



Machine Embroidered Relationship Bear

This bear is similar to the hand embroidered black velvet 'Esther' bear where I embroidered Esther's relative's names next to the appliqués. The white bear has been machine embroidered on white fabric without a pile so the bear can be passed around for relatives to neatly write their own names next to the appliqués using fine tipped coloured permanent marker pen – kind of like writing a name and message on someone's plaster cast!

Materials

White cotton or linen fabric (allow up to 0.5 metre if using fabric with an obvious grain)*

Matching sewing thread

5 or 6 small pieces of plain coloured cotton fabric *

Machine embroidery thread in matching colours *

Small amount of lightweight fusible webbing (e.g. Bondaweb)

Iron

Sewing needle

Ribbon for the neck (approx 80cm)

Cotton thread for tacking

Pins

Polyester wadding

Muslin - at least 0.5m (you could use a very fine fabric)

Large embroidery hoop (e.g. around 26cm diameter)

Scissors

Stitch/seam ripper (optional)

Fine permanent marker pen.

Plain paper and pencil

Tracing paper

Card

Ruler

Domestic Sewing Machine (does not need to be digital)

At least one spare general purpose sewing machine needle.

I used:

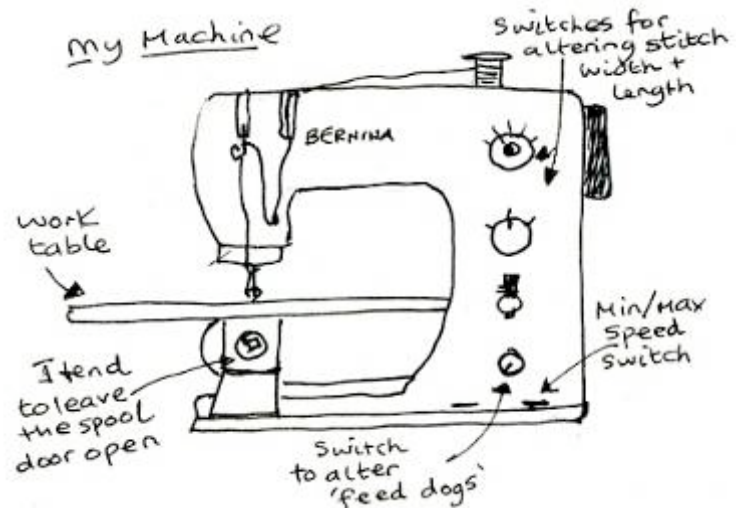
- Off white close weave linen curtain fabric
- Coloured fabric taken from a Kaffe Fassett 'plain's swatch pack (www.cottonpatch.co.uk).
- A selection of machine embroidery thread, which include bobbins of Guterman 'Sulky', Madeira, and Marathon. Some of these threads are thicker than others. I like to use strong good quality thread and avoid ones that split easily e.g. some metallic threads.

Technique

The white bear was sewn and embroidered almost entirely using a sewing machine. The face and the centre butterfly appliqué was sewn by hand at the end.

You do not need an expensive machine but you will need be able to:

- do a basic running and zigzag stitch (different lengths if necessary)
- drop the 'feed dogs' - the jagged teeth under the plate that help to move fabric along. Look for a button or switch to lock them in the down position (it may be marked by an image of a grid or jagged teeth).
- attach an embroidery 'foot'. You will need to find one that fits your particular machine. A quilting foot is a good alternative.



I find it easier to control the position of the stitching if I run the machine on 'minimum' speed.

To make the bear

The pattern pieces can be enlarged or reduced on a copier as preferred.

1. Print out enough pieces so you have the entire bear in pattern pieces (i.e. print out 2 front body, 2 back body, 2 inner legs and 2 outer legs, 2 head sides, 2 back of head, 1 head gusset, 2 inner arms and 2 outer arms, 4 ears, 2 footpads.)
2. Cut out the pieces along the dashed line. Seam allowances are included so when sewing the seams you will need to follow the inner solid black line.
3. Lay out all the pattern pieces on your fabric before drawing or cutting out to be sure you have enough

fabric. Reverse body fronts etc. You may need to adjust the layout to ensure all the pieces fit.

