stress makes you inhumanly productive and can be quite addictive. So it's not all bad... right?

When it comes to time management and avoiding stress, clearly the best solution is to start as early as possible. Trying to create a full set of armor in just a few days might not only cost you sleep and fun, it will also lower the quality of your final outcome. Instead, plan ahead and take

enough time for your projects. For me, it helps a lot to break down all the necessary work steps and guess how much time I'll need for every piece. Let's say you need one week to build a sword, a month for the armor and another week to finalize the attachments and the under suit. This clearly sounds a lot more realistic than, "Sure, I can do it all in a week!"

Creating a full costume can take a while so you're bound to get bored or exhausted during the process. To stay excited and motivated, it helps a lot to set yourself little achievable goals. Don't just work towards a single deadline for the convention. Instead, try to finish at least a small part every week. I usually give myself two days to create a new piece like a bracer, style a wig or a sew a skirt. It usually works out (not always though) and at the end I'm proud of finishing another part of my costume puzzle. With this technique you are able to stay excited, motivated and avoid taking long breaks.

NOTE

Feeling a bit overwhelmed by a project at the beginning is totally normal. In this case, it helps to start with something you can finish in a short amount of time (like a bracer, an accessory or a prop). After getting it done, you will feel a lot more confident and the rest suddenly looks less intimidating.



How to stay motivated

In our Kamui Cosplay Community Facebook group we celebrate WIP-Wednesday. On this day everyone can post and show off what they managed to get done since the week before. It is a fun way to see how far we have come and cheer each other on. Getting other people involved in your progress is actually a great way to stay motivated during a long and exhausting project.

Keep in mind that taking a break, not finishing a costume in time, or even feeling burned out is totally fine and happens to the best of us. Plans change and the world doesn't end if you'd rather play a video game instead of working on a costume. You are doing all of this for yourself and if you find something that gives you more joy, that's totally fine! In the end, you are doing it all for yourself and don't owe anybody a finished costume. Personally, I gave up working with deadlines. I still follow goals and try to reach them, but I do this only as long as I have fun and enjoy the project. There is always a next convention and the quality of my project is too important for me to try to finish it just for one convention.

See the whole costume process on YouTube:
<https://youtu.be/NovgPB4UAXU>

NOTE

The Erazer Girl costume I created for the German computer manufacturer Medion was one of the projects I had to finish in just two weeks. Instead of panicking however, I set myself realistic goals for each day. I gave myself a very specific amount of time for every armor piece and after finishing what I set out to do, I went to bed happy and relaxed. At the end the costume was even done a bit sooner than expected and I wasn't stressed at all. Granted, this is a lot easier after you have gathered some crafting experience.

Hmmm... What else?

Remember, cosplay is all about dressing up and having fun. You don't have to work with expensive tools and materials or even need to create extravagant costumes. Having fun can also be working with cardboard in a tiny corner or even enjoying a con in completely bought costume.

It's not about space

A good costume doesn't require fancy materials and tools. All you need is creativity, patience and passion. When I got into cosplay I was living in a shared apartment with two of my friends and Benni. We both shared a 16sqm room, which was our living room, bedroom and crafting room all in one. I barely had enough space to roll out a sheet of Worbla or foam, still I built one of my biggest armor costume in there. Being a student, I also had a very limited budget. So instead of going out to party or buying fancy clothes I saved all the money from my part time job to buy materials and tools. It was clearly not easy to create costumes in this environment, but I simply saw it as another challenge and tried to get the maximum out of everything I had at this point.



Buying costumes

Just want to have fun at a convention but no time to actually make the costumes yourself? Just buy them! For our Doctor Who cosplays a few years ago I just bought a pair of jeans, a top, a wig and my husband Benni got himself a suit and a sonic screwdriver. We had a great time at the con and goofed around all day. I still prefer to make my own costumes but buying something pre-made just to have a fun weekend is totally fine. There are a lot of online shops that sell costumes for affordable prices so go check them out if you're interested! Just be aware that their quality might vary and you might need a few touch ups to get a good fit.

For my Fallout costume I just bought a cheap jumpsuit from Amazon, added yellow stripes and weathered it with acrylics to make it look dirty and used. I also got boots, a hat and sunglasses, which all got the same wasteland treatment. Finally, I added a few foam armor pieces, a couple of pouches and a 3D printed Pip-Boy. It's clearly not necessary to create everything from scratch and altering something store-bought can actually be super fun too!



For many cosplayers (including me) posting our costume progress or photoshoots on social media has become a big part of this hobby.

Sharing what we do with others and getting honest feedback is one of the greatest sources of motivation too!

