

the Craving for Carving

A Jack-O-Lantern how-to guide

With Halloween just around the corner, carving a Jack-O-Lantern can be a great way to get the whole family in the spirit of the holiday. Here's a step-by-step look at how to get the most out of carving, along with tips on turning a boring, old gourd into a work of art.

1. Getting started



Before you carve, cover your carving surface with newspaper to keep from making a mess. To begin, take a marker and draw a lid. Make a five- or six-sided shape around the base of the stem. You can even add a notch so you'll know which way to replace the lid.



QUICK TIP

If you have a pumpkin that won't stand up straight, you may want to cut a bottom instead of a lid. To do so, place the pumpkin upright in small bowl or pot and trace around the rim to create a circular line. Then, cut along to create a jack-o-lantern with a hole in the bottom that can be set over a candle.

2. Making a lid

To carve the lid, start by angling your knife or all-purpose saw toward the center of the pumpkin and cut along the line you have drawn. Holding the knife at an angle when you cut will prevent the lid from falling into the pumpkin when you are done. When you remove the lid there will be seeds and stringy pieces of pumpkin attached which can be removed by sawing off the excess rind



3. Cleaning your gourd



It may look like a daunting task, but cleaning out the inside of the pumpkin doesn't have to be a chore. Simply grab a large spoon and begin to scoop out the inside walls, scraping along the sides as you go. As you drag out the slimy innards and seeds, keep in mind you want to scrape the rind fairly thin (approximately 1 inch thick) to make it easier to poke out the pieces later.

4. Choosing a pattern

Here's the most important part, and sometimes the most difficult. There are so many options here, you may want to consider a few key points before picking a design:

Theme | Do you want your design to be fun, cute or just plain scary?

Type | Do you want to design your jack-o-lantern with a traditional face or maybe something different like a cat or haunted house?

Skill Level | Are you picking a pattern for a child or beginner or are you a seasoned pumkin pro?

If you're still not sure what kind of pattern you want, you can find browse through free, printable patterns online at www.jack-o-lantern.com or visit your local bookstore to find one of the various pattern books on the market.



GRAPHIC & PHOTOS | BY CHRIS MOWDER *The Sun News*

Tools of the trade

Carving a Jack-O-Lantern can be a very simple task done with simple household items, or a precise process using special pumpkin carving tools. Here are some of the items we used to carve, but feel free to improvise if necessary:



Source: The Sun News research

5. Mapping out the pattern

Now, decide which part of the pumpkin you want to be the face of the jack-o-lantern and attach the pattern you chose using tape or straight pins. You may



need to fold the paper a little or trim off excess paper to get it to fit correctly. To transfer the design, start along the outside of the pattern and follow the lines using a pen or poker tool to make small holes (about 1/8 inch apart) in the surface of the pumpkin along the way. It can be a bit tedious, but the more detailed you are in punching holes, the easier it will be to follow the pattern while carving.

6. Connect the dots

Now you're ready to begin carving. Grab your knife or saw, holding the handle like you would a pencil, and slowly push the blade into



the pumpkin along one of the dotted lines you created. Next, move steadily along the lines with a continuous up-and-down sawing motion – don't slice like you would a steak. When you reach a sharp corner, make sure to stop, remove your tool and re-insert it at a different angle.



7. Pop it out

Once carving is finished, you will need to remove the pieces you cut by gently pushing them out from the inside of the pumpkin. If you come across a large piece that doesn't want to come out, you can slice it across the center to make it easier to remove. Once you've finished popping out the pieces, go ahead and wrap up all your waste in the newspaper to dispose of it.



8. Finishing touches

Finally, you need to light your jack-o-lantern to fully enjoy your handiwork. You can use either a candle or electric light to do so. As a safety precaution you may want to coat the bottom of your pumpkin with foil and poke few holes in the lid of your pumpkin – This will protect the inside of your gourd from overheating and will help it keep longer.



QUICK TIP

If you have a pumpkin that won't stand up straight, you may want to cut a bottom instead of a lid. To do so, place the pumpkin upright in small bowl or pot and trace around the rim to create a circular line. Then, cut along to create a jack-o-lantern with a hole in the bottom that can be set over a candle.