

# Virtual International Festival

## African Masks

Ritual and ceremonial masks are an essential feature of the traditional culture of the peoples of a part of Sub-Saharan Africa, e.g. roughly between the Sahara and the Kalahari Desert.

While the specific implications associated with ritual masks widely vary in different cultures, some traits are common to most African cultures. For instance, masks usually have a spiritual and religious meaning and they are used in ritual dances and social and religious events. A special status is attributed to the artists that create masks. In most cases, mask-making is an art that is passed on from father to son, along with the knowledge of the symbolic meanings conveyed by these masks.

African masks come in all different colors, such as red, black, orange, and brown. Masked dances are a part of most traditional African ceremonies related to weddings, funerals, initiation rites, and so on. Some of the most complex rituals that have been studied by scholars are found in Nigerian cultures such as those of the Yoruba and Edo peoples, rituals that bear some resemblance to the Western notion of theatre.

Here are some examples of Traditional African Masks.



Check out Pinterest for more examples of African Masks.  
How to make an African Mask from a Paper Plate.

### You will need:

- Paper plate (8½ or 10-inch)
- Tempera or poster paint or markers
  - Paint brush
  - Scissors
- Newspapers
- White glue
- Crepe paper, construction paper, feathers, yarn, raffia or other items you want to use to decorate your mask

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## Directions:

1. Start out with an 8½-inch or 10-inch paper plate. Draw and cut out a pair of eye holes.
2. Make some strips of newspaper. Twist and form them into a mouth and nose shape. Glue them onto the plate.
3. Paint your mask with a base color, which is typically brown, black, or white. Use a water-based paint like tempera or poster paint. Let the paint dry completely. Or color with markers.
4. Paint dots, lines, and patterns according to the African tribal mask you have in mind. You can go with a single color such as white or make the mask as colorful as you like.
5. Some African tribal masks have hair. This one has colorful strips of crepe paper. The crepe paper strips were slightly crumpled up before being glued onto the paper plate. Besides crepe paper, you can also glue some raffia, yarn, or feathers.
6. You can also make hair out of macaroni and beads strung onto pipe cleaners.



For this mask, colored pasta and beads were strung together to make the hair. To achieve this, we punched several holes near the edge of the mask's top half. A pipe cleaner was fastened to each hole. Beads and colored pasta were then strung through each pipe cleaner.