Getting your content seen amongst the thousands of other posts, however, can be tricky.

Managing your social media

A couple of years ago, you had to send your friends an email to show them a picture. Today, with the mere touch of a button, you can publish your work online for millions of other people to see. No matter if it's Instagram, Facebook, Twitter or YouTube - posting your progress online is just as much a part of cosplay as actually wearing or making a costume. So let me give you a few helpful tips!



First of all: Only create an account if you really want to. I know enough people who enjoy creating their art without the need to show it to everybody online. I did it too for a long time. I only set up my own Facebook page simply because I wanted to separate my cosplay posts from my personal stuff. I had Facebook friends who were colleagues, fellow students or simply people who weren't interested with my hobby and I didn't want to annoy them with it. Instead, I began spamming it on my page and later also on Instagram and Twitter.

This means, don't feel forced to use social media just because everybody else does it. Find your own reason and make the decision for yourself

and your art. Sharing your work and your passion online should be fun and exciting and not a duty or even a job. I absolutely love showing everything I created every day and talk with my followers about different materials and techniques. They give me feedback, help me to improve my projects and motivate me to keep going. However, sometimes I'm just not in the mood to post anything for days or even weeks. And that's totally fine! You don't owe anybody anything and taking a break shouldn't need any excuses.

If you want to gather a few followers and run a professional looking page (for whatever reason) there are a few things to keep in mind.

First of all, everybody starts small. Just as your crafting skills develop, so does your social media following. There are a lot of people sharing their work online so it's only natural that you won't get a lot of likes and comments in the beginning. It also took me years to build up my own community and I started just like you with 0 likes on all my social media channels. Don't worry if gaining followers might take a while. Instead concentrate on your work, try to post at least once a day and pick something interesting to show. Slowly people will start to notice you and your work and will interact more with your page. It is a long process but it was the same for everybody that now has a large following too.

Post quality photos

Light up your workspace, keep your table clean and don't use any silly filters on your posts. I usually shoot with the camera of my mobile phone, but if yours is not good enough, consider getting a cheap digital camera. A simple table light and one or two studio lights for around \$30 (25€) will provide enough light to see everything clearly.

In addition, most of the time I work with all my window blinds pulled down. This way the light in my photos is not affected by the time of day and step-by-step pictures look better. Now just make sure your working area isn't a complete mess and show only the piece you're working on. This way your image is clearly recognizable and even looks

interesting as a tiny preview (good for Instagram). While you can surely craft in a cozy crazy mess, just push the worst out of the frame and make sure your light is good when you take the photo.



Use #hashtags

On Instagram and Twitter, using Hashtags is the most helpful tool to grow your audience. Don't just use as many as possible however. Consider instead which ones fit your picture and audience the best. I'm mostly posting progress pictures, tutorials and finished costumes, so my most used hashtags are [#costume](#) [#cosplay](#) [#cosplaywip](#) [#cosplaytutorial](#) [#cosplayprogress](#), plus more

