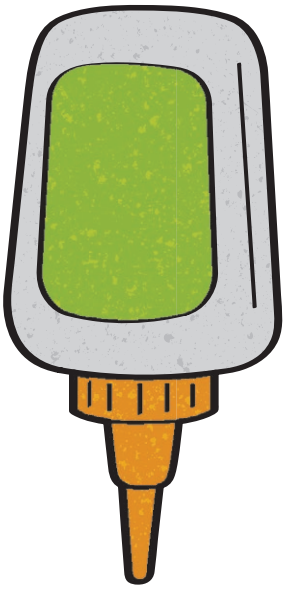
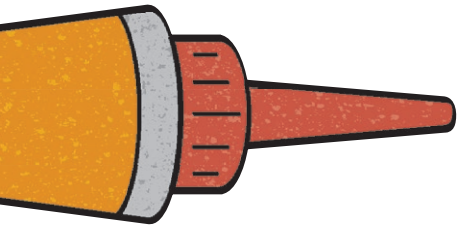
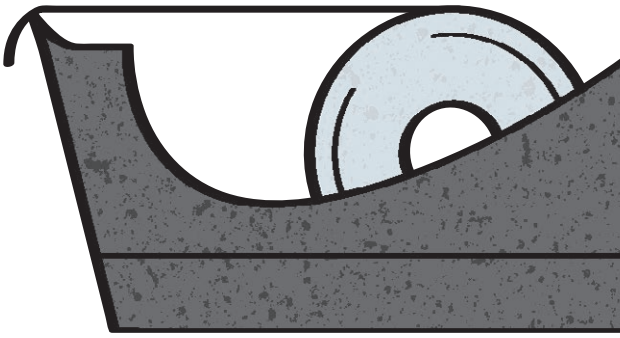


the ultimate GLUE GUIDE





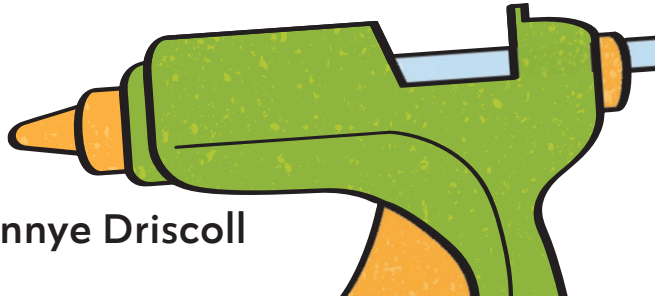




everything you need to know about adhesives

FOR COSPLAY, CRAFTS & MORE





Annye Driscoll

the ultimate GLUE GUIDE

everything you need to know about adhesives

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Annye Driscoll



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Dedication

To cosplay handlers, who dutifully tote our emergency glues and then hold our props while we apply them.

And especially to the best one of them, Zeke.

Acknowledgments

A huge thank you to Beacon Adhesives, Eclectic Products, Therm O Web, Surebonder, and my dad for generously providing products to photograph for this guide. And thank you to Sharon and Plexi, who read, edited, and provided a whole lot of validation for the first draft of this book.



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WELDWOOD
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GOOG
ALL PURPOSE / MOUNTING


BEACON
Gem-Tac







INTRODUCTION

I GIVE ONE TIP TO EVERY NEW OR IMPROVING COSPLAYER OR CRAFTER: MAKE CONSCIOUS AND DELIBERATE CHOICES ABOUT GLUE. Sometimes, the easiest and fastest solutions are the best, but often, pausing to make a more correct choice will save heartaches in the future, like:

- Messy seams in foam builds requiring precious energy to correct
- Visibility of glues spoiling your projects
- Home repair projects falling apart after a disappointing amount of time
- Costumes and props needing repairs after, or even during, photoshoots and other events
- Adhesives ruining craft supplies (paper crinkling, fabric getting soaked through, Styrofoam dissolving, and many more disasters)

With this guide, I intend to inform those critical adhesive decisions as best I can. Let's learn which glue to use for what projects and how to use it correctly, effectively, and safely!

patch testing

Patch testing is an extremely important part of choosing and using adhesives. To patch test, apply a small amount of glue to a scrap or hidden piece of your material, then allow the adhesive to cure. If any unintended consequences occur—which can range from faint discoloration to complete material break-down—you'll be happy to know ahead of time!





Artist: Marie Louise Otto of Paper Petaler
Marie uses hot glue to create her intricate paper bouquets.
Photo by Karl Otto of The Ottolab

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A WORD ON SAFETY

Some glues are very safe, and jokes about kindergarteners eating paste are truly inoffensive. As a general rule of thumb, though, the stronger a glue is, the more dangerous it is, to the point where proper PPE and ventilation are required whenever the glue pot is opened.

Whenever you are using a new type of adhesive, be sure to fully read all safety guidelines and follow all recommendations. I have made notes in individual chapters about general guidelines for using the glue in question, but manufacturer's recommendations should always be considered above all else.

You should also consider protecting your work surface. This tip is particularly important when you are using a traditional hot glue gun because the nozzle will create small drips as it heats. For a low-budget fix, protect your work surface from drips, spills, and burns with a piece of wax paper or tin foil. For a more luxe solution, a silicone mat offers a reusable surface, and many glues will easily peel off!

don't forget your housemates!

In this book, you'll learn a lot about how to protect yourself when working with potentially dangerous adhesives, but it's important to consider who's around you as well. Make sure that other people and pets aren't inhaling the substances your mask is protecting you from and pay particular attention to smaller creatures, such as cats and birds.

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Face Mask Filters

Different face mask filters are effective for different things. Likely, a protective face mask you buy from the hardware store will come with a particulate filter. This kind of filter is effective when you're sanding but does not entirely filter vapors and gases—a necessary function when you're using toxic chemicals, such as adhesives. Be sure to select the correct type of safety mask based on the manufacturer's safety information on the product you are using.

Particulate filters and vapor cartridge filters become ineffective over time and must be replaced. You should install a new filter if it:

- Is visibly dirty
- Has become difficult to breathe through
- Has been damaged



2091 filters (in foreground) are intended for particulates, while 60923 (on mask) also work on certain vapors and gases.

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Additionally, if you can smell chemicals through your vapor cartridge filter, it's definitely time for a replacement!

The exact expiration timeline of particulate filters and vapor cartridge filters varies according to type, climate, and use, but some general rules apply:

- Each filter comes with an expiration date on the package, which applies even if the filter has not been opened.
- After it's opened, each filter has a maximum life of six months, even if the filter has not been used. (This life-span is because they're affected by contaminants in their environment.)
- Filters will last longer if they're stored properly—namely, in a cool, dry environment away from sunlight and airborne contaminants.

Adjusting Your Face Mask

Respirators must be properly fitted to be effective. Place the facepiece on the chin and bridge of the nose, then tighten the head straps so that they're snug. Once you feel like you have a good fit, perform a positive and a negative pressure seal check and make adjustments to your strapping based on the results:

- For a positive pressure seal check, gently breathe out. If you feel air escaping around your face, you haven't achieved a solid seal.
- For a negative pressure seal check, gently breathe in. The mask should be drawn toward the face, pressing into the skin. If it doesn't move, you haven't achieved a solid seal.

If you cannot pass positive and negative pressure seal checks after strap adjustments, you may need to buy a different-size respirator.

And remember: Once you have a mask that fits well, do quick positive and negative pressure seal checks every time you put it on!

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WHAT GLUE TO USE

IN THIS TABLE, I'VE DONE MY BEST TO INCLUDE ALL THE MOST COMMON MATERIALS USED BY CRAFTERS AND DIYERS AND HOW TO ADHERE ALL OF THESE MATERIALS TO THEMSELVES AND EACH OTHER.

After checking the lookup table on the following pages, you can then refer to that adhesive's chapter to learn how to correctly apply the adhesive and remain safe. Those chapters also include common alternative uses for adhesives and quick tips for how to get the most out of your materials.



Photo by Lore Roberts of lorebuilds

DON'T FORGET!

When you're using new glues or gluing new materials, it's particularly important to patch test and properly prepare your surfaces. Make sure that they're clean and dry. Consider lightly sanding to create better adhesion, particularly if you're gluing a rigid, nonporous material, such as metal, plastic, or glass.

