Take & Make Bell Totas Instructions

Although the origin is unknown, bell totas consist of a string of stuffed or carved animals, often a bird, strung together with beads and bells. These beautiful pieces of decor can be found throughout Northern India, Southeast Asia, and even in Latin American crafts. In some folklore, it is believed that bell totas ward off bad spirits when hung by a window or a door. While other traditions believe bell totas serve as good luck to the household and family members. With their bright colors and easy assemblage, bell totas serve as a unique home accent while also making great gifts!

Included supplies:

- Colorful Felt (6 pieces)
- Bird Stencil (1)
- Bundle of Thread (1)
- Beads (10)
- Embroidery Needle (1 in a brown envelope)
- Bell (3)
- Stuffing (1 bag)
- Paint (3)
- Paintbrush (1)
- Base String (1 in a brown envelope)
- Glue and red cap (1)
- Henna Design Example (1)

Not included:

- Scissors
- Pen or marker

Estimate time for project: 45-60 minutes
Instructions:

1. Gather your supplies from the kit and your scissors. Work on a flat surface for tracing and cutting.
2. Locate your bird template and trim the excess paper around the black outline with your scissors. This will be the bird pattern used to trace over your felt sheets.
3. Next, lay out all your felt sheets. There should be 6 in total. Take the bird template you just cut out and lay it on top of 1 of the felt sheets.

4. With your pen or marker, outline the bird template. Do this for all the felt pieces. You will have 6 bird outlines in total.

5. Once outlined on the felt, get your scissors and carefully cut out each bird pattern on the colorful felt fabric.
6. Time to get creative! Select 3 felt bird pieces that you will decorate, this will be the front of your bird. With the included paint and paintbrush, decorate one side of each bird. You can make your little birds as decorative or as simple as you want. Add details like wings and eyes or include decorative details like these henna designs included in your kit.

7. Upon completing the decoration of your birds, allow the paint to dry for 30-40 minutes. Make sure it is completely dry before proceeding to the next step.
8. Once the paint is dry, it is time to start assembling your birds.
9. Now pair up the bird outlines. This will yield 3 completed birds (one decorated felt piece for the front and one undecorated felt piece for the back)
10. Lay out the birds as shown in the picture.

11. Take the felt bird outlines that you have paired and lay one on top of the other.
12. Separate the stuffing into three even piles for each bird.
13. Now you will want to decide whether to sew or glue your birds together.

**If sewing:** carefully thread your needle with the included bundle of thread. Thread length should be about 25-30 inches, (see picture). Make sure to tie off the thread. Take two bird outlines and line them up back to back. Continue to step 14.

[Image of sewing process]

**If using glue:** Replace the white glue cap with the red cap. Take the bird outlines and begin to add glue to the edges (be sure to protect your surface with paper napkins or newspaper). Before gluing completely add stuffing between the felt pieces for dimension. Once stuffed, glue shut completely. Skip to step 17.

14. With a basic stitch (or wip stitch), work your way around the outer edges of the bird. Start at the head, and work your way along the top of the bird. Stop at the middle of its belly. **STOP:** Don’t completely stitch up the bird.

[Image of stitched bird]
15. Just before you finish sewing up your bird, grab some stuffing and insert it into the belly of the bird. Add just enough stuffing so the bird looks more dimensional.

16. Once the bird is filled to your liking, sew up the remainder and tie it off. You can choose to cut off any leftover string or leave it as additional decoration.

17. Repeat this process two more times with the rest of the material. This will give you 3 birds in total.

18. With the birds now complete, set that aside and gather the base string, bells, and beads.

19. Grab your base string and thread it with your needle. Tie off the bottom of the string with a knot.

20. Using the needle, string one bell and 2 wooden beads to the base string. Let fall to the knot to make the base of your bell tota.
21. Select a bird and push the needle directly through the bird's belly and let it drop just like the beads.

22. Repeat this process: string 1 bell, 2 beads, followed by a bird. Continue to stack until you have all three birds with bells and beads on the base string.
23. When finished, cut the needle from the thread but **leave excess string** to tie a knot near the beads. You can then tie a loop at the end to hang for your enjoyment!

Send us pictures of your bell totas! Email them to **KCosta@pvld.org**
HENNA DESIGN EXAMPLES