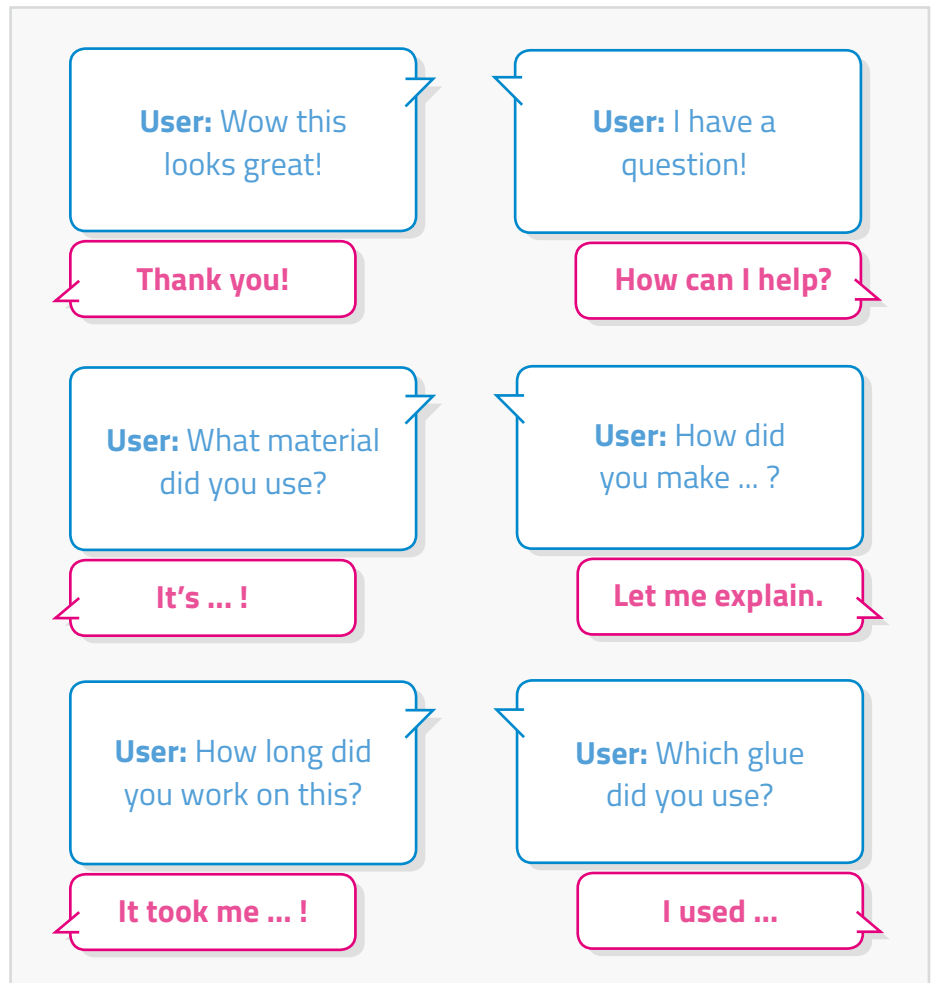
specific ones like [#evafoam](#) [#foamarmor](#) [#foam-tutorial](#) [#foamcosplay](#) [#foamsmith](#). Finally I also add more project relevant hashtags. My Zinogre cosplay for example went under [#monsterhunter](#) [#monsterhuntercosplay](#) [#mhcospay](#) [#zinogre](#) and [#zinogrecosplay](#). This sure sounds like a lot of writing for a single post but luckily Instagram actually provides recommendations after a few

letters and completes your hashtags once it's clear what you write. Of course nobody forces you to use hashtags, but if you want your channel to grow on these platforms, this is one way to do it.



