

Tomtes

A tutorial for AroundtheYear.org

*Winters come and summers go, year follows year,
but as long as people live at the old farm in the forest,
every night the Tomten will trip around between the houses
on his small silent feet.*

—from *The Tomten* by Astrid Lindgren



The tomte is a mythical, gnome-like creature that lives in Scandinavia. The word tomte comes from the Swedish word for plot of land, *tomt*, because tomtes are believed to live under or around the house or barn. Some tomtes live in very old trees on the farm. Tomtes are usually depicted as being small in stature, with an old, wrinkled face and a long white beard. They also wear a pointed, red hat.¹

Normally, tomtes are seen as benevolent, looking after the farm and helping the farmer with his chores (in secret), but if they are mistreated or neglected, they can wreak havoc. One way to avert disaster is to leave a meal for the tomte on Christmas Eve—typically porridge with butter and honey, and milk—so that the tomte will bless the family in the new year.²

Making peg doll tomtes is a fun Christmastime activity. Here is a tutorial for making your own tomte—no sewing required!

Materials:

- 2.5” or 3.5” wooden peg doll
- 5/16” wood round beads
- Red and gray felt (or whatever colors you prefer)
- Wool roving
- Scissors
- Hot glue gun
- [Tomte pattern pieces](#)

Instructions:

1. Using the tomte pattern pieces, cut out the hat and clothing pieces from the felt.
2. Secure one end of the felt clothing piece to the wooden peg doll body using hot glue. Wrap the felt around the body and secure the other end to the first with hot glue.
3. Fold the hat piece in half, so that it forms a triangle shape. Using hot glue to secure the two sides together.
4. Glue round bead to the center of the peg doll’s face—this will be your tomte’s nose.
5. Take a small amount of wool roving and secure the ends of it together with a small piece of white felt—this will be your tomte’s beard.
6. Glue the beard to the peg doll face, just under the wooden bead nose.

7. Apply hot glue to the front and back inside rim of the hat, and place it on top of the peg doll's head.





¹ Josepha Sherman, ed., *Storytelling: An Encyclopedia of Mythology and Folklore* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 459.

² Barbara Hallman Kissinger, *Christmas Past* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, Inc., 2005), 98.

Tomte Pattern Pieces

www.AroundtheYear.org/Tomtes

