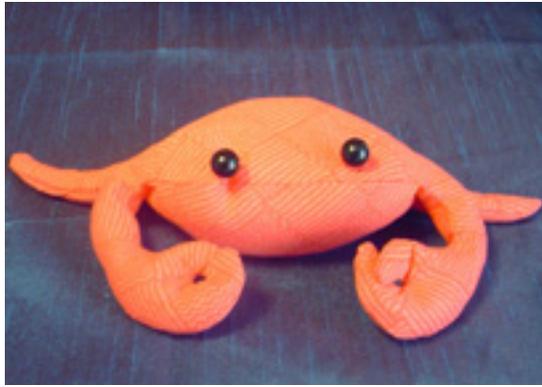


# Crab-Bags & Other Bean Beings

How to make six ingenious, companionable creatures  
with indispensable notes on their particular characters and dispositions



by Margaret Park  
illustrated by Sara Bluestone

Full Size Patterns, Complete Instructions and Secret Tips

# **Crab-Bags & Other Bean-Beings**

**by Margaret Park**

illustrated by Sara Bluestone

Great River Books  
Salt Lake City, Utah

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# Foreword

Why bean-bags?

Anyone who has ever handled, played with, cherished or lost a bean-bag knows the answer to this question. And for those who have been deprived of these small but memorable pleasures, there is only one way to explain: hand them a bean-bag. But don't give them one unless you're willing to part with it. It's very hard to get a bean-bag back.

That is why I wrote this book: to make bean-bags easier to come by and easier to part with — by making them easy to make. I have made the instructions as simple as possible. All you will need is a few square inches of cloth, a handful of beans or some similar stuffing material, a couple of beads, and a few minutes.

The designs in this book are my own. I like each of these animals, and while trying to keep the patterns simple I still wanted to catch something of the particular character of each one. Most of the bean-bags sold in stores these days are little more than shapeless sacks with roly eyes. I prefer — as I think anyone else would, given the choice — something with a little more life.

# General Instructions

This book is designed for easy use.

The six bean-bags are arranged more or less according to the difficulty in making them, though in fact the dolphin is only a little more complicated than the crab. The steps and techniques involved are basically the same and can be mastered with even the first attempt. Specific instructions for each animal are given on the pages facing the pattern.

What follows here is general advice and hints for all the bean-bags.

## Materials

### *Fabrics*

You don't need much, and what you need you probably already have. The best choice for easy handling is a tightly-woven, lightweight fabric — cotton and cotton blends are fine. Heavier fabrics, like corduroy, denim, etc., though more durable are more difficult to work with when turning the bean-bag right side out. They should be avoided, at least when working with patterns of this size. (I do, however, sometimes use velvet or velveteen for the seal and dolphin. They have wider appendages which are easier to turn, and the sleekness and softness of velvet is worth the extra difficulty.)

As for prints and colors, feel free to use your imagination. I have used stripes, polka dots, solids and small flowered prints with each and all of the

creatures, and just about anything works. In fact it's often an amusing surprise to see how well unlikely odd scraps will turn out.

If you have any intention of washing the bean-bag in the future, the fabric should be pre-shrunk before sewing. But remember that beans and other organic stuffing materials are not washable unless you want a bagful of bean sprouts. The bean-bag should be emptied before being thrown into the washing machine.

### *Stuffing*

There are lots of things besides beans that you can put inside a bean-bag. Your kitchen should provide you with plenty of them. The smaller the 'bean' the easier it is to get it into the bean-bag. Small-sized beans, peas and grains work well — such as mung beans, lentils, rice, and wheat berries. I have found the easiest material to use is millet, the main ingredient in common bird food.

It is also possible to find plastic 'beans,' small pellets of polystyrene. They have the dubious advantage of being washable, but are very much lighter in weight. They are probably quite indigestible if accidentally consumed, compared to beans which make for a large dose of roughage at worst.

### *Beads*

The final touch, the point at which your bean-bag will come alive, is the sewing on of their beady eyes.

Proper beads are easy to find in most arts and crafts and five and ten cent stores. Small wooden or plastic beads in bright colors and different sizes are sold in packets of 25 or 30 for about fifty cents — enough to keep you in eyes for quite a while.

The creatures in this book have eyes that range from 8 mm. to 4 mm. (which is how the sizes are graded). Check the directions for each animal for a suggested size.

If your bean-bags are intended for a very young child (of the chew-and-swallow-everything age) you will probably not want to use beads. Embroider on the eyes instead.

## Sewing Hints

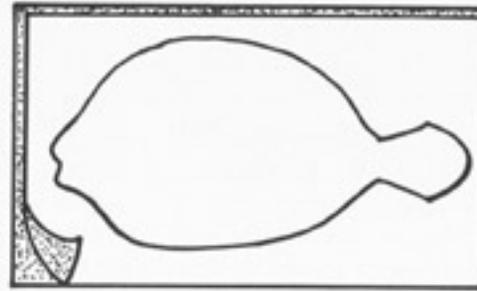
For most sewing jobs the paper pattern is pinned to the cloth, which is then cut to the exact shape of the pattern, and the seam is sewn on a line paralleling the edge of the cut cloth shape. PLEASE NOTE that the approach in this book is different.

The outline of all my patterns (except the dolphin) is the actual seam line for sewing together the two rectangles of fabric. The sharp curves and bends of the animal figures are easier to follow when the seam line is clearly marked on the fabric.

I would also like to point out that the size of these patterns and of the bean-bags has been carefully chosen. In fact this book was designed to accommodate those sizes. I think the bean-bags are most appealing and fun to handle in these dimensions, but it is also a simple matter to enlarge the size of the bean-bags with a reasonably careful drawing from my patterns.