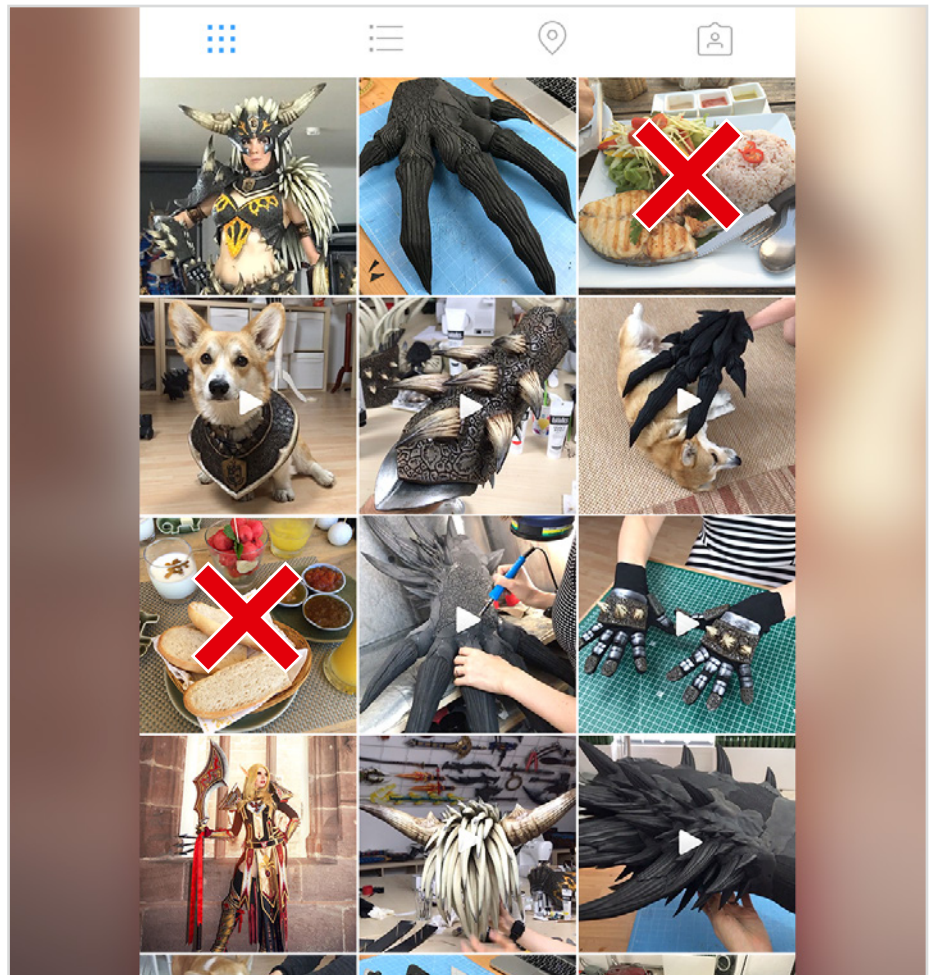
Interact with people

Listen to feedback, start a discussion, answer questions or simply reply with a "Thank you!" to a nice comment. Once your followers notice that you are actually a human being they can talk with, they will interact more often, leave comments, like your work and share your content. It's just natural that they want to know the person behind all these beautiful costumes and you might even find a few good friends among them. In addition they will show more interest for your work, give you new ideas you didn't even think about, and point out something you might have forgotten. This way, you'll build an audience that not only enjoys following your work and will check out your account regularly, but they will actually grow to a community that will have your back, and support you once you are stuck, lose motivation or simply need some cheering up.



Stay focused!

You reap what you sow - so stay focused. Mixing random posts like food, selfies or vacation pictures will hurt your growth. Something that's relevant for you, doesn't need to be relevant for your followers. If someone has subscribed to you because s/he enjoys your cosplay work, he wants to see how you make your costumes, helpful cosplay tutorials, finished projects and photo-shoots. It's surely totally fine to show a selfie here and there and talk a bit about yourself, instead of hiding behind your work. However you might lose followers if you post too much "off topic". Try to think about what you like the most about people you follow and what you like to see from them. I really enjoy crafting, so I post only cosplay relevant content on my pages. I also know that my followers really like my dogs Zelda and Midna, so their shenanigans get some occasional spotlight too (frankly, they're probably the only reason people visit my pages). You won't find any food pictures, workout routines or other non cosplay related things. I even hold back from posting too many selfies or travel pictures. Having a "clean" profile with a clear topic definitely helps to find new followers and keep those that have already subscribed.





And last but not least: Tell stories

Your followers want to see your journey, failures and successes included. I try to show my work from the first costume announcement, to how I planned it, created the patterns, tried out different materials, built the first pieces, painted it and so on and so forth. Instead of just surprising everybody with a new finished costume (that they will forget about again in a day), my followers are able to see a costume grow and develop every day, from the very beginning until the final photo-shoot.

I also share all my thoughts, my worries, my struggles and also my hard earned successes. It's a little like a daily crafting reality show. By going to my channel, even new followers are able to check out the old posts and go through the whole process until they've reached the current project. And then they mostly stick to my page, because they know what to expect. You don't need to build 10 costumes every year, create something they never saw before or do something super crazy. Instead, see it as a little cosplay diary you fill with your thoughts, photos and videos. Just let your followers join you during this adventure and let them see you and your project grow and develop from beginning to the end.


Dealing with criticism

Cosplay is all about dressing up and having fun. For many cosplayers nowadays this includes publicly posting your work on the Internet and social media. It's always more fun to share your passion with others, right? It has never been easier to connect with new like-minded people, gain followers, sharing costume progress and talking about helpful techniques and cool materials. Be mindful however that everybody will see your work, not only those who like it.


Once you hit that "post" button, your work will be published instantly. Everybody can see it. Worldwide. This includes people who don't know you, who have an entirely different cultural background and those that have a very different idea of how the character you're dressing up as should look like. They have their own image of the character and expect you to be a perfect copy of him or her. That is no matter how unrealistic the designs looks like. No matter how good your costume is though, you'll always be a human and won't be able to change the way you look. We'll never have the same slim waist as Sailor Moon, simply because we need space for internal organs (and cake). We don't have gigantic manga eyes or enough time to work out for four hours every day to get enough muscle for a Marvel super hero. We're regular people, young and old, of every race, skin color, gender, body shape or culture. Still, some folks on the Internet will expect you to look like the character, simply because all they see is a fictional person, not a real human being in a costume.


Whenever you get a stupid comment, remember these people might just have stumbled randomly over your image and wrote something before even thinking about what they are even seeing. They might be bored, having a bad day, maybe even want to help you improve your work or are simply mean.


It's important not to take these things personal. From the very beginning, before even uploading anything, keep these rude comments in mind and be prepared. Also stay objective. If you get ten nice comments and one bad one, it doesn't mean that everybody is mean to you. Just ignore this person or delete the comment. Don't argue, get into a fight and especially don't feed the troll. Instead, focus on those who keep on loving and supporting your work. Those who cheered you up and motivated you to finish your project. These are the followers that matter, not this one person who was just bored on the Internet.





