

How to Cosplay

Cosplaying is a lot of work, whether you choose to make, commission, or buy your cosplay. You need to spend a lot of time researching and putting together your cosplay. Once you have it finished, you still need to add the details, such as...

Part 1 of 4:

Planning Your Cosplay

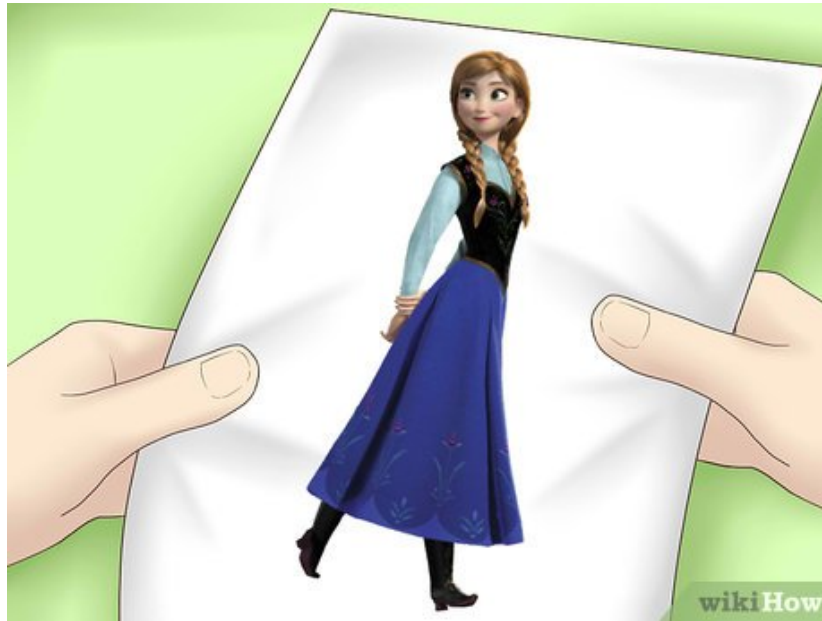


1.

Decide who you want to cosplay. Choose a character you can relate to or that you are similar to. Keep in mind that you don't have to cosplay as your race, body type, or gender; *anyone* can cosplay. On a similar note, your cosplay does not have to be from anime or anything of Japanese origin. You can cosplay a character from a movie, television show, or even a western animation (e.g., Disney).^[1]

1. If this is your first time cosplaying, however you may want to choose a character with a simpler design.

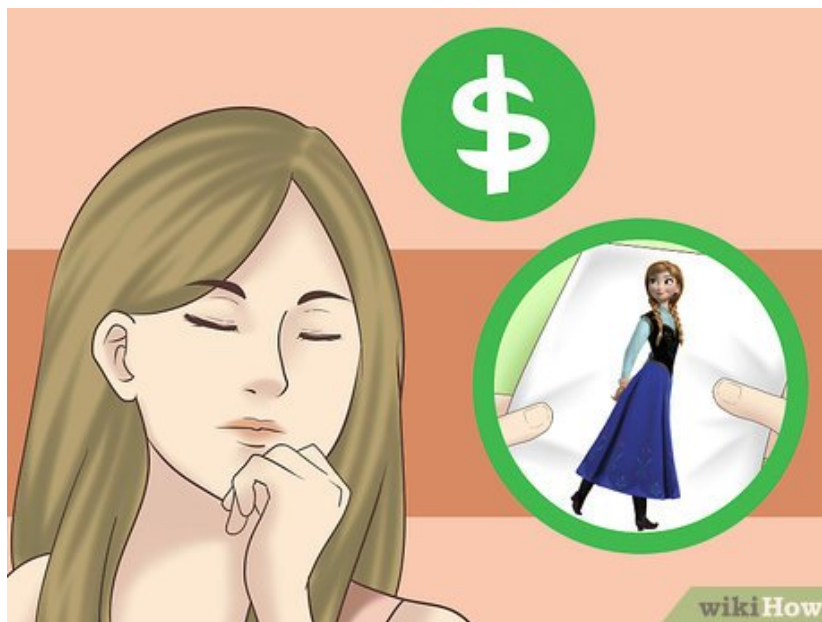
2.



Get reference pictures. Don't just get any reference pictures, however; get the ones of the specific version of the character you are dressing up as. Many characters have multiple outfits. Some characters' costumes change slightly from film to film. For example, Iron Man's body suit changes a little in each Iron Man and Avengers film. Batman sports a different design with each film as well.^[2]

1. This may not be possible with fan art. In this case, get the best quality image of the fan art you are basing your cosplay on.

3.



Determine how much money and effort you are willing to put into your cosplay. You don't need to spend a lot of money in order to have a great-looking cosplay. If you want your cosplay to look great for cheap, however, be prepared to spend lots of time on it. Some cosplays will also require more than just sewing, such as casting parts in resin or making foam armor.

