

PLAYTHINGS OF THE PAST

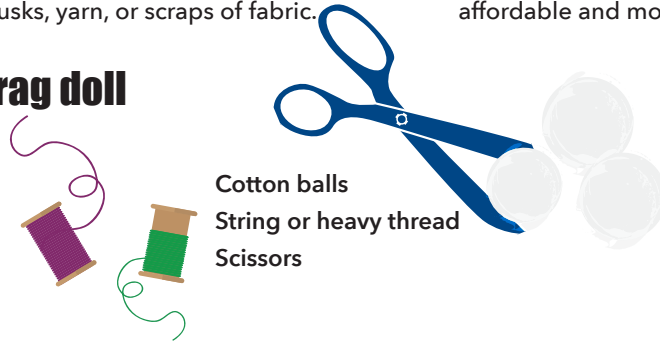
Before the railroad made mass shipment of goods to Arizona more cost effective, many children had to be inventive and make their own toys. Arizona kids played with natural materials, like adobe mud, sticks, and bones. Sometimes, if their parents couple spare the materials, they made dolls out of corn husks, yarn, or scraps of fabric.

Some kids had manufactured toys like tin soldiers, jacks, and dolls that came overland on a wagon. Wagon freighting was incredibly expensive and tended to be dangerous, so these kinds of toys were few and far between. After the railroad came to Arizona manufactured toys became more affordable and more popular.

Make your own rag doll

MATERIALS NEEDED

A square piece of fabric, at least 12" by 12"



Cotton balls
String or heavy thread
Scissors

HEAD AND TORSO

1. Place a fabric square on the table in front of you like a diamond.
2. Place 3-4 cotton balls in the center of the diamond, then bring the top point to the bottom point. Gather the loose ends of the fabric together and tie a string under the cotton balls to form the head.
3. Now you should have a triangle pointing down with the head of your doll centered on the flat side. The two points on the same side as the head of the doll will be the doll's arms. Take each arm and tie a knot at the end to make the hands.
4. Tie a string under the arms to create the waist.
5. The bottom of your doll will have a point at the bottom. Using the scissors, carefully trim that point.

Your rag doll can either wear pants or a skirt—you decide! If your doll is wearing a skirt, you can stop here. If you want your doll to wear pants, continue on.

1. Lay your doll flat on the table. Using your scissors, carefully cut a line up the front of the skirt of the doll to create two legs.
2. Tie a knot at the end of each leg to create feet.

Once you've made your doll you can make accessories for it! Experiment with making clothes aprons, bonnets, or overalls or draw and cut out other objects like a pitchfork or a frying pan. You can even use a magic marker to draw a face for your doll. Try experimenting with different sized pieces of fabric to create different sized dolls.

What is calico?

If you've watched a Western on TV or read a primary source about the American West, you might find a reference to something called "calico." Calico was a common name for fabric in the 1800s, but it's much older than that--the fabric was created in India in the 12th century! Calico is a cheap, woven fabric made of cotton that hasn't been completely processed--it would contain cotton seeds and husks sometimes so it was sometimes itchy and uncomfortable to wear. By the late 1800s, calico fabric became associated with small, repetitive patterns like flowers or leaves, probably either to copy nicer fabrics or make calico fancier to attract more buyers.