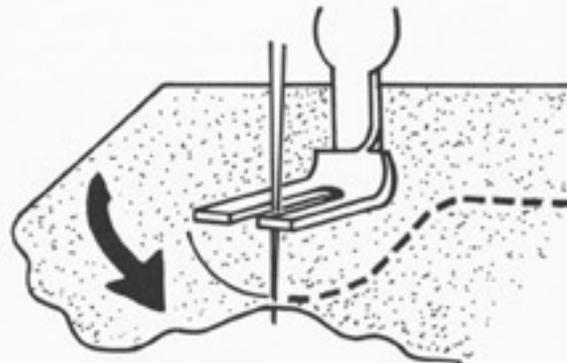
### Marking

Place the pattern on the cloth with the right sides together. Using a soft pencil or pen, lightly mark the fabric by tracing around the edge of the pattern.



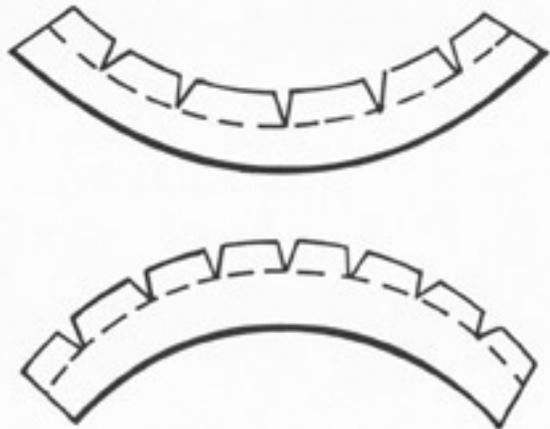
### Sewing

Lock in your first and last stitches by back-stitching over them. If sewing by hand, use small straight stitches that the beans can't slip through. If using a sewing machine, work slowly and carefully. Pivot the cloth around curves and angles by stopping the machine and with the needle piercing the fabric, lift up the machine's foot and turn the cloth to the direction desired.



### *Trimming*

Cut away the excess fabric from around the sewn figure leaving only 1/8 to 1/4 inch of material as seam allowance. Be sure to clip into all the curving edges. If you find the fabric is bunched up at any point along the seam when the animal is turned right side out, the curve has not been trimmed closely enough at that point.



### *Turning*

With the aid of a blunt, narrow stick (like the end of a paintbrush or pencil), gently turn the cloth to the right side until the seam is completely visible — even at the corners. This step can be difficult if the fabric you have chosen is heavy or napped.

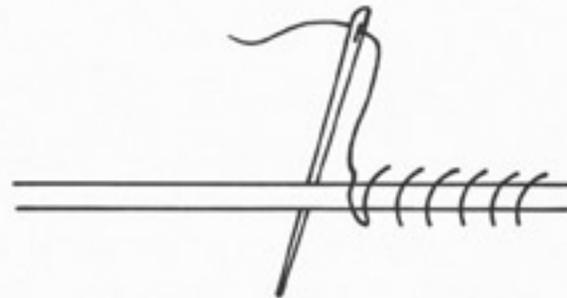
Through lots of practice I have found a simple method for turning bean-bags: Hold the end of a limb with thumb and index finger. Separate the back from the front by rubbing your fingers past one another. Place the end of the 'turning stick' against the end of

the limb and push it up between your fingers, through the inside of the limb and out the fill hole.



### *Stuffing*

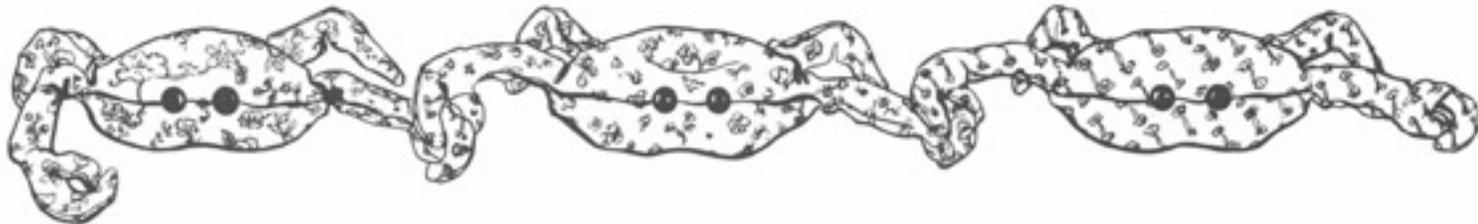
Insert a wide funnel (you can make one by rolling up a piece of paper) into the bean-bag opening and fill the bean-bag. Sew up the opening with the overcast stitch.



# Crab

People with bad dispositions have given crabs a bad name. In Tahiti, however, where people are said to have invariably good dispositions (and a crab is called *pa'a* or *'ama'ama*), crabs are highly regarded and revered. They are thought to be the shadows of local gods, especially of the god of people in trouble.

Anyone who has had any dealings with crabs knows they are extremely tenacious. Though they can be hard to find when you are looking for them, they can be hard to get free of once they have found you. And when you get them together, they are inseparable.



*Secret Tip:* The secret of this tenacious crab is its claws. The crab-bag does not have a hard shell, but its claws can become strong and even hold on to things when they are packed as tight as boxing gloves. The joint with the body will naturally not be so tightly stuffed, so the crab can move with an arm-swinging, scuttling motion.