1. The more time you have before the event, the more elaborate you can make your cosplay. If the event is this weekend, consider something simpler.

4.



Design your own cosplay if you want to be more original. You can always go with a screen-accurate version of the character you are cosplaying. Alternatively, you can put a unique spin on it, such as a historically-accurate version of a Disney princess, or a steampunk version of a character. You can even do a crossover between two costumes, such as a Sailor Scout version of a Pokemon.

1. Look at pictures of other people's cosplays or fan art for inspiration.
2. If you decide to base your cosplay off of someone's fan art, ask the artist for permission. It's the polite thing to do.

5.

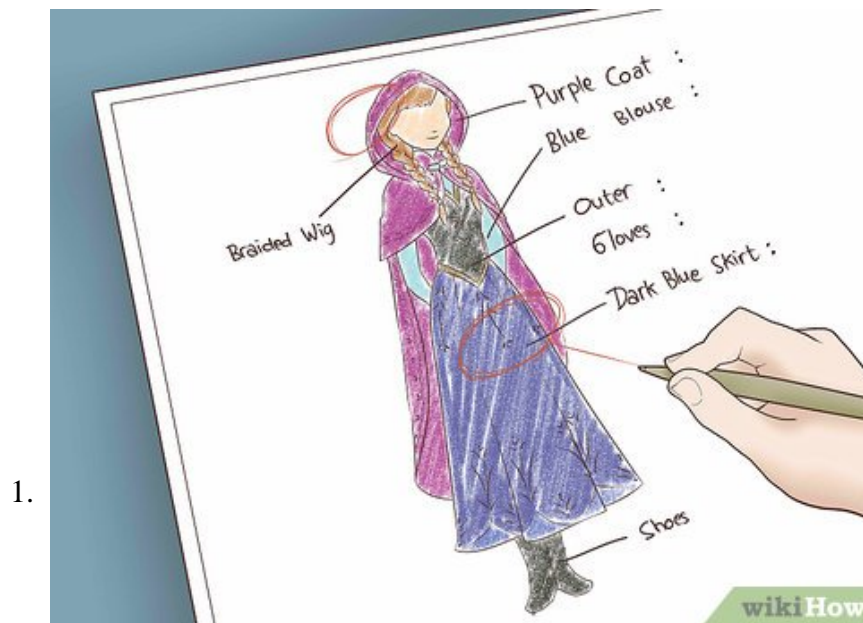


Plan ahead and give yourself time to finish your cosplay. Even if you are buying your cosplay, you still need to account the time it takes to create it (if you are commissioning someone to make it) and the time it takes to ship it out. If you are making the cosplay, you might want to give yourself extra time to fix any mistakes.^[3]

1. The more difficult and detailed the costume is, the more time you'll need to make it.

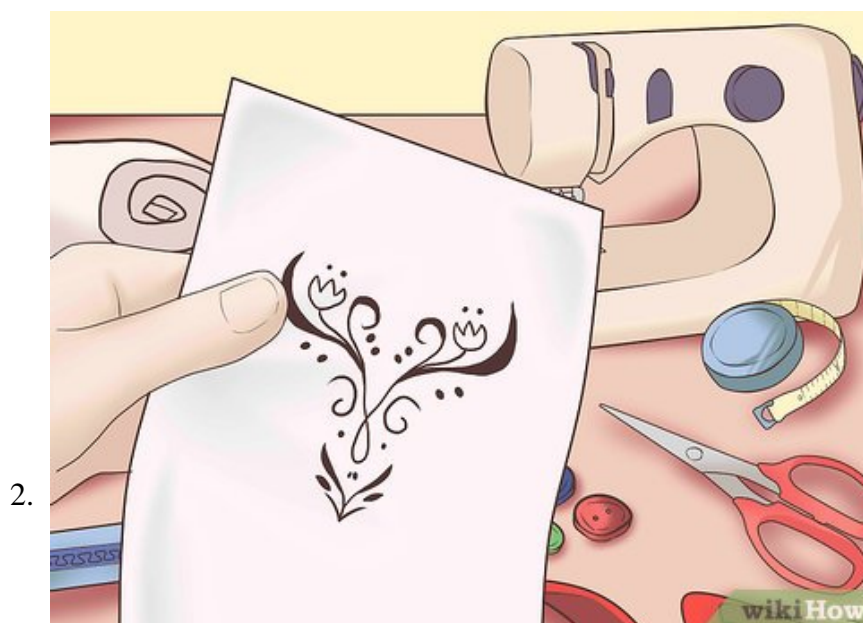
Part 2 of 4:

Making or Buying Your Cosplay



Make a list of everything you need. This includes every piece of the entire outfit, down to the belt, gloves, and shoes. It should also include things like wigs (if you are using one), makeup, and any necessary undergarments. If you are going to make the cosplay, write down the materials you'll need for each piece.^[4] For example:

1. White blouse: white cotton, white thread, white buttons
2. Green skirt: dark green twill or wool suiting, matching thread, zipper, hook closure
3. brown loafers, white knee socks, skin-toned bra

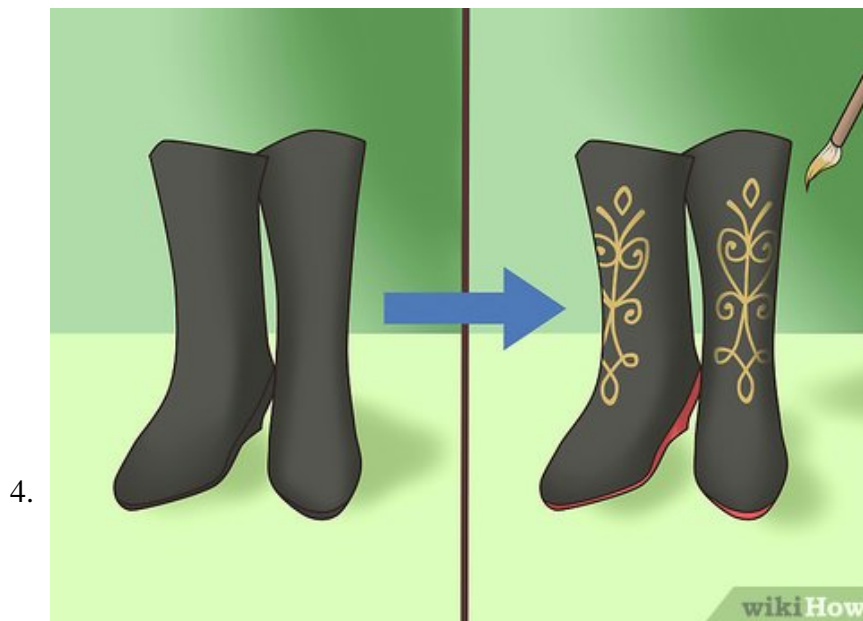


Use patterns when sewing your cosplay. You can buy a pattern from the fabric store or draft your own. If you decide to use store-bought patterns, be prepared to modify them to suit the character and your figure. Many patterns also include a list of recommended fabric types. Take these into consideration!

1. You may need to change the shape of the hem or sleeves on the pattern.
2. If a pattern is the right shape but the wrong length, you'll need to add/subtract length to/from it.
3. Don't be afraid to change the shape of a collar to suit your cosplay.



Don't be afraid or ashamed to buy pieces for your cosplay. You don't have to make *everything* from scratch. If your cosplay requires an everyday item, it would be easier to just buy it.^[5] For example, if you are cosplaying Kagome from *Inuyasha*, it would be much cheaper, easier, and faster to buy a pair of knee socks rather than make them yourself.



Consider buying and modifying piece to suit your cosplay. Sometimes, you may come across an item that is the right shape, but the wrong color. Other times, you may come across something that is the right

color but a little too long. Instead of making a whole new piece, get the almost-right piece, then modify it.

[6] For example:

1. If something is the right shape but the wrong color, dye it.
2. If something is too long or has sleeves, cut it. Don't forget to hem it though (if needed).
3. Paint boots to match your cosplay, or make boot covers for them.

5.



Do your research when buying or commissioning a cosplay. There is no guarantee that the cosplay will fit you perfectly, especially if you buy it from a cosplay shop. The quality may be top-notch, or it may be sub-par. Most importantly, research the company or the person you are buying or commissioning the cosplay from. Make sure that they are reliable!

6.



Don't forget the props and accessories. While not *absolutely* necessary, they can really take your cosplay to the next level. A prop can help you come up with more creative poses, while accessories can make your cosplay more realistic. As with the rest of your cosplay, you can make, buy, or commission

your props and accessories.

1. Many animated films use simple designs. If you are cosplaying as a Disney princess, consider adding some jewelry or hair pieces!
2. Read the convention's rules regarding props to find out what is and what isn't allowed.

Part 3 of 4:

Doing Your Hair and Makeup



Plan out your look. As with the costume, think about how the character's hair and makeup would translate into real life. Can you get away with using your real hair, or will you need to get a wig? Makeup will help you look better in photos, but do you want a more stylized or a more realistic look? Take a moment to think about what sort of look you are going for.



Use your own hair if you are willing to cut it or dye it. If your hair is almost right for the character, but not quite, don't be afraid to straighten it, curl it, or add extensions. If you are more daring, you can even dye your hair or cut it to better suit the character. Only do this if you actually like the style, however; you'll be stuck with it for a few months.^[7]



Use a high-quality wig if you don't want to mess with your real hair. For the best look, purchase a high-quality wig from a reputable wig or costume shop; avoid using the cheap wigs from the party or Halloween store. If you want your cosplay to look even more realistic, you can get a lace-front wig instead.^[8]

1. Wear a wig cap under the wig. Make sure that it is skin-toned or that it matches your wig.
2. Use bobby pins that keep your wig in place. Make sure that they match the wig color.
3. Pin your hair up under the wig. You don't want it sticking out under the wig.



