

The  
SECRETS of

# NINJA SCHOOL



# The Secrets of Ninja School: EVENT KIT

## ABOUT THE KIT

This kit was designed for librarians, educators, and booksellers, or for families hosting playgroups, parties, or simply looking for an engaging read aloud. Best for ages 4-8.

One of the secrets of Master Willow's Ninja School is that you do not have to be amazing at jumping, kicking, throwing, or sitting patiently to be a good ninja. You simply need to discover your secret skill. Through a series of activities, you can welcome ninjas to practice their ninja moves from knocking down a pyramid to crafting a dragon.

The kit contains:

- Event poster and copy to share your event
- Suggested preparation
- “Ninjas Welcome” Banner
- Ninja School Certificate
- Activity: Make a Ninja Hood from a T-shirt
- Activity: Sneak, Slither, and Creep & Sit, Listen, and Wait Patiently
- Activity: Jump, Kick, and Throw Skillfully
- Craft: Dragon Lacing Cards
- Craft: Paper Dragon Softie

## ABOUT THE BOOK

### **The Secrets of Ninja School**

By Deb Pilutti

Published by Henry Holt and Co.

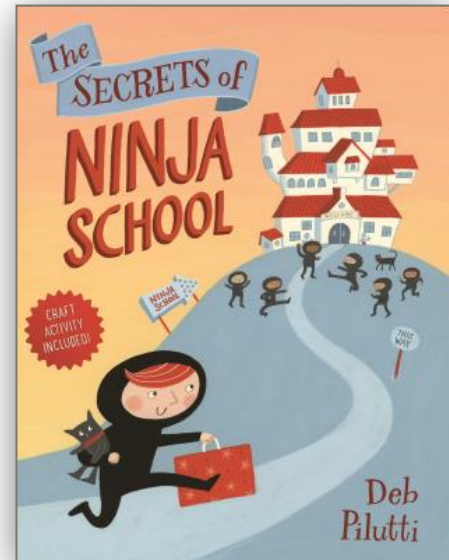
ISBN-13: 9781627796491

Age Range: 4-8 Years

Ruby sets out to learn her own secret skill at Master Willow's School for Ninjas in this charming picture book that celebrates confidence, creativity, and kindness.

Master Willow's Ninja School is a place where junior ninja saplings must learn many important skills: how to make themselves invisible, fight skillfully, meditate patiently and—most importantly—how to be brave and unleash their own secret talent. But Ruby's no good at traditional ninja skills, and she seems too afraid to conquer her fears. Can a quiet, gentle sapling really graduate from ninja school? Yes! Especially when she taps into her own special talents.

*Includes a craft for making a felt stuffed dragon!*



# The Secrets of Ninja School: EVENT KIT

## PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

“Practicing the ways of the ninja allows her to find and develop her own creative skills as she bravely comforts and supports her fellow saplings-in-training navigate the separation from home to school with a gift of friendship...A recommended general purchase suitable for young readers finding their own special skills.”

—*School Library Journal*

“The artist’s gouache, pen, and ink illustrations are a treat, with aesthetics reminiscent of 1950s graphic design and animation. Inventive framings make every page a surprise.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“She gives readers inspired to emulate Ruby appended, traceable patterns for both felt and nonstitch paper dragons...No need for a black body suit to be a ninja-in-training.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Deb Pilutti is an award-winning illustrator and designer. She was previously a partner at oliebollen.com, designing toys and products for the children’s market. The creator of the picture books **Ten Rules of Being a Superhero** and **Bear and Squirrel Are Friends** and the illustrator of **Idea Jar** and other titles, she lives with her family in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Discover more at [DebPilutti.com](http://DebPilutti.com).

## PREPARING FOR THE ACTIVITIES

You will, of course, create your own grand event or classroom activity! Following are simply suggested ways to prepare for an event or classroom experience.

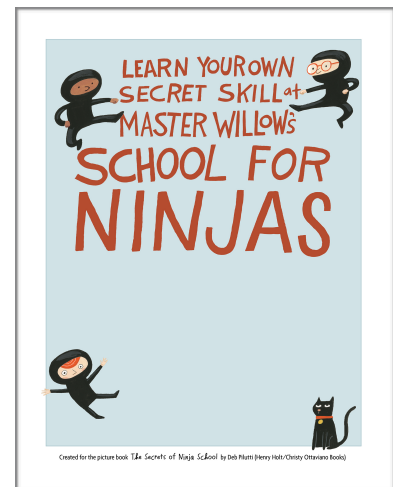
\_\_\_ Locate a copy of the picture book **The Secrets of Ninja School** by Deb Pilutti (Henry Holt/Christy Ottaviano Books).