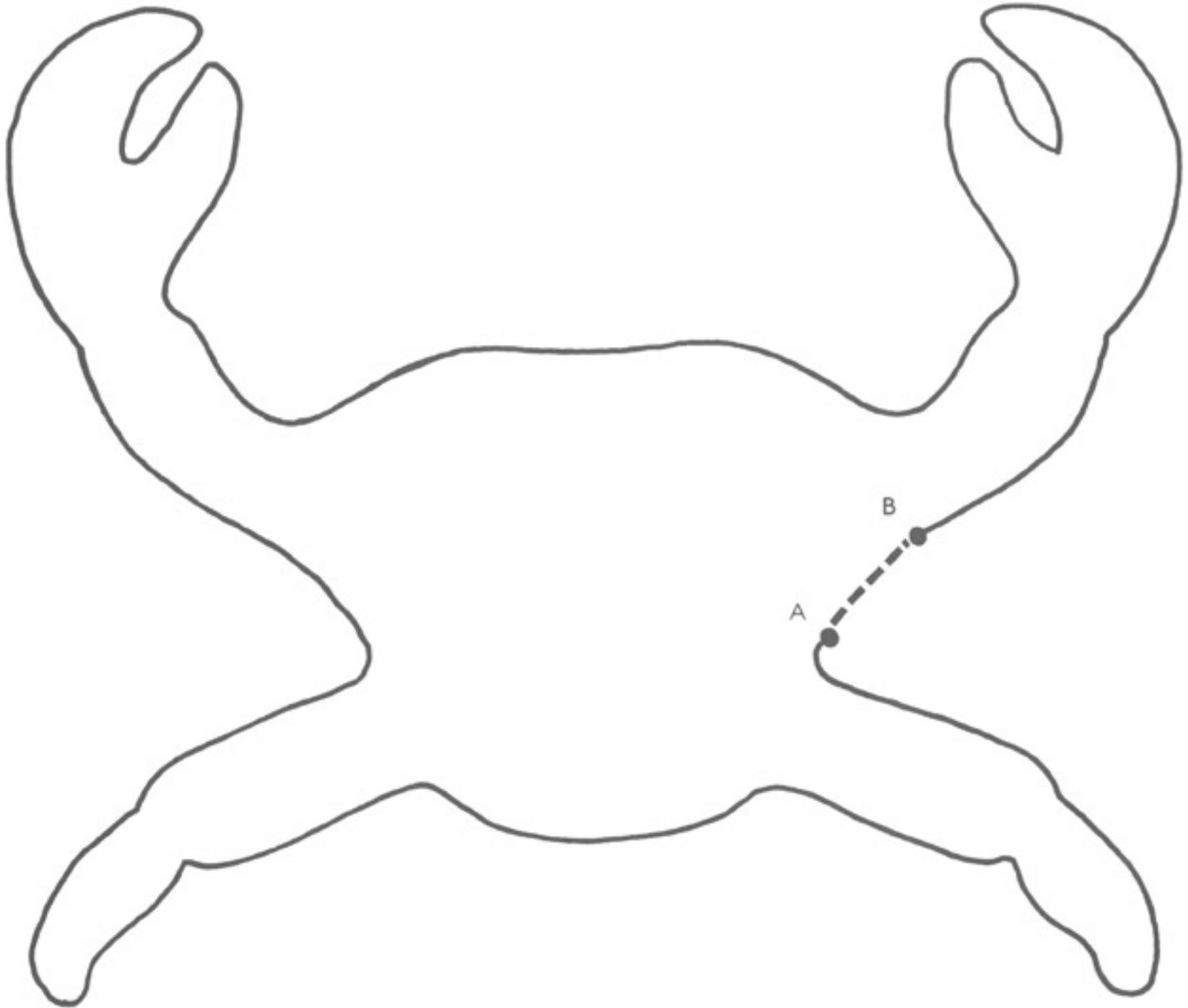
## Crab

As you see, this crab-bag has two claws and only two legs. This is far fewer than any other crab you're likely to find. If you disapprove of this alteration on nature's design, you may add as many legs as you like. But beware — it will be much more difficult to turn many narrow legs right side out.

Materials: Two rectangles of cloth 10" x 12"  
Two 8 mm. beads

- Place one rectangle on the other with the right sides together.
- Cut out the pattern on the heavy dark line.
- Trace the pattern on to the top piece of fabric.
- Sew the rectangles together on this marked line. Begin at A and end at B, leaving an opening.
- Trim around the figure leaving 1/8 to 1/4 inch of material as a seam allowance.
- Clip into the seam allowance at the curve (especially between the pincers) — close to, but not touching the seam.
- Turn the figure right side out.
- Fill the crab-bag with beans, packing them tightly into the claws and legs.
- Sew up the fill hole with an overcast stitch.
- Attaching the eyes
  1. Stitch through the fabric and bead hole four times.
  2. Firmly anchor by wrapping the thread around these stitches five times.
  3. Stitch through the fabric once more and tie off the thread ends.





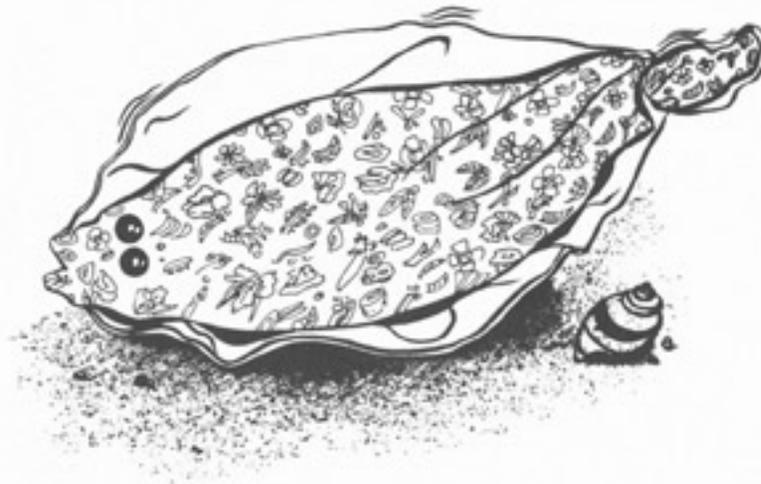
Crab

# Flounder

A flounder is a fluke. Here's why:

A baby flounder swims upright. It is the same color on both sides, and has an eye on each side of its head. As it grows older it begins to stagger and flounder and list to one side. One eye migrates across its forehead, ending up next to the other, and the flounder lies down on one side. The side lying down on the bottom becomes pale, and the upper side takes on the coloring of its surroundings. And so the flounder becomes a full-grown fluke.

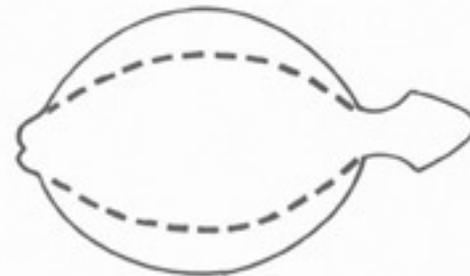
*Secret Tip:* To determine whether your flounder is right-sided or left-sided, pick it up — grasping firmly by the tail — hold it at arm's length, toss it into the air, and let it fall to the ground. Quickly pick it up before it changes its mind, and sew the eyes on as pictured here.

