

# Appliquing PHOTO Letters

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Photographs may be used as the fabric INSIDE AN APPLIQUÉD LETTER for an interesting sewing project. There are many different ways this may be accomplished. The steps below are what I used for the “Keep on the Sunny Side” and the “Appalachian Trail” wall hangings shown on this Web site. These are generic steps to be used with embroidery software OR for those who are adept with manually sewing the satin stitch.

**SELECTING LETTERS that fit this type of appliqué.** Here are some thoughts about which letters might work best:

- ❑ **FONT SELECTION:** If letters will be in a STRAIGHT ROW, consider selecting those with a twisted or slightly off-kilter angle. Otherwise, the final alignment might not be even (unless you can guarantee perfect alignment). The font I chose for both the above-mentioned wall hangings was SNAP ITC (normal). Be careful not to select letters that have too many swirls or skinny sections. Choose FAT letters. The fatter the letter, the more your photo will show. Avoid most serif styles.
- ❑ **LETTER SIZE:** Pull your selected letters into a software package that allows you to manipulate them (such as Corel-Draw). Tinker with the SIZE of these letters until they will both fit your project and will be easy to appliqué. [I chose 700 points for the size of the above projects.]
- ❑ **TRIAL:** Continue tinkering with ONE letter until you think it will be OK to use. Print that letter onto normal paper, then CUT OUT THE INSIDES OF THE LETTER. Hold this “temporary template” OVER your prepared photo, and see how it looks. Keep altering that sample letter until you are happy with the results.
- ❑ **PREPARE REMAINING LETTERS** in the same fashion. *Repeated letters will need only one template and design file.*

**PREPARING LETTER DESIGNS IN YOUR SOFTWARE:** IF you do *not* have an embroidery software package, use the above paper templates to draw the letters onto your project to use as your guidelines for later manual tackdown stitching, underlay, and satin stitching. If you DO have an embroidery software package, pull the letter designs into your software program and make a separate embroidery design for each letter. I prepare FOUR or FIVE steps for each letter design:

**Step 1: Positioning onto backing:** Use this step *ONLY if freestanding items are being used (such as the circles)*. Make the stitch length 4.00. [This LONG stitch length allows easy removal for a different positioning.] Stitch this onto the main fabric of your project—NOT onto the (optional) actual circles. This stitched outline will show you WHERE to position the circle.

**Step 2: Placement onto background:** Stitch length = 8.00. [This VERY LONG stitch length allows easy stitch removal if a different placement is desired.]

**Step 3: Initial tackdown of Photo:** Stitch length = 1.5. This very TIGHT stitch will allow for close trimming.

**Step 4: Zigzag Stitch Underlay:** Stitch spacing = 2.00; Stitch width = .10

**Step 5: Final Satin Stitch:** Stitch spacing = .40; Satin width = .13. *Note: I digitize THIS STEP FIRST because the final satin stitch can get weird (corners might need to be modified, and the beginning/end sections might need to be tweaked with the magnifying icon). AFTER you are happy with this step, then DUPLICATE it for the first four steps and change the stitch characteristics accordingly. Doing this step FIRST saves time, because the letter needs to be the same SHAPE in steps 1-4!*

**Prepare the PHOTOS for your project:**

❑ After you have prepared your letter templates, look at the photos you have selected for your project. In your photo-manipulation software, prepare these photos both in SIZE and positioning. Don't hesitate to use a program such as Adobe PhotoShop to alter the photos to fit the “arms” of its matching letter. *Note: Photo preparation is a whole different workshop—MUCH can be done with these photos for your sewing projects.*

❑ PRINT your intended photo (I use black and white first so I can save on color inks) and hold your letter template atop to make sure everything will work. THEN print the photos in color on FABRIC PAPER intended for these projects.

**FINAL STITCHING/APPLIQUÉ:**

- ❑ If you are attaching freestanding items (such as the circles shown in “Sunny Side”), stitch step 1 onto the background of your project. If you are **not** using embroidery software for appliqué letters, draw this letter design—with disappearing ink—directly onto your fabric.
- ❑ If you ARE using a freestanding item, position it now atop the step 1 stitches. If you AREN'T (such as the letters in the “Appalachian Trail” quilt), **skip step 1** and stitch step 2 directly onto your project fabric.
- ❑ Now remove the paper backing from a printed fabric photo, and carefully position it by using step 2 stitches as your guide. Stitch step 3 (see Figure 1 at left), and then CLOSELY trim the photo without cutting the stitches.
- ❑ Stitch steps 4 and 5. (See Figure 2.) You have finished one letter! Continue with the remaining letters. Have FUN!!

Figure 1



Figure 2

