

How to Make the Ruby Slippers

From “The Wizard of Oz”

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Background

In my research for reference images, I found a publication¹ that characterized the materials used in the original Ruby Slippers. The article included close reference images, a list of construction materials, and a high-level overview of the build process.

I followed the materials and techniques from the article as closely as possible, adapting where I felt appropriate.

Additional reference materials:

[Dorothy's Ruby Slippers \(National Museum of American History\)](#)

[The Wizard of Oz – Ruby Slippers \(Paragon FX Group\)](#)

¹ Douglas, J.G., Kavich, G., Mori, C. *et al.* Materials characterization of the Ruby Slippers from the 1939 classic film, *The Wizard of Oz*. *Herit Sci* 6, 49 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40494-018-0214-1>

Tutorial Overview

Cost: \$120

Time to Completion: 5 months

High Level Steps:

1. Purchase and prepare a commercial pump-style shoe
2. Paint the shoe
3. Tack mesh onto the shoe
4. Sew sequins onto the mesh
5. Attach the sequined mesh to the shoe
6. Make a pair of bows from stiff red fabric, covered in the same mesh
7. Sew beads and decorations onto the bow
8. Attach the bow to the top of the shoe
9. Attach felt on the sole and heel

Tutorial Assumptions

- You are **confident** with hand sewing.
- You are **comfortable** with beading, fusible interfacing, and fabric paint.
- You have **access** to:
 - Needles
 - Hand scissors and fabric scissors
 - Iron and ironing board (or iron-safe surface)
- You are **prepared** to do separate research as needed to feel sufficiently informed about working with potentially hazardous materials and to procure the necessary equipment / spaces needed to work with the indicated materials safely.

Material List

Material	What I Used	What I Paid
Pump shoe	Journee Saar Pump <i>Variety of heel heights, wide sizing, round toes</i>	\$50
Pleather fabric paint	Angelus Preparer and Deglazer, 1 oz ² Angelus Leather Paint – 1 oz, Scarlet Angelus Glitterlites Paint – Ruby Red, 1 oz Angelus Acrylic Finisher 1 oz Angelus Synthetic Paint Brush Set of 5	\$30
1/4 yard stretch mesh	Red Tie Dye Power Mesh <i>1 yard minimum</i>	\$15
1/4 yard woven fabric	Scrap of red felt from another project, interfaced	\$0
~5000 sequins	5mm Flat Metallic Red <i>My shoe size is 6.5W with 1.5” kitten heel; you may need more sequins if your size or heel is larger</i>	\$10
3 sew-on flat back gems	10x14mm Red Ruby Rectangle Sew On Gems ³	\$5
~100 sew-on rhinestones	5mm Montee Chatons Sew On Rhinestones	\$10
~300 bugle tube and/or seed beads	6mm Glass Bugle Tube Seed Beads Leftover seed beads from another project	\$5

² **Angelus Deglazer** and **E6000** produce harmful vapors and can cause severe irritation if it comes with direct contact with skin, eyes, mouth etc. Please refer to the safety data sheets ([Angelus Deglazer](#), [E6000](#)) for a full list of potential risks and protective measures.

When working with these materials on this project I:

- Wore protective equipment including: goggles, respiratory mask, and gloves
- Worked in a well-ventilated area – a bathroom with a window open and fan running
- Kept the door to the workspace closed to keep the vapors away from my pets and family

³ Several vendors on this list shipped from China or another international location prior to the USA tariff changes, but may now be subject to tariffs. Prices do not reflect any tariffs or other additional trade costs.

Material	What I Used	What I Paid
Thread	Any standard thread will do	\$5
Adhesive	E6000 ⁴	\$5

⁴ **E6000** produces harmful vapors and can cause severe irritation if it comes with direct contact with skin, eyes, mouth etc. Please refer to the safety data sheet ([E6000](#)) for a full list of potential risks and protective measures. See back to the notes on **Angelus Deglazer** for protective measures I took on this project.

Step 1: Prepare the Shoes

Wear the shoes around to stretch them out a bit.

WHY?

While the mesh will stretch to fit the shoes, if you see the sequins while either shoe is new, you might end up with gaps in your sequin pattern if the base shape of the shoe changes once you wear it.

