

BIG Puppet

Refer to diagrams when following these instructions.

The Puppeteer

Clothing Comfort Working with your puppet is like working out at a gym. Dress so that you don't overheat, have restricted movement, or get any puppet apparatus caught in your clothing. In inclement weather, this may be more difficult to achieve. Breathable, waterproof outer clothing is advised. Be careful not to chill during down times. On sunny days, use sunscreen on exposed areas.

Shoes Wear well-fitted shoes with good arch support and well-cushioned. In addition, the shoes must be able to attach to the puppet via Velcro™, elastic, or strapping. Other considerations: easy on/off shoe and easy on/off of puppet.

Weight Five to ten pounds of total weight (frame pack, puppet, arm extensions, and shoe attachments) is ideal. If you're in good shape, you may be able to tolerate up to 20 pounds. Keep in mind that most of the puppet weight is above your head! It can be unwieldy. Even at 10 pounds, a slight breeze will put forces on shoulders and back that can lead to excess fatigue or strain, or both.

Maintaining Puppeteer's Visibility The puppeteer's eyes are even with the puppet's thighs. If you add a lot of bulk at the thighs, you greatly reduce visibility and put you and your puppet at risk.

Hiding Puppeteer The puppeteer should be non-obvious. Black works well but consider the weather. If hot, wear loose-fitting cotton. If cold, wear layers. If raining, wear breathable outer clothes. Regardless of weather, wear a matching fanny pack with water, ID, cell phone, cash, etc.. Carry UV protection for summer puppeteering.

Ideally, the puppeteer should be invisible and silent. However, we have found that this is not always practical. In broad daylight, eyes will be on both puppet and puppeteer. When interacting with spectators, especially children, it is necessary to talk. There are a few gimmicks to minimize the puppeteer's "intrusion." Dress in black or drab clothing and attempt to blend in with background. You may even want to blend in with ground-level color of puppet or appear as an insignificant part of the puppet. The puppet and its actions should "speak" for itself. A banana, for instance, doesn't need to talk. A human-like puppet, could.

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[inspired by Michael Curry's Big Puppets]