



What Color is Your Repair Kit? Kevin Roche*

When something goes wrong in the masquerade green room, you'll be glad that a repair kit is available. An expert costumer and masquerade director offers his advice on what to include.

A well-thought-out repair station in the Masquerade Green Room is something that can make your competition stand out as a good experience for the participants. Just knowing that one has the means to deal with unexpected wardrobe/prop emergencies without having to travel all the way back to a hotel room (assuming one has one) can dramatically reduce the backstage stress level.

It has been my pleasure to take advantage of the excellent repair kit that Byron and Tina Connell bring to the masquerades they run or volunteer for, so in 2008, I set out to create one like it for use at SF Bay Area masquerade and cosplay events. If all you care about is its contents, you can skip to the end of this article right now. The list is Tina's, with some additions from me.

When assembling a repair station for your competition, there are several things to consider before you begin.

First, the goal of your repair station is to enable *repair* of costumes, not construction. This means you shouldn't need to make space for a sewing machine, for instance.

How much space will you have available in the Green Room for repairs? If space is especially tight, you may wish to limit things to just the basics. It might be wise to omit the makeup components as well in such a case, because of the risk that floating powder/etc might pose to other costumes in the room.

How is the ventilation in the Green Room? If ventilation is poor, you won't want people opening solvent-based adhesives in the room.

Do you have power available? All the hot glue in the world won't do much good without power for the glue gun! Be sure to locate the table so power cords don't pose a trip hazard for people in costume.

One alternative I have seen work quite effectively is a *Costume Repair Room*, which is placed close to the Green Room. Contestants could pop over to that room to effect their repairs and then return, eliminating the contamination/exposure

problem for other contestants). During the rest of the convention it was available to everyone for anyone experiencing a hall costume/wardrobe malfunction.

If your kit is going to be used multiple times, you'll want something to keep it in. Our repair kit all packs down nicely into a rolling footlocker, which makes it easy to move in and store. You needn't invest in such an expensive container for yours, however – an inexpensive rolling suitcase can serve equally well.



Once you've invested in building your green room repair kit, here is an important piece of advice: *don't forget to restock any parts of the kit that were consumed!*

All right then – on to the list!



Tools

Many of these come pre-assembled into "first apartment" tool kits at stores like Target. They include a case that helps you keep the tools organized and makes it obvious which ones have been remove.

- Hot glue guns: large cordless, small regular, small low heat & glue sticks
- Hole punch, awl
- Pliers & wire cutters (1 ea. needle nose/regular plier in kit)
- Screwdrivers - straight, phillips, miniature-set
- Craft knives, single edge razor blades
- Scissors - 2-3 pairs
- Hacksaw blade
- Metal file
- Hammer
- Crescent Wrench



Sewing Materials

Consider buying a few travel sewing kits in plastic cases, and add other notions as needed.

- Needles, some pre-threaded in most common colors (pincushion)
- Straight pins
- Safety pins (as above, see Fasteners)

- Thread - several primary and neutral colors
- Hooks & eyes, snaps (limited selection, no whoppers)



Adhesives, Fasteners and Connectors

When something breaks, having these will temporarily mend it quickly, especially when time is short.

- Wire - various types/gauges
- Plastic cable ties
- String & braided heavy cord
- Paper Clips and Binder Clips
- Stapler/staples (Note: this can be a great resource for emergency hem repair!)
- Rubber bands, pony tail elastics
- Safety pins - 5 sizes, lots
- Bobby pins & hairpins - various sizes & colors
- Tapes:
 - Masking
 - Duct
 - Plastic (black and colored)
- Adhesives:
 - 5 minute epoxy
 - Super glue (gel) (& super glue remover)

- 527 cement
- Sobo
- Tacky glue
- Spirit gum (& remover)
- Fray check & clear nail polish



Makeup

Materials only unless a makeup repair person is available. This is for makeup REPAIRS only; do not plan on using this for "from-scratch" makeup jobs.

- Lighted makeup mirror (3 intensity), unlighted double-sided mirror
- Basic (very) stage makeup kit
- Be sure it includes loose translucent and matte powder!
- Roll of Surgical Cotton (can be used for applying powder and then discarded)
- Makeup applicator sponges, cotton balls & QTips
- Hairbrush, comb
- Hair spray (pump bottle)
- Nail polish remover (non-acetone)
- Makeup remover, cold cream, baby powder, moist towelettes
- Baby wipes (less messy than cold cream)



Medical Emergencies

An inexpensive first aid kit plus a few additional items is sufficient.

- Band-aids, surgical tape
- Alcohol wipes
- Tylenol (acetaminophen), coated aspirin, ibuprofen, antacid tablets, cough drops
- Contact lens saline solution, moisturizing eye drops, empty c.l. case (not sterile).
- Salt/Potassium tablets (for heat shock); glucose tablets



Miscellaneous

These items will help with many other kinds of unexpected emergency

repairs in the green room.

- Steam iron & small ironing board (optional - depends on packing space available)
- Measuring tape(s)
- Batteries - not all sizes, limited supply - for emergencies ONLY
- Magnifying glass
- Soldering iron and small quantity solder (rosin-core/electrical solder, NOT acid flux core. It may or may not be the type

needed, but the rosin core will not inadvertently corrode anything)

- Static Guard
- Dry cleaning wipes (*quick fix for food and other organic stains*)
- Paper towels
- Flashlight
- Extension cord(s); multi-plug outlet adapter
- Emery board, nail clippers
- Shoe horn
- Clothes brush
- Drinking straws
- Sharpie (*black + a few colors – great for touching up repairs, nicks, and cracks*)
- Ziploc® style reclosable plastic bags (*assorted sizes*)
- Small package of writeable CDs and a memory stick (*sometimes, it's the entrant's audio track that needs emergency repair*)

Kevin Roche is a sci-fi fantasy costumer with extensive experience entering, judging, and running masquerades. He was the Chair of CostumeCon 26 in 2008, and was awarded the International Costumers' Guild [2007 Lifetime Achievement Award](#).

A Personal Repair Kit

If you plan to enter a masquerade, you should create your own personal repair kit. Here are a few good reasons why:

- The green room may not have one
- Other entrants may be trying to use the repair kit when you need it
- The repair kit may not have exactly what you need, or has just run out.
- You may not be able to locate what you need quickly.

Even if you just wear your costume at a convention, a repair kit lets you make minor repairs if something rips or breaks.

What should you include? Whatever you need to fix your costume! Use a small fishing tackle box to hold everything. Here is a personal repair kit that you can customize:

- Sewing repair kit
- Simple tools (screwdriver, pliers, knife)
- Basic makeup and applicators
- Spirit gum and remover
- Super Glue (gel) and solvent
- Duct and transparent tape
- Stapler and staples
- Safety pins and straight pins
- Paper clips and rubber bands
- Baby wipes, dry clean wipes, napkins
- Brush and comb
- Hair spray (pump bottle)
- Fray check & clear nail polish
- Hand normal/magnifying mirror
- Sharpie (black + a few colors)