To expedite this process, you can try:

1. Fill a pair of gallon zip-lock bags with water
2. Put the bags in the shoes
3. Place the shoes in the freezer for a few days

WHY?

When the water freezes, it expands and pushes against the edges of the shoe. This technique works best with fabric or natural materials like leather, but I've had some limited success with pleather shoes as well.

Step 2: Paint the Shoes

NOTE: If your base shoes are already an appropriate shade of red, skip this step.

NOTE 2: These instructions are for a leather or pleather shoe. If your shoes are fabric, I recommend RIT dye or Jacquard fabric paint to color your shoes.

Use the deglazer to remove any sealer or top coat on the shoe. The paint will stick to the shoe better if there are no commercial polishes or finishes on the surface.

REMINDER: Follow safe practices when working with materials that produce fumes.



Paint the **ENTIRE** shoe (including the arch and inside face of the heel) with multiple coats, allowing it to dry between coats.



Apply glitter paint to the edges of the shoe openings.

WHY? The sequins won't fully extend perfectly to the edge. Putting glitter on the edges adds some sparkle to catch the light if the underlying shoe is visible in those areas.

Apply the sealer to protect the paint.

Step 3: Tack the mesh onto the shoes



Put paper or fabric inside the shoes to help hold the “stretched” dimensions.



Tack the mesh over the entire shoe, securing the edges on the bottom.

Sew down the center back seam as flatly as possible.

WHY? I wanted to be able to see the placement of every sequin on the shoes in a 3D space, so I used a power mesh pre-stretched on the shoes.

Step 4: Sew the sequins onto the mesh



NOTE: I recommend doing some tests on a scrap of fabric until you have a comfortable rhythm with applying the sequins.

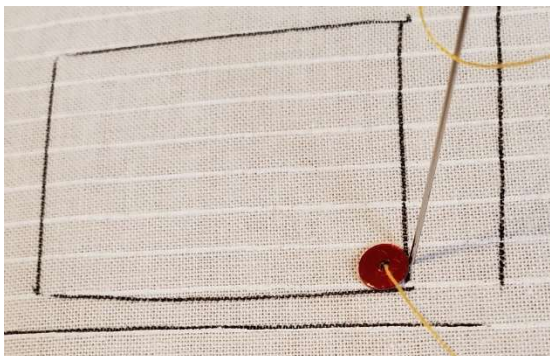
You may also have a different way that you prefer to sew your sequins. I will share how I did mine.

How to sew sequins in a line:



Prepare your needle and thread.

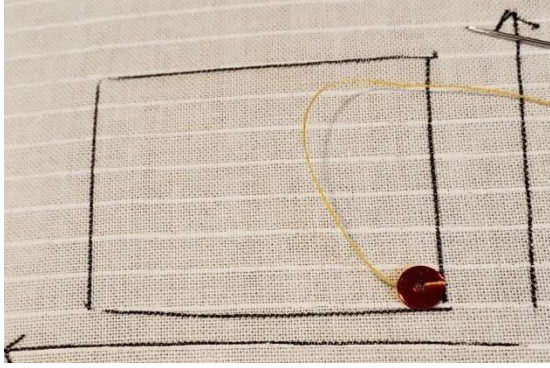
To start a row, bring the needle up through the fabric. The thread should be positioned where the **CENTER** of the sequin will need to be.



Add a sequin.

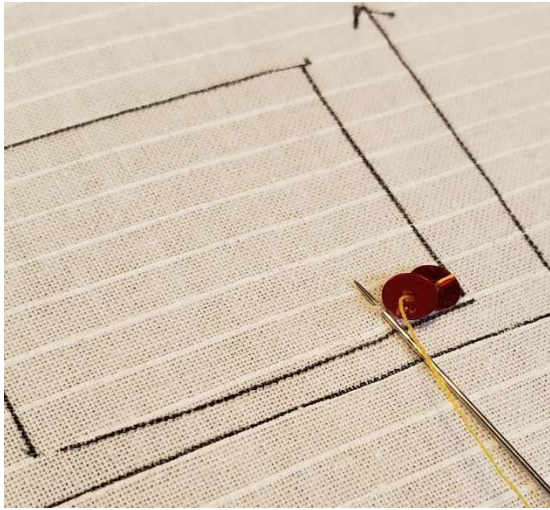
Bring the thread to the **OUTSIDE** edge of the sequin.

