

# Learning through... Sock Monsters!

Over the years, we have made a LOT of sock monsters, but we have also learned a lot about what kind of learning happens when children make their own. Using the [Exploratorium's Learning Dimension Framework](#) as an observational tool, here are some of the learning themes you can expect to see:

## Engagement

Monster making - especially with fun, bright colors, and inspiring materials - is FUN! Sewing and working with your hands invites flow experiences. This encourages:

- Spending TIME working - kids and parents often lose track of the time while working
- Showing joy and pride in their creations
- Playing with their creations, creating narratives and stories around them

## Initiative

Inspired by the materials or texts, we hear a lot of ambitious goals from kids in this activity. Even with new skills to learn, the drive to make an awesome monster is strong, so we see lots of:

- Persisting to reach goals in the face of a struggle or frustration
- Taking risks (trying something even if they are unsure of how it will work)
- Seeking resources, materials, and help for problems they encounter

## Social Scaffolding

Sewing requires a set of fine motor skills that many of our little makers are trying out for the first time. This encourages:

- working with multiple hands on a project
- sharing ideas and advice on how to do things
- looking at each other's process and asking questions



## Sock Monsters Maker Kit Facilitation Guide

Our sock monster kit is a Bubbler favorite! A great way to introduce basic sewing skills, the kit also invites tons of creativity and creative play.

- Ages 5 and up (adults love monster making too!)
- Medium to High Facilitation needs
- 1-1.5 hrs for monster making
- Drop in programming settings
- Larger group workshops - best with parents for extra hands

## Materials in this kit:

- clean, unloved socks (usually donated)
- inexpensive woven gloves
- large tapestry needles
- needle threaders
- embroidery floss
- beeswax
- buttons
- felt
- pipecleaners
- pom pom balls
- fake fur fabric
- fiber fill stuffing
- scissors
- tacky glue
- fabric chalk
- plastic canvas mesh for practicing stitches

## Things to know:

### Trust them

Little makers do just fine with needles and thread. They are often more careful than adults. Tapestry needles are not very sharp and are large enough to be handled easily and woven socks have loose enough weave to use them to stitch. However, felt is usually glued, and buttons must have wider holes to use a tapestry needle.

### Preparation makes everything smoother

The hardest part is often threading the needle. Having beeswax to run the embroidery floss through helps, and needle threaders are great, but having several needles threaded at the start helps.

### Take the time

Making a fabulous monster often takes an hour. Learning some basic stitches and making your shape takes time, and adding buttons and flare is the most fun and shouldn't be rushed. Set realistic expectations with caregivers, their children will want to work for a while!

## Inspirational texts



*Tickle Monster*  
by Edouard Manceau



*Cómo reconocer a un monstruo*  
by Gustavo Roldán



*Go away, big green monster!*  
by Ed Emberly



*If you're a monster and you know it*  
by Ed Emberly



# Making Sock Monsters!

## Skills to model:

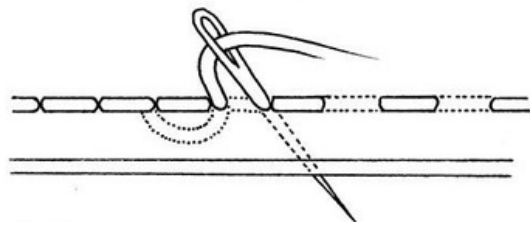
### Creative Brainstorming

A child's monster can be ANYTHING. But sometimes it's hard to get started. Get some ideas flowing by:

- Read one of the monster books and talk about what makes a funny/scary/silly monster
- Take some time to draw a monster picture together
- Put supplies out in eye catching ways to give inspiration.

### Running stitches

To make their "monster bumps" and to close their sock together once they have stuffed it, we use a running stitch - sewing back and forth through the fabric. Give room for kids to practice this to avoid tangles later on.



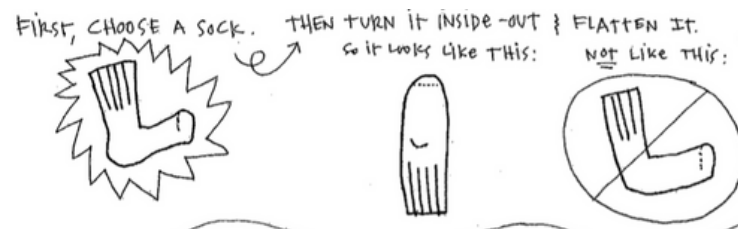
### Button sewing

It is easier to sew on buttons once your monster is stuffed. It may take practice for little makers to go back and forth through the holes without wrapping the thread around the button. Kids can practice on plastic canvas mesh before stitching on monsters.



### Hiding stitches:

By turning your sock inside out, you can hide your interior stitches and create neat seams. Have kids turn their socks inside out to sew the seams for their "monster bumps." Use scissors to cut the space between the bumps (but not the stitches!) then turn them right side out.