\_\_\_ Think about which ninja colleague will work alongside you at Master Willow’s Ninja School.

## SHARING THE EVENT

\_\_\_ If you list your events in print or online, here is some text that may assist you:

All aspiring ninjas are invited to Master Willow’s School for Ninjas to discover their secret skill. We will be jumping, kicking, sneaking, creeping, and reading **The Secrets of Ninja School** by Deb Pilutti (Henry Holt/Christy Ottaviano Books). If you wear black and bring an extra black t-shirt, Master Willow will show you how to become invisible on your next mission. All welcome, but best for ages 4-7.



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\_\_\_ If this event is for the public, print out the event poster (page 10), add your date, time, and location, and duplicate it to advertise the event. If you prefer to adapt the poster in your design software, you can find a JPEG of the poster design on CuriousCityDPW.com. Simply search for “secret ninja” at CuriousCityDPW.com and navigate to the Event Kit listing.

## DECORATING: WELCOME NINJAS BANNER

Author/illustrator Deb Pilutti has made you a banner to welcome ninjas to your event.

\_\_\_ Print the three-page banner pieces on pages 11-13 and assemble with tape or glue like



this:

## ACTIVITY: MAKE A NINJA HOOD FROM A T-SHIRT

A black t-shirt folded and tied in a super secret way can make a ninja hood that renders your ninja invisible in the dark. Doing this activity with readers as they arrive at the event or after reading the second spread of **The Secrets of Ninja School** (when the saplings put on their ninja gear) will transform everyday readers into ninjas.

\_\_\_ Ask your colleagues to bring in old black t-shirts (they can have writing on them) and/or visit a secondhand shop.

\_\_\_ Encourage your ninjas to dress in black and bring an extra black t-shirt to the event. The t-shirt will not be cut or otherwise changed.

\_\_\_ Learn the secret of making a ninja hood by watching the PBS Parents YouTube video “DIY Ninja Costume” from Full-Time Kid.



# The Secrets of Ninja School: EVENT KIT

## ACTIVITY: DISCOVER YOUR SECRET SKILL

Ruby discovers that her secret skills are storyteller, dragon maker, and very good friend. Consider ways that you can draw out your gathered ninjas' special skills. Author/illustrator Deb Pilutti has created a Master Willow's School of Ninjas Certificate for you to share with readers.

\_\_\_ Print a Master Willow's School of Ninjas Certificate from page 14 for each ninja.

Suggested script to introduce the idea:



*Were you happy that Ruby discovered her secret skills like a true ninja? What are her secret skills?*

*[Revisit and reread the page with the defeated Ruby and the cat that reads, "If Ruby had a secret skill, she did not know how to find it."]*

*Do you sometimes feel that way? Do you worry that you don't have a secret skill? You do have a secret skill, I promise.*

*Let's think of some secret skills together. What are you good at? Jumping? Drawing? Being a big sister? Eating ice cream? Petting cats? Sleeping? Dancing? Making faces?*

*Do you have any secret skills you want to share?*

*At the end of the event today, I want to give you a Master Willow's School of Ninjas Certificate. It reads [read]. You may want to fill in your skill today, or you may want to think about it or talk with your friends about it.*

*Often your friends know what your secret skills are before you do — just like Master Willow and the other ninjas were able to see Ruby's secret skills.*

## ACTIVITY: PHYSICAL NINJA SKILLS

Master Willow spends much of his time teaching his ninjas-to-be agility and physical abilities. Will you do the same? Do you have a local martial arts instructor you could work with? Imagine having an instructor teach a few simple lessons for ages 4-8 on how to...

*"sneak, slither, and creep invisibly,  
jump, kick, and throw skillfully,  
sit, listen, and wait patiently..."*

**—The Secrets of Ninja School**

# The Secrets of Ninja School: EVENT KIT

When leading the physical ninja skill activities, it is good to remind your ninjas that some ninjas (like Ruby) have secret abilities that are not about agility.

Here are some ideas for physical activities:

## 1) **Sneak, Slither, and Creep / Sit, Listen, and Wait Patiently**

To teach the ability to sneak, slither and creep and to sit, listen, and wait patiently, pair up two ninjas. One ninja will have bells attached to their ankles and one will be seated and turned away from the approaching belled ninja.

