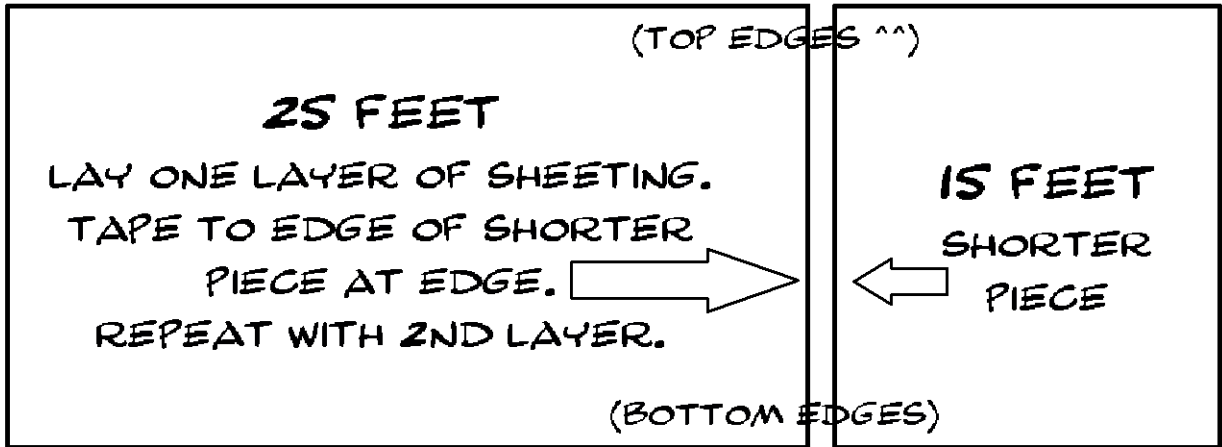


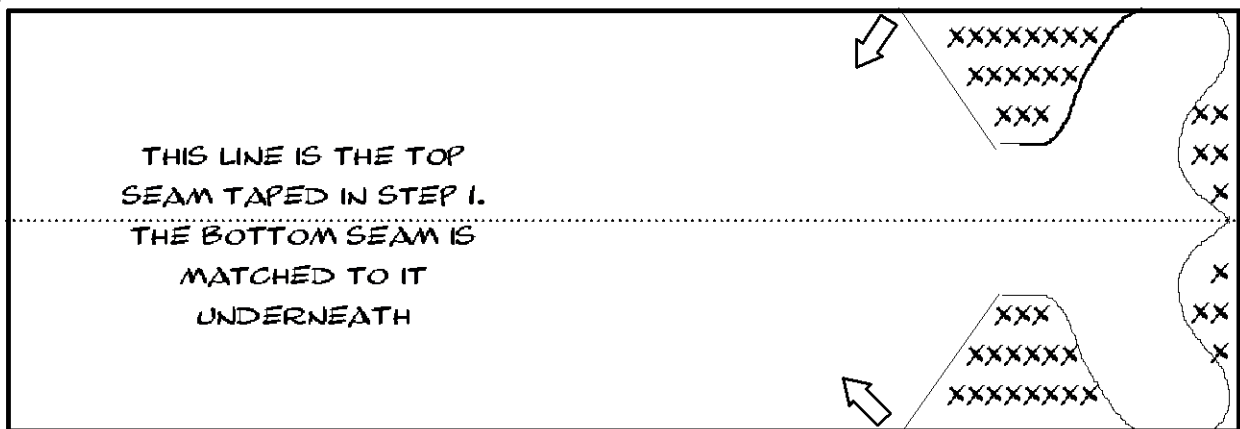
THE WHALE



<-- 10 FEET -->



<-- 40 FEET -->



THE WHALE

Instructions and suggestions

Written for Windham Presbyterian Church, Windham NH 2004

I got my supplies from Ace Hardware for \$41.12 to make a 40' whale, not including the fan (which the church all ready had). To make a 30' whale, you could use one less roll of sheeting, saving \$6.

4 rolls black duct tape 1.88" x 20 yds

4 rolls plastic sheeting 3 mil 10' x 25'

1 3 speed household box fan

a couple of light color crayons to sketch tail on plastic

a bungie cord (from my car trunk - only a couple bucks at Ace, I'm sure)

I cut out my whale on a commercial vinyl tile floor, which is made of 1' squares. This makes it easy to estimate your measurements - no need for a tape measure.

