



Step 1: There are two ways to transfer your design onto the pumpkin. One is to copy it freehand onto a clean, dry pumpkin with a water-based marker (mistakes can be easily corrected with a paper towel). The other is to tape your pattern or template to the pumpkin, then score the design into the skin by poking holes through the pattern with a nail or plastic poking tool (available in some pumpkin-carving kits).

Step 2: The black portion of the image is the part of the pumpkin that you'll be cutting out and removing. Carve by starting at the center of your design and working outward (this avoids putting pressure on areas already carved). Begin with the innermost and smallest. As each shape loosens up, gently push it out of the pumpkin with a finger or a dull pencil point (a good job for small kids). Larger shapes, such as gap-toothed grins, may have to be removed in pieces.

Tip: If you cut something you didn't intend to, perform an ad hoc pumpkin surgery: Stick a toothpick through the flesh side of the piece and fit it back into place.

Step 3: You can create dramatic effects by letting candlelight through the pumpkin in varying intensity.

For a shaded effect, don't cut all the way through the pumpkin. Instead, make a shallow, angled (or V-shaped) cut (1/8 to 1/2 inch, depending on the thickness of the pumpkin wall), then peel away the outer flesh with a knife tip, spoon or vegetable peeler. You also can use deep, angled cuts to remove larger pieces, so that the light reflects off the walls of the hole.

Lastly, put your jack-o'-lantern in a place of honor (away from flammables) and remember to blow out all candles before you go to sleep.