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COMMON COSPLAY MATERIALS

THIS ⬇ TO THAT ➡	Paper	EVA Foam	XPS Foam, EPS Foam, and Floral Foam	Thermoplastic Sheets	
Paper	PVA glue stick	Spray glue	PVA glue	PVA glue stick Spray glue	
EVA Foam	Spray glue	Contact cement	PVA glue	Contact cement	COMMON COSPLAY MATERIALS
XPS Foam, EPS Foam, and Floral Foam	PVA glue	PVA glue	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Foam-Tac PVA glue	
Thermoplastic Sheets	Spray glue	Contact cement	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Contact cement	
Lightweight Fabric	Spray glue PVA glue stick	Spray glue	PVA glue	Spray glue	TEXTILES
Mediumweight Fabric	Spray glue	Spray glue	PVA glue	Spray glue	
Heavyweight Fabric	Spray glue	Contact cement	PVA glue	Contact cement	
Leather, Pleather, and Upholstery Fabric	Spray glue	Contact cement	PVA glue	Contact cement	
Faux Fur	Spray glue	Hot glue	PVA glue	Hot glue	
Felt	Spray glue	Hot glue	PVA glue	Hot glue	
Elastic and Hook-and-Loop	Spray glue Tacky glue	Contact cement	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Contact cement	LIGHTWEIGHT DETAILS
Patches and Appliqués	Spray glue Tacky glue	Spray glue Contact cement	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Spray glue Contact cement	
Rhinestones, Gems, Sequins, and Beads	Gem Tac Tacky glue	Gem-Tac	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Gem-Tac	
Faux Foliage	Tacky glue	Hot glue	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Hot glue	
Ceramic	Spray glue Tacky glue	Contact cement	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Contact cement	POROUS RIGID MATERIALS
Stone	Spray glue Tacky glue	Contact cement	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Contact cement	
Wood	Spray glue Tacky glue	Contact cement	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Contact cement	
PVC Pipe	Spray glue Tacky glue	Contact cement	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Contact cement	NONPOROUS RIGID MATERIALS
Glass	Spray glue Tacky glue	Contact cement	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Contact cement	
Metal	Spray glue Tacky glue	Contact cement	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Contact cement	
Plastic / Acrylic	Spray glue Tacky glue	Contact cement	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Contact cement	

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LIGHTWEIGHT DETAILS

THIS ⬇ TO THAT ➡	Elastic and Hook-and-Loop	Patches and Appliqués	Rhinestones, Gems, Sequins, and Beads	Faux Foliage	
Paper	Hot glue Spray glue	Hot glue Spray glue	Tacky glue	Hot glue	
EVA Foam	Contact cement	Hot glue	Tacky glue	Hot glue	COMMON COSPLAY MATERIALS
XPS Foam, EPS Foam, and Floral Foam	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Foam-Tac PVA glue	
Thermoplastic Sheets	Contact cement	Spray glue	Tacky glue	Hot glue	
Lightweight Fabric	Spray glue	Fusible web	Spray glue	Tacky glue	TEXTILES
Mediumweight Fabric	Hot glue	Tacky glue Fusible web	Tacky glue	Hot glue	
Heavyweight Fabric	Contact cement	Tacky glue Fusible web	Tacky glue	Hot glue	
Leather, Pleather, and Upholstery Fabric	Contact cement	Tacky glue Fusible web	Tacky glue	Hot glue	
Faux Fur	Hot glue	Hot glue	Hot glue	Hot glue	
Felt	Hot glue	Hot glue Fusible web	Hot glue	Hot glue	
Elastic and Hook-and-Loop	Contact cement	Tacky glue	Hot glue	Hot glue	LIGHTWEIGHT DETAILS
Patches and Appliqués	Spray glue Contact cement	Fusible web	Hot glue	Hot glue	
Rhinestones, Gems, Sequins, and Beads	Gem-Tac	Gem-Tac	Gem-Tac	Hot glue CA glue	
Faux Foliage	Hot glue	Hot glue	Hot glue	Hot glue	
Ceramic	Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue	Hot glue CA glue	POROUS RIGID MATERIALS
Stone	Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue	Hot glue CA glue	
Wood	Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue	Hot glue CA glue	
PVC Pipe	Contact cement	Hot glue CA glue	Hot glue Tacky glue	Hot glue CA glue	NONPOROUS RIGID MATERIALS
Glass	Contact cement	CA glue	Tacky glue	CA glue	
Metal	Contact cement	CA glue	Tacky glue	CA glue	
Plastic / Acrylic	Contact cement	CA glue	Tacky glue	CA glue	

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TEXTILES

THIS ⬇ TO THAT ➡	Lightweight Fabric	Mediumweight Fabric	Heavyweight Fabric	
Paper	Spray glue	Spray glue	PVA glue stick Spray glue	
EVA Foam	Hot glue Spray glue	Hot glue Spray glue	Contact cement	
XPS Foam, EPS Foam, and Floral Foam	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Foam-Tac PVA glue	
Thermoplastic Sheets	Spray glue Tacky glue	Spray glue Tacky glue	Contact cement	
Lightweight Fabric	Fusible web	Fusible web	Fusible web	
Mediumweight Fabric	Fusible web	Fusible web	Fusible web	
Heavyweight Fabric	Fusible web	Fusible web	Fusible web Contact cement	
Leather, Pleather, and Upholstery Fabric	Fusible web	Fusible web	Fusible web Contact cement	
Faux Fur	Tacky glue	Hot glue	Hot glue	
Felt	Spray glue Fusible web	Hot glue Fusible web	Hot glue Fusible web	
Elastic and Hook-and-Loop	Spray glue	Spray glue	Contact cement	
Patches and Appliqués	Fusible web	Fusible web	Fusible web Contact cement	
Rhinestones, Gems, Sequins, and Beads	Gem-Tac Tacky glue	Gem-Tac	Gem-Tac	
Faux Foliage	Tacky glue	Hot glue	Hot glue	
Ceramic	Hot glue CA glue	Hot glue CA glue	Contact cement	
Stone	Hot glue CA glue	Hot glue CA glue	Contact cement	
Wood	Hot glue CA glue	Hot glue CA glue	Contact cement	
PVC Pipe	Hot glue CA glue	Hot glue CA glue	Contact cement	
Glass	Hot glue CA glue	Hot glue CA glue	Contact cement	
Metal	Hot glue CA glue	Hot glue CA glue	Contact cement	
Plastic / Acrylic	Hot glue CA glue	Hot glue CA glue	Contact cement	

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	Leather, Pleather, and Upholstery Fabric	Faux Fur	Felt	
	PVA glue stick Spray glue	Hot glue	Spray glue	
	Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue	COMMON COSPLAY MATERIALS
	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Foam-Tac PVA glue	
	Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue	
	Fusible web	Hot glue	Spray glue Fusible web	TEXTILES
	Fusible web	Hot glue	Hot glue Fusible web	
	Fusible web Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue Fusible web	
	Fusible web Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue Fusible web	
	Hot glue	Hot glue	Hot glue	
	Hot glue Fusible web	Hot glue	Hot glue Fusible web	
	Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue	LIGHTWEIGHT DETAILS
	Fusible web Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue Fusible web	
	Gem-Tac	Hot glue	Gem-Tac	
	Hot glue	Hot glue	Hot glue	
	Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue	POROUS RIGID MATERIALS
	Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue	
	Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue	
	Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue	NONPOROUS RIGID MATERIALS
	Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue	
	Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue	
	Contact cement	Hot glue	Hot glue	

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NONPOROUS RIGID MATERIALS

THIS ↓ TO THAT →	PVC Pipe	Glass	
Paper	PVA glue stick Spray glue	PVA glue stick Spray glue	
EVA Foam	Contact cement	Contact cement	
XPS Foam, EPS Foam, and Floral Foam	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Foam-Tac PVA glue	
Thermoplastic Sheets	Contact cement	Contact cement	
Lightweight Fabric	Spray glue	Spray glue	
Mediumweight Fabric	Spray glue	Spray glue	
Heavyweight Fabric	Contact cement	Contact cement	
Leather, Pleather, and Upholstery Fabric	Contact cement	Contact cement	
Faux Fur	Contact cement	Contact cement	
Felt	Hot glue	Hot glue	
Elastic and Hook-and-Loop	Contact cement	Contact cement	
Patches and Appliqués	Spray glue Contact cement	Spray glue Contact cement	
Rhinestones, Gems, Sequins, and Beads	Gem-Tac	Gem-Tac	
Faux Foliage	Hot glue	Hot glue	
Ceramic	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	
Stone	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	
Wood	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	
PVC Pipe	PVC cement	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	
Glass	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	
Metal	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	
Plastic / Acrylic	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	

