

Quilt Instructions for the Beginner

By Terry White

Part 3



Editor – Robyn Rex Reed

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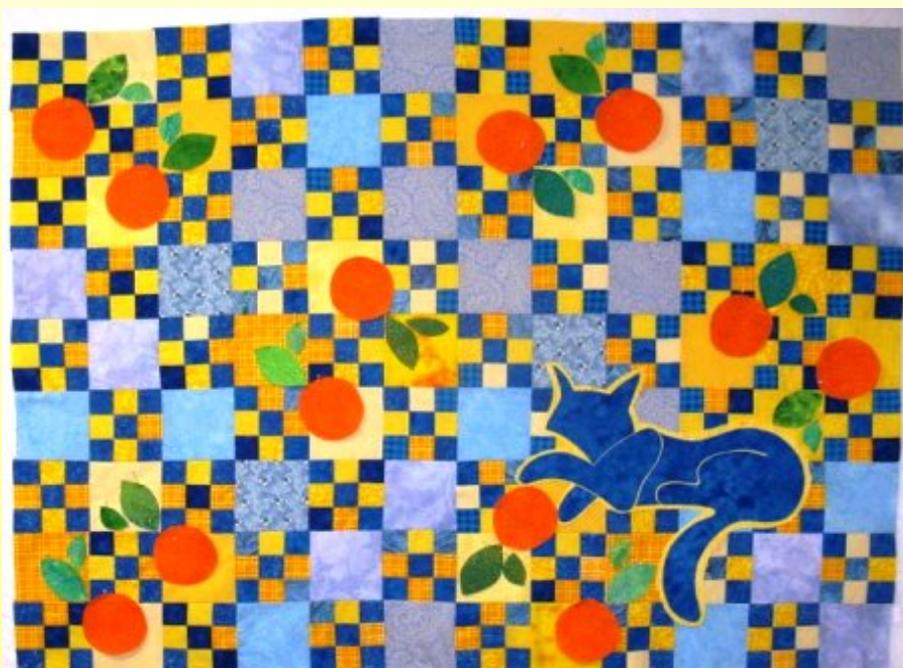
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Fused Appliqué Techniques

Appliqué is a sewing technique that consists of applying one piece of fabric to another. Over the years there have been many different types of appliqué techniques developed by a variety of creative stitchers.

For this project, I am going to use fusible web and machine stitching.

The *Blue Cat*, or in some instances *Jazz Cat*, is a recurring design motif in a lot my work. So, this patchwork quilt adds a royal blue cat to a checkered background dotted with bright, leafy oranges. During this project's creation, I discovered that adding the bright blue cat to contrast the vibrant color of the oranges greatly improved the entire design. Not only did this cat enhance the design, but the various shades of green used on the leaves also produce an interesting color combination.



Notice the positioning of each appliqué element. The oranges are offset on yellow blocks. The green leaves are positioned on adjoining yellow blocks. The blue cat is layered over a piece of yellow fabric so that it stands as its own separate design element. Basically, the design lines of the cat remain separate and don't blend into the surrounding blue squares.



Fused appliqué

An easy way to do machine appliqué is to utilize a tremendously valuable product known as *fusible web*. There is a wide selection of fusible web on the market and each variety has a different purpose. It can be found at almost any fabric store, but if you are unable to locate it, just ask a sales clerk for assistance.

This project utilizes a paper backed fusible web. It is crucial when using this particular product to *always* test it with your iron and fabric. It is important to know how hot the iron needs to be and also how long the iron must be applied to the paper and fabric.

For this quilt, we will incorporate three different techniques for using fusible.

The first and most straightforward method for utilizing fusible web is demonstrated on the orange leaves of this quilt.

A Little Story:

When I was a young girl growing up in California, I joined the Girl Scouts. I remember our troop once went to a Mexican street fair. While at the fair, I purchase a blue flocked plaster cat bank. On the back of this cat, drawn on with glitter, was my name. I remember thinking this little cat was the most beautiful thing in the world. We also had an orange tree in our backyard in California. By combining these two symbols of my childhood, the imagery throughout this quilt was born.



1.) The Orange Leaves:

The back of fusible webbing is covered in paper which is noticeably similar to tracing paper. This makes tracing with a pencil easy since the designs will visibly show through the paper.

