

109-2

Tricia Waddell and Katrina Loving use both hand sewn and machine sewn reverse appliqué to refashion t-shirts.





## Refashioned Tees with Reverse Appliqué

By Katrina Loving, Project Editor for *Stitch* magazine

### Fabric

T-shirt

Scraps of one or more knit fabrics similar to the weight of the T-shirt material

### Other Supplies

Removable fabric marking pen

Leaf and/or Circle templates (optional)

#### *For handsewn reverse appliqué:*

Handsewing needle and silk, buttonole/craft, or other strong thread

Temporary spray adhesive (optional; Recommended: Sulky KK 2000)

Safety pins (optional)

#### *For machine-stitched reverse appliqué:*

Sewing thread in color to match or contrast T-shirt color

Ballpoint or stretch needle for sewing machine

Self-adhesive tear-away stabilizer (Recommended: Sulky Sticky +)

## Instructions

### Handsewn Reverse Appliqué

Follow the placement instructions given here to create a t-shirt design similar to the sample or design your own.

1. Find the center front of the t-shirt and then measure about x" (x cm) to the right. Use a ruler and removable fabric marking pen to draw a straight line from the neckline/shoulder to the hem of the t-shirt.
2. Use the provided Circle templates to draw the desired nested and single circle designs, centering the circles along the drawn line, down the shirt. Refer to the photo AT DIRECTION for help with the placement and design seen on the sample shirt.

3. For nested circle designs, cut each knit fabric layer to a piece at least 1" (2.5 cm) large on all sides than the largest drawn circle. Stack the cut pieces in order lower-most to top-most layer (the lower-most layer will appear in the center of the design, moving to the top-most layer which will appear closest to the t-shirt fabric. Make sure all fabrics are right side up and that the grains of all fabrics are running in the same direction. Optional: Use a temporary spray adhesive to adhere the layers together to make them easier to handle as one; make sure you read the manufacturer's instructions carefully to understand how the adhesive is removed.
4. Place the stacked fabrics, right side up, under the front layer of the t-shirt, directly behind the drawn circle(s). You'll need to open the shirt at the hem or neck edge and insert the stacked fabrics into the shirt; make sure the grain of the stacked fabrics runs in the same direction as the grain of the t-shirt for best results.
5. Pin the stacked fabrics in place, pinning around the drawn circle. Using safety pins is recommended to avoid sticking your fingers as you sew but straight pins can be used as well. Make sure the fabrics are smooth and reasonable taut (just so that the reverse appliqué fabrics don't sag).
6. Thread a handsewing needle with your chosen thread and knot one end. Holding the t-shirt fabric at the drawn circle with one hand, bring the needle up from the wrong side somewhere along the outer-most drawn line. Use a running stitch, about x" (x cm) long, to stitch around the drawn line. Fasten off securely on the wrong side and weave the tail through a few of the stitches before trimming the thread.
7. Pinch the t-shirt fabric in the center of the stitched circle to pull the t-shirt fabric only away from the other fabrics (if you used temporary adhesive to secure the layers, you may be able to simply peel the layers away from each other, or you may have to follow manufacturer's instructions to remove the adhesive before continuing). Make a small clip with our scissors in the center of the pinched fabric, making sure to cut only the top layer. Continue cutting, trimming away the t-shirt fabric about 1/8" (3 mm) inside the stitch line.
8. To continue and create a nested design (if you have several layers of fabric pinned in place), trace the next smallest circle template in the center of the just-trimmed circle. Then, repeat Steps 6 and 7 as many times as necessary until you have only one layer of fabric left. Alternatively, simply trim the next fabric about 1/8" (3 mm) inside the first trimmed edge, without stitching again (recommended for only two layers of reverse appliqué).
9. To finish, turn the shirt inside out and carefully trim all fabrics about 1/8" (3 mm) outside the outer-most stitch line only. Remove any remaining pen marks on the right side, according to manufacturer's instructions.

### **Machine-Stitched Reverse Appliqué**

*Follow the placement instructions given here to create a t-shirt design similar to the sample or design your own.*

1. Lay the t-shirt out in front of you with the back of the shirt facing up. Use the provided Large and Small Leaf templates and the removable fabric marking pen to draw the desired design in the upper left shoulder to center back area of the shirt, referring to the photo AT DIRECTION for help with placement and the design seen in the sample. Use a combination of small and large leaf shapes, angling the templates as you trace them to create a random/organic appearance. Make sure that you leave at least 1/2" (1.3 cm) between each shape.
2. Cut enough pieces of your chosen appliqué fabric so that you have one for each leaf shape; make sure the appliqué fabric is at least 1/2" (1.3 cm) larger than each shape (remember that the shapes are angled and the fabric should fit the shape on-grain, not angled).
3. Cut enough pieces of the stabilizer so that you have one for each cut piece of appliqué fabric, cutting the stabilizer about 1" (2.5 cm) larger than the fabric on each side.
4. Remove the paper backing from one cut piece of stabilizer and adhere one piece of appliqué fabric, centered and right side up, to the stabilizer, following manufacturer's instructions.
5. Carefully position the stabilizer/fabric piece directly underneath one drawn shape on the t-shirt (you'll need to open the shirt and insert the stabilizer/fabric piece through the bottom or neck opening, being careful not to let the stabilizer stick in place until you have it properly aligned with the drawn shape). Place the stabilizer/fabric piece so that the right side of the knit fabric is facing the wrong side of the t-shirt and ensure that the fabric grain is running in the same direction as the t-shirt fabric for best results. Once you have the stabilizer/fabric piece in place, adhere the stabilizer margin around the appliqué fabric to the t-shirt fabric.

6. Install the ballpoint or stretch needle in your sewing machine and use contrasting thread (if you'd like the stitching to stand out) or matching thread (if you'd like the stitching to be subtle). Place the t-shirt on the machine so that only the back layer will be sewn and position it so that the drawn shape with the stabilizer/fabric piece is under the needle. Be careful as you sew that you are keeping the front layer and other areas of the t-shirt (like sleeves) out of the way of the needle. Topstitch along the drawn shape, stitching slowly to maintain control. Optional: Stitch around the shape (just outside the first topstitched line) a few more times if you'd like to create a sketchy appearance.
7. Turn the shirt inside out and gently peel away the stabilizer. Then, carefully trim the excess knit appliqué fabric about 1/8" (3 mm) outside of the stitch line.
8. Turn the shirt right side out. Pinch up the t-shirt fabric in the center of the stitched shape, making sure that you only have one layer of fabric grasped in your fingers. Carefully cut a small slit through the t-shirt fabric only, in the center of the shape. Continue to cut the t-shirt fabric away, about 1/8" (3 mm) inside the stitch line, being careful to cut only the top layer of fabric, leaving the appliqué fabric intact. When you are done, you will have revealed the appliqué fabric.
9. Repeat Steps 4–8 to complete each of the remaining shapes. Remove any remaining pen marks according to manufacturer's instructions.
10. If desired, repeat Step 1 to create another design on the front of the T-shirt. The sample shirt has 3 Small Leaves on the front of the T-shirt, placed in the upper left shoulder area, to create the appearance of the leaves wrapping around the shoulder from the back to the front. Refer to the photo AT DIRECTION for help with placement. Then, repeat Steps 2–8 to complete the reverse appliqué design as before.

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