- \_\_\_ Use masking tape to mark out a path that is 9-10 feet long and 2-3 feet wide.
- \_\_\_ Place a chair at the end of the path with the back of the chair facing the path.
- \_\_\_ Devise a way to attach bells to ninja ankles. One simple way is to order the “Thick Jingle Bell Bracelets” at [OrientalTradingCompany.com](http://OrientalTradingCompany.com). That retailer offers a twelve-pack of the bells affixed to Velcro straps for \$15.99.

Suggested script to introduce the challenge:

*Master Willow will now teach you to sneak, slither, and creep and to sit, listen, and wait patiently like a ninja!*

*I need two volunteers! One ninja will velcro these bells to their ankles, and one ninja will sit in the chair and listen deeply for the sound of the sneaking ninja.*

*To Ninja 1: Your job is to sneak up on the Chair Ninja and tap them on the shoulder without them hearing your ankle bells.*

*To Ninja 2: Your job is to listen intently for the Sneaking Ninja’s bells. If you hear the bells, yell, “Sneak!” You cannot turn around, you cannot fidget. You must be still.*

*Each ninja will have three tries to sneak, slither, and creep without making a sound. Learn from your mistakes and find new ways to move silently and ways to listen patiently. Ready? 1, 2, 3...*

*Remember that sneaking, slithering, creeping, sitting, listening, and waiting may not be your secret skills, but Master Willow thinks you are quite brave to try. Now switch places!*

## 2) **Jump, Kick, Throw Skillfully**

While Ruby initially felt she was not skillful at jumping, kicking, and throwing, she did excel at these actions when she was combatting her fellow ninjas’ homesickness. Your ninjas can jump, kick, and throw with this simple activity.

# The Secrets of Ninja School: EVENT KIT

\_\_\_ Locate 16 large plastic drink cups from your recycling bin or your craft closet to create a 15-cup pyramid and a 1-cup ball holder.

\_\_\_ With 5 cups on the bottom and one on top of your pyramid, consider using a Sharpie to write a phrase that descends down the pyramid as you read, such as:

I /AM / THE / BEST / NINJA.

\_\_\_ Locate a ball that will sit inside a cup.

\_\_\_ Locate masking tape and a yard stick to create a grid of four 15" x 15" connected squares on your floor.

\_\_\_ Place the ball inside an upside-down cup at the end of the grid.

\_\_\_ Build the pyramid 5 feet beyond the end of the grid.

Suggested script to introduce the challenge:

*Here, my ninjas-in-training, is where you can show your skills at jumping, kicking, and throwing.*

*I ask you to jump with two feet into each of the squares and kick over this cup to reveal the next challenge. [Demonstrate.]*

*What do you think your next challenge is? We have jumped and kicked... what is the next skill? Yes, throw! Throw the ball at the pyramid, and see how many cups you can knock down in a single throw.*

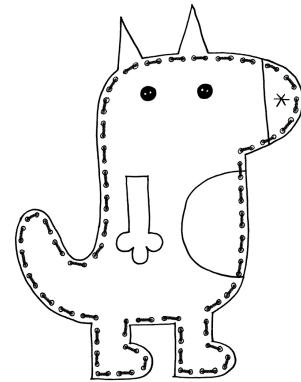
*Your partner ninja will rebuild the pyramid and challenge you to repeat the tasks two more times. Try different ways to throw to see if you can knock down more cups each time. [Depending on the group you could have the partner ninja change up the jumping challenge to one foot jumping, alternate feet jumping, and so on.]*

## **CRAFT: DRAGON LACING CARD**

When Ruby sneaks off to the Ninja Craft Area to make a softie for the other homesick ninjas, she discovers that one of her secret skills is dragon maker (and very good friend). Consider creating a Ninja Craft Area at your event to make a Dragon Lacing Card.

\_\_\_ Print the Ninja Craft Area poster on page 15 to display on your craft table.

\_\_\_ Print out the Dragon Lacing Card on page 16 on card stock. Print one for each crafting ninja.



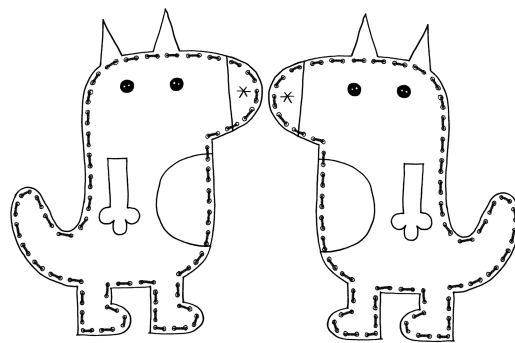
As the Master Willow of *your* Ninja School, only you know how much time ninjas will have to dedicate to this activity. Decide if you want to pre-cut the templates. If yes, consider also hole punching the outside edges to ready the dragons for lacing/sewing. Lacing the dragons can be done with a 30" shoelace, piece of yarn, or length of curling ribbon.