KamuiCosplay
At home











♥ 2.453 likes

KamuiCosplay Look at what I built! I'm super proud of it! #FFXIV #costume #miqotecosplay #cosplay #diy #costumemaking #crafting #whitehair #wip

[view all 42 comments](#)

user1 Love FFXIV! Need to play again!

user2 Great costume! Suits you. ♥

Mighty_Troll That looks so stupid. 😡

user4 That's a pretty photo! 😊

user5 How did you make the ears?

user6 What a mighty horn!

user7 You should wear white hair more often!

Constructive criticism

Another way of dealing with criticism is to see it objective and try to learn from it. It doesn't work with intentionally offensive comments of course. Sometimes, however, there is a truth to what they are saying (even if they could say it nicer). When I started working with thermoplastics several years ago I simply had no idea how to build up layers and add details to my armor pieces. I made everything pretty flat and Benni had to fake all the details with his paint job. While most people commented how they loved my work, others

were more critical and started complaining about my laziness and lack of effort. They disliked the flat and boring design of the costume and while I simply didn't have the knowledge or experience to do it better, I started to experiment during my next project. I wanted to improve myself. Not for those who didn't like my work, but for myself. Even an angry pair of eyes might see something that you don't. They pushed me to try harder and I actually found a solution to add interesting details and layers on my next armor

costume. So, while it still hurt to get criticized, I tried to draw something positive out of it and finally was able to improve my work. Today I'm actually quite thankful for any skeptical and constructive comments regarding my work. Of course it's nice to hear that someone likes everything, but if you are searching for honest feedback, compliments are simply not that helpful. I really appreciate if somebody points out any flaws I might have overlooked or gives advice on new techniques or materials I haven't tried yet.



Each new cosplay is a journey that challenges you in a different way. From figuring out where to start, finding the right materials and turning them into costume pieces - it can seem intimidating.

Let me guide you through four examples of my own and hopefully give you a few ideas for your costume projects. All you need to do is to take the first step!

World of Warcraft - Alexstrasza

Accomplishing something you did not dare before, solving problems by yourself, and creating something from scratch by hand can be a huge boost for your self confidence. With Alexstrasza, creating the costume itself was one challenge, but an even bigger one was to leave my comfort zone and show some skin in public.



Jump over your shadow

Creating such a scantily clad character as Alexstrasza was very much outside my comfort zone. She was actually the very first costume that I did as a commission too. I was asked to make the entire costume from scratch and wear it at Trading Card events all over Europe – all as a fully paid job. It was my first opportunity to try and make a living (more like a side income) from my art, but also forced me to dress up in public, basically half naked. All my previous costumes were pretty closed up and I simply didn't feel that comfortable to show... so much! Despite that, however, I didn't want to miss the opportunity.

I was a long time fan of World of Warcraft and really loved the character but it required a lot of effort and willpower to wear the costume after it was done. I was never very confident about my appearance and being in the spotlight scared me. With every passing day embodying Alexstrasza, however, I actually felt more and more comfortable in my own body and didn't even care that there might be people staring at me. In fact, I got a lot more self confidence and was extremely proud of myself, not only for creating this quite challenging costume, but especially for overcoming my fears and worries about what other people might think about me.

There is nothing that boosts your confidence more than not caring about being almost naked in public. Everything that comes after this is definitely a walk in the park, haha. Don't be scared to bring characters to life that you might not feel comfortable with initially. Doesn't matter if they require a huge armor you are worried about building, a stature you might not be able to pull off, or just something you might simply be worried to wear. Overcoming your fears is an amazing feeling and you won't regret accepting the challenge.

Pokemon Go - Trainer

Naturally, not every costume needs to involve armor and props. Sometimes it's nice to wear a comfy cosplay that doesn't limit your movement, the ability to use the rest room and even works as an every day outfit!

Finding fitting patterns

I was in the middle of my Pokemon Go hype when I decided to make this costume. I really liked the design of my avatar. Being able to rotate her in the app was also great for reference. It was the perfect cosplay to enjoy a comfy day at a con and super (like really super) to travel with. Plus, for a change, it wouldn't take me weeks to finish it. Creating clothes from scratch is quite difficult, so I bought patterns to help me out.

The two I used for this costumes were an over-all and some simple pants from Burda. I found them simply by browsing through the pattern catalogue in my local fabric store. Working with pre-made patterns is a lot easier than drawing everything yourself. All you need is to unfold them, edit the shape a bit and trace all pieces onto your fabric of choice.

