

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL



HALLOWEEN TIPS FROM CIRQUE DU SOLEIL EXPERTS

With a little advance planning and some help from Cirque du Soleil, you and your kids can make a real splash with your costumes and makeup this Halloween. And it doesn't have to cost a fortune. All you really need is an active imagination, some simple materials and a well-developed sense of fun.

It's easy enough to buy or rent a ready-to-wear costume, but designing and making your own is a lot more satisfying. And it can quickly become an activity for the whole family.

Creating a character

"It's so much more rewarding to actually create a character than to just go out and buy a costume off the rack," says Isabelle Fink, Assistant to the Makeup Designer at Cirque's Montreal headquarters. "To create your character's unique look, don't just slap on some makeup on Halloween and trust to luck. Get started a few days ahead and experiment. You have to play with makeup. Try a whole bunch of different looks before you decide exactly who you want to be."

"I suggest you start by doing some research to identify the kind of personality that sparks your creativity," she adds. "You can find lots of inspiration in comic books, movies and cartoons. And take a close look at the faces, especially the eyebrows. That's going to be one of the keys to finding your character. If you want your character to be scary, concentrate on the eyebrows. They change the whole expression. Draw them on way up on your forehead, arched and pointy, because pointy features are scary. They suggest sharpness and danger. Thin lips are scary too."

When performers first join Cirque du Soleil shows, they are trained to apply their own makeup, and one of their first exercises is to paint a design directly onto a photograph of themselves—which they then try to reproduce on their faces using stage makeup. Eleni Uranis, also Assistant to Make-up Designer Nathalie Gagné at Cirque's headquarters, says this is a great technique for inventing a face to go with your Halloween alter ego.

How to make it simple but scary!

When it comes to selecting scary colors Eleni suggests white, red and black: "Start with a foundation of white, or sculpt the face by making artificial hollows with dark shadows under the cheekbones, around the eyes and under the nose. That can look really freaky on kids, because it ages them. By the way, you don't need expensive professional stage makeup to carry this off. The Halloween makeup you find in stores is good enough. But make sure you really blend the colors well, especially around the eyes."

And if you should happen to need a good supply of fake blood to complete your look, Isabelle Fink has a recipe for you: A mixture of corn syrup and red food dye. "And if you want it to really gross out the neighbors," she adds, "put in a little Vaseline to get that lumpy, clumpy look!"

Everything you need is within reach

As for materials and fabrics, you probably already have everything you need to come up with a completely original fun outfit, says Danika Lalonde, who works in the department's storeroom, and has been making her own Halloween costumes since she was a teenager. "You don't have to go the scary route," she says. "And you can make a costume out of almost anything lying around the house. For instance, if you have a couple of ordinary cardboard boxes, you can paint them white, add some black dots and go trick-or-treating with a friend — as a pair of dice!"

According to Line de Cotret, Cutting and Sewing Supervisor in Cirque du Soleil's costume department, you don't even have to know how to sew to make a great costume. "You can use duct tape, heat-activated self-adhesive materials, self-adhesive Velcro and even ordinary staplers to hold everything together," she says.

"The main thing is to be open-minded," says Danika Lalonde. "Take some time to experiment, let your imagination run wild. And involve your children. Kids are great at coming up with ideas."

Hortense Tchatchoua is great with ideas, too. She's a Senior Costume Maker at Cirque and she has one suggestion in particular that is certain to cause a colorful sensation-- and it costs practically nothing. "At this time of year there are thousands of beautiful leaves just lying on the ground waiting to be picked up," she says. "All you have to do is collect them and use a glue gun to stick them onto any kind of old clothes, or onto an old sheet with a hole cut in it for your head to poke through. They look great stuck onto hats, too."

Frédérique Hinse, a Costume Maker at Cirque likes to haunt church basement sales all year round. "You might find the one item of clothing that inspires you and makes a character come to life," she explains. "It could be a deerstalker hat that you pick up for a dollar, for example, and suddenly you have a Sherlock Holmes character to work with."

Halloween: Your chance to change skins!

According to Isabelle Fink, putting a look together for Halloween isn't just a matter of makeup, costumes and props. "Those are all important components of course, but really, it's all about attitude," she says. "For a lot of people it is only about the costume. But I believe you have to completely inhabit your persona, and have fun doing it."

That's why Isabelle suggests that before you unveil your new identity to the world you might want to take a few moments to, well... reflect. "Once we've finished creating a makeup, a lot of the artists we work with look in the mirror for a long time and pull faces to play with their character," she says. "They can be quite surprised by this new person looking back at them, and they need to get to know themselves all over again before they step out and face an audience for the first time."