Then bring the thread back up on the **INSIDE** edge of the sequin, aligned with the center.



Thread another sequin.

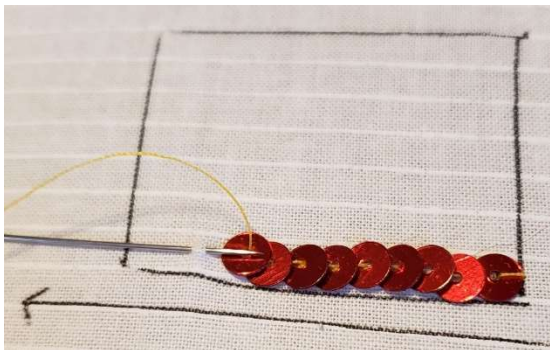
The center of the second sequin should overlap with the edge of the first.



On the inner edge of the second sequin, run the thread through a small amount of fabric.

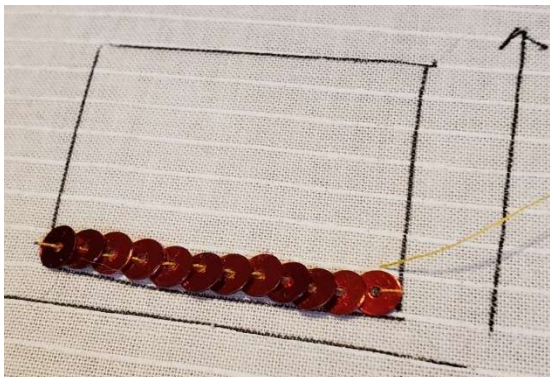
This should leave the thread just next to the previous sequin, aligned with the center.

NOTE: I found that typically 3 strands of the mesh were enough to secure the sequin.



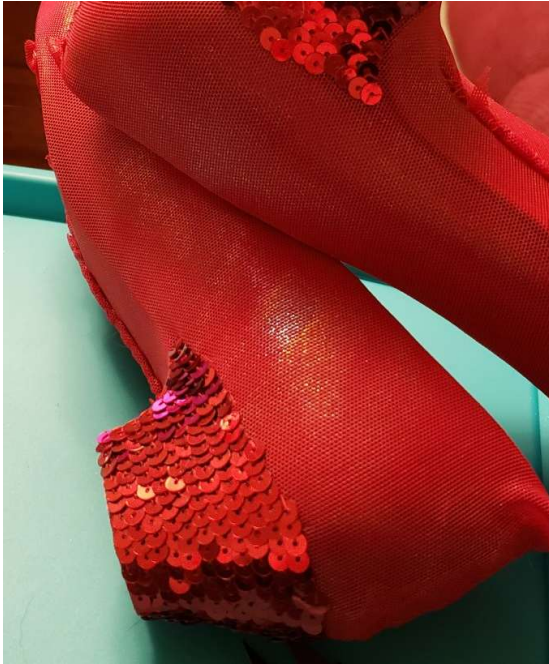
Continue to add sequins by bringing the thread through a small amount of the fabric next to the previous sequin, aligned with the vertical center.

At the end of the row, knot off the thread.