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	Metal	Plastic / Acrylic	
	PVA glue stick Spray glue	PVA glue stick Spray glue	
	Contact cement	Contact cement	COMMON COSPLAY MATERIALS
	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Foam-Tac PVA glue	
	Contact cement	Contact cement	
	Spray glue	Spray glue	TEXTILES
	Spray glue	Spray glue	
	Contact cement	Contact cement	
	Contact cement	Contact cement	
	Contact cement	Contact cement	
	Hot glue	Hot glue	
	Contact cement	Contact cement	LIGHTWEIGHT DETAILS
	Spray glue Contact cement	Spray glue Contact cement	
	Gem-Tac	Gem-Tac	
	Hot glue	Hot glue	
	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	POROUS RIGID MATERIALS
	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	
	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	
	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	NONPOROUS RIGID MATERIALS
	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	
	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	
	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	

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POROUS RIGID MATERIALS

THIS ⬇ TO THAT ➡	Ceramic	Stone	Wood	
Paper	PVA glue stick Spray glue	Hot glue Spray glue	Tacky glue	
EVA Foam	Contact cement	Hot glue	Tacky glue	COMMON COSPLAY MATERIALS
XPS Foam, EPS Foam, and Floral Foam	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Foam-Tac PVA glue	Foam-Tac PVA glue	
Thermoplastic Sheets	Contact cement	Spray glue	Tacky glue	
Lightweight Fabric	Spray glue	Fusible web	Spray glue	TEXTILES
Mediumweight Fabric	Spray glue	Tacky glue Fusible web	Tacky glue	
Heavyweight Fabric	Contact cement	Tacky glue Fusible web	Tacky glue	
Leather, Pleather, and Upholstery Fabric	Contact cement	Tacky glue Fusible web	Tacky glue	
Faux Fur	Hot glue	Hot glue	Hot glue	
Felt	Hot glue	Hot glue Fusible web	Hot glue	
Elastic and Hook-and-Loop	Contact cement	Tacky glue	Hot glue	LIGHTWEIGHT DETAILS
Patches and Appliqués	Spray glue Contact cement	Fusible web	Hot glue	
Rhinestones, Gems, Sequins, and Beads	Gem-Tac	Gem-Tac	Gem-Tac	
Faux Foliage	Hot glue	Hot glue	Hot glue	
Ceramic	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	POROUS RIGID MATERIALS
Stone	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesivecement	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	
Wood	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	
PVC Pipe	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	NONPOROUS RIGID MATERIALS
Glass	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	
Metal	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	
Plastic / Acrylic	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	Contact cement Epoxy or polyurethane adhesive	

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CONTACT CEMENTS

CONTACT CEMENT FORMS EXTREMELY HIGH-STRENGTH BONDS—it's rubber cement, but with five times the smell and ten times the holding power!



Contact cement is an excellent way to level up your cosplay results and vastly improve your home mending. If hot glue or CA glue (Super Glue is a common brand of CA glue) are your current go-tos, I encourage you to transition to contact cement; home repairs will survive much longer, armor seams will be prettier and cleaner, and disasters at cons and shoots will drastically diminish.

The two most common brands of contact cement used by cosplayers are DAP Weldwood and Barge, both of which are readily available for purchase online and, in many cases, in brick-and-mortar stores.



STAY SAFE!



Contact cement is dangerous. When contact cement comes in contact with the air, the solvent in the adhesive evaporates, leaving the rubber that actually creates bonds. That evaporating solvent is highly toxic, so you should always wear a properly fitted and filtered face mask and work in a well-ventilated area.

Contact cement is also highly flammable and explosive. Never use it around an open flame and always store it in a cool, dry environment.

Barge and DAP Weldwood offer lower-toxicity and nonflammable versions of contact cement. Unfortunately, these products lose most of their actual adhesive power and should be avoided.

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Cosplayer: PerlerTricks
Costume: Tiny Tina from *Borderlands*
PerlerTricks uses contact cement to glue his Perler Bead creations to EVA foam.
Photo by Buress Productions

ADHESIVE APPLICATIONS

Contact cement is particularly effective on materials that are moderately to highly porous. It also works well on nonporous surfaces, such as plastic, metal, PVC, and acrylic, that have been lightly sanded to provide a rough surface.

It works exceedingly well on EVA foam and should be a foam armorer's go-to adhesive! Because contact cement retains some stretch and flexibility after it cures, it is an excellent choice for high-mobility areas, such as gauntlets and boot armor.

In addition to EVA foam, contact cement works particularly well on leather, pleather, thermoplastic sheets (Worbla), and even hook-and-loop tape and elastic. Contact cement is perfect for adhering foam and Worbla to fabric, especially if that fabric is heavyweight.

Conversely, be careful when working with expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam and extruded polystyrene (XPS) foam, which are closed-cell foam boards often used for insulation, because the adhesive will corrode the materials.



Cosplayer: Paisleyandglue
Costume: Maleficent
Paisleyandglue used contact cement to construct all the armor on her Maleficent cosplay.
Photo by Alexandra Brumley of Alexandra Lee Studios

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GOOP and E6000

Amazing GOOP and E6000 (both by Eclectic Products) are popular contact adhesives that, like all contact cements, provide extremely secure and flexible holds. However, these products in particular take a long time to cure and are more expensive than DAP Weldwood and Barge. I suggest them as stronger and more flexible alternatives to CA glue and not as a replacement for other contact cements.



USING CONTACT CEMENT

Using contact cement can take some practice, but the results are well worth the effort. Timing is crucial in application, so you may have to make adjustments depending on temperature and humidity.

Before gluing, make sure that both of your surfaces are clean and dry. If your material is particularly nonporous (such as hard plastic), lightly sand it and then clean off the dust.



1 Apply the contact cement to both surfaces. Spread it thin with no drips or globs. Use an old brush, a cotton swab, scrap foam, or silicone makeup brushes to scrape off excess glue.



2 Let the contact cement sit for ten to fifteen minutes so the solvent can evaporate. The glue should be barely tacky before you move to the next step. If you let it sit too long or want an extra level of hold, you can add another layer of glue and repeat the drying process.



3 Finally, press your two pieces together. Especially if the bond will be under strain (a curved or heavy seam, for example), you'll need to maintain that pressure for fifteen seconds or so to secure the bond. Allow it to completely set before applying heat or sealer!

Humble Bundle

contact cement and fabric

Adhering fabrics onto foam and other materials with contact cement is a similar process.

- With thicker fabrics, such as pleather and vinyl, apply contact cement to the structure and the fabric, just as you would with two pieces of foam.
- With thinner fabric, apply the contact cement to just the base material. Be ready to work a little sooner than you normally would, when the contact cement is still a little sticky. Then, you should be able to stretch the fabric over the structural piece and achieve a very solid hold.

As with all glues, make sure to do test swatches first! Some fabrics will work well with contact cement, while others will soak up the glue and quickly become ruined.



This belt was made by adhering fabric to EVA foam with contact cement.

CHOOSE WISELY!

Technically, contact glue refers to adhesives characterized by their high instant adhesion upon contact. However, they aren't all flexible like the neoprene rubber adhesives that work so well in crafts, home, and cosplay applications. In fact, some glues referred to as neoprene glue are an entirely different product and are generally less effective. There's no definitive way to identify *the good stuff*; if you're unsure, do a quick online search to make sure that what you're looking at will work well for you.

Humble Bundle

CLEAN UP

To clean up excess glue or glue blobs or to repair mistakes, use either isopropyl alcohol at the highest alcohol percentage or mineral spirits. Apply the solvent to a clean rag, gently soak the area you want to clean, and then scrape off your contact cement. Don't forget to wear a respirator when working with these solvents!

Solvent won't always clean up contact cement, particularly if it is fully cured. Luckily, contact cement is sandable with a rotary tool and sandpaper. You'll need to let the cement dry before sanding, and you may need to remove glue blobs from your sandpaper or the rotary bit as they build up; the solvent method above works great for this purpose. Be sure to wear a dust mask and protective eyewear when sanding.

Because I don't want to risk solvent getting into my glued seams and undoing adhesion, I generally prefer to use the sanding cleanup method on my actual builds and repairs. When it comes to spills, however, I prefer the solvent method; it gets me the cleanest result!