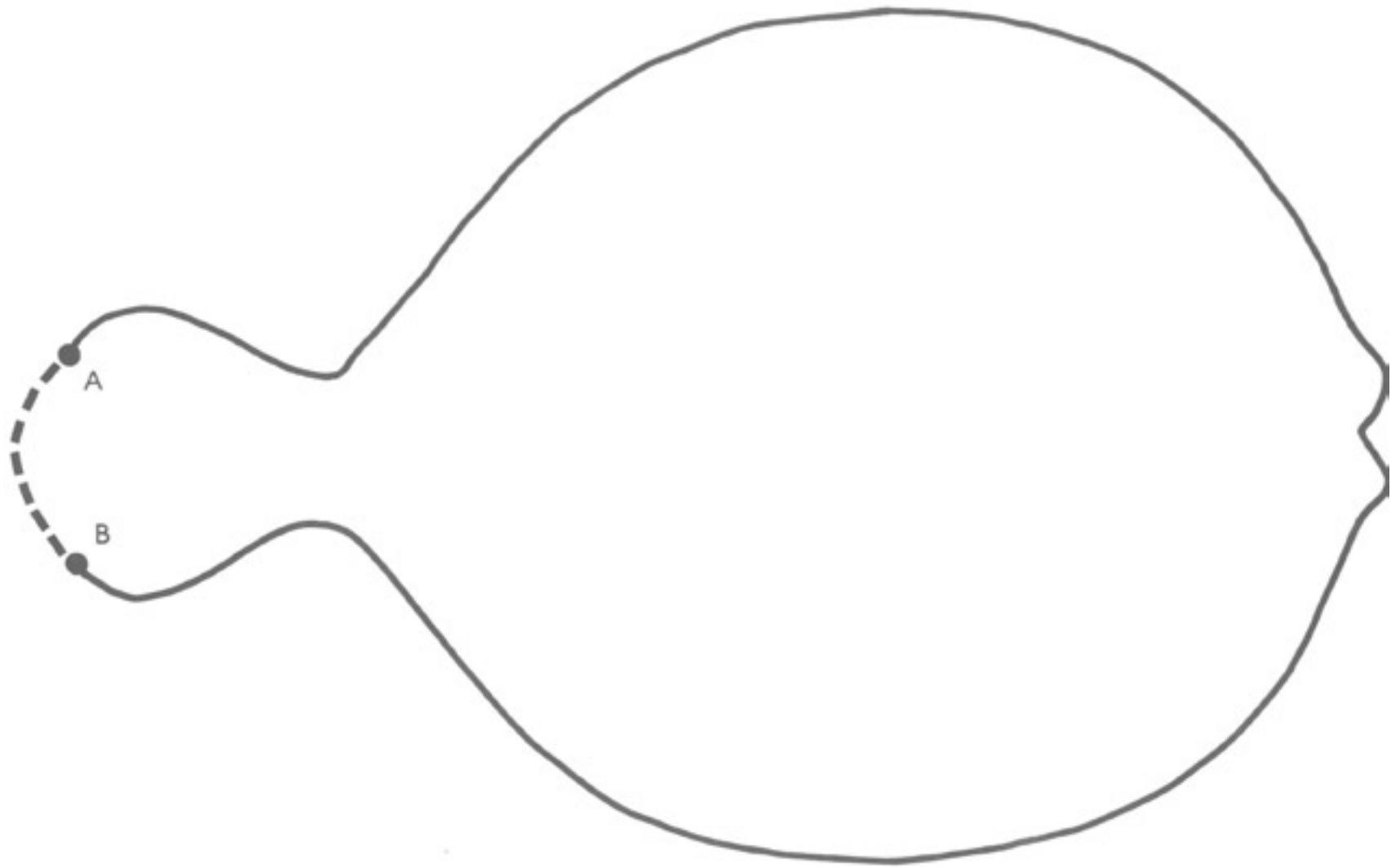


## Flounder

Materials: Two rectangles of cloth 10" x 12"  
Two 8 mm. beads

- Place one rectangle on the other with the right sides together.
- Cut out the pattern on the heavy dark line.
- Trace the pattern on to the top piece of fabric.
- Sew the rectangles together on this marked line. Begin at A and end at B, leaving an opening.
- Trim around the figure leaving 1/8" to 1/4" of material as a seam allowance.
- Clip into the seam allowance at the curves — close to but not touching the seam.
- Turn the figure right side out.
- Making flounder fins
  1. Flatten the flounder with an iron to smooth the edges.
  2. Stitch on the top of the fabric with matching thread as shown by the dotted lines.
- Fill with beans. Flounders are flatfish and should be sparingly stuffed.
- Sew up the fill hole with an overcast stitch.
- Attaching the eyes
  1. Stitch through the fabric and bead hole four times.
  2. Firmly anchor by wrapping the thread around the stitches five times.
  3. Stitch through the fabric once more and tie off the thread ends.





Flounder

# Frog

Folklore and fairy tales are full of frogs who turn into princes and other high-powered creatures — as if that was supposed to be an improvement. But there are stuffed princes who would give the world a great deal more happiness if they could be turned into frogs as fine as this one.

For this is a frog with jewel-like eyes who passes its time croaking harmoniously from a lily pad under the moon and stars, or glittering contentedly under a hot mid-day sun. It is almost always smiling because it is almost always among friends.

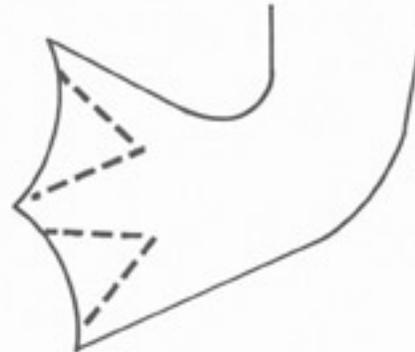
*Secret Tip:* This frog has an exceptionally well-turned leg, about which it is secretly — and forgiveably — a little bit vain.

