

# jack-o'-lanterns 101

10  
simple tips  
to make carving  
a piece of  
cake

## 1 Pick your pumpkin

For the easiest carving, select a large, ripe pumpkin with a smooth, even surface and a stem (stemless, dented, and bruised pumpkins may already be in decline). If you plan to light your jack-o'-lantern with a candle, choose a pumpkin at least 9 inches high. When you get it home, clean and dry it.

## 2 Put a lid on it

To remove the top of the pumpkin, use a paring knife (parents only) or a carving tool to cut around the stem. Angle the carving tool to make the lid taper toward the inside, which will keep the lid from slipping in later. Scrape the lid clean. If you like, sprinkle cinnamon or nutmeg on the inside of the lid, and the jack-o'-lantern will smell like pumpkin pie when it's lit.

## 3 Scrape it out

Use a large metal spoon or an ice-cream scoop to remove the pumpkin's innards. Since a thinner wall is easier to carve and makes for a brighter lantern, scrape the sides until the walls are about 1½ inches thick all around (or until you've had enough!). Flatten a spot on the bottom for the candle.

## 4 Make a pattern

Sketch your own design with a pencil and paper, or use one of our 18 templates on page 90.

## 5 Transfer the design

Draw it freehand onto the pumpkin with a washable marker (you can wipe off mistakes with a paper towel). For more complicated patterns, tape your template to the pumpkin, then use a nail or pushpin to transfer the design.

## 6 Start carving!

There are tools that kids can use as a safer alternative to the traditional kitchen knife. Basic carving kits cost less than \$10 and include a variety of kid-friendly saws, drills, and scrapers. After the main features are carved, a parent can use a knife to add finer details.

**For the best results, follow these easy tips:**

### Choose the right tool

We recommend using a pumpkin-carving saw for most carving tasks. For very small or delicate features, try a paring or craft knife (parents only), and for curves, a potato peeler.

### Begin at the center

Working outward from the center of the design keeps pressure off carved spots.

### Be gentle

Rather than push right through on the first try, run the knife or tool over each line a few times.

## 7 Remove the pieces

After you've carved the shapes, carefully push them out with your finger or a dull pencil point. You may need to remove larger shapes, such as gap-toothed grins, in pieces.

## 8 Fix any mistakes

If you cut something you didn't intend to, use a toothpick to reattach it.

## 9 Seal the deal

To keep your jack-o'-lantern from shriveling, coat the cut edges with petroleum jelly or vegetable oil.

## 10 Light the night

Place a tea light or votive in the pumpkin. If the candle won't stay lit, increase the air supply by enlarging some features or cutting a vent in the lid, or use a battery-powered tea light.