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- \_\_\_ Locate a 30" shoelace, piece of yarn, or length of curling ribbon for each ninja.
- \_\_\_ Check on your secret stash of scissors, single hole punches, colored pencils and/or crayons, and clear tape to share.
- \_\_\_ Secure paper bags in case ninjas do not finish their dragon and need to take the pieces home.
- \_\_\_ Make a Dragon Lacing Card demo by following the suggested instructions on the sheet.

## CRAFT: PAPER NINJA SOFTIE

Your ninja crafters may be ready for something more complicated than a lacing card. This activity doubles the lacing card template and allows the ninja to "sew" together the back-to-back dragons and stuff them to make a paper softie.



- \_\_\_ Print the Ninja Craft Area poster on page 15 to display on your craft table.
- \_\_\_ Print out the two-page Paper Dragon Softie on pages 17-18 on card stock. Print one set for each crafting ninja.

As the Master Willow of *your* Ninja School, only you know how much time ninjas will have to dedicate to this activity. Decide if you want to pre-cut the templates. If yes, consider putting the paired dragons back-to-back and hole punching the outside edges to ready the dragons for sewing. Sewing the dragons can be done with a 30" shoelace, piece of yarn, or length of curling ribbon.

- \_\_\_ Locate a 30" shoelace, piece of yarn, or length of curling ribbon for each ninja.
- \_\_\_ Check on your secret stash of scissors, single hole punches, colored pencils and/or crayons, and clear tape to share.
- \_\_\_ Locate something to stuff the dragons with. Tissues or cotton balls work great.
- \_\_\_ Secure paper bags in case ninjas do not finish their dragon and need to take the pieces home.
- \_\_\_ Make a Paper Dragon Softie demo by following the suggested instructions on the sheet.

NOTE: Those who want an actual sewing project can refer to the materials and instructions in the back of **The Secrets of Ninja School** and use the same template as the Paper Dragon.

## DAY OF THE EVENT

- \_\_\_ Hang your "Ninjas Welcome" banner.
- \_\_\_ Using masking tape, outline a space 9-10 feet long and 2-3 feet wide. Place a chair at one end (its back to the marked space) and ankle bells at the other for the Sneak, Slither, and Creep; Sit, Listen, and Wait Patiently Physical Activity.

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\_\_\_ Using masking tape and a yard stick, lay out a grid of four 15" x 15" connected squares on your floor. Place the ball inside an upside down cup at the end of the grid. Build the pyramid 5 feet beyond the end of the grid. You now have your Jump, Kick, Throw Skillfully Activity.

\_\_\_ Lay out your craft table with dragon templates, yarn and lacing needles or shoelaces, glue sticks, crayons and colored pencils, scissors, hole punches, clear tape, stuffing, and any other craft items you choose for the Dragon Lacing Card or Paper Dragon Softie Activity.

\_\_\_ Lay out your black t-shirts and make ninja hoods as readers arrive.

\_\_\_ Welcome your "saplings" to Master Willow's Ninja School and then read aloud from the picture book **The Secrets of Ninja School** by Deb Pilutti (Henry Holt/Christy Ottaviano Books).

\_\_\_ Discuss your ninjas' possible secret skills.

\_\_\_ With your ninja colleague, run the ninja physical activities.

\_\_\_ Lead readers through making a Paper Dragon.

\_\_\_ Send your ninjas home with their Paper Dragon and Master Willow's School of Ninjas Certificate. Know that "event ninja" is one of your secret skills!

## OTHER RESOURCES

Enjoyed using this kit? Visit [CuriousCityDPW.com](http://CuriousCityDPW.com) for other story hour kits, event kits, treasure hunts, book club guides, book giveaways, and more ways to engage in children's literature with play, conversation, and social action.





