

Pumpkin Carving

Ready to learn a fun new skill?

Pumpkin carving is fun—and it’s an American tradition that has been celebrated since the 1830s. Before its association with Halloween, the carved pumpkin was a symbol of the fall harvest. Today, millions of pumpkins are carved each year and put on display in front of homes across America.

Did you know that pumpkins are members of the gourd family, which includes cucumbers, honeydew melons, cantaloupe, watermelons, and zucchini? These plants are native to Central America and Mexico but now grow on six continents. The largest pumpkin ever carved was grown right here in western Pennsylvania!

Pumpkin seeds should be planted between the last week of May and the middle of June. They take 90-120 days to grow and are picked in October when they are bright orange in color. Their seeds can be saved to grow new pumpkins the next year.

How to earn the Pumpkin Carving patch the Girl Scout way:

Steps:

1. **Discover**—Choose the correct pumpkin for carving.
2. **Connect**—Design your Jack-O-Lantern.
3. **Take Action**—Carve your pumpkin.

Materials Needed:

In order to complete this patch, you’ll need a few things:

- pumpkin
- carving supplies (scoop/spoon and carving knife/knife)
- paper
- marker
- old newspapers

Step 1

Discover the perfect pumpkin for carving.

You’ll never go wrong with a Jack-O-Lantern variety for carving. They’re farmed just for this very purpose! They’re made up of thin, straight walls and fibrous flesh that can stand up to being carved and have hollow cavities perfect for holding candles. The Lumina pumpkin is particularly fun to carve. It’s a white pumpkin that has an orange interior. When a candle is placed inside, it gives off an eerie glow through its ghostly white skin.

Now it's time to look for a pumpkin at your local pumpkin patch or grocery store. Look for a pumpkin that is:

- firm and heavy for its size,
- consistent in coloring,
- fresh (If the bottom of the pumpkin flexes or gives when you put pressure on it with your thumbs, it is NOT fresh.),
- not damaged—look for soft spots, mold, wrinkles, or open cuts that would indicate damage,
- topped with a solid, attached stem—a green stem indicates a freshly picked pumpkin, and
- capable of sitting on a flat surface.

When using these tips, you should have the perfect pumpkin to carve.

Step 2

Design your Jack-O-Lantern.

Design your Jack-O-Lantern pattern on a piece of paper. Some ideas include:

- traditional face with eyes, nose, and mouth—smiley, scary, funny, etc.
- words or phrases—like boo, danger, Happy Halloween, or even your family name
- Halloween shapes—like ghosts, cats, witches, owls, etc.

Cut out your design template from the paper.

Step 3

Carve your pumpkin.

You will need your carving tools for this step. Make sure you have permission from your adult.

Set up your work area. Pumpkin carving can be messy, so put down some newspaper on a flat surface. This makes for easy clean-up. When you're done, you can bundle up the newspaper and throw the whole mess away.

Trace your design on the pumpkin. You can do this by poking holes around the design or by tracing it with marker. Next, make a lid by cutting a circle about two inches around the stem. Then, scoop out the pumpkin's flesh and seeds. Carve out your design. Once completed, put a candle inside the pumpkin and put it on the front porch for trick-or-treaters and neighbors to admire.

All done? CONGRATULATIONS!

You've completed all the necessary steps to earn the Pumpkin Carving patch.



After completing the activities from each step, visit or call a Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania retail shop at 800-248-3355 to purchase your patch.* A patch may be worn on the back of a vest, sash or tunic.

*Patch shown may be substituted with similar patch, based on availability.