OTHER APPLICATIONS

Contact cement doesn't have any applications other than as an adhesive, and it should be respected as a particularly dangerous chemical in your cosplay arsenal.

Humble Bundle

CA GLUES



Artist: Jessy Jones of Leaf & Node
Jessy uses CA glue on her propagation stations; her favorite is Gorilla Super Glue Gel.
Photo by Jessy Jones of Leaf & Node

CYANOACRYLATE, OFTEN REFERRED TO AS CA GLUE and sold under such common brand names as Super Glue and Krazy Glue, is strong, fast-acting, and easy to use. It works on many different materials, especially porous ones. CA glue is brittle and rigid, but this inexpensive glue also has extremely fast curing times and is easy to find.

STAY SAFE!

CA glue is toxic when inhaled or ingested or when it comes in contact with eyes, but it is generally safe to use with sensible precautions. Wear eye protection and do not inhale the vapors created when the glue cures.



Humble Bundle

ADHESIVE APPLICATIONS

Because CA glue is easy to get and use, many crafters and cosplayers use it as general-purpose glue. However, this adhesive has some serious drawbacks, and I prefer to use it much more situationally.



Cosplayer: Xephyr Studios
Character: Moira from *Overwatch*
Xephyr used CA glue with an accelerator to create his incredible Moira cosplay.
Photo by Casey Achgill of New Moon Studios

Humble Bundle

CA glue is rigid and brittle, so seams on EVA foam armor or other costume pieces that may flex will break. This trait can be a good thing if you need a temporary hold, but it will be a disaster if your entire suit of armor is built with CA glue!

Plus, CA glue becomes more brittle over time. Any home repairs or craft projects that rely on it may degrade with age.



The "rivets" on this foam armor are googly eyes attached with CA glue.

In my opinion, CA glue is best used for small details that will not undergo any pressure or flex. Attaching googly eyes, small EVA foam details, and lightweight 3-D prints and greebles are some of my favorite applications. In the home, it serves the same purpose; it's best for lightweight repairs and such projects as attaching felt pads to furniture or fixing plastic toys. It can also be used to great effect in projects with clear or semitransparent materials because many CA glues dry completely clear. And because it's available in such tiny tubes, it's also perfect for a traveling repair kit.

USING CA GLUE

You have likely used CA glue before but it is good to know the general process.



1 Make sure that both surfaces are clean and free of dust. If your materials are smooth, gently sand them.



2 Apply a very thin layer of the adhesive—about 1 drop per square inch. CA glue is activated by water, a task that is usually achieved by the moisture in the air. This means that a thinner coat of glue will cure faster and stronger.

Using CA glue can be a bit complicated by the fact that, because it's activated by moisture, it will often adhere to your (living, breathing) skin instead of your (dry) craft materials. You can avoid this issue by using a long-tipped applicator.



3 Apply pressure for 30 seconds.



4 If you find that CA glue takes too long to set for your project, you can apply a CA glue accelerator or activator to create a much faster bond. The full cure time for CA glue is 24 hours.

CLEAN UP

Acetone, which can be purchased in its pure form or as part of many nail polish removers, can be used to clean up CA glue. It's also sandable, which is particularly helpful when correcting overapplication. In either case, be sure to wear lung and eye protection.

Humble Bundle

OTHER APPLICATIONS

When added to baking soda, CA glue forms a paste that works well as a filler to fix cracks on rigid materials, such as 3-D prints and plastics. However, because the material itself is rigid and brittle, it shouldn't be used to fill seams on EVA foam.



HOT GLUES



Artist: Sharon Stahl of Bauble & Hag
Sharon uses hot glue to attach her felt hats to her kitchen witches.
Photo by Sharon Stahl of Bauble & Hag



HOT GLUE IS AN ABSOLUTE CRAFTING STAPLE, AND FOR GOOD REASON—it's easy to use, inexpensive, and completely nontoxic. It also has some significant drawbacks, however: Most notably, generic hot glue sticks have a relatively weak hold, and the glue takes up space, so it can be difficult to get clean seams and otherwise keep your adhesive hidden.

Humble Bundle

There are different kinds of hot glue: high and low temp, gun and skillet applicators, and even glue sticks specifically made for fabric and for cosplay. When choosing a glue gun, make sure that it's either high-temp or dual-temp to get the strongest hold possible. When choosing glue sticks, you may want to splurge on a name brand such as Surebonder; glue-stick formulation can vary widely across price points.

STAY SAFE!

Almost all standard hot glue is harmless in its cool plastic form. However, there's always a risk when you're working with heat—consider wearing goggles and heat-resistant gloves to protect your eyes and skin.



Cosplayer: Knightmage
Costume: Link from *Legend of Zelda*
Knightmage used hot glue exclusively to create his Link cosplay.
Photo by Knightmage

Humble Bundle

ADHESIVE APPLICATIONS

Hot glue is a rock star when it comes to floral crafting, working with felt and faux fur, and making minor home repairs. One huge advantage it has over other adhesives is its very quick curing time: If it's cool, it's done! Many makers reach for hot glue as their go-to adhesive, but I prefer to use it for highly specific applications.



Because it is lightweight, hot glue is great for applying gems, googly eyes, and other details to craft projects.



As an adhesive, hot glue is particularly effective at reinforcing existing connections. I love to insert a bead of hot glue around the edge of my webbing, elastic, or hook-and-loop tape to provide extra support for very important connections.

Humble Bundle

You can also reinforce the inside of armor seams, where the drawbacks of hot glue aren't relevant. You gain the advantages of contact cement and hot glue simultaneously!



Hot glue works supremely well on faux fur, felt, nylon webbing, hook-and-loop tape, and other substantial fabrics. When I'm attaching faux fur to EVA foam, hot glue is my go-to every time.

In the home, hot glue is great for making small repairs, especially ones where both materials are porous or when the gap-filling property of hot glue is an advantage (such as when adhering something to a surface that's rough or bumpy).

Its thermoplastic properties are also great around the home; it can be used to fill small gaps (such as in a trash can or vase) or to provide friction (such as on a rug or clothes hanger).



A glue gun is easy to pack and nontoxic, so hot glue works well for quick repairs at cons. Keep in mind that you need the glue and the tool in your repair kit.

If you need lots of hot glue in a short amount of time—such as if you're building a highly decorated wreath or making a ton of subsequent repairs—you may want to consider using a hot glue skillet or pot. Unlike a glue gun, which only melts a couple inches of adhesive at a time, a glue skillet or pot melts as much adhesive as will fit in the device. It's also particularly useful for a project where you can dip your supplies directly into the skillet or pot, such as floral crafting.

USING HOT GLUE

Although many crafters have grown up using hot glue guns, the general usage steps are worth reviewing:

1 Load your glue gun. Make sure that you have the correct size stick; they come in full size and mini.





2 Allow your glue gun to heat up, which generally takes around two minutes.

3 When the gun is hot, gently pull the trigger over a piece of scrap material or a silicone mat. If the glue gently flows out, you're good to go! If you feel resistance or buckling in the gun, wait a bit longer to allow the gun to reach temperature and retry extrusion.



4 Dispense the glue close to your surface. This technique cuts down on hot glue strings and increases your accuracy.

Humble Bundle

You may not be quite as familiar with how to use a hot glue pot or skillet:



1 Load your pot or skillet with hot glue. You can use either cubes or regular sticks. Cubes melt more quickly, but sticks are more versatile because you can also use them in your glue gun.



2 Allow your skillet or pot to heat up and melt your glue. This time varies, depending on the amount of glue you're using.



3 Dip a chopstick, silicone brush, or dowel into the melted adhesive, and then twist it to remove strings as you take glue from the skillet or pot. Alternatively, you can dip your item directly into the hot glue skillet or pot.



4 When you're done, you can leave the melted adhesive in the skillet or pot for next time or remove it from the nonstick surface after it cools.

CLEAN UP

Hot glue is one of the easiest adhesives to clean up because it becomes a solid plastic once it's cured. For many mistakes and messes, you can simply peel off excess globs. You can use a heat gun to soften the glue if peeling proves ineffective. For the most stubborn hot-glue blobs, rubbing alcohol will break down adhesive additives! For all three solutions, a scraper works wonders to actually remove excess hot glue.