Trace the leaf shapes onto the paper side of the fusible web.

Draw the amount of sets as you need. I have 12 oranges, so I traced 12 sets of leaves.



Since we are making a scrap quilt, I chose a variety of green fabric scraps. This helps give the quilt a livelier look and feel.



Rough cut around the leaf shapes.

Now iron the green fabric to the glue side.

Pull a little bit of the paper backing off before cutting out the leaf shape. I like to call this the *pre-pull*. Once the leaf shape is cut out, pre-pulling will make it easier to remove the paper backing.



Cut out the leaf shapes.

I prefer to use [Havel's 5 1/2" Curved Scissors](#) for projects like this. These scissors are able to produce a beautiful curve when cutting out shapes.





Remove the paper backing.

Place the leaves on the yellow squares of the quilt.

Lastly, fuse the shapes according to the manufacturer's directions.



The leaves are now ready to be stitched to the quilt by machine.

Double-Fused Appliqué & Machine Stitching

The second fused appliqué technique we will cover works when fusing over seams.

2.) The Oranges:

The oranges will be placed across the patchwork seams. By only fusing the orange shape to the quilt it will look and feel as though the patchwork seams are coming through the orange.

Prevent this by fusing the orange shape to some white fabric and stitch it to the quilt top.



I don't like the oranges to be perfectly round. By tracing the shapes, each orange will come out slightly different.

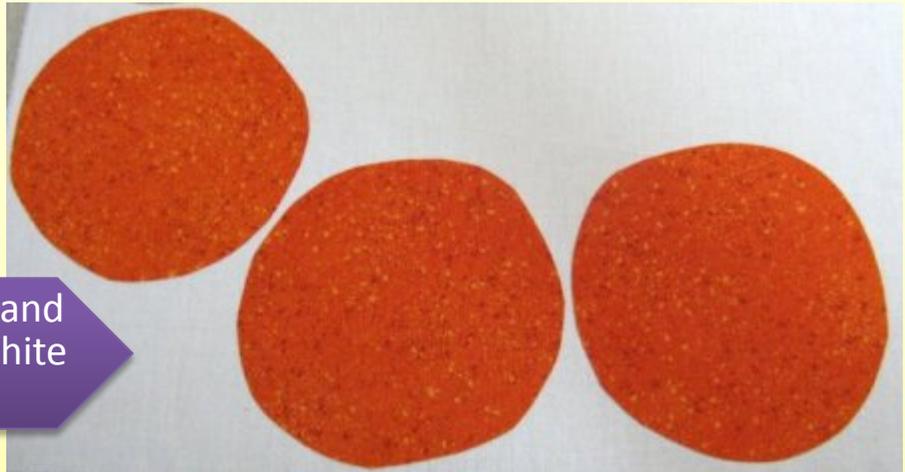
Now trace the orange shapes onto the paper back of the fusible web.





Fuse the wrong side of the orange fabric to the fusible web.

Remember to *pre-pull!*
(Again, this will make it easier to pull the paper when the whole orange has been cut out.)



Cut out the oranges and fuse them to some white cotton fabric.



Cut the oranges out of the white fabric.

The orange shapes will have more body, and the color of the patchwork and seams won't show through.

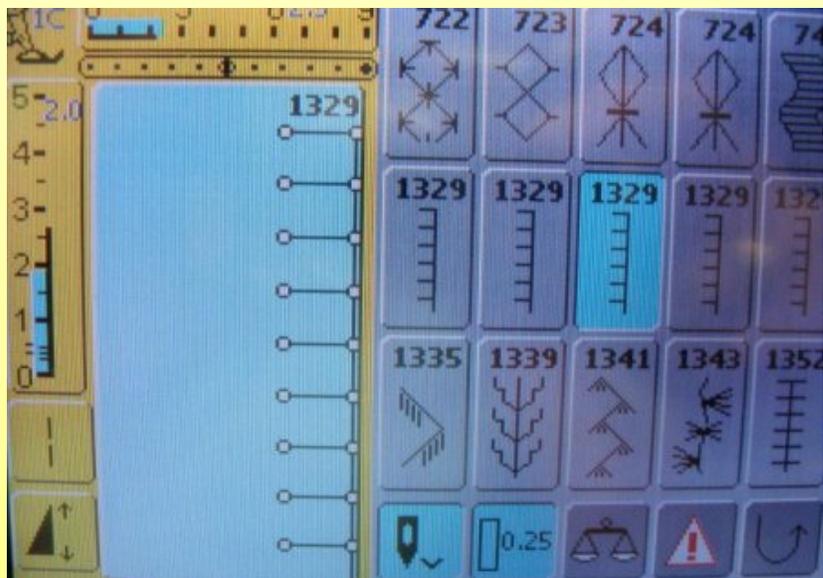
Pin the oranges in place on the quilt and they are ready for stitching. I used about five big quilt pins. While stitching be sure to take each pin out before you get to it.