Style your hair or the wig. Whether you are using your own hair or a wig, you'll need to style it. Most wigs rarely look like the intended character's hair, so you'll likely need to trim it; in some cases, you'll need to straighten it or curl it. You will also need to comb your hair or the wig into the right style, then set it with hairspray.

1. Use hairspray and styling wax to shape your hair.
2. If you are styling a wig, invest in a Styrofoam wig head.
3. Do not use curling irons or flat irons on wigs. Use the hot water curling or straightening method.



Wear makeup, even if you are a guy or cross-playing a male character. Makeup is important for cosplay. It makes your skin appear smoother and more photogenic. For most characters, you will need a natural look: basic foundation, neutral eyeshadow, and eyeliner. If you are cosplaying a girl, you can add mascara or false lashes. From there, you can bring more life to your character with lipstick and contouring or blush.^[9]

1. You can use contouring to make your face look more feminine or masculine.
2. Even male characters can benefit from lipstick. Use a neutral color.
3. You can use a different color of eyeshadow, but only if it suits the character and costume.

Part 4 of 4:

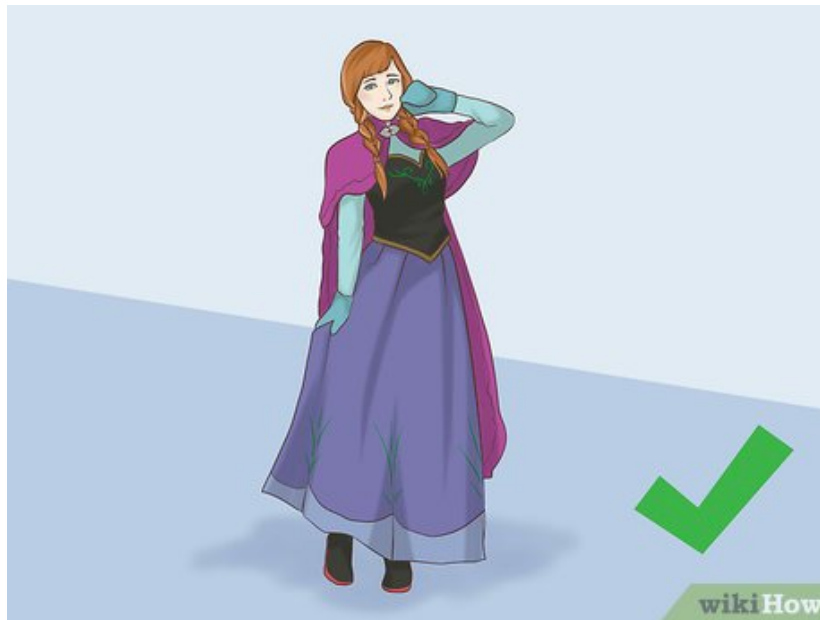
Putting the Cosplay into Play



Practice getting into cosplay before the big event. This includes applying the makeup, putting the wig on, putting in and taking out contact lenses, etc. If something doesn't fit or feel comfortable, take a moment to fix it. Make sure that your cosplay is comfortable and durable.^[10]

1. If you are having troubles with contact lenses, *leave them out*. Don't leave costume contact lenses in your eyes for the entire convention; that is asking for a serious infection.

2.



Get into character. You don't necessarily have to act like your character, although you can if you want to. It would be a good idea to have some poses in mind, however. People love to take pictures of other people's cosplays at conventions, so there is a high chance that someone might want to take a picture of yours!^[11]

3.



Be respectful of other people's boundaries. There is nothing wrong with getting into character if you see someone from the same anime or series. Be aware that not everyone will want to play along with you. If they don't play along, apologize and leave them alone; don't harass them or force them to play with you.



Try not to take things too seriously. Cosplay is supposed to be fun. Instead of comparing yourself to everyone else, feel proud of the work you did. Meet up with friends or make new ones. If you are shy, consider going to some panels, gathering, or other events. There is lots to do at conventions while in cosplay!^[12]

1. If you *do* like competition, consider joining the cosplay contest or masquerade; most conventions will have one.



Remember that cosplay is not consent. If someone makes you feel uncomfortable, speak up. Report them to security or con-ops. If someone is harassing you, and con-ops or security are not around, call for help. While these instances are not common at conventions, they still happen. Your safety is very important.^[13]

1. Stay smart. Don't go to empty or solitary places with people you don't know.
2. Stick with a friend or a person you trust, especially if you are out at night.

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