

African animal masks

Animal masks are very helpful for showing an audience which animal you are playing, but they cannot show expression on your face. You must make up for this by using clearer or larger gestures and body language. You also need to speak slowly, loudly and clearly.

Wearing a mask to perform a play can cause problems:

- Masks can hurt because of tight elastic, or slip out of place.

- Animals' eyes are often not in the same position as humans', so cutting eyeholes so that we can see through them means that the animal looks incorrect.

The mask idea below is designed to solve these problems. The mouth has a flap so that you can be heard. The headbands mean that the mask should stay in place, and the pinholes to look through mean that the animal's eyes are in the right place.

You will need: photographs of animals' faces; flexible white card; stapler; scissors; different coloured paints; paintbrush; bradawl (pointed tool) and a wooden board.

- 1** Paint the animal's face – about the same size as your own – on to card. Look at the photographs for colour, shape and position of features. (See diagram 1.)



Diagram 1

- 2** Cut two strips of card, one about 4cm by 65cm for the headband, the other 4cm by 40cm for the top band. If your card is not big enough, just staple some shorter strips together. Paint both pieces to match the colouring of the animal.

- 3** Make ears, horns or tusks out of card and paint them. Follow diagram 2 to make 3D ears.

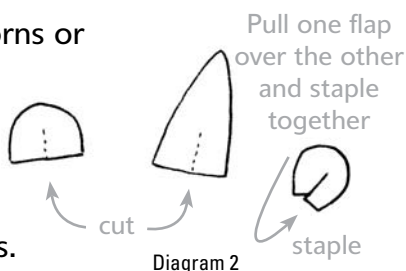


Diagram 2

- 4** When all the parts are dry, wrap the headband snugly round your head.

Holding the two ends in place, take it off and staple it. Fit the top band on to it (see diagram 3). Staple the ears or extra pieces on to the main mask and staple the mask to the headband.



Diagram 3

- 5** Put the mask on and mark with a pencil where your mouth is. Cut an opening flap in this part of the mask (even if this is not where the animal's mouth is) as shown in diagram 4.

- 6** Put the mask on again and mark where your eyes are. (See diagram 4). Take off the mask and pierce ten to 15 holes all around these areas by pushing the bradawl into the card with a wooden board underneath. You should now be able to see out of your mask.



Diagram 4