Keep the patchwork and the orange very flat while you stitch. Also, note the position of the presser foot and try using it as a guide while stitching.



Notice how the stitch is positioned to the far right. This is so the appliqué is moved by the feed teeth.

This shows the stitch I'm selecting to use for the appliqué.





Now bring the bobbin thread to the top of your work to make a quality first stitch.

This can be done by inserting your needle into the work once and pulling the thread up, holding the top and bobbin thread in your hand before taking the first stitch.

After stitching, cut the top and the bobbin threads about two inches from the last stitch.

Now pull all of the threads to the back of the work with a hand needle.

Finally, secure them on the back with a knot.



This is a close-up of the stitching detail.



STAR Cottons
variegated
green and
orange threads
were used.



This picture demonstrates how the oranges with their vivid green leaves stand out beautifully on the blue and yellow quilt.

Fuse Shadow Appliqué

Shadow appliqué is simply adding a background to an appliqué that is cut around the appliqué shape. This is what separates the shape from the quilt.

For this project shadow applique is important. Without using this technique, the blue cat would fade into the other blue sections of the quilt. This would result in a rather awkward looking and shaped cat. Also, the use of yellow accentuates the appliqué so that it has more presence in the quilt and makes the cat shape more dramatic.

Trace the cat pattern pieces onto the fusible web.
I traced all the pattern pieces together onto the fusible web so that you can see the shapes together.



Remember to reverse the pattern so that the cat faces the left.



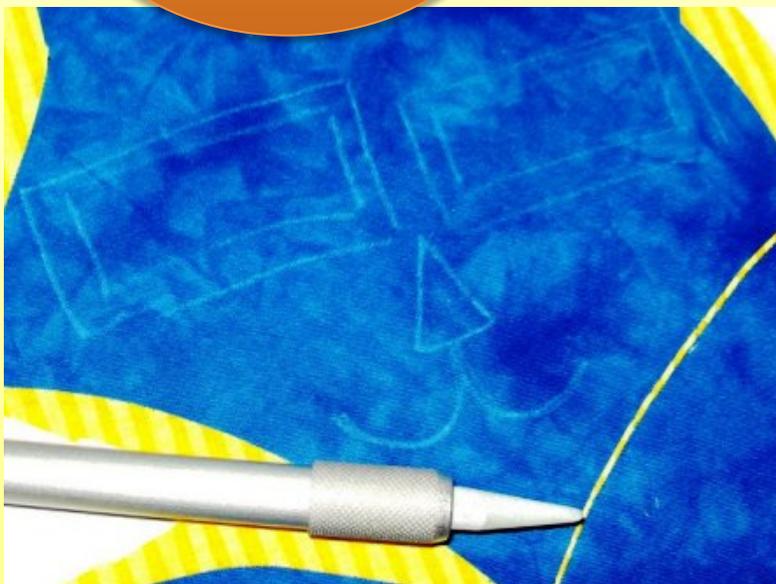


Iron the blue fabric to the web and cut out the cat.

The blue fabric that I chose is a deep blue with soft texture. I think that the texture makes the cat livelier.

I used a graphite marker. A graphite marker will last forever and also works on dark fabrics.

Trace the cat's face onto the blue fabric.



Fuse the blue cat to a yellow piece of fabric.
The yellow striped fabric helps to add a bit of fun to the cat.

Rough cut the yellow fabric about half an inch around the cat shape.



The yellow fabric acts as a stabilizer.

