Whimsies : new idea in easy-to-make hats

O. E. Evans Scott
WHIMSIES—New Idea in Easy-to-make Hats

By O. EVANS SCOTT

It has often been said that buying a new hat is the best way to boost a woman’s morale. But have you tried making one?

The whimsy, a recent fashion discovery, is becoming increasingly popular at functions when a hat is required to complete milady’s outfit. On afternoon-into-evening occasions such as weddings, cocktail parties and so on, a whimsy is a most suitable and attractive hat.

A whimsy consists of a little cap of veiling (held by milliners to be universally flattering) with a suitable trimming. Whimsies have an advantage over the larger type of hat in that they do not spoil a newly-set hairdo—(the veiling can, in fact, act as a hair net, keeping the hair in place). They are inexpensive, simple to make, and can be worn with the French Roll and Chignon hairstyles for which it is difficult to find a suitable hat.

The centre-piece or feature of the whimsy is usually a large artificial flower or a spray of flowers. Other ideas include hand-made satin or organdie rose with buds and leaves, flat velvet, satin or grosgrain bow, "goosepads" and similar feather pieces, and other millinery trimmings. A small "pillbox" hat shape or a circlet of ribbon can be trimmed with a smart brooch or clip, bow, beads or sequins or small flowers. For a flatter style, small made bows of narrow velvet ribbon may be sewn on to the veiling in several places—this suits an older woman—or very small flowers or groups of beads used in several places rather than having one central trim.

MAKING A WHIMSY

Veiling

One yard of nine-inch wide veiling is needed for a deep whimsy (a little longer than nose-tip length). For a shorter whimsy—eyebrow to mid-nose length—27 to 30 inches of 6 inch to 8 inch wide veiling is enough.

The veiling foundation is gathered at the centre of the crown and has a seam down the centre back.

Gather up the long top edge of the veiling with the fingers. Slip an elastic band over it, or hold together with a few twists of thread. Bring ends together to form a circular shape, and try on (with the right hairstyle) to decide width. Pin a join down the centre back (using hairpins) and check that the width round the lower edge is comfortable. Check depth also—if too long, put rubber band lower down or twist thread to hold in place.

The veiling foundation must be of a length and width to flatter the wearer—one may find nose-tip length correct, others may prefer a shorter line. The right length is especially important if the veiling has a clearly defined edge or a wide border pattern. If there is a wide border, see that the dense part is not at

A whimsy is a suitable and attractive hat for afternoon and evening occasions.
eye level! For comfort also, see that the veiling is not too tight—it can catch in eyelashes and be most annoying. The width will depend on the hairstyle—narrower for straight or waved hair, wider for curly or back-combed hairstyles. When making a whimsy, try on the veiling with hair done as you intend to wear it.

If veiling is very coarse, stiff and hard to gather, the centre back seam may be shaped to take out some of the fullness. Mostly a straight seam is satisfactory. Undo temporary gathering thread or elastic band, and press veiling (cool iron) to make sewing easier. Trim edges and allow an overlap of two squares of veiling.

The Seam

The neatest effect is obtained by hand sewing with “tie-stitch”. Have needle threaded with a long strand of matching cotton. Hold the edges of the veiling together, overlapping the two squares, and take an oversew stitch over the first two threads of veiling, leaving two inches of thread. Tie this with the needle thread, cut both threads near the knot, and repeat at next position. (If you like, leave cutting the threads until the seam is complete, and if the thread is not very obvious it may be left for extra strength). This “tie-stitch” is used a lot in millinery for attaching veiling, seed-pearls, beads and other light trimmings.

If the veiling consists of small squares of solid fabric interspersed with the open squares, these solid spots may be glued together to make an invisible seam (though the top and lower few squares should also be tie-stitched, and one or two along the seam). Clear or very pale nail varnish is the easiest “glue” to use—brush a little on each square, allow a few minutes to become “tacky” then press together for a few minutes. Do only two or three spots at once, and dip fingers in talcum powder before pressing the spots together. Nail varnish may also be used to glue sequins and other small, lightweight trimmings on to the veiling.

Pressing and Stiffening Veiling

When seam is complete and dry, press wrinkles from veiling, using a moderate iron and placing veiling between sheets of waxed paper (the type found in breakfast cereal packets). Take care not to stretch veiling out of shape, nor to press in any folds. Place a piece of waxed paper in between the two layers of veiling to prevent them sticking together. This wax-paper pressing is generally enough to stiffen veiling, but if a stiffer veiling foundation is needed dip in a sugar and water solution then, when dry, press between waxed papers again.

A liquid straw-stiffening solution can be bought from handcraft and hobby shops. This stiffener is brushed on and allowed to dry, but if not making many hats the sugar solution or ordinary hair lacquer spray is cheaper and quite effective.

Gathering and Shaping Veiling

Oversew along top edge of veiling, taking a stitch through each loop, then pull up lightly and secure with oversews. If gathering thread is not right at the top, trim off the surplus veiling and stitch through the centre several times before cutting threads. Make this spot as neat as possible, as the trimming of the whimsy is generally placed more to the front and may not hide it.

