

Making Applique Patterns with Your Word Processor

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Making the Pattern

These instructions are for Microsoft Word on a PC. If you use a different word processor or a Mac computer, your layout and commands may be different, but the method is the same.

1. Open your word processing software and type the letter you'd like to use.
2. Select the letter with your mouse. Locate the Font area in the toolbar and click on the arrow at the lower-right corner of the area. This opens a dialog box with lots of choices.

a. Font: Our sample is in Times New Roman, the default font on many computers.

However, you probably have a wealth of different fonts available; experiment to find one that you like. Remember that, even if the overall look of a font is likeable, individual letters sometimes are less than perfect for appliqué. Avoid too-thin areas and shapes with lots of wiggle, as they may be difficult to stitch around.

b. Font Style: For our purposes, the selection in this menu may not make a difference, but try choosing Bold to increase the size of the letter slightly.

c. Effects: Choose Outline so that only an outline of the letterform prints.

d. Font Size: The drop-down menu for this option gives us sizes up to 72 points. That's quite large for type, but still small for appliqué. Fortunately, we're not limited by the drop-down options. Type 300 into the box and watch what happens; now the letter is about 2" tall.

3. To refine the letter even further, close the dialog box and try some of these options.

a. Type in a capital C to compare the two. You can even retype the same letter, select one of the two, and change the font to see what various letterforms look like side by side.

b. By looking at the ruler along the edge of the workspace, you can gauge the size of your letters. The capital C is about 4" tall. If you don't see the rulers, check your program's help function to learn how to turn them on.

c. Let's stay with the lower-case c, which has an interesting ball serif in this font. We can make it even larger; type 700 into the box in the Font area on the toolbar. Now the size is good, but the bottom of the letter is cut off. To fix that, click on the Page Layout tab and select Margins. Choose or create an option that makes the page margins smaller and the entire letter settles into place on one page.

4. Print your outline letter onto plain paper. If you're using a fusible-appliqué technique, use the printer commands to reverse the letter, creating a mirror image, before tracing it onto the fusible web. You can also use a light box or sunny window to trace the letter on the wrong side of the printer paper, creating a mirror image. Read on for an appliqué technique that doesn't require reversing the letter.

TIP: You can also change the virtual page size in your word processing software to accommodate full words or phrases, then select "Tile large designs" in your printer options to print your patterns on letter-size paper. Bonus with this technique: The letters will be perfectly spaced and aligned when they start as a single pattern!

Appliquing the Letter

1. Cut a piece of appliqué fabric at least 1/2" larger on each side than the pattern. Back the fabric with fusible web.

2. Position the appliqué fabric on the background fabric, fusible side down, and pin in place. Do not fuse yet!
3. Place the printed pattern on the appliqué fabric and pin it in place. Slip a piece of tear-away stabilizer under the background fabric to support the appliqué stitches.
4. Thread the machine and bobbin with the thread you'd like to use for appliquéing the letter. Set the machine for a straight stitch, 1.8 mm long.
5. Stitch on the outline of the letter. Follow the pattern contours until you've stitched all the way around the outline, including any "eyes" inside letters such as B and e.
6. Gently tear away the paper along the stitched outline. Use a pair of small, sharp scissors to cut away the appliqué fabric outside the stitches, clipping as close as possible to the stitches.
7. After the appliqué is trimmed to shape, fuse it in place.
8. Set the machine for a satin zigzag stitch and appliqué the letter to the background fabric. The straight stitches that hold the letter in place will be covered by the appliqué stitches.

For instructions to make the Support Pillows seen on the show, visit makeitcoats.com.