4. Make sure you lay your pattern pieces out so the nap/grain of the fabric lies in the correct direction on your finished bear.
5. Turn your fabric over, and draw an arrow (on an edge) on the back of your fabric in the same direction as the nap/grain lies down.
6. Lay your pattern pieces on the back of the fabric with the arrows going down in the same direction as the arrow you drew on the fabric.
7. Pin the pieces onto the fabric. Trace around each pattern with a fine permanent marker pen. Cut the shapes out of the fabric.

Embroidering the pieces – tips

- Use the same thread colour in the spool as on the bobbin.
- Keep fingers out of the way of the needle!
- You find it easier to run your machine on minimum speed.
- It may help to have a practice or a trial run with colour combinations before you start stitching, as it can be very difficult to undo the stitches.
- There is no need to break the thread when moving between each piece of appliqué. Just bring up the needle, pull the hoop out to loosen the thread, reposition the needle and start to sew the next shape. All the threads (front and back) can be cut when the piece is complete.
- Try to keep the back of the work neat by neatly snipping the thread ends as you go.

Embroidering the pieces - practical

Pieces of muslin are used to hold the body pieces onto which appliqué and embroidery is applied by machine. The appliqué shapes are backed with fusible webbing (e.g. Bondaweb), which holds them in place and helps to prevent

fraying. The muslin is placed in an embroidery hoop, which keeps the fabric taut and gives a firm edge to hold so the fabric can be moved around in any direction enabling you to 'draw' with the needle. When the embroidery is complete the muslin is cut away from the back of the body pieces.

1. Using pieces of left over fabric cut 2 or 3 long strips of fabric approx 4cm wide and bind them around one ring of the embroidery hoop (the one with the screw closure). This will stop the muslin moving when you embroider the pieces of bear.



2. Cut a piece of muslin to fit the hoop and allow approx. 4cm overhang all the way round the hoop. Use this piece as a template to cut out enough rounds of muslin to accommodate all the pieces of bear.

3. Lay out the bear pieces 'right side' up on the rounds of muslin making sure the pieces will fit within the work area of the hoop. Pin the pieces to the muslin and tack down - remove the pins.



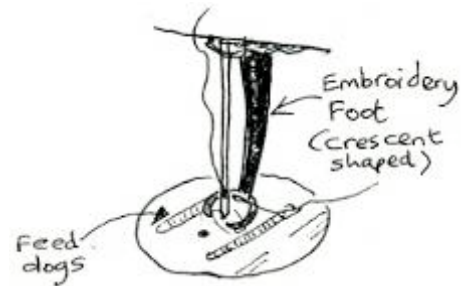
4. Decide on the overall design of each piece and make templates of your choice of appliqué shapes and letters. See the 'Embellishment Ideas' pages.
5. Iron fusible webbing to the back of the small pieces of coloured fabric. Trace the appliqué shapes onto the backing paper, cut out and remove the backing paper. Lay the appliqué shapes on the body pieces keeping them within the sewing lines. Avoid placing any embellishments where they will be covered by the arms or neck ribbon. Check that the layout and colours work together across all the pieces.
6. Cover each appliqué shape with a small piece of the backing paper. Using only the tip of a medium hot iron, individually bond each piece of appliqué to the main fabric.

7. Ensure the machine is fitted with the embroidery 'foot' and the 'feed dogs' are dropped before you embroider.

8. Place one of the rounds of muslin over the covered outer ring of the hoop. Fit the inner ring inside the outer ring so the fabric lies at the bottom of the hoop and you have an edge to hold when you embroider the pieces. Start to decorate the pieces of bear. Begin by machine stitching around the edges of the appliqué using zigzag stitches (narrow and close together). Continue to stitch until you are happy with the look.

9. When each piece of bear has been decorated remove all the tacking and carefully cut away as much muslin as possible.

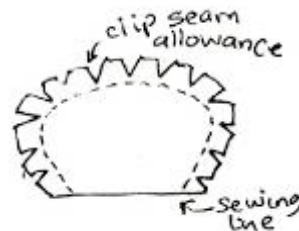
NB The eyes; nose and appliqués that cross the seams are added after the bear has been stuffed.



