

How to Make a Tibetan Lamb Locks Wig on a Crochet Wig Cap for the Crocheted Bleuette Doll

By Victoria DiPietro © 2012

Supplies:

Crochet Wig Cap in the appropriate hair color. Acrylic yarn in the appropriate ply is ideal. Use Beth Webber's pattern instructions for the construction. Do not crochet too tightly. The cap will tighten up as you sew on the wefts.

A Tibetan lambskin plate (your choice of color). There are many suppliers out there. I purchase mine from <http://dollmakersjourney.com/>. They come in two sizes: 6" x 6" and 12" x 6". I can get two wigs out of the larger size; so in theory, you should be able to get one wig out of the smaller size. The skins are typically pieced and sewn together, but this will not pose a problem in this application.

Thread to match the wig cap and Tibetan lamb locks

A piece or two of white printer paper; 8 ½" x 11" is fine.

Plastic wrap

Tools:

Sewing machine

Small, sharp scissors

Ruler

Pencil

Straight pins

Sewing needle

Small hair clips to hold the locks out of your way as you hand sew

Wide tooth comb or small wig brush

Baby oil

Water

A clean terry hand or bath towel you don't care about (sometimes the dye transfers when the locks are wet)

Plastic soda straws, scissors and bobby pins (for curlers)

Your doll!

Basic Construction Overview:

Locks of Tibetan lamb are cut off the plate (skin), lined up on the printer paper and sewn on the sewing machine with short machine stitches. Once removed from the paper backing you'll be able to hand sew it to the wig cap. It is fragile at this point, so handle carefully.

The wefts are hand sewn to the wig cap in a specific layout pattern. You will need between 65" and 72" of weft to make a nice thick wig that can be washed, conditioned, parted, combed, curled, and styled in many ways. Once it is completely finished, you should not have any problems with shedding hair provided you treat the wig as gently as baby hair.

Hand sewing on the wefts is a two-step process and you must do both to create a sturdy wig. The first hand sewing step attaches the weft to the cap. The second hand sewing step locks the individual hairs in place so they won't pull out.

Important: Machine sewing them on will stretch and distort the wig cap. Gluing instead of hand sewing will ruin the wig.

If you're *not* interested in having a removable wig, you can hand sew the wefts directly to the crocheted head, but you must follow the layout pattern and you must use the two-step hand sewing.

The principle behind this process can be used to wig other dolls made of yarn or cloth. I used a very similar principle to wig the Portrait-Style Dolls which have cloth over paperclay heads. The wig caps are held in place with a loop of scotch tape under the cap. Both uses double-stick tape.

Handling the wig during construction will make the Tibetan lamb locks “explode” in volume (you’ll see photos later on). To tame them, the final step is to condition the entire wig with a baby oil and cold water treatment. It’s no big deal to do and the results are fantastic.

Making the Machine Sewn Wefts:

With paper, ruler and pencil, draw a straight line down the length of the printer paper, 10” long and about 1/2” to 1” from the margin on your right. Make a little cross line on both ends of your long line (like the capital I) so you can see where your line begins and ends.

Thread your sewing machine with your matching thread and set the straight stitch length for very small stitches. Using a standard universal needle is fine.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

Fig 1: Put the paper under the presser foot on one end of the line and drop the needle through the paper to hold it in place. Leave the presser foot up.

Fig 2: With your scissors, part a section of hair. Go right down to the skin backing when you make the part. This photo shows about how much you want to work with at one time.

Fig 3: Position scissor blades right against the skin backing and then cut the section of hair away from the skin, keeping the cut line straight as you can.

Fig 4: Line up your lock of hair under the presser foot and against the needle. If your lock of hair is a little thick, gently spread it out a little so the lock is not so thick. If the lock is thin, push it closer together. You don’t want to be able to see the paper backing under the lock. Leave a “seam allowance” or margin of hair of about 1/2” over the line.

Drop the presser foot and sew forward, then back tack it between 4 to 6 stitches to secure it. Continue to sew forward until you’ve sewn all but about the last 3 or 4 stitches worth of hair to the paper.



Fig 5: Cut another lock of hair from the plate and position it under the presser foot, overlapping a bit of the new lock of hair over the last bit of the previous lock. Drop the presser foot and continue sewing.

