

Easy Iridescent Cellophane Fairy Wings

BY DONNA ANNE MASI

Iridescent cellophane wings are some of the prettiest wings you can learn to create for your dolls. You may find yourself making many pairs because they are so remarkably quick and easy.

This style of wings requires the use of a digital camera or scanner, computer and color printer. A proficiency in photo manipulation is helpful, and the more you know, the fancier you can make your wings.



Another completed wing.



Donna's completed wings.

I create my own wing patterns from scratch by first drawing the basic shape on a white piece of paper. You can manually color the wings with markers, paint, or a medium with which you are comfortable. If you are skilled at using digital image enhancement software, you can create some beautiful wings digitally. For the purpose of this tutorial, I am using a simple manually colored wing. Choose whatever method works best for you.



Make sure you create a left and a right wing. Once you have your wings designed, photograph them and transfer the photos to your computer.

Print the wings onto a sheet of clear labels. You can probably fit a couple pairs on the sheet if you know how to use editing software. Resize them to make them smaller or larger, depending on your needs.

Once the wings are printed, cut the sheet so that the right side and left are separate. This is an easier way to work when wiring them. We are going to do one wing at a time. Take one side of the wing and peel off the backing paper. Place it face down and adhesive side up on your work surface.



Materials:

- Color laser or ink jet printer
- Clear, full sheet address labels (make sure to get the correct type for your printer)
- Iridescent cellophane
- Jewelry wire (24-gauge for larger wings, 28-gauge for smaller wings)
- Wire cutters
- Scissors (or hot knife and heat safe cutting surface)
- Clear gloss or varnish, or sparkle glaze
- Brush to apply gloss or varnish
- Any decorative touches you want, such as glitter, crystals, etc.
- Printable wing pattern
- Computer and scanner

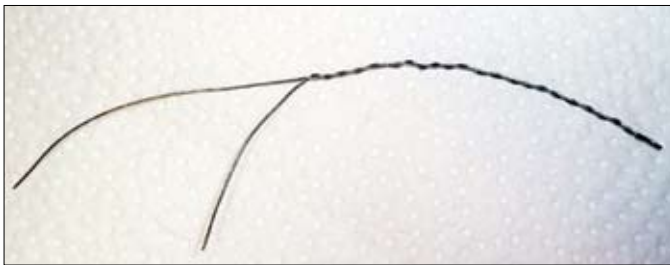
Now we are going to wire the wings. This is done for two reasons. The wire adds support to the wings, preventing them from being too flimsy, and provides something to insert into or sew to the doll.



Cut two identical lengths of wire. Make sure each is long enough to reach from the tip of the wing down to the bottom where it will connect to the doll. Add a couple extra inches for good measure.

If the wings are going to be larger than six inches, use at least 24-gauge wire. This may be harder to twist. If you are unable to twist it, skip this next step.

Fold the wires in half. There will be a looped end and an open end. Starting from the looped end, twist the wires together as tightly as you can. Only twist about two inches or so, just enough to insert into the doll or sculpt. Leave the remainder of the wires untwisted.



Apply the wires to the wing. Since the address sheet is adhesive, placing the wires down on them will hold them in place. Make sure the twisted part extends down from the bottom of the wing and the straight part is placed close to the top edge of the wings.



Now that the main support wires are placed, cut any additional wires that you would like to go across the wings to add support. Be aware that depending on how the wings are colored, you may see the wires, so make them neat and even. If the wires are placed so that they extend past the edges of the wings, curl them over or add beads to the tips for an extra special touch.



Now that you have finished wiring one side, repeat on the other wing. Cut two pieces of iridescent cellophane large enough to cover each wing. Very carefully lay the cellophane down on the back of the wing, onto the sticky adhesive. Do not move the cellophane once it is down. Press out any creases as best as you can. Run your fingertips all around the wires to make sure the cellophane adheres well.



I have a cheat method that I use when doing the above step. I was getting frustrated by finding creases in my cellophane after I applied it. Now I purposely crinkle up my entire sheet of cellophane and then apply it. It actually looks very nice, as it adds texture and actually catches the light quite well. Try it, and if you don't like the look, you can revert to the non-crinkled method.



Turn the wings over and see how pretty the iridescent cellophane shows through the front of the wings. If you want a very simple look, draw the wings as an outline, add a few veins and skip the color. The entire wing will be transparent and iridescent instead of having the shimmer showing through a colored background.

The wings are ready to be cut out. I prefer to use a hot knife, also known as a wood burning tool. The benefits of using a hot knife are that the edges of the wings are sealed with heat when they are cut, ensuring the layers don't separate, and it looks a lot nicer.



If you are using a hot knife, heat the tool on a heat-safe surface. I use a ceramic tile for this purpose. Please keep kids and pets away when you are using any heat tool, and do not leave it unattended, as it gets red hot.

When the tool is hot, place the wing face down on the heat safe work surface. The reason for cutting it from the back side as opposed to the front, is that the hot knife can be prone to slipping, and can mar the surface of the wings. If it does slip, it's better to have a slight mark on the back of the wing where it won't show as much.



Using the pointed tip of a hot knife, "cut" around the perimeter of your wings, watching out to cut around any exposed wires. If you have used the knife correctly, the wing will lift right up off the work surface. If you jiggle the hot knife a little when you are cutting the wings, you will get a more tattered look, which can give a more fairy-like appearance.



Embellish the cut wings any way you like. I like to use dimensional fabric paint on the edges and then sprinkle glitter over the paint. Another nice embellishment to add is small rhinestones or crystals. Long, flowing ostrich feathers can be glued onto the backs of the wings for an extra special touch. ■

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