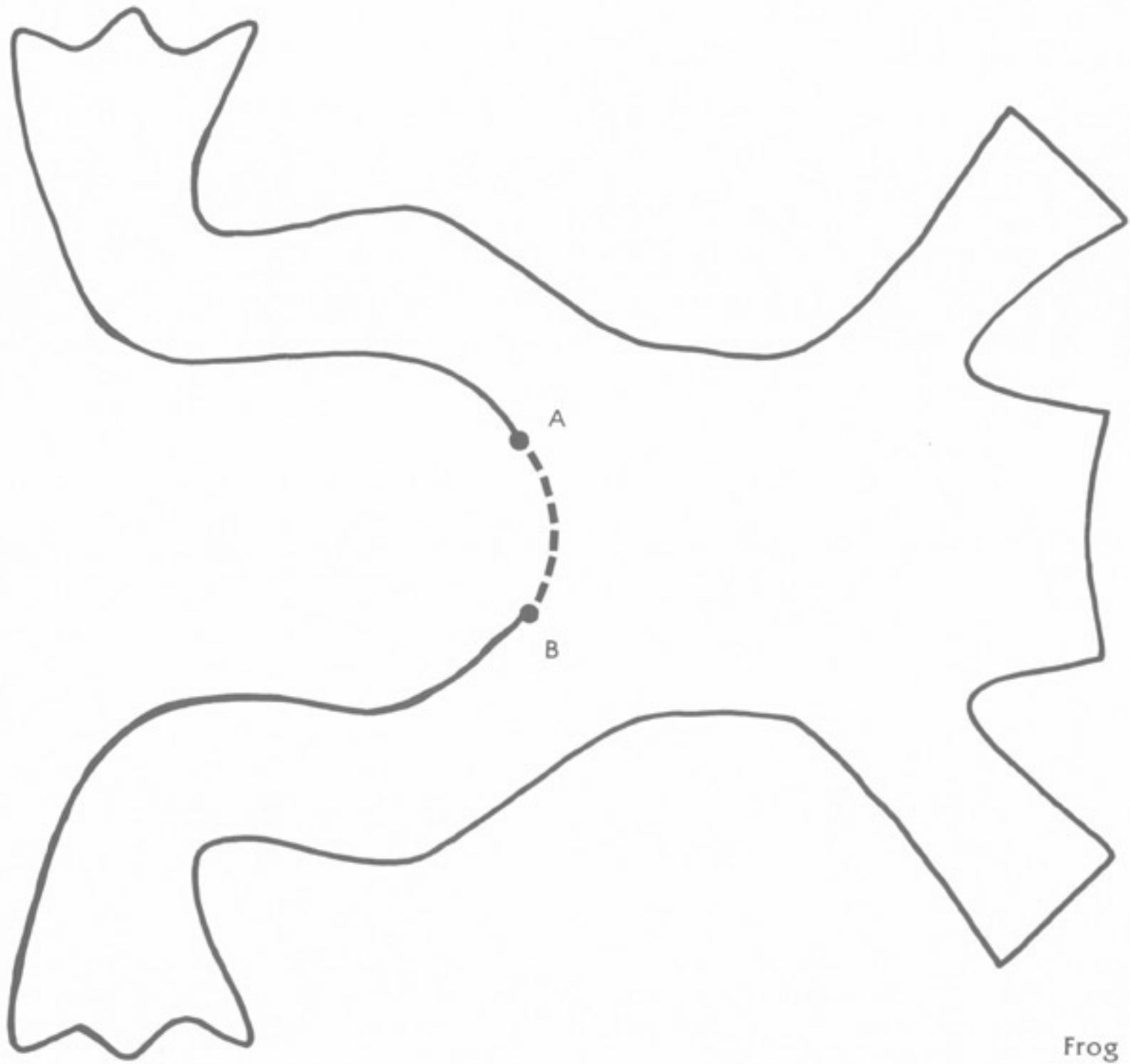


## Frog

Materials: Two rectangles of cloth 10" x 12"  
Two 8 mm. beads

- Place one rectangle on the other with the right sides together.
- Cut out the pattern on the heavy dark line.
- Trace the pattern on to the top piece of fabric.
- Sew the rectangles together on this marked line. Begin at A and end at B, leaving an opening.
- Trim around the figure leaving 1/8" to 1/4" of material as a seam allowance.
- Clip into the seam allowance at the curves — close to but not touching the seam.
- Turn the figure right side out.
- Making webbed feet
  1. Flatten the feet with an iron to smooth the edges.
  2. Stitch on the top of the fabric with matching thread as shown by the dotted lines.
- Fill with beans.
- Sew up the fill hole with an overcast stitch.
- Attaching the eyes
  1. Stitch through the fabric and bead hole four times.
  2. Firmly anchor by wrapping the thread around the stitches five times.
  3. Stitch through the fabric once more and tie off the thread ends.





Frog

# Seal

Almost everyone knows how clever and funny seals are. Few people realize the full range of their talents. Seals are very musical. The harp seal, the lovely white swimmer of the polar seas, is well known. But seals sing too, and their songs have even been recorded. So of course they can talk. Elephant seals talk to each other in what sounds to us like honks and burps, and since they grow up in different places they naturally speak in different dialects.

It has long been known that seals have the magical power to transform themselves into human beings and back again. In the west of Ireland in very ancient times, some of the Coneely clan were magically changed into seals, and seals are still called Coneelys. This was such common knowledge that local people would no more hurt or eat a seal than they would a human Coneely.