OTHER APPLICATIONS

One of the main drawbacks of hot glue as an adhesive—that it's a thermoplastic that takes up space when cured—is also one of its greatest strengths when it comes to other crafts and cosplay applications.

If you need an adhesive that will fill in space—such as when you're securing a PVC pipe inside one that's a larger diameter—hot glue is a spectacular option.

You can also use hot glue *as* detailing! For very delicate filigree or faux rivets, hot glue applied directly to foam before painting works perfectly.



Humble Bundle

Hot glue can be used in silicone molds to create quick and easy gems, cloches, and other details. If you're quick, you can even dye the hot glue before it cures in the mold by adding mica powder or liquid dye to the melted glue while it's cooling:



1 Carefully fill the mold with hot glue. You can gently manipulate the silicone mold as you're filling it to ensure that the hot glue fills in all crevices and details.



2 Scrape the top of the mold with a silicone brush to remove any excess glue and smooth the edge of the piece.



3 Let the glue cool and cure before carefully demolding it!

PVA GLUES



Artist: Steve Driscoll
When creating his cutting boards, Steve adheres his cut pieces with wood glue before planing and sanding.

POLYVINYL ACETATE (PVA) GLUE IS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON AND POPULAR GLUES IN THE WORLD. Four types are often used for crafts and cosplay: tacky glue, wood glue, white glue, and decoupage medium. Although these four products share some characteristics—namely, that they're sandable once fully cured and retain some flexibility as they dry—they have vastly different applications and are worth exploring individually.

Humble Bundle

STAY SAFE!

PVA glues are water-based and nontoxic. They are safe for bare skin, but shouldn't be ingested. They don't produce fumes and aren't flammable, so they can be used safely in non-ventilated areas.



ADHESIVE APPLICATIONS



Tacky Glue

Tacky glue is the thickest of the four common PVA glues. It excels at holding materials together as it cures, so it requires relatively little clamping, and it's particularly effective for adhering small porous objects to other porous materials. I like using it for small fabric details, where its superior flexibility when cured shines. The adhesive also works very well for lightweight holds, so I'll use it when adhering small resin, wood, or other porous pieces.

Humble Bundle





Wood Glue

Wood glue is moderately thick and is often modified from the base PVA formula to include additional waterproofing properties.

Predictably, wood glue is best used when gluing wood to wood, such as when making home repairs or when crafting with natural materials, such as wood and jute. It also works very well on extruded polystyrene (XPS) foam and does not corrode that material as other adhesives do.

White Glue

White glue, which you probably know by the brand name Elmer's Glue, has a consistency between decoupage medium and wood glue. It's great for kids and for papercrafts, but tacky glue provides a better adhesive hold and decoupage medium works better as a primer or sealer.

Perhaps white glue's best craft application is in papier-mâché, where it works extremely well as an inexpensive, safe, and flexible option.

Humble Bundle



Decoupage Medium

Decoupage medium is thin and has additives to enhance its sealing and finishing properties. You may be familiar with the decoupage medium Mod Podge (by Plaid), which has been available for decades.

Decoupage medium is perfect for adhering paper and very light materials and for the actual craft of decoupage! In other crafts and cosplay, however, it's mostly used for its priming and sealing applications.

USING PVA GLUE

Because PVA glue is so common, you probably already know how to use it! Apply a thin layer of your PVA glue to one of the surfaces you'd like to adhere. I like to evenly spread the glue with a paintbrush.

Once you have an even layer of glue, press your pieces together. For best results, clamp or otherwise put pressure on your seam for the glue's full curing time—usually 24 hours.



CLEAN UP

Because PVA glue is water-soluble, brushes are easily cleaned with soap and water to be used again, and messes can be similarly cleaned up quickly and generally without damage.

OTHER APPLICATIONS

Wood glue and decoupage medium are wonderful primers and sealers, particularly on porous rigid materials, such as wood and XPS foam. Although they can be used to seal foam armor, they will crack under duress and are better used off the body for such items as props and weapons. Decoupage medium comes in many finishes and varieties and dries completely clear. If you're using wood glue as a sealer, do a patch test to confirm that it doesn't have a yellow cast when cured!



Wood glue is used to seal a prop made of XPS foam.

Tacky glue could also theoretically be used as a sealer, but its thickness and price make it a less sensible choice for that application. Instead, I like to use it as an alternative fabric seam sealant to prevent fraying, where its thickness makes it much easier to apply and control.



Humble Bundle



Artist: Dalton Miller
CA glue may come to mind first when you think about working on miniature figures and armies, but PVA glue is often used when constructing terrain and adding texture, such as faux grass, to bases.

UV, EPOXY, AND POLYURETHANE ADHESIVES



Artist: Pixel Raptor Designs
Pixel Raptor Designs adheres the details to her dioramas with UV resin before creating intricate dice encapsulating them.
Photo by Alyssa Jarkewicz

UV AND EPOXY ADHESIVES HAVE EXTREMELY HIGH-STRENGTH BONDS, and many varieties suit different craft and DIY needs.



Where epoxy and UV glues without special additives are generally extremely strong but brittle, polyurethane glue maintains an extremely high bond strength, but it also flexible. Because it was the first company to bring the adhesive to the United States, the brand name Gorilla Glue is often used to refer to polyurethane glue.

Humble Bundle

Epoxy and polyurethane adhesives come in two forms: one-part and two-part.

The one-part versions work similarly to most other adhesives: Once the glue is dispensed, it begins curing in the air.

The two-part types come as two materials—usually, a resin and a hardener—that must be combined before application to start the chemical reaction. Because of this chemical reaction, two-part epoxies have limited work times.



Cosplayer: Akakioga
Costume: Nargacuga Armor from *Monster Hunter World*
Akakioga uses a combination of CA glue, contact cement, and Gorilla Glue (polyurethane adhesive) for her armor builds.
Photo by Brad Conyers Photography

UV glue only comes in the one-part variety. However, instead of curing in air, it requires a source of UV light to cure, such as a UV lamp, a UV flashlight, or even the sun!

CHOOSE WISELY!

Two-part epoxies and polyurethanes may come in dual-syringe applicators; when the plunger is pressed, parts A and B come out of the packaging. This makes them easy to use because the A to B ratios are predetermined! If your product doesn't come in a dual-syringe package, you'll need to measure the two parts yourself by either weight or volume to make sure that your ratios are correct.



All three kinds of adhesives come in different formulas. They may be rigid or flexible, they may be transparent or opaque, and they may have different resistances to weather and temperature. They form extremely strong bonds, and two-part epoxies and polyurethanes in particular are some of the strongest glues available for crafting.

STAY SAFE!

Like all the strongest adhesives, these glues are toxic. Handling and curing should be done in a well-ventilated area, and breathing protection should be worn.

Many of these adhesives will cause skin irritation and minor burns when they come in contact with skin. For that reason, you should also wear nitrile gloves when working with them.

Most varieties are sandable, but they should never be sanded until they are completely cured so that partially cured dust isn't released into the air. And, of course, wear a dust mask and eye protection when sanding even fully cured UV resin, epoxy, and polyurethane, as the adhesives pose serious health risks when inhaled.

Humble Bundle

ADHESIVE APPLICATIONS

The glues in this chapter, particularly their two-part versions, are the "gotta get it done by any means necessary" adhesives. They are extremely strong and relatively easy to use and acquire. If other glue types are repeatedly failing or you're attaching two particularly strange materials, one of these products is likely the way to go.

Notably, the glues work well on porous (wood, stone, and concrete) and nonporous (ceramic, glass, and metal) surfaces. Both adhesives are fantastic for home repairs. They are terrific on acrylic, such as when making a backplate for wings or the structure for a prop.



Two-part epoxy adhesive is used to create the backplate for wings.

Unlike epoxy glue, polyurethane expands as it cures, which works well for filling seams and unevenness.

Unfortunately, because UV resin, epoxy, and polyurethane are messy to work with, are toxic, and have medium to long cure times, they're not suitable emergency glue at a con or photoshoot.

USING UV, EPOXY, AND POLYURETHANE ADHESIVES

Before exposing any of your adhesives to air or light, make sure that your surfaces are ready for application. They should be clean and dry. You may want to lightly sand any smooth surfaces.

For one-part versions, simply apply a thin, even layer to your surfaces, apply pressure, and clamp while curing. If you're working with a UV glue, expose your seam to UV light. Most UV glues will cure in fifteen seconds or less.