If no millinery block is available, have ready an upturned basin or a cone of cardboard on which to place veiling foundation to preserve its shape. Try on this veiling foundation and shape gently—if necessary, soften in the steam from a kettle first, manipulate into shape, and allow to dry in this shape—leave it on for a few minutes to make sure that it is comfortable to wear (doesn't catch in eyelashes). If this does happen, lift up a little fold of veiling at the crown. This will be enough to place veiling out a little more at eye-level.

Trimming the Whimsy

Decide on the most suitable trimming, keeping in mind the outfit with which it will be worn. Take into account the size of the flower—if it appears too small extra leaves and buds could be added, or small “fill-in” flowers such as lily-of-the-valley may be wired in with it to make the size more in proportion. Various flowers and leaves can be wired together forming a suitable spray, or buds and leaves can be made from the dress material to ensure a perfect match. Very fine hair pins can be...
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opened out and used as florists wire. Fuse-wire is also a good substitute. Cover wires with green crepe paper or organdie strips or otherwise disguise the wire. Flower trimming should be complete before attaching to the veiling.

If using a bow or several small bows for a trimming, a *made* bow as distinct from a tied bow is more effective. Fold ribbon or material rouleau so that the folds look like the folds of a bow, then cut a small piece of ribbon or material and sew over the centre of the folded ribbon. A few stitches may be necessary before the “knot” is sewn on. Many attractive styles of “bows” can be made in this manner, from flat tailored ribbon bows to soft, floppy chiffon ones. An attractive whimsy bow can be made from a two-inch rouleau of brocade, satin, velvet or other material, with a layer of cotton wool or dressmakers wadding inside to give a rounded effect and more height.

The circlet idea is attractive for young people, particularly for bridesmaids, when it can be covered with the same fabric as the gowns. The circle may be as small as three inches in diameter, or large enough to fit around the head.

Its foundation can be stiff vilene or leno, hat straw, or even cardboard. (One very attractive one seen recently was made on the rim of a powder-box lid). When covering any stiff foundation, always pad first with wadding or cotton wool to soften the line. Place joins to the inside or the back, and make stitches as invisible as possible.

Having bought or made the centrepiece or trimming for the whimsy, try on the veiling and hold the trimming in position (in front of the gathered centre) with a hair clip. View from all angles with a hand mirror to decide most attractive position for face and hairstyle. When satisfied sew trim to veiling foundation with tie stitches. If you feel that the trimming is a little heavy for the veiling, cut a three-inch circle of net, leno, organdie or matching fabric and sew this on the inside at the centre of the trimming. Try on and trim circle smaller if necessary, then tie stitch around edge.

Keep whimsy in place when wearing it by using a hair pin, hat pin or clips hidden under the trimming, or sew a comb on the inside (choose a small curved comb to match your hair colouring or use clear plastic, and sew so that the teeth face forward). If this idea is used for a bridal veil or heavy bridal headwear, it will be necessary to tie a length of hat elastic to the outside teeth of the comb. Fix one end and try on to find a comfortable fit, then tie other end.

A HANDMADE FLOWER SPRAY

**Organdie Rose**

Take a strip of organdie, cut on the cross, about 6 inches wide and 20 inches long. (This makes a rose about 2 inches deep and 2½ inches across). Fold in half lengthwise, but do not press fold. Run a tacking thread from fold at one end, down to raw edges and up to fold at other end, as in diagram. Leave needle threaded. Trim off corners then pull up tacking thread, twisting around finger and easing gathers in to form a cup-shaped rose, keeping fold...
as soft as possible. Sew across at base of rose then push "petals" into shape. The fold may be rolled over in places too to look like rose petals.

**Rose Bud**

Take a six-inch square of organdie, cut on the bias. Fold in half diagonally then roll folded edges in and gather edges with fingers to form a bud shape. Stitch through and wind cotton around to form stem, or twist fuse-wire around ends. Trim ends. To hide this, take a two-inch bias strip folded lengthwise, and wrap this around tightly. Start at the bud end, overlap the join and finish at the stem end. Secure at back with a few stitches or a few twists of fuse-wire. Smaller buds can be made using smaller squares of organdie. If different shades are available, make smaller buds in a deeper colour.

**Leaves**

Take a six-inch bias square, and fold in halves and quarters to form a small square. Press in creases, then gather ends together as in bud. Press flat. For a larger leaf the square could be folded again diagonally, then ends twisted together. Secure with thread or wire as before.

When using rose leaves, arrange in groups of three or five for a more realistic effect. The pair of leaves below the central leaf can then overlap to hide the ends of the first leaf, and gives a three-dimensional appearance in keeping with the height of the rose. Attach stem to leaf as for bud.

To complete the flower spray, arrange the roses, buds and leaves attractively, making them look as natural as possible. (These are not suited to a symmetrical arrangement). Hide stitches underneath when sewing parts of the spray together. It may be necessary to sew the pieces on to a foundation—a strip of ribbon, organdie or net may be used. Hold the flower arrangement in the steam from a kettle for a few seconds to soften the folds. Touch up rose shape if necessary, spray with hair lacquer if desired, and allow to dry. This type of flower spray would be suitable for a whimsy.

**Hat Cone**

A cone is very handy when making and storing a hat—the hat can be kept off the work surface and soiling and crushing are avoided.

From a piece of stiff paper or cardboard, cut out the shape shown in the diagram. Bring the straight sides together and secure with pins or clips.

![Diagram shows how to make the cone](image)

The cone shown here is handy for making and storing the hat.