Two pieces I did not find any patterns for were the top and the leggings. The easiest solution to create these parts was to simply use a shirt and leggings I already had at home as a template. I simply copied their shapes to the material I wanted to work with, sewed on some purple stripes and connected all pieces afterwards. You can use this technique to recreate all kinds of clothes you already have at home! Easy, right?





Pants and short jacket

Since I have never sewn anything similar (I'm usually more the armor type of person), I was worried to start with the pants and the overall in the beginning. Luckily the instructions of the patterns were easy to follow and so I finished both in far less time than I expected. To get an idea for the right fabrics, I just checked some of my own clothes to see what might fit for this costume. Afterwards I simply tried to find matching materials in the fabric shop. I ended up with a soft fleece for the short jacket, jersey for the top, slightly stretchy wool for the shorts and lycra for the leggings. For simple projects like these, I really recommend getting a serger. This special sewing machine cuts edges and sews them together at the same time. It is just perfect to finish the edges of easily fraying materials and keeps especially jersey and spandex nice and stretchy. Consider getting this tool if you want to work with these materials more often.

I only made four small fabric parts so far but the costume is nearly done already! Maybe I should try this more often!





Finishing the rest

I kept the gloves and cap simple as well. An outline of my hand was all the patterns I needed for the first one. I cut out two sides, attached a purple strip on one of them, and connected both layers afterwards. The cap I just bought and customized with an additional fabric cover piece that had a Poké Ball emblem on it. Unbelievably professional, right?

My whole Pokemon trainer costume was done in just a few days. It is definitely one of my most comfortable projects, even if I ended up not really wearing it to conventions very often. I guess I'm just not used to wearing fabric only costumes and

prefer to have at least some armor on my body (everybody needs protection, right?).

Still, I was really happy with how it turned out, had a great time making it and wearing it to a photo-shoot. Projects like these are great to keep you motivated! Not everything needs to take a whole month to build!

If you're interested in creating a Pokemon Trainer costume yourself - both McCalls and Simplicity released a pattern for this exact costume. Using either of them will definitely save you a lot of time and experimentation!

NOTE

The Pokemon Trainer is a great example for a very first costume. It's fairly simple and doesn't require a lot of tools and materials. A good old sewing machine, a pair of scissors, and you are good to go. No need to pick a crazy, huge armor to get started. Sometimes it's better to start small and ease your way in.



Diablo III - Wizard

My Wizard from Diablo III was a collaboration with my dear friend Yaya Han. We both love to cosplay and craft together and even if we're from different countries, we still managed to spend a few days together during one of our trips. To profit from both of our biggest strengths, Yaya did the bulk of the sewing work, while I worked on our armor sets.



Crafting together with a friend is one of the best things you can do in cosplay. It's not only super fun, but you can also save shipping costs for materials, share your tools, and learn from each other. It's also very motivating and far more fun than working on your costume by yourself. Being a huge fan of Diablo III, I talked Yaya into creating two Wizards from the game. She is an amazing seamstress and I was very eager to learn from her and steal one or two of her tricks. In return, Yaya could watch me work on armor in person as well. Sharing is caring after all.

Yaya picked dupioni silk from a local fabric store for the floating and shimmering skirt of my costume. Using coupons, the material costs turned out to be very affordable, even with the high quality faux leather for the corset. I never worked on such a piece before and seeing her throw together a professionally made corset with steel boning within two hours was a sight to behold. She also draped the silk in a way that it became a puffy cascade of purple, white and black and I never thought about using fabric like that. Finding the right material was always very hard for

me, but here I learned that it's okay to add your own personal touch and just pick something you personally like. My fabric didn't have the perfect shade and was a little bit different than in the reference, but in combination with everything else, looked great in the final costume. This is all that matters.



Quickly, some armor!

Meanwhile, I worked on both our armor sets at the same time. Worbla is a very beginner friendly and an easy to handle material, so all I needed were a pair of scissors and a heat gun. Since I had only three days to build the whole armor, I actually got two of those to work even faster. I used my standard technique by wrapping myself in tape to get the patterns, trace them to craft foam, cover them with Worbla and add details with scraps of the material. Worbla is very forgiving and easy to adjust, so even mistakes I did in the hurry were easy to fix. It wasn't a very complicated project for me, but my friend really enjoyed following my work steps and taking notes for her upcoming projects. We both bombarded each other with questions about fabric choices, sewing machines, pattern making, primers, paints and much more. While we clearly had a lot of fun it was in general a great learning experience we both profited from a lot.

NOTE

Worbla is a great choice for your very first armor set. Especially since there are plenty of helpful tutorials you can find online. When you get started, keep it simple though and try to pick a small armor piece to begin with. I made my very first experiments with bracers, which don't need a lot of materials. Just check out my [Book of Cosplay Armor Making](#) if you want some inspiration and help!