When you’ve covered the entire drawn line with locks of hair, back tack to secure your stitches. Remove your work from the machine. Trim thread tails close to the stitches.

Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

Fig 6: When you are finished sewing, you should have something that looks just like this weft that's still sewn to the paper backing.

Fig 7: Cut the paper right up to the stitching line on each end of the weft. Be careful not to cut the stitches when you do this.

Fig 8: To remove the weft easily, flip the paper over and put it down on a hard surface with the back of the paper facing up towards you. Fold the narrow margin of paper down, right on the stitching line. Crease it with your fingernails to make the crease nice and sharp. It will tear easier with the sharp crease over the perforations made by the sewing needle.

Put the palm of your hand on top of the paper backing and near your sewing line. Press down firmly to keep the paper from sliding around AND to help support the weft. It's fragile at this point and it is possible to pull the stitches right off the hairs

With your fingers of the other hand, grasp the cut tab of paper at the beginning of the weft stitching and start tearing away the narrow margin of paper. Get your fingers right down to the stitches and gently tear along the perforation. The idea is to remove all of the paper, leaving only the thread and hair.

After you've removed the narrow margin of paper, repeat the process on the wide margin of paper. Support the weft stitching on the "seam allowance" side of the weft and get your fingers right down to the stitches on the paper side. Gently pull it away a little at a time.

Any pieces of paper left under the stitching will have to be removed. You can carefully pick them away with the point of a sewing needle.



Fig 9: Ta DAA - One lovely Tibetan lamb hair weft!

I make each weft when I need one as opposed to making a bunch of them at one time. I can assess the amounts I'll need a little better as I go and I won't have to worry about them getting tangled or matted if I have to set them aside. It takes me 5 to 10 minutes to make one, depending on the plate I'm working with. Some plates are quite densely furred and harder to part and others have well defined locks and are easier to work with.

Hand sewing the wefts on to the wig cap (or doll) is a two-step process as I mentioned before. It's not hard, but it takes quite awhile to do. For me, it takes about three or four days, from idea to finished wig. I get antsy doing it and I have to take frequent breaks, so unless you're like me, it probably won't take you as long.

Figure 9

Most of the time is spent corralling the hairs. They are very lightweight and flyaway and tend stick to everything, so you must keep them under control. Have your wide tooth comb or wig brush on hand, plus some of those little hair clips with teeth that are spring loaded. They are very handy. Use a piece of plastic wrap to wrap around your doll's neck and body. It will cut down on the loose hair sticking to your doll. (Once the wig is finished, you won't have that problem with shedding.)

Work under good lighting. Have patience with this process. The results will be worth it!

Use as much thread as you can handle at one time. Fold your thread length in half and thread both cut ends through the needle's eye. The loop end should hang lower than the cut ends. Knots will slip right out of your yarn, so this is why you want to thread your needle this way. You'll take a tiny stitch through the yarn fibers and pull until only a bit of the loop remains on the topside of your work. Slip your needle through the loop and tighten. Your thread is now secured using this loop knot.

The First Step of the Two-Step Hand Sewing Process:

We are going to start with a center part, from forehead to crown. The part will remain after you've made it, but you can make a temporary part in the hair later at a different location, if you wish. You'll also be able to comb the hair back away from the forehead if you want to make a temporary change for a style that requires it.

The crown is easy enough to locate; it's where you started your crocheted cap. Lay the end of your weft at that point and bring it down in a straight line to the edge of the cap where the center of the forehead will be. (Use the machine stitched line of the weft as your center point reference.) You can pin the weft in place for the moment, if you wish. A pin to hold it at the crown and another pin to hold it at center front should be fine.

Make the loop knot, as described above, right on the point of the crown and make your first stitch into the weft to secure it. I like to make another loop knot to hold it in place, and then I can take out the first pin.

The first stitching is a cross between a straight stitch and a whip stitch. Make the stitches as short and small as you can manage. You do not have to sew completely through the wig cap layer; you only need to catch enough yarn to keep the weft securely fastened when it comes time to comb and style it. I catch about half the thickness of the yarn in every stitch.

