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Visible Mending: Patchwork and Embroidery

by Brenda K.B. Anderson

Visible mending is a technique used for repairing textiles that highlights the beauty of mending. Instead of trying to hide the repair, we allow fabric and thread to show the history, change, and importance of our beloved garments. There are many different means for doing this including: patchwork, embroidery, darning, weaving, and crochet; and each technique with countless methods. In this tutorial, Brenda will focus on combining patchwork with running stitches and embroidery, to patch holes and cover stains.

Visible mending adds beauty and value to our pieces and is also a vital step toward reducing waste. By continuing to care for our clothing, we are keeping textiles from ending up in a landfill and reducing consumption of new clothing.

Materials:

- Garment in need of mending
- Cotton fabric in various colors/patterns for patches. This could be a quilter's cotton, denim, or other fabric of a similar weight to the garment being mended.
- 12 wt. cotton hand sewing thread, such as this:
<https://sulky.com/thread/petites-solids-assortments-samplers/>
- Embroidery needle
- Quilter's pins
- Optional: fabric marker, or pencil
- Optional: embroidery hoop (smaller hoops are best as they will often fit inside sleeves, pant legs, or other smaller spaces). I used this one in the demo:
<https://sulky.com/german-wooden-embroidery-hoop-6>
- Optional: Embroidery templates (included) printed onto water soluble, stick-on, stabilizer such as this: <https://sulky.com/stick-n-stitch-8-12-x-11-printable-sheets>

Notes

Clean garment if possible before mending. However, keep in mind that there may be times that it makes more sense to patch it first, and then wash it. For example if you are afraid that the garment will shred or tear while being washed, then you should patch it first.

Think about which thread colors will contrast nicely with the patches as well as the garment. If you are stitching through both light and dark colors, you might choose to stitch twice: once with a lighter color and once with a darker color. This technique was used when stitching the circular running stitches over the pink heart-shaped patch as shown in the last example.

If you plan to use the included embroidery template, print this onto the Stick n' Stitch paper. Keep in mind this can be printed at different sizes depending on the needs of your project. I only used a template/stabilizer on the large bee embroidery, however, I have included templates for all of the embroidery used in this project for those who are stitching onto lighter weight fabrics or those who find templates helpful in general.

All hand stitching and patchwork on this project was done with a doubled strand of the 12 wt. cotton thread.

I did not treat the edges of my patches with Fray Check, because I prefer to allow the edges to fray when worn. All raw edges are exposed.

The patchwork embroidery technique shown, draws on a technique found in traditional Japanese Sashiko stitching. I have so much admiration for the artists and crafters who practice Sashiko stitching, and feel that it is important to give credit to this artform for the inspiration of the style of mending that I am using in this project. I do not consider myself a teacher of Sashiko stitching however, as I do not come from this culture and need to acknowledge that I do not have a complete understanding of the stories and traditions that surround this craft.

To learn more about Sashiko check out the following links:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCraGC2n7qN31FIQSvXYI0JA>

<https://www.youtube.com/@XiaoxiaoYarn/videos>

<https://a.co/d/9EA8dVa>





Patch from the Inside- Running stitch

1. Cut patch to size, making sure patch will extend past the hole or blemish by at least 1" beyond all edges. If you need to flatline a piece of fabric to make it stronger, use a running stitch to stitch layers together around perimeter before the next step.



2. Pin patch to WS of hole or blemish. Take your time to make sure it is centered well.

3. Optional: using Sulky 12wt. cotton hand-sewing thread, stitch around edges of patch with a running stitch to secure patch in place and remove pins. I usually skip this step and leave pins in place until they are no longer needed.

4. Begin making a running stitch along one of the sides of the patch. This should extend past the edges of the patch if possible.



5. On next row of stitching, try to alternate the placement of the stitches as shown in the photo above
6. Continue making straight lines of running stitches to cover patch. Wherever possible, try to hide the knot from a new length of thread (or ending knot) between the patch and the fabric being mended.



Adding Embroidery: In the sample shown below, I used yellow and olive thread to embroider over two small flowers that were printed on the fabric patch shown. I also embroidered a large bee near the patch to make it look like a bee was escaping through the hole in the jacket.

The yellow flowers were embroidered with straight stitches that radiate outward from near the center of the flower. Each flower center was made with satin stitches.



For the embroidered bee, I printed the embroidery template on Sulky Stick-n-Stitch stabilizer, then cut around the image and adhered this to my project. I used an embroidery hoop to hold my fabric as I stitched the embroidery.

A backstitch was used to outline the wings in black thread. Next, I created the veins in the wings with white thread. The black and yellow sections of the bee head and body were made with satin stitches oriented vertically. The body of the bee was outlined with a backstitch in black, the legs were created with chain stitch embroidery in black thread, and the antennae were made with a backstitch in black.



Patch from the Inside- Running stitch with checks

Begin just as you would for the plain running stitch design through step 6. You should now have a patch filled with horizontal dashed lines.



Using the same color thread (or a different color, for a different look), make the running stitch pattern once again, but with vertical stitches this time. Make sure that your new stitches cross over the previous rows of stitching. This will create many small checks where the lines intersect.