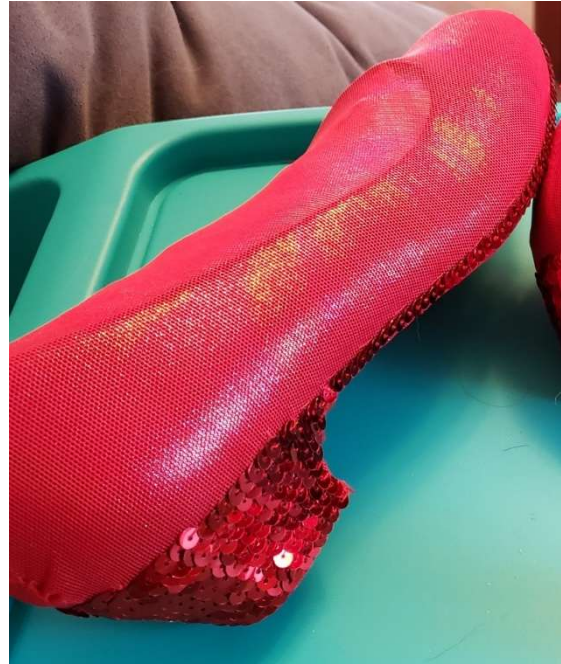


Repeat the process to add more rows.

Use the following order for applying the sequins:



1. Work back to front, starting with the heel



2. Work bottom to top



WHY?

We want the sequins to lay flat and smooth if brushed by hand from the front and the top. If we apply the sequins from back to front, the sequins in the front will overlay the ones further back. Similarly, if we apply the sequins from bottom to top, the sequins towards the top will overlay the ones further down.

Step 5: Attach the sequined mesh to the shoe

Going one segment at a time, carefully glue down the edges of the mesh.

REMINDER: Make sure to follow all safety precautions when working with industrial strength adhesives like E6000.

How to Glue Down a Segment:

1. Trim the mesh 1/2" away from the sequins
2. Apply the glue to a Q-Tip
3. Gently lift the mesh and apply the glue directly to the base shoe
4. Gently pull sequined mesh back into place, aligning the sequins with the edge of the shoe
5. Press down for 30s to make sure glue has adhered
6. Leave the segment to cure
7. When the glue has fully cured, carefully trim away the extra mesh as close to the sequins as possible.



Alternately, for segments under the sole and bottom of the heel, the 1/2" overhang can be glued to the bottom of the shoe since those sections will be covered by the woven fabric.

Recommended Segment Order:

WHY? Segments that will pull the mesh in opposite directions should not be done at the same time because the mesh may move out of position while the glue is curing.

NOTE: Photos below were taken after glue had cured and surfaces were safe to handle.



#1 – Bottom of the sole and heel – outer side

#2 – Bottom of the sole and heel – inner side

#3 – Arch – outer side

#4 – Arch – inner side

#5 – Opening – front and back

#6 – Opening – outside side

#7 – Opening – inner side



Step 6: Make the bows

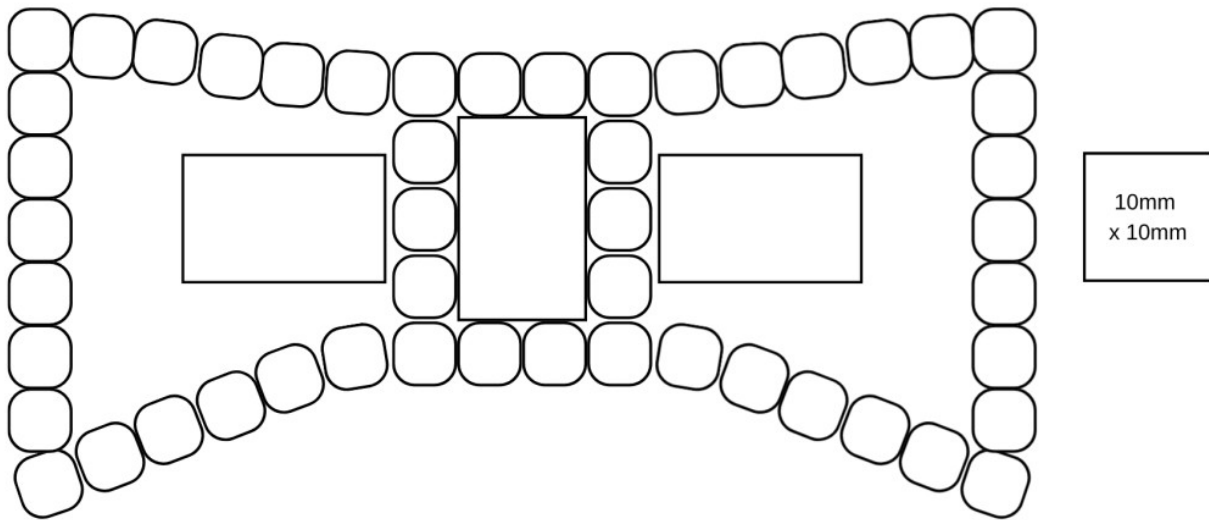
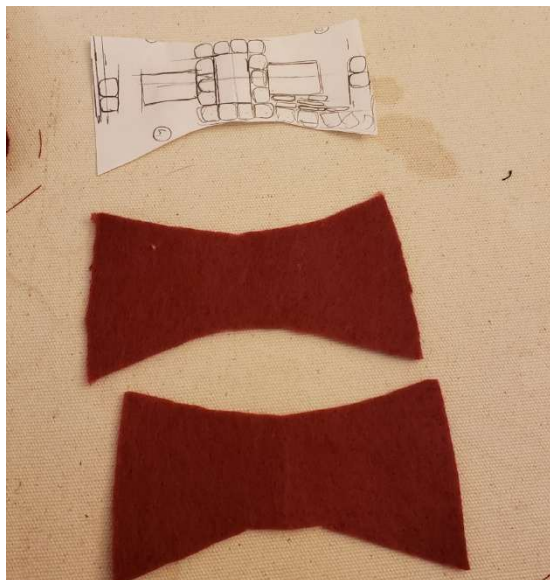