LEARN YOUR OWN  
SECRET SKILL <sup>at</sup>  
MASTER WILLOW'S  
SCHOOL FOR  
NINJAS



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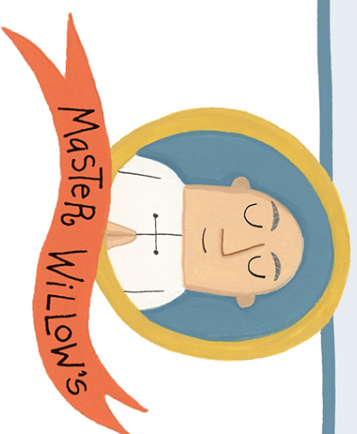


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# SCHOOL for NINJAS

This certifies that

\_\_\_\_\_ has completed the training and is a

\_\_\_\_\_ ninja.

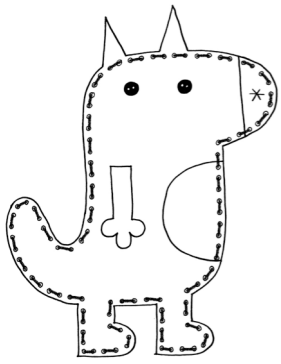
*"Discovering your secret skills is an  
endless journey." – Master Willow*



# NINJA CRAFT AREA

Discover your secret crafting skill.





## Dragon Lacing Card

Having a dragon can help you feel brave. Practice sewing a dragon softie with this Lacing Card.

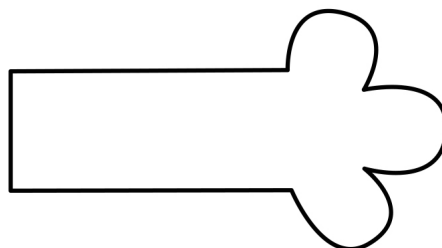
- 1) Print this template on cardstock.
- 2) Color the dragon with your favorite dragon colors.
- 3) Cut out the dragon.
- 4) Hole punch the outside edges of the dragon.

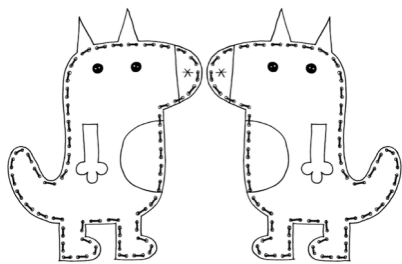
Created for the picture book  
*The Secrets of Ninja School* by Deb Pilutti  
 (Henry Holt/Christy Ottaviano Books)

- 5) Locate a 30" or longer shoelace or piece of yarn. (Curling ribbon also works.)
- 6) If you are using yarn, pull the yarn through a hole underneath the dragon until just a tiny length remains. Tape the very end of the yarn to the back of the dragon. Wrap tape around the other end of the yarn until it looks like a shoelace.
- 7) Push the shoelace or yarn through the top of a hole and pull until tight.

- 8) Push the shoelace or yarn through the bottom of the NEXT hole and pull until tight.
- 9) Alternate going through the top and bottom of the holes until you have "sewn" your dragon.
- 10) Don't forget to give your dragon a hand!

If you're ready to make a Dragon Softie, check out a copy of **The Secrets of Ninja School** by Deb Pilutti (Henry Holt) and follow the instructions in the back pages.





## Paper Dragon Softie

Ready to sew a stuffed paper dragon from paper and tissues?

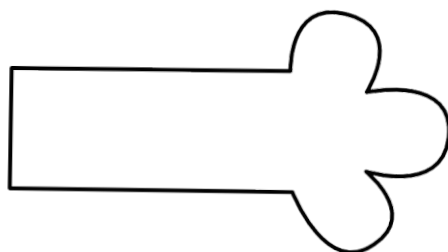
- 1) Print this two-page template on cardstock.
- 2) Color the two dragons with your favorite dragon colors.
- 3) Cut out the dragons.
- 4) Place the two dragons back to back and hole punch the outside edges of the joined dragons.
- 5) Locate a 30" or longer shoelace or piece of yarn. (Curling ribbon also works.)

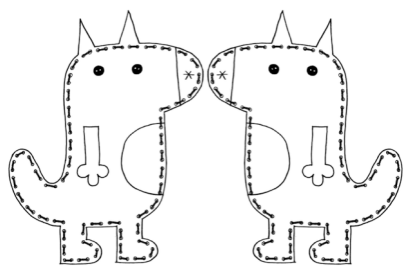
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- 6) If you are using yarn, pull the yarn through a hole underneath the dragon until just a tiny length remains. Tape the very end of the yarn to the back of the dragon. Wrap tape around the other end of the yarn until it looks like a shoelace.
- 7) Push the shoelace or yarn through the top of a hole and pull until tight.
- 8) Push the shoelace or yarn through the bottom of the NEXT hole and pull until tight.