Putting the bear together - tips

Seams

When sewing the seams remember the seam allowance and stitch to the inner black line marked on the pattern. Clip the seam allowances on all curves so the seams will not pull when turned. You may wish to press the seams open and trim the excess fabric.



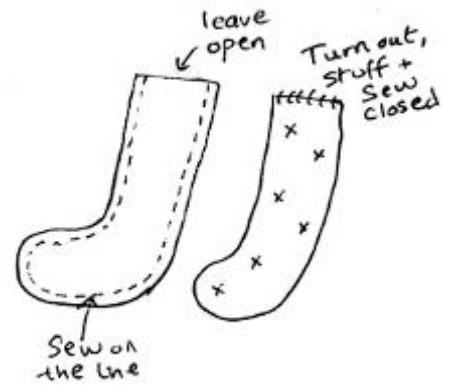
Stuffing

Stuff the bear until you get the right feel e.g. firm or squishy. To ensure an even finish, avoid pushing in large pieces of wadding. Pull the wadding apart into small pieces and push it into all the corners. Do not stuff too near the seam opening, as you need to allow some fabric for closing the seam. You can always add more wadding as you close the gap. You may find that rotating the limbs as you add wadding helps to keep the stuffing even.

Putting the bear together - practical

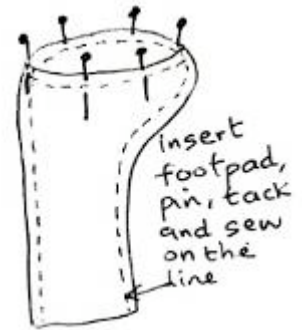
Arms

Match the outer and inner arm pieces 'right side' together and sew with the seam allowance. Pin, tack and sew - leave open the top edge. Snip the curved seams; turn the arms to 'right sides' out and stuff. Now pin together the gap at the top of each arm and neatly sew to close. Remove the pins.



Legs

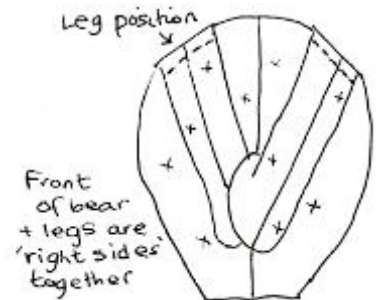
Match the outer and inner leg pieces 'right side' together. Pin tack and sew along the left and right edge with the seam allowance making sure to leave the top seam and bottom 'footpad' edge open. Insert the footpads by matching up the front and back to the seams on the feet. Pin the footpad in place and tack. Remove pins and sew with the seam allowance. Remove the curved seams. Turn 'right sides' out and stuff. Flatten the opening at top of the leg ensuring the front seam sits on top of the back seam. Pin together and neatly sew to close. Remove the pins.



tacking. Snip the legs to

Front body

Match up the right and left front body pieces - 'right sides' together. Pin and tack together and sew up the middle seam. Remove pins and tacking. Snip the curved seam. If you wish, carefully iron to press the seam open. Position the legs as marked on the pattern, pin and stitch in place.



Back of body

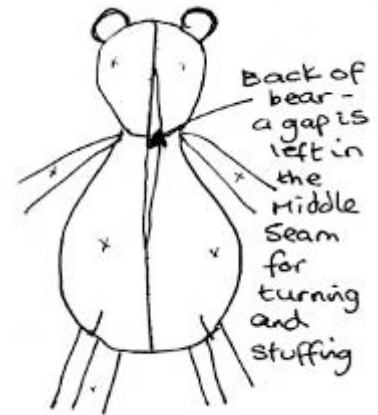
Fold a tuck, as shown on the pattern, towards the bottom of both sides of the body back pieces, Pin, tack and sew in place. Match the 2 pieces for the back of the body 'right sides' together. Pin, tack and sew along the seam forming the middle of the back leaving an opening approx 11cm from

the neck edge (later this will enable you to sew the head and body together). Snip the curved seam. If you wish carefully iron to press the seam open.