In the case of two-part versions:



1 Dispense parts A and B simultaneously with the dual plunger or measure out your amounts (by weight or volume). You should always read the directions for your specific product to make sure that your ratios are correct. Two-part epoxies and polyurethanes with incorrect ratios may suffer reduced strength, have altered color or texture, or even not cure at all!



2 Fully mix the two parts with a disposable stir stick, such as a popsicle stick or old paintbrush. Remember to work quickly and scrape the sides of containers when mixing.

Humble Bundle





3 Once the two parts are fully combined, apply a thin, even layer of the mixture to your surface.

4 Apply pressure to the pieces and then clamp while curing. Refer to your product's instructions to know exactly how and when your adhesive will be fully cured.

Remember, not all of these adhesives cure in the air. Some require heat or UV curing and therefore need to be exposed to the sun or a UV light bulb to harden. Make sure that you read the instructions for your specific adhesive.

CLEAN UP

Because of their strength, UV glues, epoxies, and polyurethanes are best cleaned before they're cured with a disposable towel and acetone. If they're cured, it may be easiest to scrape or sand them away. Otherwise, generous applications of acetone or paint thinner may do the trick, depending on the base material. As always, be safe and wear PPE when sanding and when using and combining chemicals.

Humble Bundle

OTHER APPLICATIONS





Epoxy comes in many different nonadhesive forms, several of which are relevant to cosplay and crafting:

- Epoxy coating, such as Epsilon (by Smooth-On), can be used to harden armor and props for an extremely smooth and durable finish.
- Epoxy resin can be cast in molds and is particularly effective for making gems and jewelry. It can be colored with multiple kinds of pigments and powders.
- Epoxy putty, such as Free Form SCULPT (by Smooth-On), can be sculpted like clay. Because it cures in air, it doesn't require baking or firing.

Polyurethane is most commonly used as a varnish or sealer, often to finish woodworking projects. Polyurethane varnishes and sealers can be waterproof, are often tinted, and are extremely tough.

Like epoxy, UV resin is wonderful as a casting material for creating gems, jewelry, and other small details. It can also be used in thin layers as a durable sealer.

Humble Bundle

TAPES

TAPE COMES IN SEVERAL DIFFERENT FORMS, BUT THE KIND WE TYPICALLY USE IN CRAFTS AND HOME PROJECTS IS *PRESSURE SENSITIVE TAPE*, which means that it bonds with pressure and without the need for heat or water. Because it's so easy to pack and use and creates no mess, tape is spectacular for any emergency repair kit.

DON'T FORGET!

As always, a patch test is necessary when using tape. Make sure that your tape of choice won't ruin your paint job, mar your home repair, or rip up your craft!





Cosplayer: Maker Fishmeal
Costume: Dragon Master Swain from *League of Legends*
For big builds like Dragon Master Swain, you may need to mask off areas for painting with masking tape or something similar.
Photo by Sydney Newland of Cinnamon + Birch

Humble Bundle

ADHESIVE APPLICATIONS

Masking Tape or Painter's Tape

Masking tape, true to its name, is designed to mask off areas not intended to be painted, which is handy for DIY, cosplay, and craft projects. However, masking tape is also a great general-use tape. Masking tape is easy to tear, lending itself to frustration-free crafting. It can usually be removed safely without damaging or leaving behind residue. Despite being generally safe on painted and finished surfaces, it's also relatively sticky and can be used for temporary attachment, such as when trying on foam armor or securing a home repair while a more permanent adhesive cures.







Masking tape is also my go-to tape for pattern making. To make a super-easy 3-D fitted pattern, cover an object (be it a body part, a piece of armor, furniture, or whatever you need to pattern) in cling film and then encase that cling film in strips of masking tape. Draw the pattern onto the tape and then carefully cut it off and lay it flat to use as a pattern for sewing, armor making, construction, and so forth.

Humble Bundle

Duct Tape

Duct tape is an extremely strong adhesive, is not easily ripped, and can resist weathering. These facets make it super useful as a heavy-duty tape option! However, it also leaves behind a residue, often even when immediately removed from a surface. Duct tape works well for permanent repairs, especially ones that don't need to be pretty.



Gaffer Tape

Gaffer tape is a specialized type of duct tape that is designed to be removable and, therefore, doesn't leave a residue. It was originally made for the theater, so it's also low-visibility. Plus, it's easily torn by hand! For these reasons, I think that gaffer tape is the best option for a cosplay emergency repair kit.

Transparent Tape

Transparent tape, often found under the brand name Scotch Tape (by 3M), is the ultimate all-purpose home tape. Of course, it's perfect for wrapping gifts, but it's also relatively high-tack and therefore excellent for papercrafting where a permanent bond is desired.

CosBond



CosBond has a line of very high-strength double-sided adhesive sheets made just for cosplayers and other makers. CosBond Attach & Build sheets are nontoxic and have zero drying time, but they do not hold as strongly as contact cement. They are fantastic if you don't have access to the PPE or ventilated area necessary for using contact cement. They work well as a fabric adhesive for applying appliqués

Humble Bundle

and are washable. They can handle foam seams that won't be under stress, particularly when layering foam face to face and when applying details.

I also love using CosBond Reinforcer single-sided sheets. They're great for strengthening attachment points, such as nylon webbing and pleather strapping.



Packing Tape

If you want to close a package, packing tape is the adhesive for you! It also has non-packing applications, however; packing tape is a great option if you need a clear tape that's stronger and is more difficult to rip than transparent tape or if you need a clear tape that's wider than transparent tape, which usually maxes out at 1″. Finally, packing tape can also be used for low-budget lamination.



Double-Sided Tape

Double-sided tape is absolutely spectacular for papercrafts. Because it can be used between layers, it's completely invisible! Some kinds of double-sided tape even have height, creating dimensionality in such crafts as scrapbook spreads.

Double-sided tape also comes as adhesive dots. These dots are packaged as small bubbles of adhesive on a strip and are particularly useful for low-mess situations because they're prepackaged and require no ripping or cutting. Some adhesive dots are also repositionable.

Humble Bundle

Electrical Tape

Electrical tape is used for insulating wires, so it's essential to have around for any LED, RC, or other electrical projects. Additionally, electrical tape is one of the few common tapes that is stretchy, so it's an option if you need to tightly wrap an object or tape around curves. Keep in mind that you should loosen the stretch as you finish wrapping an item, or the end may tend to curl and pull back over time.

CLEAN UP

Many types of tape leave behind residue when removed from a surface. In fact, the longer tape is left on a material, the more likely it is to leave a mess. Even tape that's generally safe to remove from a surface—such as masking tape—will need to be treated more carefully if it spends a long time on a surface.

Often, soapy water will remove tape residue. If a stronger solution is required, rubbing alcohol will dissolve most tape adhesives.



Humble Bundle

FABRIC ADHESIVES



MANY GENERAL-PURPOSE GLUES WORK ON FABRIC, BUT SOME ADHESIVES ARE MADE SPECIFICALLY FOR FABRIC. These adhesives can be used for mending, hemming, adhering decorative elements, attaching appliqués, basting, and more.

ADHESIVE APPLICATIONS

Fusible Web

Fusible web is a heat-activated fiber that melts to glue two fabrics together. You may also know fusible web as hem adhesive or iron-on adhesive, and it is sold under various brand names, including HeatnBond (by Therm O Web), Bondaweb (by Vlieseline), Pellon, and many others. It generally has a paper backing so that you can apply the adhesive to one fabric at a time. It's great for creating appliqués where visible stitching isn't desired, for patching holes, or for using as an alternative to basting. Fusible web comes in various weights (referring to the amount of adhesive the product contains) and sizes. It is sold as packs, on rolls, and by the yard, so it's easy to find the strength and dimensions that work for your project.

Humble Bundle



Cosplayer: Candace Birger of Plexi Cosplay
Costume: Nargacuga x Magnamalo Armor from *Monster Hunter*
Plexi used Aleene's Super Fabric Adhesive, an industrial-strength, flexible fabric glue, on her shoes and gloves.
Photo by Downen Photography

Humble Bundle

CHOOSE WISELY!

It's important to consider the weight of fabric when choosing a fusible web. If you choose a product that contains too much adhesive, it may seep through a lighter fabric. On the other hand, a fusible product that's too light might not bond heavier fabrics.