Enter your needle close to the line of machine stitches on your right. Angle the needle while the tip of it is inside the thickness of the yarn and exit out just on the other side of the machine stitches which is on your left. Cross over the line of machine stitching and once again enter the needle to the right of the machine stitching. Exit on the left. This a bit like a spiral, but "hugs" the line of machine stitching. Continue sewing in this fashion until you reach the edge of your wig cap. Don't cut anything just yet. We'll get to the weft layout in a bit.

Important: You are sewing *through* the locks of hair. In fact, pretend they are not there at all and simply focus on securing the weft in place around the machine stitching. The only thing you need to do is make sure your tail of thread doesn't touch the loose hairs because it will pick up those fine hairs on contact and when you pull the thread through it will take those hairs right with it and into the crochet cap along with the thread. It doesn't matter on the short "seam allowance" side, but it matters a lot on the long hair side; and they will tangle terribly if the long hairs get caught and pulled through the wig cap.

Use the little clips to keep the hairs out of your stitching path. You might try angling your work and allow gravity to help or even "mask off" areas with something smooth, like a small piece of fabric pinned in place to keep the hairs out of the way. In my mind, this is the only downside to this project. If you can keep the hairs corralled, you'll be fine.

This is how to do the first step of the two-step hand sewing. Sew one entire length of weft to your cap this way and then come back with the second step before you start sewing on another weft.

The Second Step of the Two-Step Hand Sewing Process:



Fig 10 (left): After you've completed the first step of hand sewing, you'll notice that the seam allowance side of the weft is starting to look matted and loosely felted. I don't know why it does that, but it's a great side effect for our purposes. If this side looks like it's becoming one with the yarn, run the tip of your sewing needle under it and gently lift it up and away from the yarn surface so you can work with it. Just lift it up as if it were a single layer of felted material.



Figure 11 (left): Use your thumb and forefinger and in a slight pinching motion, stroke the felted seam allowance to straighten it out. You want to make it stand up so you can trim it down to about 3/8 to 1/4 of an inch. Use your small scissors and carefully trim the seam allowance to this new width.

Take the tip of your needle and stroke it along the edge felted area to make it fuzzier and then to lay it down at an angle over the machine stitching. I guess you could say it is the equivalent of folding the raw edges down. Work the area to get the felted section to be as flat and narrow as possible so you won't have big ridges where the weft is sewn. If you can roll it under, like a rolled hem, that would be ideal!

Now, you are going to make kind of a blanket stitch around this rolled (or folded) seam allowance and wig cap right over the previous stitches. This will make it very secure, tidy and quite flat. Make the smallest stitches you can manage. Sew this just like the first step of the stitching, except slip your needle through the loop of thread before you tighten it down. When you get to the end of the weft, knot off two or three times and cut the thread tails. That's all there is to it!

Before moving on to the next weft, gently comb or brush out this weft and secure it with the hair clips to keep it out of your way.

Universal Weft Layout on the Wig Cap:

Very simple store bought wigs simply take the weft round and round the wig cap from the center of the crown and work outward. If you've ever tried to part this type of wig, you'll know that the part doesn't look right. So, I've developed an alternate layout that looks a lot more believable.

This is nearly impossible for me to photograph and get any kind of clarity, so I'm going to draw it out for you instead.

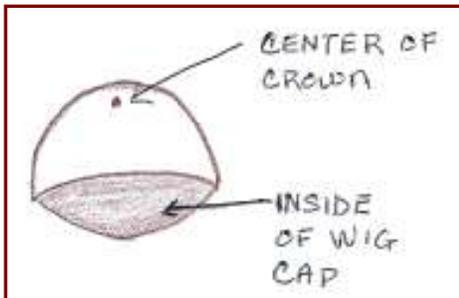
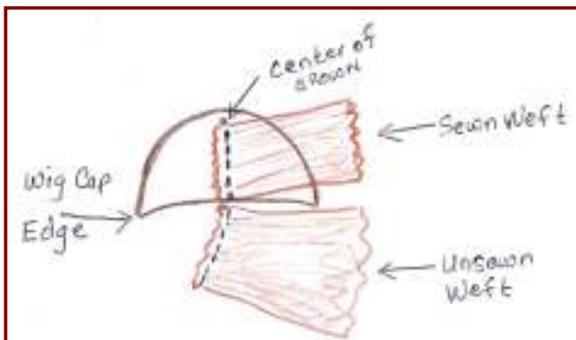


Figure 12 (left): When you start sewing on the wefts, begin at the center of the crown (the dot) and bring your weft forward in a straight line to the edge of the wig cap. This will form the beginning of the center part.