Whatever works for you

At the same time, I've also discovered that it can be quite difficult to find something you are used to working with in a different country. Getting a strong enough heat gun was quite a challenge because of the lower voltage supply in the states. My trusty brands of primers, paints, and sealers were not available, so I tried to keep my eyes open for something similar. Wood glue, which I used a standard primer in Germany was also something completely different in the US. Finally, Reeves acrylic paints, Elmer's glue

and a brush on varnish from the hardware store turned out as good replacements. So, it's really not about the right products and brands, but about searching and finding something that might work just as good.

Finally, Yaya and I finished the main parts of both our costumes in around one week. We clearly wouldn't be as fast and effective without each other and I'm sure the quality wouldn't be that good. As friends and passionate artists, we had

not only a great and an incredible inspiring time, but we were also motivated to go even further and step out of our comfort zones. Yaya's following projects included far more armor and prop making, while I finally dared to get closer with my hated sewing machine.





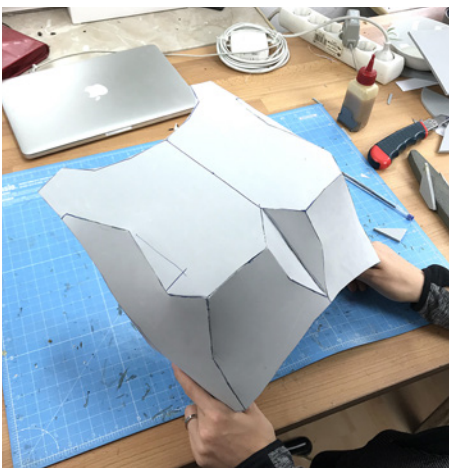
Iden Versio – Star Wars Battlefront 2

A cool costume doesn't need to cost a fortune. For my Iden Versio cosplay I gave myself the challenge to create it as affordable as possible, only using the most basic tools. While buying all the parts for this costume could easily add up to around \$2000 (1700€), I spent only \$40 (35€) on the suit and the armor, \$20 (17€) on the helmet and \$20 (17€) on the blaster (material costs only, tools not included).



I began with building the blaster. The base was simple EVA foam I still had laying around. I wrapped it over a PVC pipe I bought ages ago for another project. Based on a blueprint Benni made for me, I continued cutting out shapes of 2, 5 and 10mm high density EVA foam. This material is a little bit harder and less wobbly, so I prefer it over standard EVA foam when working on props. My main tools were scissors, a box cutter and a dremel. I simply added piece after piece to the pipe using contact cement. You can see the full building video on my YouTube channel or read more in my book about [Advanced Prop Making](#), so I won't go into more detail here.





Next up I had to sew the flight suit. For this I heavily edited a jump suit pattern from McCalls. To do this, I traced all pattern pieces onto a cheap, left-over fabric, cut all shapes out and sewed them together for a super simple mock up. This gave me a pretty good idea how to alter the shapes by taking fabric away. Based on this, I adjusted my paper patterns and began working on the real costume. I thought a flight suit would need a thick and protective material, so heavy, black jeans fabric was my choice. It only cost a few dollars per meter (yard). Since I never sewed anything like it, I watched plenty of video tutorials about attaching zippers, adjusting patterns or creating pockets. The YouTube community was incredibly helpful here and I was happy that the suit turned out just as I wanted.

While I could have just bought a resin kit of the armor from Ebay, I preferred to build the breastplate by myself. The purchasable kits all look too large for my taste. Instead I wanted my armor to fit perfectly and be as lightweight as possible. Luckily Benni found an awesome pepakura/papercraft model online, which we printed out in different sizes. Once we figured out which was the right scale, I edited the shapes a bit and traced them on 5mm EVA foam. Following the paper template, I glued all pieces together with strong contact cement, cleaned up the edges and finally primed and painted the breastplate in a glossy black. All additional parts like the box at the front, the belt and the accessories were made the same way. I also used cheap fake leather, which I weathered with acrylic paint to create the holster for the blaster.