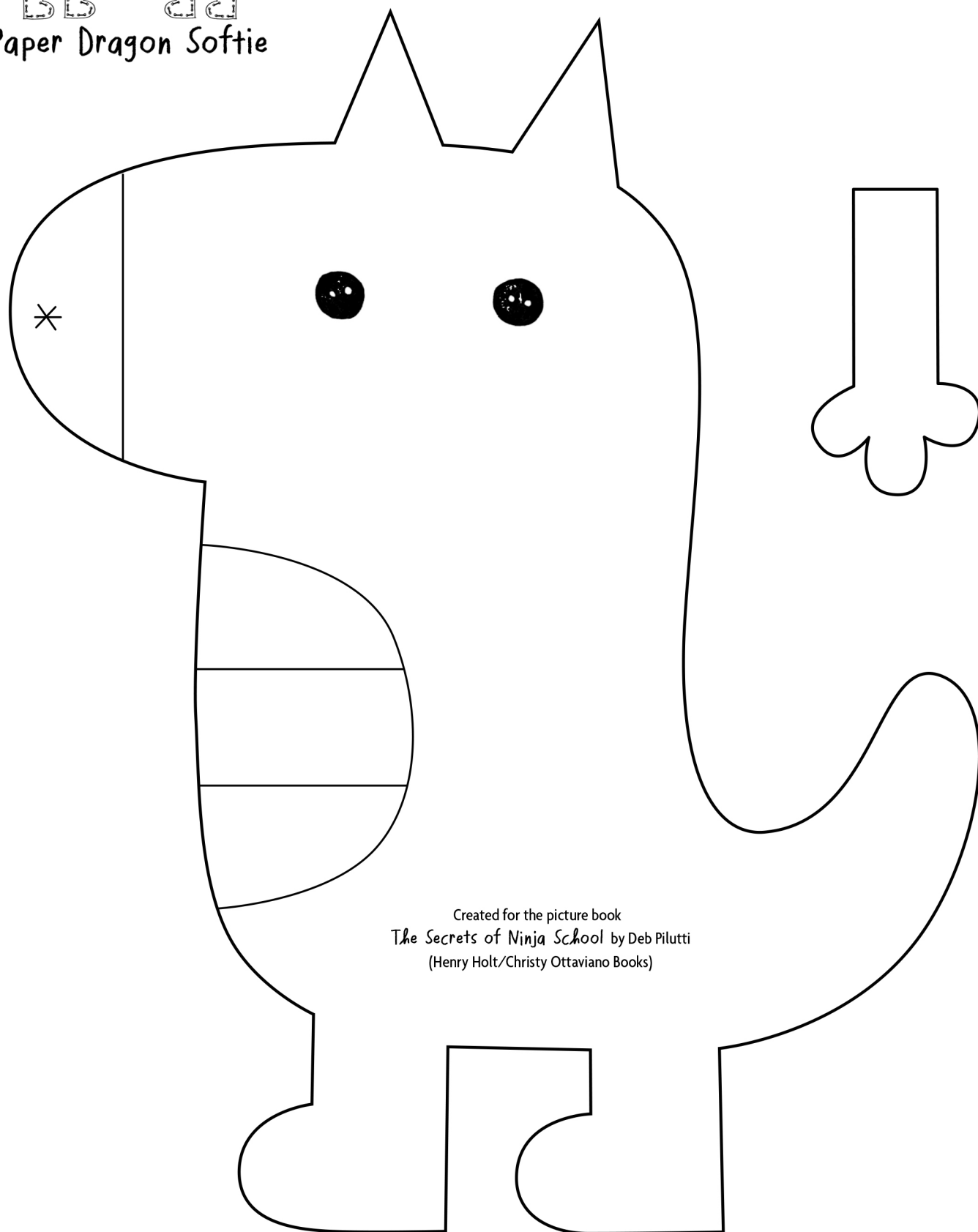
- 9) Alternate going through the top and bottom of the holes until you have 6-7 holes left.
- 10) Stuff the dragon with tissues or cotton balls.
- 11) Finish "sewing" the remaining holes and secure the end with a knot or tape.
- 12) Don't forget to give your dragon a hand!

If you're ready to make a cloth Dragon Softie, check out a copy of **The Secrets of Ninja School** by Deb Pilutti (Henry Holt) and follow the instructions in the back.





Paper Dragon Softie



Created for the picture book  
*The Secrets of Ninja School* by Deb Pilutti  
(Henry Holt/Christy Ottaviano Books)