Adding Embroidery: In the sample shown below, I used white and yellow thread to embroider over a few lazy daisy flowers along the frayed edge of tear in the fabric. First, I made about 6 long stitches in white that radiate outward from the center of the flower, then I made the lazy daisy stitches over these lines. The yellow flower centers were made with a satin stitch.



I also embroidered two small lilac flowers with stems curved around the edge of the same hole. Using green thread, I made 5 stitches that radiate from one point, and then created the curved stem using stem stitch. I used a variegated pink/purple thread to create the flower section with many French knots.



Patch from the Outside- Vertical Running stitches with Circular running stitches.

1. Cut as many patches as needed or desired and layer them over the hole or blemish. In the sample shown, I used 3 patches, each in a different color. One of these patches was cut into a heart-shape using the included template.

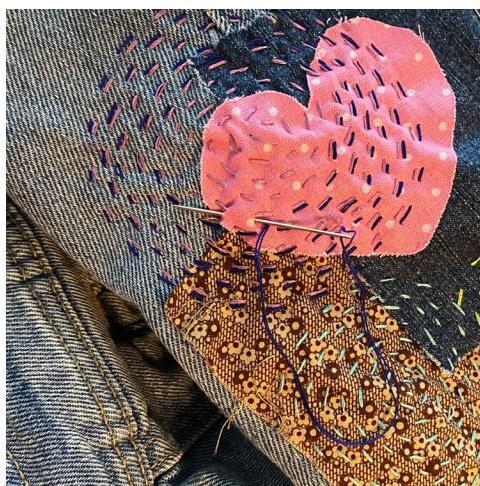
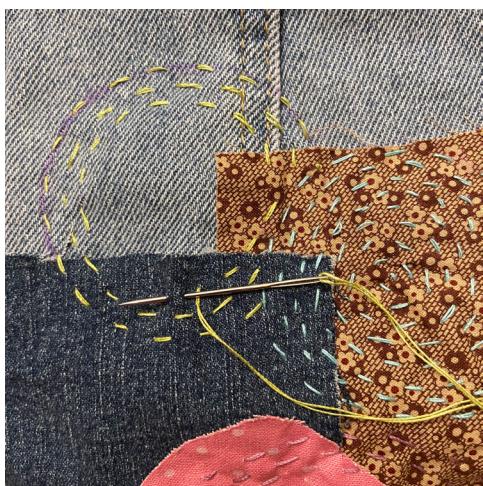


2. Pin patches in place.

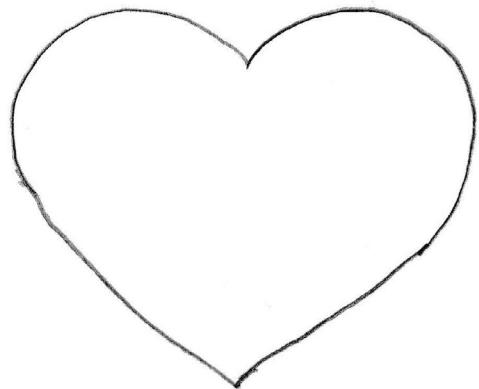
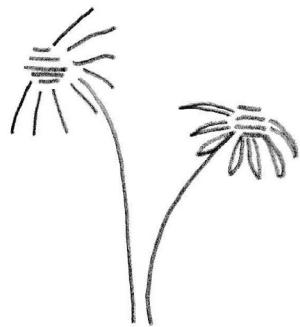
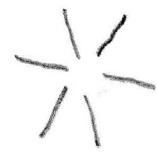
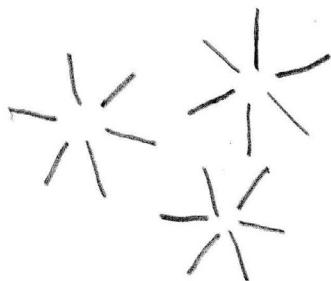
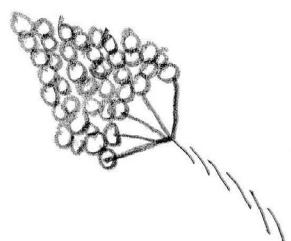
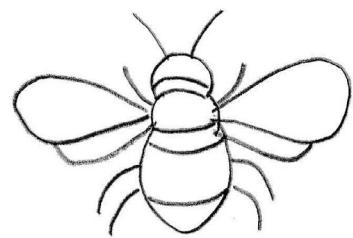
3. Using circular objects such as plastic lids or glass jars, trace some circles over the patches that are pinned to the garment. This looks best when the circles are not centered on each patch, but rather when the circles are offset from the centers of the patches as shown. (Because the tracing didn't show up well in the photo, I added green lines to show placement.)



4. Use the running stitch to sew around the circumference of each circle. Once each circle is secure, fill in each circle with running stitches in concentric rings. In the sample shown, I used a different color of thread for each circle. I stitched one area twice (with contrasting colors of pink and then again with dark blue), in order to show contrast between different colored patches.



5. After circles are complete, choose another color of thread and create vertical running stitches in the area surrounding the circles.



My Notes

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