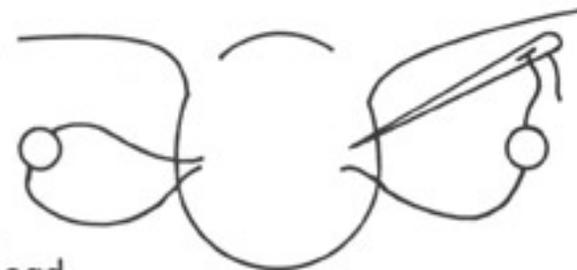
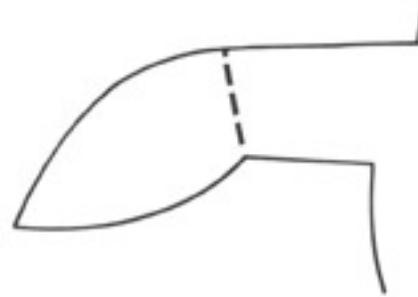
*Secret Tip:* The secret of this seal is in its versatile flippers which enable it to stand, swim, walk or clap with perfect pinniped dexterity.

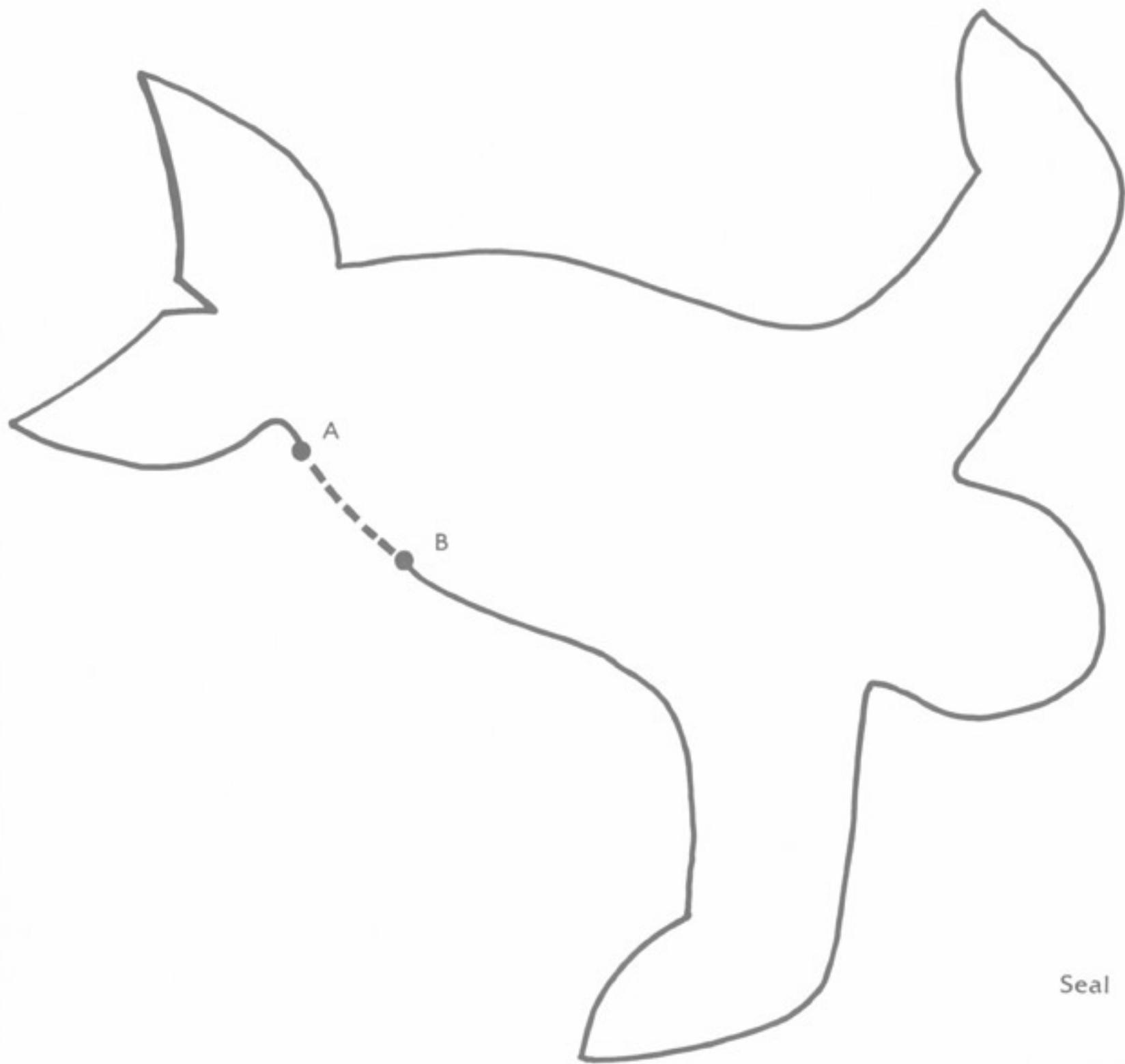


## Seal

Materials: Two squares of cloth 12" x 12"  
Two 4 mm. beads

- Place one square on the other with the right sides together.
- Cut out the pattern on the heavy dark line.
- Trace it on to the top piece of fabric.
- Sew the squares together on this marked line. Begin at A and end at B, leaving an opening.
- Trim around the figure leaving 1/8 to 1/4 inch of material as a seam allowance.
- Clip into the seam allowance at the curves — close to but not touching the seam.
- Turn the figure right side out.
- Making seal flippers
  1. Flatten the flippers with an iron to smooth the edges.
  2. Stitch on the top of the fabric with matching thread as shown by the dotted line.
- Fill with beans.
- Sew up the fill hole with an overcast stitch.
- Attaching the eyes
  1. Insert the needle and knotted piece of thread into the right side of the head and push it through to the same spot on the left side.
  2. Thread through a bead and push the needle back through the head to the right side.
  3. Thread the second bead — pushing the needle back to the left side and pull the beads together slightly to form a brow and snout.
  4. Repeat until the eyes are firmly anchored to the head.