Fig. 1 – Bow template



Adjust the size and shape of the template (Fig 1) based on the size and shape of your shoes.

Adjust the pattern as needed if you used different sized gems and rhinestones.



Cut the pattern out of the fabric.

[Optional] Cut the pattern out of interfacing and apply the interfacing to the wrong side of the material.



Fully cover the top with mesh and tack to the underside of the bow.

Use thread to mark the vertical and horizontal center lines.

Recommended order for sewing the decorations:



#1 – Start with the center gem.

#2 – Sew the rhinestones around the center gem.



#3 – Sew the rhinestones around the outer edges of the bows.

#4 – Sew the remaining gems in the center.



#5 – Use the bugle and seed beads to fill the remaining space.

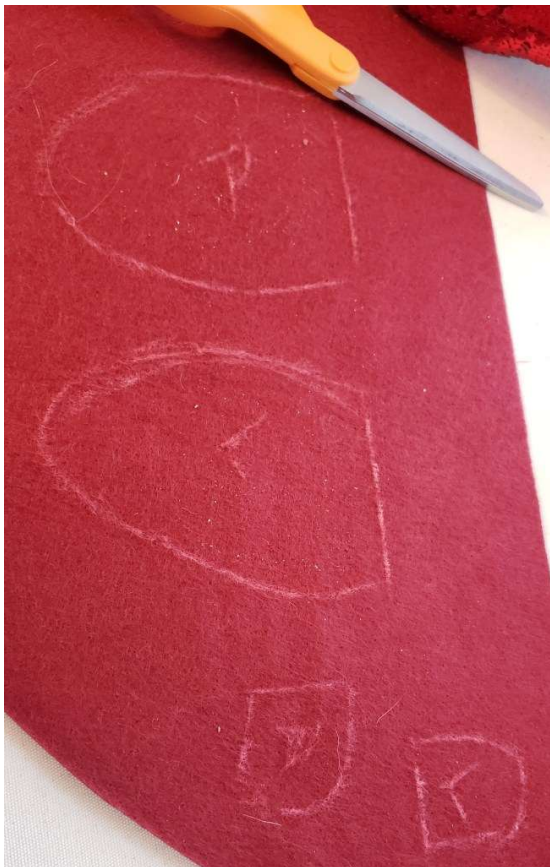
NOTE: You may need to play around with the bead arrangement to get a pattern that doesn't look messy. It took me 4 attempts to find a pattern I liked!

Step 7: Attach the bows and bottom felt



Check the positioning of the bows and then glue them down on top of the sequined upper.

REMINDER: Follow all safety protocols when working with E6000!



Trace the edge of the sole and bottom of the heel onto the woven fabric.

Cut out the traced pattern.

Glue the pieces onto the sole and bottom of the heel, allowing time to cure.

Final Result