Fusible web is heat-activated, so materials can be perfectly placed before the adhesive becomes sticky. It's cured as soon as it's cooled and is completely nontoxic. Of course, you should always work carefully around irons and steam.

Different fusible webs will have different heat and setting requirements, and some will require steam to activate the adhesive. Generally, though, fusible web is very easy to use. In this case, I'm illustrating a no-sew appliqué, but the same process applies to hemming, repairs, and other uses:



1 Cut the fusible web down to size.



2 Place your fusible web on your fabric with the web side down and paper side up. Iron over the protective paper to activate the adhesive. Remember to refer to the directions to find the exact temperature and timing requirements.



3 Cut your appliqué down to size. I prefer cutting at this step instead of tracing and getting the exact shape in step 1 because it means that my fusible web extends all the way to the edges of my appliqué.



4 Peel off the protective paper to reveal the second adhesive side of the fusible web.



5 Position your piece (or, in the case of hemming, fold over your hem). Iron the fusible web once again to activate the second side of adhesive.



6 Fusible web does not have a curing time. Once it's cool, it's done!

If you make a mistake or need to remove fusible webbing from a project, steaming the area and then gently pulling the fused material apart will often work. For this reason, you shouldn't wash your garments using this product with hot water! If steam and heat don't loosen the adhesive enough, rubbing alcohol on a cotton ball should do the trick.

Humble Bundle

Fabric Glue

Fabric glue is a generic term that refers to a wide range of products.

Some fabric glue will dissolve in the wash and is intended for temporary repairs or basting. If you're looking for a basting glue, try SpraynBond Basting Adhesive (by Therm O Web).

Other types of fabric glue, such as Beacon Fabri-Tac and Gorilla Waterproof Fabric Glue, are super-strong and permanent but may require more safety measures when being used. Be sure to read and follow all the manufacturer's safety instructions. Many of these glues, in particular, are inflexible, fairly heavy, and better used on stiffer materials, such as denim, canvas, and pleather.



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If you're using lightweight or stretchy materials, a flexible adhesive, such as Heatnbond Fabric Fuse Liquid Adhesive or Aleene's Super Fabric Adhesive, is a better choice.



Some fabric glue has an extremely short curing time, similar to CA glue, and will work for emergencies. Aleene's Quick Dry Fabric Fusion would be a welcome addition to your convention repair kit!

CLEAN UP

The cleanup step for fabric adhesive depends highly on what kind of glue you're using.

For liquid or viscous glues similar to CA glue and contact cement, break down the adhesive with a solvent, such as isopropyl alcohol or acetone. Always read the manufacturer's specific guidelines and patch test on a scrap piece of fabric to make sure that the solvent won't react with your materials.

To remove fusible web, begin by steaming the webbing portion of the product so that it can be easily peeled off your fabric. Likely, an adhesive residue will remain behind; gently rub the area with rubbing alcohol to break down that remaining glue.

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SPECIALTY ADHESIVES



Artist: Tenacious Clay Things

Tenacious Clay Things uses Sculpey Oven-Bake Clay Adhesive, a specialty heat-activated glue for adhering sculpted details before curing. I've covered many of the most common specialty adhesives in this category, but there really is a glue for most everything!



NOT ALL GLUES ARE EASILY CATEGORIZED. The adhesives in this chapter are relevant to craft, cosplay, and home DIY, but they are used in very specific circumstances.

Because they vary wildly in their composition and use, each of these adhesives has different safety and cleanup protocols. Remember, whenever you use a new glue, always read the instructions to make sure that you're using and cleaning the adhesives safely.

PVC CEMENT

If you're affixing PVC to PVC, I recommend working with PVC glue (also known as solvent cement) every time. PVC glue literally dissolves the plastic in PVC so that your pieces are welded together. PVC glue and PVC plastic are both toxic, so take care when using this adhesive.

To use PVC cement:

1. Make sure that both pieces of your PVC are clean and dry.



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2 Apply an even, thin layer of adhesive to both sections of PVC with the included applicator or a disposable paintbrush.

3 Immediately push the pieces of PVC together, twisting as you go to evenly spread the cement. Apply pressure to your pieces for about fifteen seconds.

STAY SAFE!

PVC cement should be used in a well-ventilated area with proper respiratory protection. Full safety glasses and gloves are also recommended. Be sure to read and follow all manufacturer's safety instructions.



Cosplayer: Maker Fishmeal
Costume: Brigitte from *Overwatch*
For Brigitte, I used PVC cement to create the shaft of the flail.
Photo by Nathan Hackmann of Hackmann Media

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GEM-TAC



Beacon Gem-Tac is specifically formulated for adhering gems, sequins, beads, and other embellishments to fabric. It works exceptionally well, particularly for an odorless glue that's nontoxic and water-based. E6000 (by Eclectic Products) offers a stronger bond but is toxic and requires several safety measures. Gem-Tac is the way to go when you want a similar bond and a product that does not require extra safety measures.

FOAMBOARD ADHESIVE AND FOAM-TAC

Highly porous materials, such as extruded polystyrene (XPS) foam, expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam, and floral foam, can be particularly tricky to find a glue for because many adhesives will dissolve or melt right through them. Foamboard adhesive and Beacon Foam-Tac are made specifically for these very delicate, porous foams. They're terrific for crafting with flowers; for using on foam toys, such as model planes; and for adhering small XPS and EPS foam details to projects.



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XPS, EPS, and floral foam adhere well with PVA glue and with specialty adhesives, so it's useful to compare them to make an informed choice.

PVA glue is better than the specialty options in several important factors:

- Most PVA glues have curing times of 24 hours or less, while the specialty adhesives take up to seven days to fully harden.
- PVA glue is significantly less expensive and more readily available than specialty options are.
- Foamboard adhesive and Foam-Tac have odors and other safety issues, while PVA glue is generally quite safe for skin and lungs.

However, adhesives made specifically for porous foams do have some advantages over PVA glue:

- Specialty glues have a much tighter initial grab, which means less clamping or otherwise providing pressure as the adhesive cures.
- Specialty glues are weather-resistant, whereas not all PVA glues are.
- Specialty glues have minor gap-filling properties, so they're a good choice when you're not adhering perfectly smooth surfaces.

Generally, I recommend PVA glue—wood glue, specifically—in a situation where you can easily provide pressure to your bond as the glue cures. It's also much more cost-effective as a sealant on foam if you're using it for prop-making, miniature dioramas, or other "unconventional" uses of insulation foam. You may prefer a specialty glue if you cannot easily provide pressure to your bond as it cures (for example, if you're mounting XPS or EPS boards onto a wall) or if your application will be exposed to weather.

Most products marketed as "foamboard adhesives" come packaged to be used in a caulking gun. For instructions on how to use this tool, see Construction Adhesives (page 77).

Alternatively, Foam-Tac is packaged in a squeeze tube and is specially formulated with UV blockers and enhanced adhesion promoters to be used on model planes. Because of its smaller footprint, it's the better option for use around the home.

ADHESIVES FOR USE ON SKIN

If you're wearing a lace front wig (a wig on which the front section has individual wig fibers sewn into lace), you'll want to glue your lace to your skin to give yourself the most natural hairline possible. Wig (or lace) glue is made to be gentle on the skin, and many types can also withstand sweat and skin oils. Different wig glues have different strengths and durability, and some require a second product for removal.

An alternative to wig glue is spirit gum, which works well for attaching lace fronts but can also be used for bald caps, faux facial hair, fake noses and ears, and other prosthetics.



Cosplayer: Maker Fishmeal
Costume: Draven from *League of Legends*
I attach my Draven mustaches to my skin with spirit gum.
Photo by Sydney Newland of Cinnamon + Birch

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Wig tape (also known as toupee tape) and fashion tape are double-sided tape specially made for use on skin. You may prefer wig tape to a glue adhesive. Fashion tape is spectacular for adhering outfit pieces to skin or each other, such as keeping a low-cut top close to the skin or closing the gaps between buttons. Wig tape and fashion tape are especially useful for cosplay emergency kits!



Fashion tape closes the gap between two buttons.

DON'T FORGET!

Because you'll be using these products directly on your skin, be particularly sure to complete a small patch test to make sure that your skin doesn't react poorly.