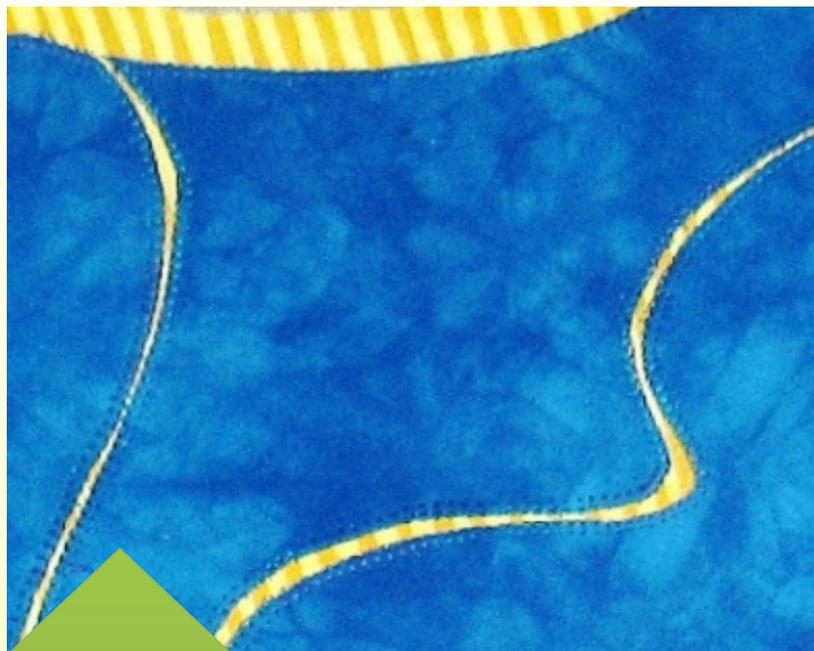


Now, the cat's face can be hand embroidered, painted, stenciled, or stitched with free motion embroidery.

I used white and fuchsia STAR cotton threads to do the embroidery. Use your favorite technique for this detail work.

Stitch the blue cat to the yellow fabric.

Use the same stitching method as with the leaves and oranges. I used a variegated blue cotton thread to do the stitching. It blends in best with the mottled blue color fabric.



Trim the yellow fabric to create the cat's shadow.



At this point, after embroidering the face, I pressed the appliqué.

Then, I carefully trimmed the yellow shadow to make a nice smooth shape. Notice that the yellow shadow is thin in some spots and thicker in others. This was done to make an interesting silhouette.



Pin the cat appliqué in place and stitch as with the oranges and leaves. I used a bright yellow variegated cotton thread to stitch the cat to the quilt top.