Back of head

With 'right sides' together match the 2 pieces for the back of the head. Pin, tack and sew along the seam forming the middle of the back - leave an opening approx 7cm from the neck edge (later this will enable you to sew the head and body together).

Snip the curved seam. If you wish carefully iron to press the seam open.

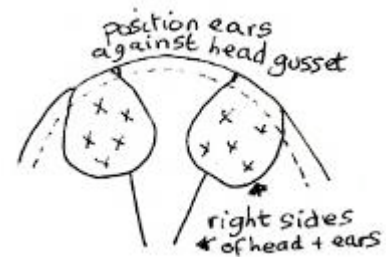


Ears

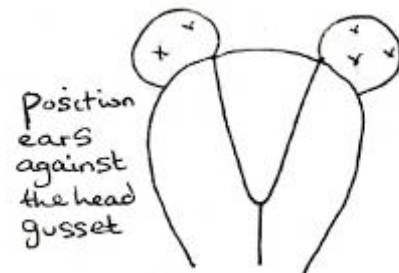
Match up the pieces for both ears 'right side' together. Pin and tack then remove the pins. Following the seam allowance and leaving the straight edge open, sew from one corner, around the curve to the other corner. Snip the curved seam. Turn the ears 'right side' out and sew up the opening.

Front Head

Match the 2 front headpieces 'right side' together and sew from the tip of the nose down to the neck. Insert the head gusset. Start with the nose and then match each side of the gusset with the pieces forming the sides of the head. You may prefer to hand sew the nose area to ensure a neat finish. Pin and tack the gusset in place, then sew up the seams. Remove pins and tacking and snip the curves.



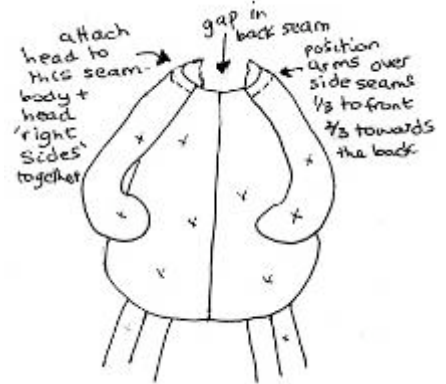
Position the ears at each side of the head gusset seams. Check how they look from the front, back and above and when you are happy, pin, tack and sew them in place. Remove pins and tack.



Match the front of the head and back of the head 'right side' together and sew around the outside seam. Turn the head to 'right sides' out.

Match the front and back of the body 'right sides' together. Pin the 2 pieces together tucking the feet inside, tack and sew along the seam allowance. Snip the curved seam. Turn the body to 'right sides' out.

Position the arms across the side seams at the top of each side of the body. (A third of the width of the arm should be toward the front of the side seam and two-thirds at the back of the side seam). Pin, tack and sew the arms in place. Remove pins and tacking.



Unite the head and body. Match the body and head pieces 'right sides' together along the neck opening (keep the gaps in the centre seam open for stuffing). Pin, tack and sew to the seam allowance. Remove pins and tacking.

Stuff the head and the body of the bear. Make sure the neck is firmly stuffed - if not the bear will have a wobbly head! Then close the gap by tucking in the seam allowance and hand sewing together with tiny stitches.



Adding the nose, mouth and eyes
Decide how you would like the bears nose and eyes to look. Try different colours of fabric and use pins to temporarily place the pieces.

Eyes tend to look best placed approx 0.5cm from the head gusset seam and 1cm from the ears. Moving them even a fraction can dramatically alter the expression so spend a bit of time placing the eyes to see which look pleases you best. Select the colour of the fabric (back it with fusible webbing) cut out two eye shapes and pin them in place. Tack the eyes down or very carefully use the tip of the iron to fuse them to the face.

Use double strands of machine embroidery thread to decorate the eyes. Try and imitate the machine stitching so the hand stitches blend in. (see Embellishment Ideas).

The nose is applied in a similar way to the eyes. So are any pieces of appliqué that cross seams. E.g. the front butterfly.

Outline the mouth shape with some pins or tacking. The mouth is approx 1.5cm from the nose and 2.5cm across. Use machine embroidery thread to stitch the mouth.

Tie a ribbon bow around the bear's neck.