Seal

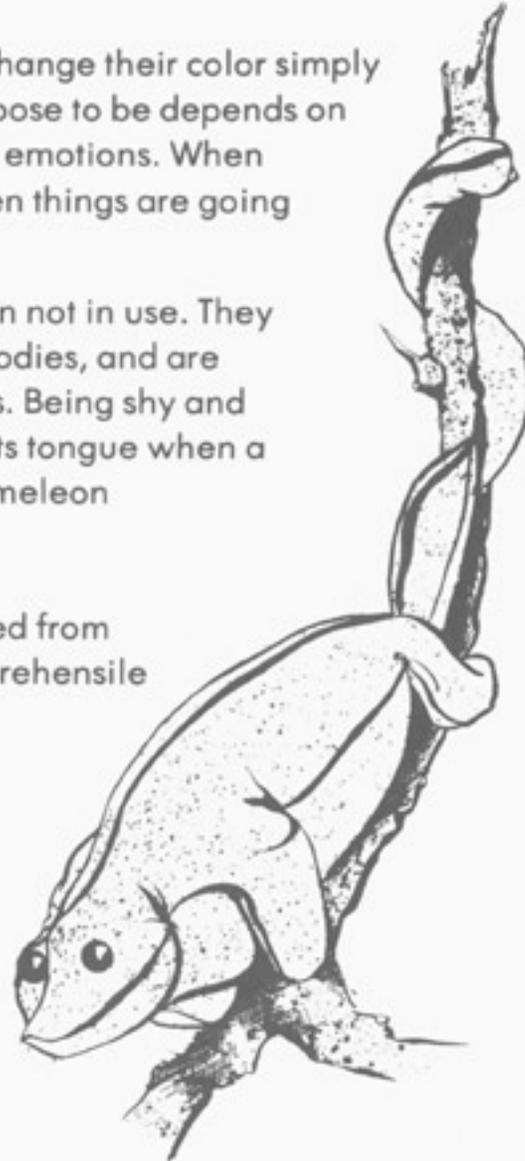
# Chameleon

Contrary to popular belief, camelions do not change their color simply to match their surroundings. The color they choose to be depends on light and temperature, and especially on their emotions. When Camillelyons are sad they are really blue, when things are going better, they brighten up quickly. And so on.

Chameleons keep their tails tightly furred when not in use. They also have tongues which are as long as their bodies, and are carefully folded up and packed in their mouths. Being shy and quite polite, a chameleon will never stick out its tongue when a person is around — as is the case with the chameleon pictured here.

*Secret Tip:* This chameleon can hang suspended from your finger or other neighboring object by its prehensile tail, when it is tightly packed with beans.

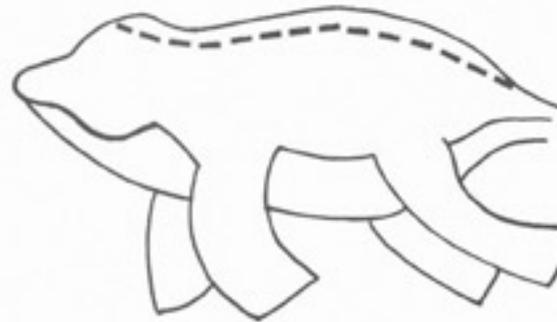
Of course the choice of color for your chameleon is most important. It might be wise to make the choice on a Friday or Saturday.