I would recommend sweeping the floor before starting, sand and pebbles put holes in the plastic when you step on it. Work sock-footed and wear comfy clothes - you'll be on the floor a lot!

step 1: Figure out where your finished whale will be set up. We kept our whale along one wall in the Fellowship Hall so the "door" was on the side against the wall. If you do this, figure enough room for a walkway at one end of the whale and space between the whale and the wall to enter. This hidden entrance was easier to "guard" during Fellowship time to keep the kids out, you really need a low kid/adult ratio to safely enter the whale!

The door can be placed anywhere. To save space, you could push it up against the wall and enter/exit from the room. You can also crawl in through the mouth area. Just adapt the directions accordingly.

I think our whale is almost 7 feet high, keep light fixtures in mind!

Once you know your whale's destination, you can determine his dimensions. The illustrated directions are for a 40' whale. Scale yours accordingly by making the "15 foot" section bigger or smaller.

Piece together each layer as shown. Then, put one over the top of the other. Tape the top edges together then the bottom edges together to make a long tube. Tape must fully line each edge to make whale airtight.

Tape edges together at the head end (left side of diagram), starting at the top and leaving a little over 2' open at the bottom for the fan (later).

step 2: Open the tail end of the tube. Match the top seam to the bottom seam for at least 10 feet towards the head and get that section to lay flat. The seam you just taped at the head will help him fill vertically, now you will be making the horizontal tail.

Sketch out a tail as shown with the crayon. Not much shows up on black. If you use a black permanent marker, BE SURE to give it several minutes to dry on the plastic. Otherwise it will rub off on you or the floor and then remain permanent. The tail section should be at least 5' long including the fin and the narrow section.

Cut out the tail. If you mess up, get out your duct tape, tape it all back together and start again. Since everything is black, no one will ever notice.

Use your duct tape to seal the edges together. Smaller pieces work better on the curves.

step 3: Center the fan in the opening at the head end. Tape the plastic around the edge of the fan, with the fan blowing inward.

(Here's the fun part!)

Turn the fan on high. Lift the top seam of the whale and gently shake as it begins to inflate, then stand back. It takes less than a minute.

Now you need a door. Do this with the whale inflated. I cut mine in the side, about two-thirds of the way back from the head. Make two vertical lines with duct tape about $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch apart. The bottom of the stripes should be about 8 - 10 inches from the floor. Kids will have to step over this to enter the whale. Put a "rip-stop" horizontal piece at the top and bottom of the pair of stripes. With scissors, slice through the $\frac{1}{2}$ inch gap between the stripes from top to bottom.

I had planned on some extra plastic to make a curtain over the door to keep the air in. I found this was not needed. The whale deflates a little as you step in, but reinflates quickly. The tension of the full whale keeps the door shut.

Note: To inflate after the door is made, hold the edges of the door shut until the whale has nearly assumed his shape.

Step inside! It is really amazing.

step 4: "Plastic surgery" on your plastic whale. Refer to diagram 2. Where the arrows are, I pulled those corners inward from the inside of the inflated whale to taper his shape better. Just tape the excess to the inside wall. This is a two-man job, someone on the outside to direct the nip and tuck, and someone inside to tape.

I also moved the fan to the side against the wall. Keep in mind where your outlets are and where your walkway is so you can minimize the trip hazard on the cord. Plan to anchor your fan to a sturdy chair or bench with a bungee cord. Put the chair next to the whale to see what height to make the hole. Make an "I" shaped cut, just a little smaller than the

height and width of your fan. Use duct tape to prevent the cuts from enlarging once you know your fan fits. Line the opening with duct tape. Use more tape to secure the whale to the fan. This second layer of tape can be removed each time to deflate the whale.

Close up the hole at the mouth. Nip and tuck with duct tape from the inside to shape his forehead as you want. Add an eye (a dinner size paper plate is a good size).

You could do lots from here that I didn't have time to do. Use excess plastic or trash bags to splice in some inflated side fins. Use paint or red duct tape for a mouth (remember they have very BIG mouths).

The plastic sheeting is pretty tough. I just had the kids take off their shoes (most of the time).

Maintenance/Storage: deflate whale. Remove the fan, make sure no sticky edges of tape are exposed - fold them over. Fold the whale in half lengthwise, then roll or fold him up. He can be stored in a large yard-sized trash bag or a Rubbermaid container. Patch holes with black duct tape, inside & out so no "sticky" is exposed.

Fyi: I found whale-shaped cheddar crackers by Stauffer's at Walmart for snack. The kids loved them!