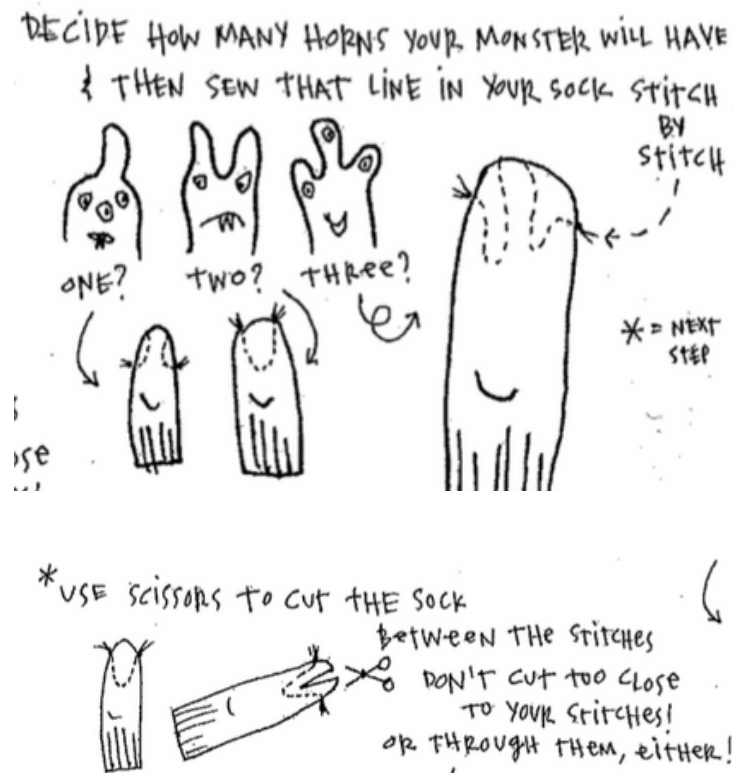


## Monster Making Steps:

### Create the shape

Lots of our kids like to add bumps to their monster to use as horns, antennas, or eyes. We usually draw large posters of the shapes to show kids how to stitch their monsters to get the desired bumps.

- You can use fabric chalk to draw lines for stitches to follow with younger monster makers, especially if they are unsure.
- Other kids like to take risks, free hand their sewing and see what happens when they turn it right side out. Embrace this risk taking!



### Stuffing & Advanced Shaping



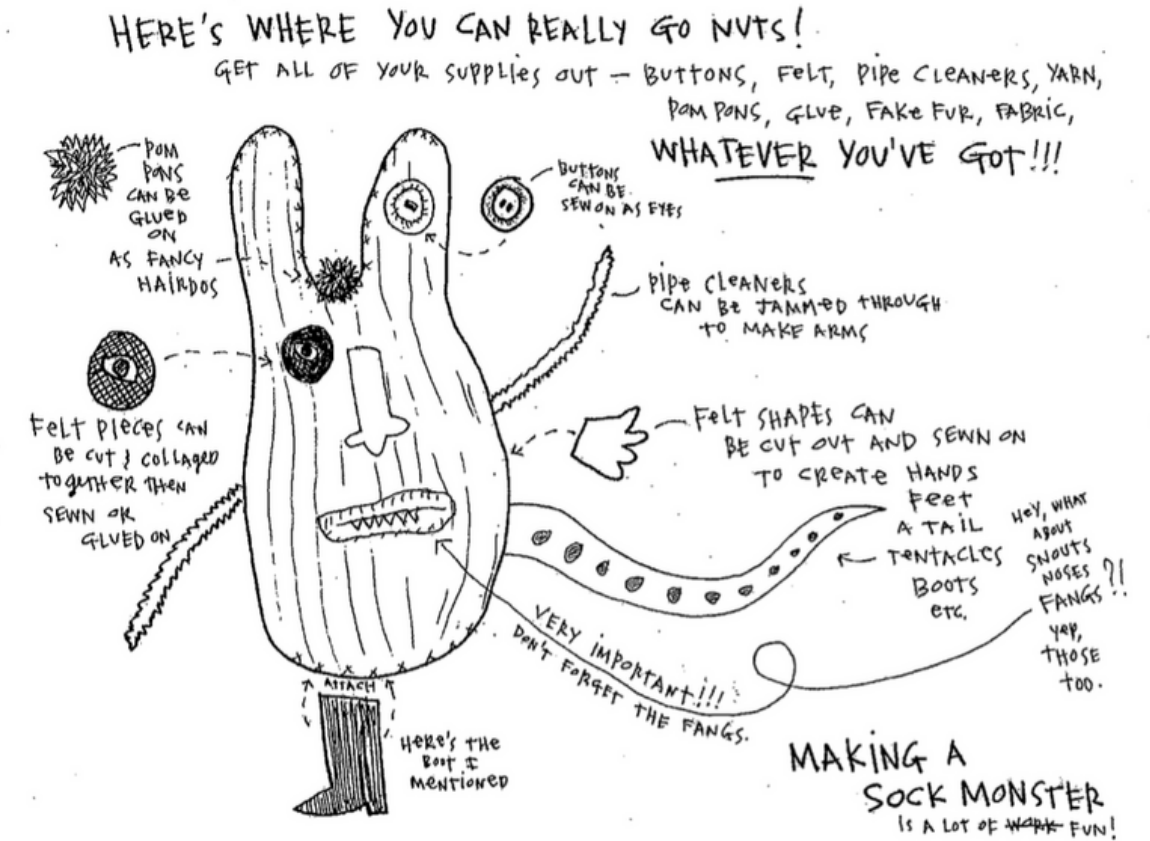
Stuffing can add shape to your monster and invite more advanced shaping options. Stuff and shape your monster before adding buttons and other details!

- Pinch the heel and stitch it together to make lips (maybe add some stuffing for them to be super fat?)
- Pinch a portion together and stitch to make a nose?
- Sew "bumps" on the bottom too to make legs

### Finishing the bottom

Once you have stuffed your monster, use a running stitch to sew the bottom of your sock closed. Now you are ready to make it your own!

### Make it your own!



## Facilitation Best Practices

- Do a brainstorm to get started - read a book, draw some pictures, be silly
- Break it into 3 steps - showing or modeling creating the shape, stuffing and shaping, and adding details.
- Create large visuals to show options and ideas
- Encourage working together - extra hands can make sewing a monster closed easier.... but also encourage parents to **not take over when children struggle**
- Circulate to thread needles, give advice and encouragement
- Encourage play when finished! Have a photo booth or ask kids to draw their monsters and where they live.