

DECK THE HALLS WITH APPLIQUÉ ORNAMENTS

Easy-to-make, versatile appliqué ornaments are great decorations for trees, gifts, coasters, bottles, and more

By James Raymer, Dalco Home Sew

Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year — and you can make it even more festive with eye-catching appliqué ornaments. Whether you use prepackaged appliqué kits or start from scratch, make your holiday season an unforgettable one with these fun, easy projects.

Appliqué ornaments can be used for much more than just hanging decorations for Christmas trees. These colorful pieces also make great coasters, bottle embellishments, and package decorations. Stuff them with potpourri or fiberfill to give them a three-dimensional look and scent the air.

No matter how you use them, premade kits make the process simpler. You can purchase kits that include precut pieces and a sew disk that will automatically embroider the embellishments and sew a satin stitch border around the outside edge. The sew disk also automatically sews a loop out of thread to use for hanging or if you choose not to use the loop, this step can be easily skipped when sewing it out.

If you want to create an ornament from scratch, simply choose your shape, fabric, and what type of embroidered embellishment you want and custom digitize the outline and the decoration.

TREE ORNAMENTS

This process is as easy to do as it is great looking. Hoop your precut appliqué piece or chosen fabric with medium-weight tearaway backing. Next, using the sew disk or your custom digitized disk, stitch an outline. Next, sew the ornament's embellishments, followed by a satin stitch border. That's it! Just cut out the ornament and it's ready to go.

Because the item is free-standing, meaning it's not being sewn onto something like an appliqué normally is, you'll want to use a satin stitch border, which won't fray and unravel like a ziz-zag or running stitch. You also have the option of adding a backing piece of fabric such as an organza or a something in a complementary color. You may opt for this if the back of the ornament will be seen. If you want to have the embroidered embellishment show on the front and the back of the ornament, be sure and that your bobbin thread color matches the top thread.

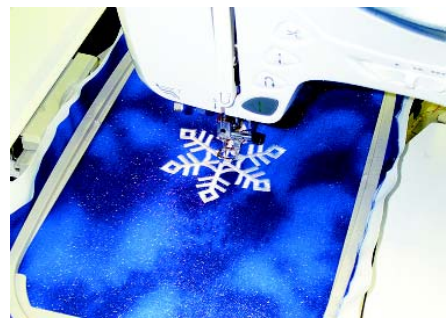
COASTERS

Another great holiday decorative option is to make attractive coasters from appliqué ornaments. Choose a design that is circular like a snowflake or globe. Start by hooping the fabric with a piece of medium-weight tearaway. Sew an outline stitch, followed by the ornament's embellishment stitches. Unhoop the fabric and rehoop with a piece of clear vinyl on the backside. Sew a satin border stitch around the perimeter. Trim the coaster and you're done!

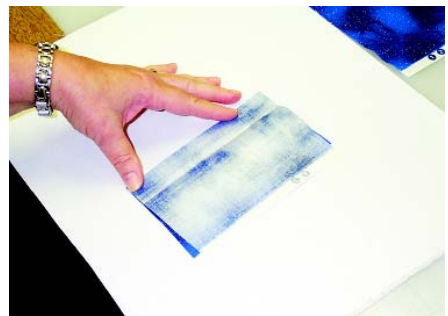
An important note: You want to add the embellishment on the top piece before you sandwich the vinyl piece together because if you try to embroider



Freestanding appliqués can be used to create unique Christmas ornaments, coasters, and package decorations. At the bottom of the tree, two examples show how ornaments can be used to decorate cups or bottles or stuffed with fiberfill or potpourri for a three-dimensional effect.



Hoop a piece of fabric. Normally you would sew the outline of the ornament first, but in this instance it is sewn last. Instead, sew out the ornament's inner embellishments as shown in this snowflake example. Take the hoop out off the machine.



Cut two pieces of fabric big enough to cover the entire ornament with spare on all sides. Place the two pieces of fabric right side to right against each other.



Fold over the left side of the top piece of fabric 1/2 inch. Crease or lightly press the folds in place. This forms a neater edge when closing the back.



With the wrong side of the overlapped pieces of fabric facing up, lightly apply spray adhesive to the entire back side. Then place the fabric—adhesive side down—against the back of the hooped ornament. Lightly press down on the fabric to help seal the adhesive to the ornament.



Return the hoop to the machine. Sew the satin stitch border of the outline of the ornament.



Remove the ornament from the hoop and carefully cut it out along the satin stitch border.

with the vinyl layer at the bottom, it has a tendency to unattractively scrunch up. By adding the vinyl last, you avoid this problem.

STUFFED ORNAMENTS

Many ornament shapes can be stuffed by adding an extra piece of fabric on the back—a great 3-D decorative option. First, hoop a piece of fabric (the piece should be larger than the hoop) with medium-weight tearaway backing. If you're using the kit's sew disk, you'll skip the first sew step which makes the loop for hanging the ornament. Sew the outline and the inner embellishments.

For the ornament's back side, cut two rectangles of fabric. Make sure that the two pieces are larger than the ornament. Place the two pieces face to face, and fold the left-hand side of only the top piece over so that it overlaps the bottom piece by 1/2 inch. Turn both pieces over so that the fabric's "wrong side" faces up, and apply spray glue on the back side of the pieces. Use a light amount of adhesive — only enough so the pieces don't move during stitching.

Take the hooped piece off the machine (leaving it in the hoop), turn it over, and press the overlapping extra pieces of fabric pieces to its back side. Press it down on the backside making sure you are cover the entire appliqué shape. Return the hoop to the machine, and sew the satin border stitch.

Next, remove the ornament from the hoop and cut around its outside edge. On the back of the ornament, gently separate the overlapped fabric and fill it with or fiberfill or potpourri. Don't overstuff the ornament or you won't be able to close the folds over each other. Finally, use a sewing needle to whip stitch the two pieces.

PACKAGE DECORATIONS

The directions for making a package decoration are exactly the same as the tree ornament. If you put a solid color backing on the ornament, you can use a fine line permanent marker to write a "to: and from:" or a special note. The loop makes it easy to attach to the package ribbon.

BOTTLE EMBELLISHMENTS

Another twist is using the appliqué ornament to decorate bottles. For example, make a Santa or a train design and attach a piece of elastic to the back. Slip the ornament over a wine, bubble bath, specialty vinegar, or other bottle to make an attractive, one-of-a-kind gift decoration. ❖

*James Raymer has been in the textile industry for more than 25 years. As managing director of Dalco Home Sew, he and artist/digitizer Norman Gates have spent the past three years creating appliqué design collections for a dealer network. The company offers easy-to-use appliqué kits in more than 50 motifs. For more information, you may contact him at 1-972-494-1455 extension 214; e-mail: jraymer@dalcoathletic.com or visit www.dalcohomesew.com.
Photos courtesy of Dalco Home Sew.*



Turn the ornament to the back side and gently separate the overlapped folds of fabric. Stuff with fiberfill or potpourri.



Replace the folds of fabric to close up the back and whip stitch the edges together.