Sew the weft to the cap with the two-step stitching process. This is where we left off on Page 4.

Figure 13 (below, left): Although this is not to scale, notice there's a lot of unsewn weft hanging off the wig cap's edge. You'll probably have more than what's shown here.



Fold the remaining (unsewn) weft back towards the crown to make a second row of hair. For the part area and all upper layers of hair, you want to keep the wefts spaced close together. Initially, I place them right under the last row, using the seam width of the previous row as my guide. They should be touching, but not stacked on each other.

Lay the remaining weft in the same direction as the previous weft layer (seam allowance to the left, locks of hair to the right) and sew it to the cap, starting at the edge of the wig cap. (You always pick up from where you left off.) Complete the two-step sewing process.

Continue in this manner as many times as necessary until you run out of weft. Gradually you will begin to fill in the cap area on your left with rows of wefting. When you run out of one 10" weft, make a second one and continue where you left off. You'll want a minimum of four rows of wefting in this area. When you've got them sewn on, you'll need to stop and assess the thickness of this entire section of hair. Does it look thick enough to cover wider spaced wefts on the rest of the wig?

When I made the auburn wig, four layers was sufficient, but when I used the brunette Tibetan lamb wefts, it wasn't thick enough, so I added two more layers.



Figure 14 (left): There are six layers of wefting applied to one side of the center part. Every lambskin plate is different. Some have a lot of short under fur which makes the wefts thick looking at the roots, but not on the ends where you need the coverage. Other plates have long hairs throughout and cover well.

Once you've completed one side of the part, it's time to do the other side. **In Figure 15 (below, left),** you can see the ridge of sewn wefting. I still had a little more to blanket stitch down near the crown and I still had extra weft to be sewn down (it's tucked behind the sewn weft).

Fig 14



What I did next was to fold this section of part down over the ridge, to reveal the "right side" of the part (**Figure 16**). This is the right (as in correct) side of the parted hair. There was extra unsewn weft after my last row, so I swung the remaining weft length around and tucked it very close to the part line.

The seam allowance section of the unsewn weft must now face in the opposite direction from the other side of the parted hair. Tuck it in so that the gap of the part line is very close together; almost to the point of being on top of each other.

Fig 15

Fig 16



Figures 17 and 18: When all six rows are sewn to the cap on this second side and each part section is folded over their respective weft ridges, the part should look very much like this brunette wig on the left and this auburn wig on the right. (The auburn wig was finished in this photo and I gave the wig bangs, but nevertheless, you can see that the part line is very tight and close together.)

Now let's move on and finish filling in the rest of the wig with more wefts.

Fig 17

Fig 18

Figure 19: The reddish-brown color represents the area you've covered with sewn weft to this point. The black line represents the part line. The center black dot is the top of the crown. The little arrows represent the layout you'll follow from here on out with the rest of your wefts. Are you with me so far?

Important: You'll sew on the wefts with the seam allowance portion of the weft pointing up towards the crown and the long locks of hair hanging down like they're supposed to!

Two-step stitching is still required and so is the seam allowance trimming between the stitching steps. Also, you do not have to space the wefts as closely together as you did, but until there's more coverage on the back of the wig cap, I would keep them closer together in that area for a few rows. After you've gotten good coverage over the crown, you can space them about 1/4 of an inch apart.

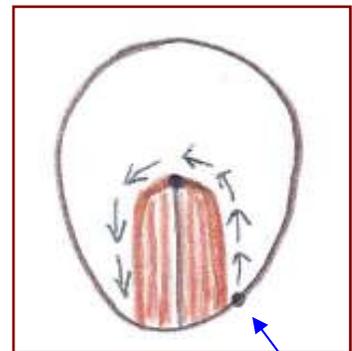


Fig 19: Start sewing wefts here

You are going to start attaching wefts at the edge of your wig cap at the blue arrow and follow the path as show by the black arrows. When you arrive at the opposite side of the part section, make a u-turn and head back to where you started. Continue in this manner; machine sewing more wefts as needed.

As you fill in the sides, the curving path around the part section will start to straighten out and the sides will be filled in completely. All that will remain to fill in will be the back. Just go back and forth from one side to the other until the entire wig cap is covered.