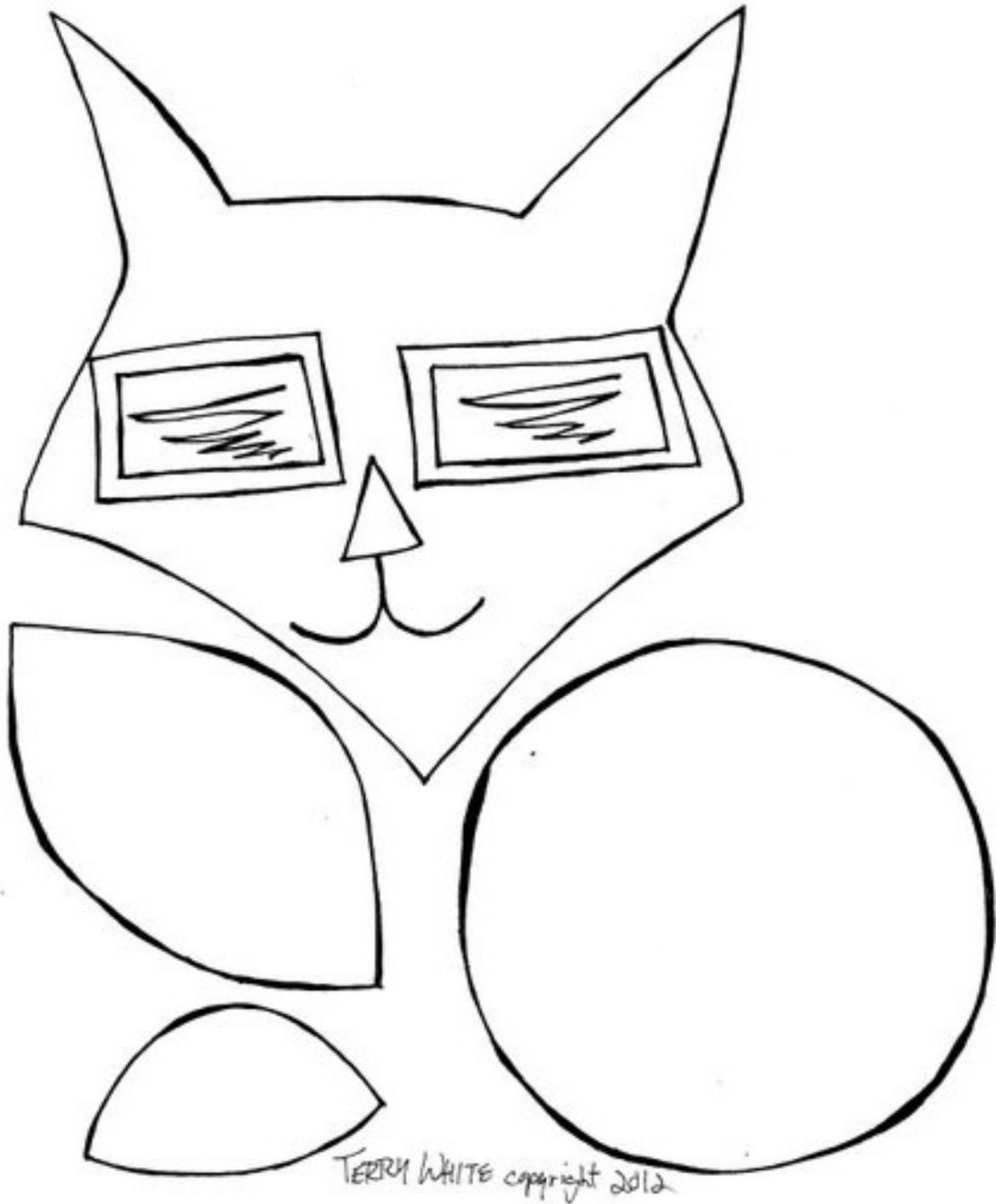
Sometimes, people like to cut the pieced fabric from beneath the appliqué shapes. It does make it easier to quilt. In this case, I choose to keep the pieced top intact. This will be a picnic quilt that will be well used and I want to keep the integrity of the patchwork intact for strength.