See how I made this costume on YouTube:
https://youtu.be/jb4sdH_Uzi8



The helmet was clearly the most complicated part of the costume and something I was really worried about. Most Star Wars cosplayers just buy their helmets, so I wasn't really able to find any helpful tutorials or references. The only help I found was another pepakura/papercraft model, which was close enough to the design I wanted to build. Again, I printed out everything on paper, taped together a dummy to find the right size and used this to create patterns for my EVA foam. The whole time while putting this thing together, I had no idea if it would actually work. Since paper doesn't really have a thickness I had to be careful when transferring the patterns to thicker foam. It was pretty wobbly at the beginning and I simply wasn't able to build it as clean and precise

as I wanted. There were many moments when I just wanted to throw it away, but I was still curious if it would work out in the end. On the very last day when I finally glued the bottom part on, the helmet became a lot stronger and symmetrical. I was so happy and extremely proud of not giving up. It was one of these moments that showed me that fighting on, no matter how unattainable your goal looks, can be worth it in the end. After a happy little dance, it was finally time to finish this part. I covered the helmet in several layers of PlastiDip and Benni applied the red details with an airbrush. Once I sealed everything with spray varnish, the helmet got super shiny and didn't look like foam at all anymore.

NOTE

It took us two weeks and \$80 (not counting the shoes) to bring Iden Versio to life. It might look like a simple costume, but it was quite the challenge to build everything from scratch and only with very basic materials and tools. Besides reaching my budget goal, it also gave my self-confidence a huge boost. I hope this costume shows that cosplay doesn't need to be expensive and even an elaborate project can be done with a very limited budget.



The costume is done. What's next?

Finally, after this long journey you can gather all your pieces, get your wig ready and put your costume on! Now what? Well, luckily the journey has just begun!

Visit a convention

When I first got into cosplay, my personal highlight was always showing off my finished costume at my favorite convention. I packed all my parts, threw my suitcases and bags into the car and drove with Benni, my cosplay partner Selina and all my friends through the country. Together we got into our costumes the next day, laughed about our cosplay malfunctions, posed for photos and enjoyed the amazing feeling of taking everything off again in the evening. Conventions are a great a reason to push yourself and set yourself a goal you can work towards. For cosplay, everything is more fun, even panicking and crafting through the nights to finish everything before the event starts. Just try it out! There are so many different conventions you can go to. It doesn't have to be a big Comic Cons too. Smaller events can actually be a lot more fun! I have made countless friends at conventions and met a lot of like minded people I would miss out otherwise.



Take some cool photos

Something I can also highly recommend are photo-shoots. Creating a costume is one thing, but truly bringing your character to life requires some extra tricks. Try thinking about a specific scene or just the feeling of the world your character lives in and try to recreate it in a photo. I often search for locations like an untouched forest, a futuristic looking building or a metal junkyard covered in rust. It really depends on your character which location would fit the most. Finally I dress up and Benni and I take a short trip through the city (or country) by car. A cheap DSLR is enough to take a cool photo (or even your phone, those things can take some high quality pictures) and you can upgrade anytime if you want to go more "professional". Equipment doesn't really matter so much as long as you have a pretty costume, a nice location and enough daylight. It's a million times better than anything you can get on a convention floor. It also is a much better way to show off your hard work online. It would be really sad if you put so much work into your costume and then you don't even have a proper photo of it, right? We maybe wear our costumes a few times, but the pictures and memories stay forever.





Participate in a contest

Finally, you might also want to check out some local (national or even international) cosplay contests. I know I told you to not compare yourself to others just a few pages back, but if you're still into it, contests are a great opportunity to meet other skilled artists and spend some time with them backstage. I did it for a short while too and was always incredibly inspired to see all the different techniques and materials they used and truly enjoyed to learn from them. Once home I was excited to try out everything I saw and even got more ideas for some issues I had with my own current projects. If the contest offers a pre-judging, this is always a great way to get some honest and unfiltered feedback for your work. Just ask! As a judge myself I'm always open to this and will try to answer all your questions or give you some tips and tricks to improve your project. Don't take contest too seriously however. It's all good as long as it's fun and games but if the competitive side starts to take away the fun, and the drama emerges, maybe it's time to stop. Cosplay should be about fun and creativity first and foremost.



Where to go from here

I hope this book has given you a few ideas of where to start with your first costume. Cosplay is an amazing hobby and I wish it brings you as much joy as it does for me. If you want to see more of our costume creation process, make sure to check out our YouTube channel, social media or our crafting tutorial books. We have a book about all kinds of topics from sewing, to Worbla and foam work, all the way to airbrush and LEDs. Follow other artists on Instagram to get inspired, join a friendly Facebook group, meet other people at conventions and just try to have a good time and spread the love.

This concludes book number eleven, wowzers!

I really appreciate that you finished this book. Hopefully you found some tips that were helpful!

Please leave me a message if you have more questions or ideas for upcoming books or videos!

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

www.kamuicosplay.com

Also, if you already made a costume or prop using my techniques, I would love to share your work in my gallery!

kamuicosplay.com/epiccosplay

You can always find me on:

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