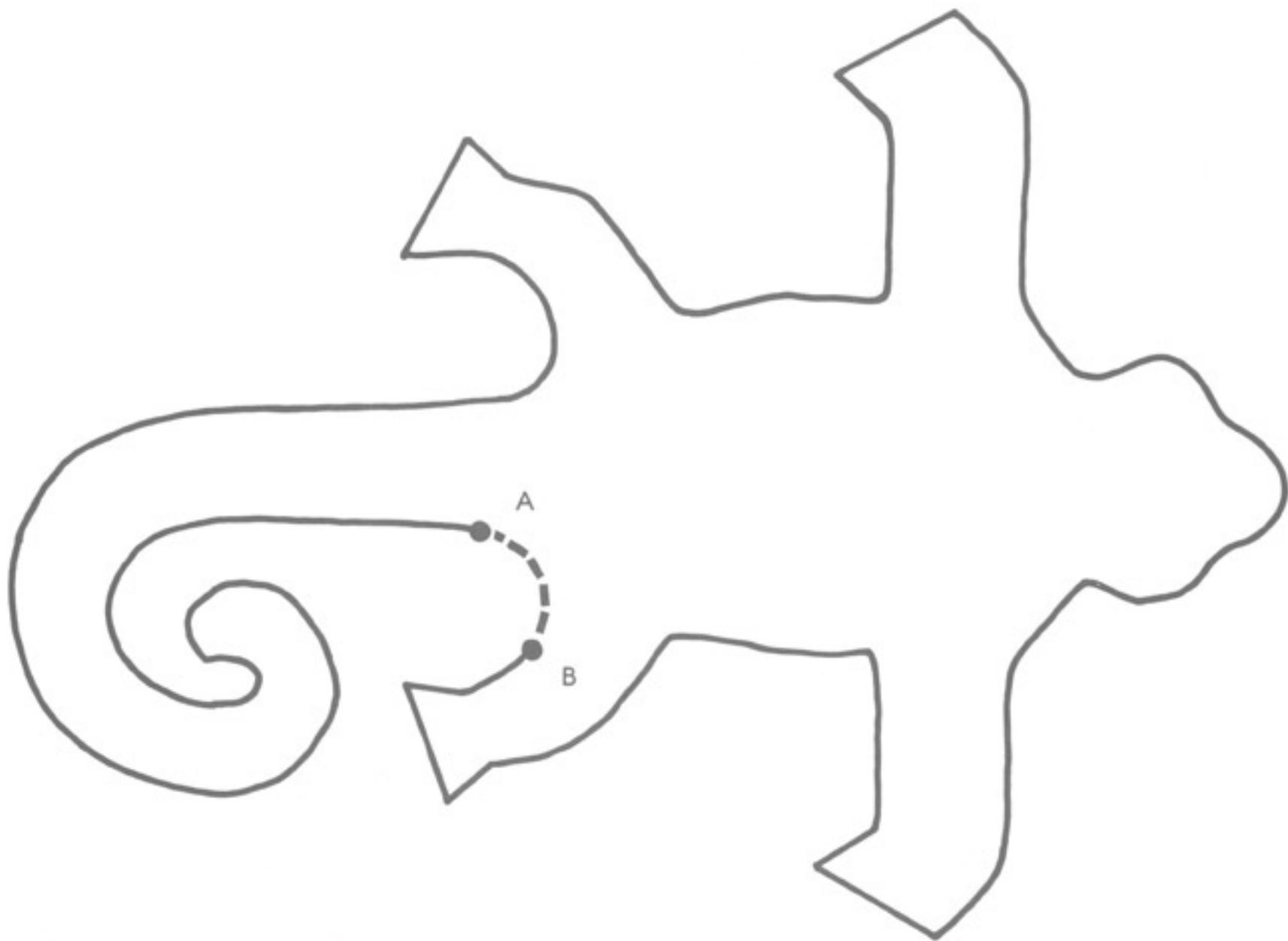


## Chameleon

Materials: Two rectangles of cloth 10'' x 12''  
Two 6 mm. beads

- Place one rectangle on the other with the right sides together.
- Cut out the pattern on the heavy dark line.
- Trace the pattern on to the top piece of fabric.
- Sew the rectangles together on this marked line. Begin at A and end at B, leaving an opening.
- Trim around the figure leaving 1/8 to 1/4 inch of material as a seam allowance.
- Clip into the seam allowance at the curves (especially the tail) — close to but not touching the seam.
- Turn the figure right side out.
- Making the reptilian spine
  1. Pull the underbody away from the back.
  2. Fold the upper body in half from forehead to tail to form a ridge down the center of the back.
  3. Press the fold with an iron.
  4. Stitch a seam with matching thread from forehead to tail as shown by the dotted line.
- Fill with beans.
- Sew up the fill hole with an overcast stitch.
- Attaching the eyes (see seal illustration)
  1. Insert the needle and knotted piece of thread into the right side of the head and push it through to the same spot on the left side.
  2. Thread through a bead and push the needle back through the head to the right side.
  3. Thread the second bead — pushing the needle back to the left side, and pull the beads together slightly to form a brow.





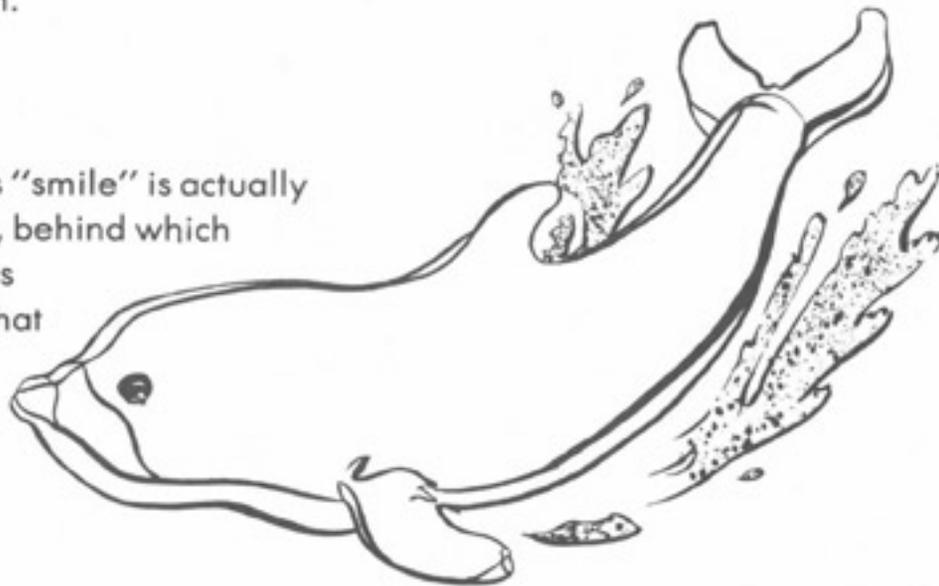
Chameleon

# Dolphin

Judging from recent scientific studies, dolphins are superior to human beings in intelligence and every other respect except one: they do not have bean-bags. Indeed, the most advanced research indicates that these playful creatures are teaching us their language in order that we may understand their yearning to correct this small evolutionary imbalance.

Dolphins are wonderfully well-disposed towards people. They have saved sailors who have fallen into the sea and guided imperiled ships to safety. And yet they ask nothing in return.

*Secret Tip:* The dolphin's "smile" is actually a wrinkle in its forehead, behind which are concealed mysterious thoughts. The secret is what makes the dolphin smile.



## Dolphin

The dolphin is made differently from the other bean-bags in this book. In order to give it a dorsal fin, it must be made from three pieces of cloth. Also the method of sewing is different. There are two pattern pieces — one (1) for both the right and left sides of the upper body and a second (2) for the under body.

Materials: Two rectangles of cloth 5 x 10 inches for the upper body  
One rectangle of cloth 8 x 10 inches for the under body  
Two 4 mm. beads

- Place the two smaller rectangles of cloth with their right sides together and pin pattern piece # 1 to them. Cut the cloth to the shape of the pattern.
- Pin pattern piece # 2 to the larger rectangle of cloth and cut to the pattern's shape.
- Sew together the upper body pieces from A to B, leaving a seam allowance as marked in the pattern. (You may wish to mark your seam line on the fabric.)
- Place the upper body on top of the under body with right sides together and sew the pieces together from C to D. Keep the dorsal fin free of your seam.
- Clip into the seam allowance at the curves — close to but not touching the seam.
- Making the dolphin smile
  1. Press down the upper body's center seam from forehead to nose.
  2. Pull the upper body away from the under body and fold along a curve across the forehead as shown by the dotted line.
  3. Sew up the tuck (you may wish to try this by hand first), making certain that the under body is free.
- Turn the figure right side out, fill with beans, sew up the hole with overcast stitch.
- Attach the eyes separately as described for the crab, frog and flounder.