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CONDUCTIVE GLUE

Conductive glue is made from a combination of a conductive material, such as silver, nickel, or copper, and an adhesive component, such as resin. Conductive glue can be a great alternative to soldering in certain applications, such as when a join needs to be flexible, when a soldering iron can't reach a join, or when a component is heat-sensitive and therefore cannot be exposed to molten solder. However, conductive glue has a lower electrical conductivity than solder and so should only be used in those specific cases.

RUBBER CEMENT



Rubber cement is special among adhesives because of how easily removable it is. For this reason, it's best for papercrafts where extremely easy cleanup is desired or when you need to be able to reposition or remove the item (such as with vintage photos or fine art). Keep in mind, however, that rubber cement is toxic to inhale. It should always be used in a well-ventilated area!

For best results, apply a thin layer and then allow it to dry a bit before pressing your pieces together.

Shoe GOO

Shoe GOO (by Eclectic Products) is a specialized kind of rubber cement that has increased strength, longevity, and flexibility, but also takes quite a while to cure. Its original purpose was to repair shoes, but it also shines as a repair sealant (such as on bicycle tires), as a waterproofer (such as on RC boats), and as a hobby glue.

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ADHESIVE PUTTY

You may have seen adhesive putty sold as Blu Tack (by Bostik), a very popular name-brand version of the product. Adhesive putty is—you guessed it—an adhesive in putty form. It is extremely low-strength and therefore perfect for pieces that will need to be removed or repositioned. It's commonly used to hang artwork and other lightweight objects on walls and is excellent around the house for securing small objects. It is completely nontoxic.

Artist: Jackie London Studio



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THREAD-LOCKING FLUID

Thread-locking fluid is specially formulated for use on nuts, bolts, and screws to keep them from loosening or coming free due to vibration or other stressors.

Thread-locking fluid generally comes in two forms: red and blue. Blue provides a strong hold, but it's possible to break its bonds with regular household tools, such as a wrench. It's best for applications where you'll eventually want to take the threads apart: furniture you'll need to disassemble for a move, power equipment that will need servicing, props that will need to be packed into a suitcase, and similar uses.

Red thread-locking fluid is meant to be permanent but can be removed with some work. First, apply significant (at least 550°F or 250°C) heat to the bonded threads. The adhesive will soften, allowing you to twist the join with a wrench. Once the threads have come apart, you'll need to soak the pieces in a strong solvent (such as paint thinner or brake cleaner) and clean them with a wire brush.

Thread-locking fluids are essential for construction projects, but I find them handy to have around for general home repair as well. They're also useful for very large prop builds, which may connect by using nuts and bolts and require the security that thread-locking fluid provides.

To use thread-locking fluid:

1. Make sure that the nut and the thread are clean and dry.
2. Apply a small amount of thread-locking fluid to the thread where the nut will sit.
3. Tighten the nut to spread the adhesive evenly.

Most thread-locking fluids will take 24 hours to cure.

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SPECIALTY APPLICATORS



SOME ADHESIVES ARE BETTER DEFINED BY THEIR METHOD OF APPLICATION RATHER THAN THEIR COMPOSITION AND USE.

For these glues, it's particularly important to patch test and read instructions and warning labels because the chemical compositions can vary wildly, even if packaging appears similar.

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Cosplayer: Maker Fishmeal
Costume: Debonair Leona from *League of Legends*
For Debonair Leona, I used a sprayable basting adhesive to attach details to my suit before sewing them on permanently.
Photo by Sydney Newland of Cinnamon + Birch

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GLUE STICKS AND GLUE PENS

Glue sticks and glue pens are usually, but not always, PVA glue, such as white glue and wood glue. They have low holding power, so they're best used for papercrafting and other lightweight applications. Glue sticks come in repositionable and permanent strengths, so be sure to grab the correct one for your project. Because glue sticks are in a hard paste form and glue pens have very small applicators, both products are very low mess.



SPRAY GLUE



Spray adhesives are sprayed as a mist from a pump or pressurized container and can vary wildly in holding power. Some attributes, however, are generally shared across the category:

- Because they are dispensed as a mist, coats of the adhesive are very even, consistent, and thin.
- They dry quickly and clear.
- They do not cause puckers in the materials if properly applied.



Some spray glues are repositionable, making them the perfect adhesives for paper mockups, patterns, papercrafts, and photo mounting.



Alternatively, an all-purpose or heavy-duty spray glue works well as an all-around DIY and home-repair adhesive when you need a glue that will dry invisible quickly.

A specialized spray adhesive, such as SpraynBond Basting Adhesive fabric spray (by Therm O Web) is an alternative to basting stitches or pins when working on appliqués, trims, and other details on fabric pieces; just attach the detail with the spray before machine sewing. This is particularly valuable when compared to pinning because it doesn't create puckers and, therefore, allows for perfectly placed details!



STAY SAFE!

As with anything that's aerosolized, protect your eyes and lungs when using spray glue. Always work in a well-ventilated area, and don't forget to protect your surroundings from overspray as well.

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CONSTRUCTION ADHESIVES



Construction adhesive is a generic name for a wide range of types of glue used for construction, woodworking, DIY, and home repair. Most construction adhesives are packaged for use in a caulk gun. They are often polyurethanes or epoxies but can be any kind of glue.

To use a construction adhesive with a caulk gun:

1. Cut the nozzle at your desired spot; the closer the cut is to the tip of the nozzle, the less adhesive will be dispensed at once. For a very precise job, you'll want to cut near the tip of the nozzle at a 45-degree angle. If you want to dispense a lot of adhesive at once, cut at the middle or the bottom.

2. Poke something sharp, such as a pin or a nail, through the opening you just made to puncture the inner seal.

3. Press the release trigger near the end of your caulk gun, then pull the metal rod all the way back.

4. Insert the glue container into the caulk gun once the metal rod is out of the way.

5. Apply a bead of adhesive to the surface with the caulk gun. If you're doing a precision job, this may take some practice; don't be afraid to get the feel of the trigger by using a scrap piece of material.

6. Leave the adhesive as is or use scrap foam, a disposable paintbrush, or a silicone makeup brush to smooth and spread the bead.

7. Apply pressure and then wait for the suggested curing time, which will vary depending on your specific product.

CONCLUSION

THERE ARE A WHOLE LOT OF ADHESIVES OUT THERE — NOT ONLY DIFFERENT TYPES, BUT DIFFERENT BRANDS AND VARIATIONS WITHIN THOSE TYPES. Making the right choice can feel overwhelming and scary, especially if you're making artwork or an important home repair. But just as *using* many of these glues takes practice, *choosing* them also takes time to learn. I encourage you to make choosing your adhesive an intentional part of your process: when it's time to pick up a glue, pause for just a moment and ask yourself if this is *really* the glue you want to be using. (If you need help, maybe take a quick glance at What Glue to Use, page 11).

As you learn and practice, keep a healthy respect for the danger involved in using many adhesives. Whenever you're using a new product or coming back to one after a long time, read the packaging to refresh your safety knowledge. If the safety data isn't on the adhesive itself, search online for your glue's name plus "safety data sheet" to pull up the full safety suggestions. Keep your mask filters fresh and your gloves handy, and don't forget to think about protecting your housemates (human and otherwise) and surfaces, too!

Choosing and using adhesives can sometimes be a frustrating process of trial and error and of gradually learning a specific material's needs, a product's timing, and an application's requirements. Glue choice is one of the many elements that contribute to a beautiful craft, and as you get better at adhesive use, your creations will improve too.

Stick with it, friends, and happy making.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Annye (Maker Fishmeal) believes that cosplay brings joy, that making is an incredible form of creative self-expression, and (most importantly!) that everyone can cosplay. Their cosplay focus is on highly detailed craftsmanship, and they're willing to spend a year on a cosplay to get it just right. Annye's favorite glue is contact cement, which they use for everything!

Annye has won multiple best in show awards, is a repeat finalist for Riot Games' State Farm x LCS cosplay contest, and has been published by *Entertainment Weekly* and *Marvel Becoming*.

Annye lives in Ohio with their husband, cats, horse, and school of fancy guppies.



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HOUSE & HOME / Do-It-Yourself / General

A PRACTICAL REFERENCE GUIDE to keep essential glue information handy.

A pocket-sized guide for which glue to use for successful gluing, even when adhering to two or more different materials.

Learn alternative uses for glues such as primers, sealers, adding texture, and gap filling, and find out which glues can be used for non-traditional applications.

Easy-to-use tables allow you to find the right product quickly, and the in-depth information later in the book helps ensure your pieces stay together.









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