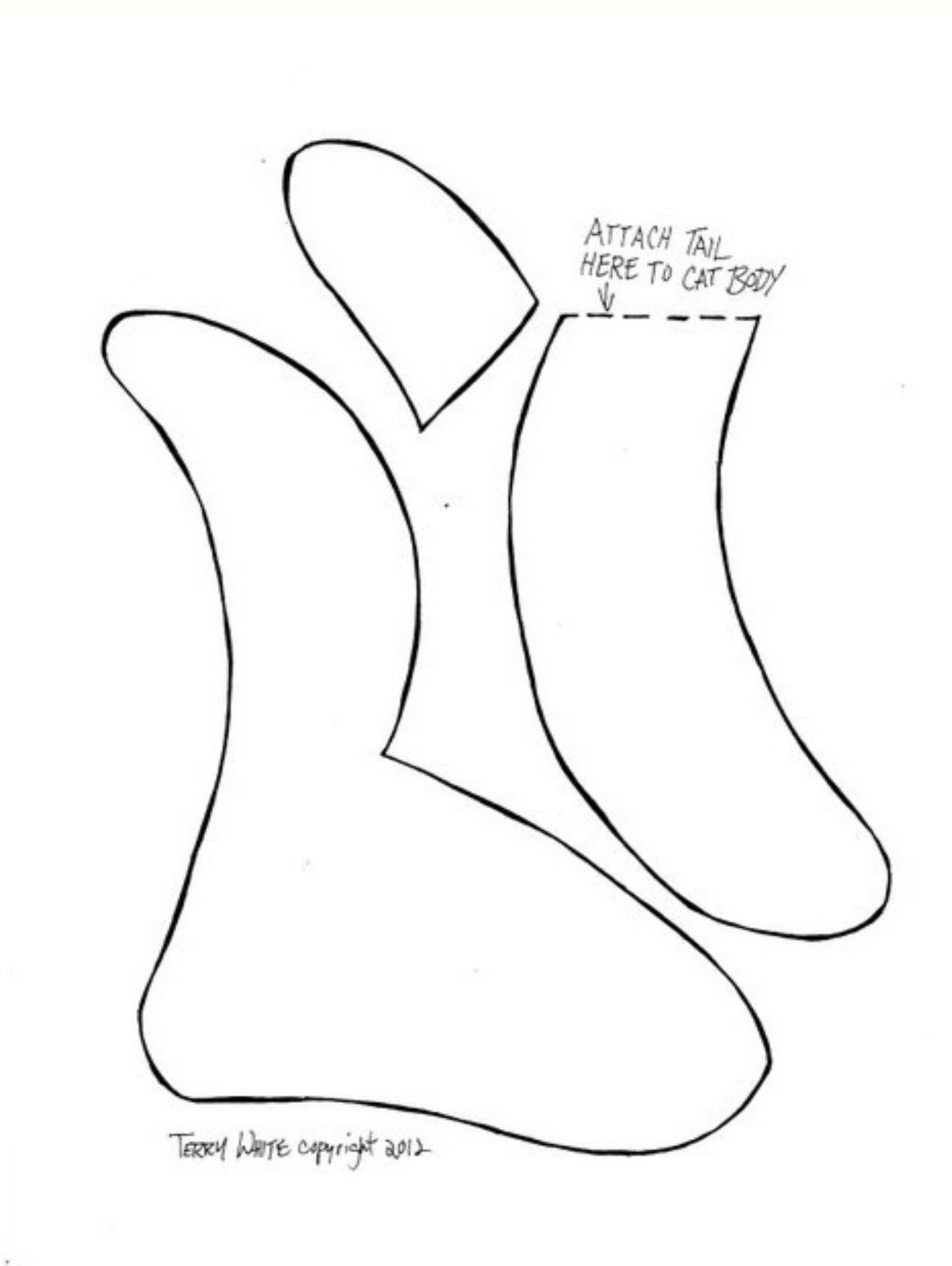


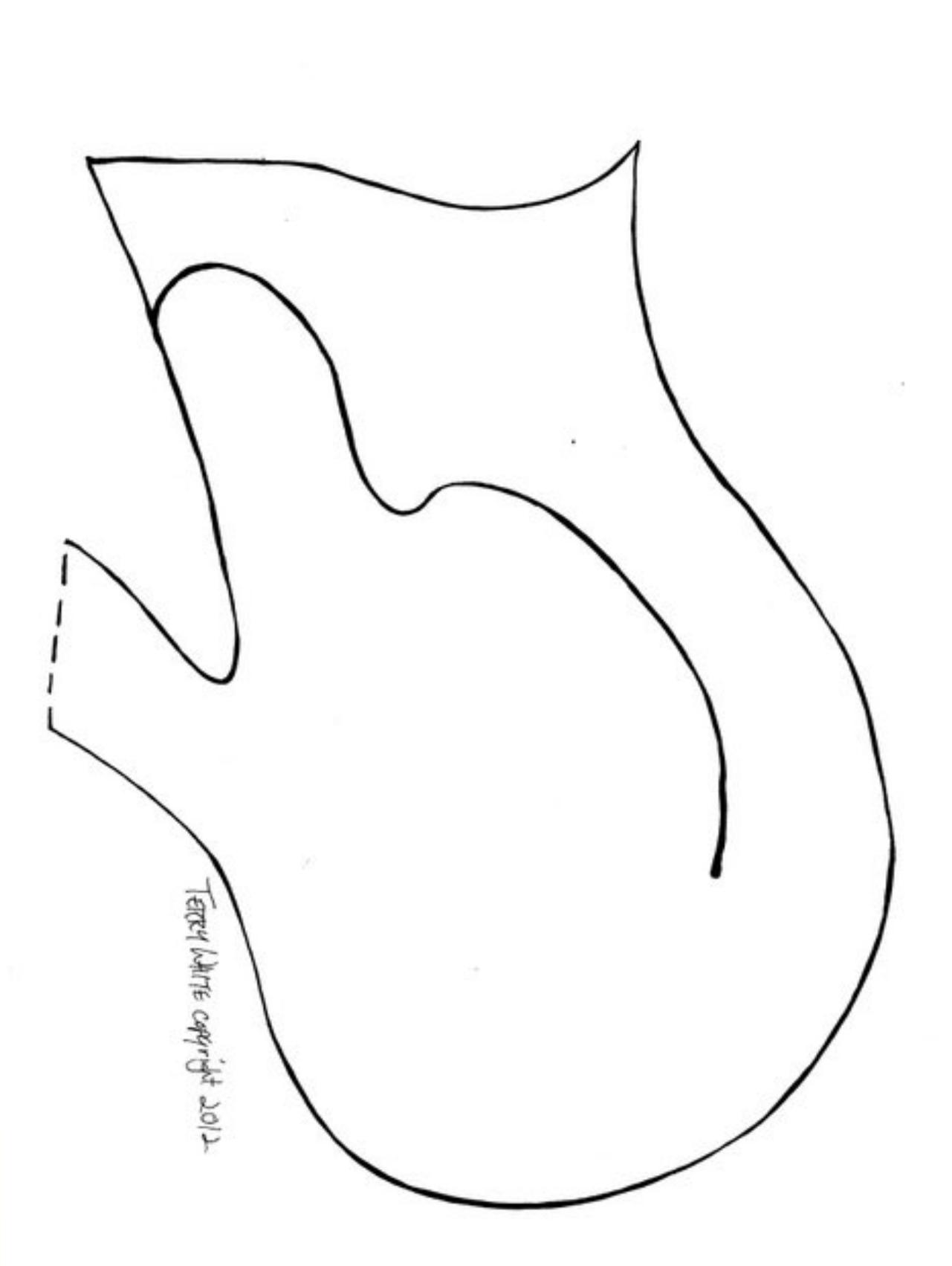
Here the blue cat is stitched to the finished quilt top and looks happy among the oranges on this picnic quilt.