The Final Row:

This last row is sewn to the edge of the wig cap, but the seam allowance is placed on the *inside* of the cap. I'll show you why. (Just remember that the wig *has not* been conditioned yet, okay?)



Figure 20: without weft edging.



Figure 21: with weft edging.

Which hair style would YOU rather have?

Okay, I'm kidding . . . but how can you *not* miss how the hair lies closely around her face in the photo on the right? (More like engulfs, but it hasn't been conditioned yet . . .) The photo on the left that does not have that last row of weft edging and the hair stands away from her face. Up close, you can see there is a gap between the hair and the head.

Getting that last row of wefting as close to the face as possible is only achieved if you apply the weft on the inside edge of the cap, not on the outside. So, gently brush or comb all the hair up and away from the edge of your wig cap and secure it with clips to get it out of your way. Then, lay the seam allowance section of the final weft along the *inside* edge of the wig cap and complete your two-step sewing process. If you happen to have some weft hanging along the outside edge that hasn't been sewn yet, flip it around to the inside edge of the wig cap and sew that section down first with the two-step sewing process. Measure the remaining area around the wig cap edge and make a machine sewn weft that length to finish off your wig.

Remove your clips, straighten out the hairs, re-part the hair (which should be easy to find) and gently brush or comb out the wig.

Conditioning and Styling Your Wig:

This particular plate of Brunette Tibetan lambskin was the most unruly looking I've ever had to work with and definitely needs conditioning to tame it. Your piece may look as crazy as this or it might look pretty good just the way it is, but I've found that all the wigs I've made look better and feel better after conditioning.

Spread out your clean towel on the counter next to a basin (I do this in my bathroom). Run a gentle stream of cold water from your tap and put the wig under the tap to wet it thoroughly (cap and all). Gently press out most of the water and set the wig on the towel. Stopper the basin and run more cold water in it. As it's filling, put about 3 or 4 drops of baby oil in the palm of your hand. Rub your palms together to make a film of baby oil and then put your hands in the basin and swish your hands through the water to disburse the oil in the water.

Pick up your wig and gently begin swishing the entire wig through the water, lifting it up occasionally to pick up some of the oil floating on the water's surface (**Figures 22, 23, 24**).



Fig 22



Fig 23



Fig 24



Fig 25



Fig 26



Fig 27

Figure 25: Lift the wig out of the water. Press/squeeze the excess water out of the wig. Do not wring or twist it. Let the water out of the basin.

Figure 26: Hold the wig under cold running tap water to gently rinse it from all angles, even inside the cap. Let the water stream “comb” the hair for you. After rinsing, again, press out the excess water so the wig is not dripping.

Figure 27: Lay the wig out on the clean towel as shown. If it’s still pretty soggy, you can fold the towel over the top of the wig and *press* more of the water out.



Fig 28



Fig 29



Fig 30

Figure 28: Gently begin to comb out the hair, working from the hair tips to roots until it is all smoothed out.

Figure 29: Notice that the center part is still there? It just naturally parts in that spot. Comb out the hair in a fan like fashion. It will help it to dry faster. Leave it to air dry for 3 to 4 hours, turning it over periodically so that the inside of the cap starts to dry. The cap itself should be damp-dry by now.

Figure 30: Cover the doll’s head and body with your plastic wrap to protect it. Put the damp wig on the doll’s head and comb it once more. This will help to “size” the wig. Allow to dry overnight. The next day, check and see how the wig cap is drying. You can take the wig off and turn it cap side up or simply to the air to allow it to finish drying.

Never apply heat to this wig. Always air dry.



Fig 31



Fig 32



Fig 33



Fig 34



Fig 35



Fig 36

Figures 31, 32 and 33: The finished brunette wig; conditioned and dry. The only styling on this wig has been combing.

Figures 34, 35 and 36: The finished auburn wig. This wig had the additional step of having the bangs cut and the hair curled with lengths of plastic soda straws held in place with bobby pins until completely dry. Mist the hair with cold water, comb each section and roll on the soda straw curlers. Allow to dry naturally overnight. The hair will remain curled until you decide to re-wet the locks and curl it again.

Thank you for joining me on this tutorial. If you have any questions about the process, please feel free send me an email at: victoriadipietro@yahoo.com