On the following pages are the pattern pieces for the Blue Cat with Oranges quilt.







Tips for Sewing Patchwork

When I first started to make quilts, the first thing I did was to take a beginner's quilt class. I am sure glad I did. I was experienced in many needlecrafts, but quilting has its own ways. The class was six weeks long and I loved it! I didn't obey all the rules, but I learned what the rules were and why they existed. Actually, the "rules" are a compilation of many quilters' wisdom gained from trial, error and success.

I want to leave you with some tips on sewing patchwork because there are a lot of things that a new quilter may do that doesn't work well. These are things that are good to know when learning to quilt.

Seam allowance is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. This helps to control the shapes of patchwork. More than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch is unnecessary and less is not wide enough to keep the seams from fraying.

The wrong side of a nine patch showing consistent and straight $\frac{1}{4}$ inch seams before the three sets are sewn together. Notice the direction in which the seams are pressed.



Use the same thread in the bobbin as the top thread. You can choose a neutral color that blends with the colors of your patchwork, instead of changing thread colors all the time. Here are examples of threads that work for these color combinations.



Try to cut and stitch each fabric piece as perfectly as possible... knowing full well that it is hard to make perfect happen. Each cut and each seam that is just “a little bit off” will eventually add up to “a lot off”.

Handle patchwork and fabric pieces gently. It is very easy to pull a small piece of fabric out of shape. As soon as a piece of fabric is cut from the cloth, it begins to fray.

Press, press, press...

This is different than ironing fabric into submission and distorting the pieces. Gently pressing your seams as you piece will go a long way towards beautiful patchwork. I like to press every set of seams as I piece. The patchwork fabric is easier to manipulate when you press as you go. It is very hard to press an entire quilt if you haven't been pressing it section by section.

The seams are pressed open to distribute the seam bulk in the corners. This block will stay flat and be easy to quilt.



Use the correct needle size and type for the thread and the fabric. Generally, I like a 75/11 machine embroidery needle. It has a nice sharp point and, most importantly, it lasts a long time. Embroidery needles are built to last for a long time. Have you ever seen an embroidery machine go? The needle works very hard!

Batik fabrics are very tightly woven and have wax residue from the printing process, so, for batiks I switch to a Microtex needle.

As I said before: the best thing you can do for yourself before you make a quilt is to really get to know your machine. Your machine comes with a book that explains the parts of your machine, how to use and maintain it and what the many functions do. You can learn about tension settings, presser feet, needle positions, needle plate, types of stitches, stitch adjustments, needles to use, threading the machine, spool holder positions, etc.



Set the stitch length to 3 and the default setting for thread tension which is usually about 4.

Know and control your tension settings.

When you thread your sewing machine, the thread is guided through a series of guides and tension discs. This puts some friction on the thread so that it doesn't loosely spool off and make messy stitches.

You are able to adjust these settings. Each machine is different, so you have to know how to adjust your tension for the different types of sewing you do with different types of fabric, stitches and threads you use. Most sewing machines have a default tension (about 4) which produces even stitches and is good for patchwork.

Place spool upright using a spool pad and spool cap to create an even pull - thus, even thread delivery - from the side of the spool.



If your spool is big and heavy, it can cause extra drag on the thread and that can cause the tension to be too tight. Place the spool upright on a spool cap with a felt or foam spool pad in between. The spool cap will act like a "Lazy Susan" and keep the spool moving around. If your spool is lightweight and spins too fast, it can jam up the thread in the tension discs. This will add the friction necessary for the spinning to stop.

If you usually put your spool on one way and you have trouble with it, then change it. I always think that the best way to pull thread off of any spool is the way it was spooled on- from the side of the spool.

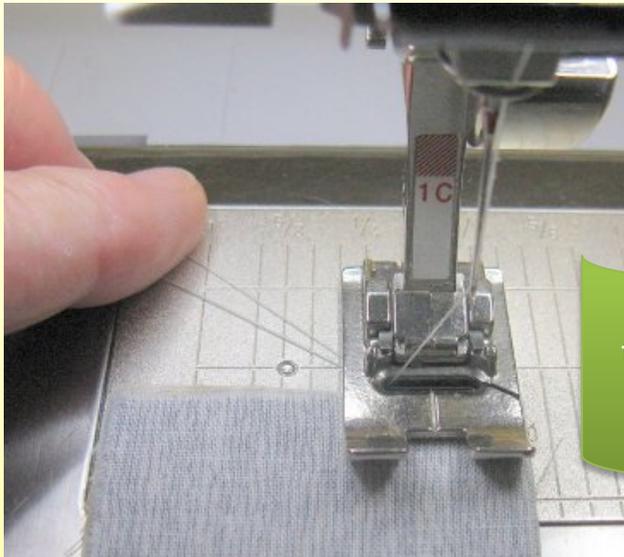
What you want is for the spool thread to have smooth delivery from the spool through the tension disks. Usually, you won't have this problem with patchwork; it usually occurs when quilting or thread painting. (i.e. when you are stitching a lot without cutting the thread.) Stitching for a long time can twist up a thread and cause it to break.



Some machines have the capability to move the needle to the right of center needle position. This way the fabric is moved by both feed teeth which help to keep the line of stitching straight.

You can guide the fabric along the side of the foot, and/or use the stitch plate guide on the sewing machine table so that you can have a consistent seam width.

Don't stitch too fast, the machine is already sewing faster than you can. Keep control of the fabric pieces and guide them so that the feed teeth are doing the work of moving the fabric. Keep maintaining an even seam to the end of the patchwork.



By holding the top and bobbin thread like this, you are creating tension for that first stitch.

Hold top thread, take a stitch, and bring the bobbin thread up. Hold these threads to the side under the presser foot. Now, you can line up your pieces under the needle and begin to stitch. There is no beginning tension until you take that first stitch

If you have problems making a good stitch check the simplest things first:

- Is the bobbin threaded correctly?
- Is the top thread threaded through all the correct tensions and guides?
- Is the thread stuck on the spool or wrapped around a spool pin?

You would be amazed how often these things happen to everyone.
(Okay...me!)

Test your stitches before sewing. ***Do a little stitch sample every time you adjust a setting on the machine.*** If there is a problem you can adjust it before getting too deep into your project.

Finally, when you get fatigued, stop stitching.



Go wash your hair or eat some ice cream.

It is better to get up and walk away before you make trouble for yourself than to wait and make trouble and have to rip it out, right?

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