

Sashiko

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Sashiko stitching comes from Japan.

Sashiko techniques were developed many years ago, based on Japanese techniques for mending clothes. Long ago, most clothes in Japan were made of indigo blue colored fabric. When the clothes needed mending, they were mended with the cheapest thread, which was undyed, or white thread. Striking patterns emerged from the white mending thread on the blue fabric. Many of these patterns were codified into the art of Sashiko.

Sashiko patterns are based upon one or two basic lines, which are rotated and re-positioned to create complex designs. The designs were originally sewn by hand, in continuous thread paths, but are easily adapted to sewing by machine.

After you've become accomplished at sewing straight line Sashiko patterns you can jump to sewing curved line patterns.

The embellished Sashiko top shows the diamond pattern which is the central motif for this design. It is replicated over and over, thickly here and more thinly, and finally it falls apart into just lines.

Because you are adding lot of stitches to the fabric you need to embellish the fabric before you cut out the pattern pieces of your garment. All of these stitches can shrink the fabric slightly. If you complete your Sashiko stitching first, and then cut out the piece, you will be sure the piece it is the right shape and size.

To make Sashiko designs we need to take apart the designs so we can plan how to stitch them.

This first design is Diamonds. It requires sewing lots parallel lines at 30° angle off horizontal. Next, you will add the other layer of lines- the lines that turn this into a diamond pattern. These lines are sewn lines the mirror image of the first lines. That's the basic Diamond pattern.

This second design, Double Diamonds, is the basic diamond pattern with a second set of lines added. All you have to do is to add another set of lines ¼" away from the first set of lines, the width of your sewing machine foot, and then you can add a second set of lines to really changes up this design.

This third design, is called the Diamond Shaped Wave pattern that looks like mountains. It's the basic diamond pattern with 3 ½ diamonds sewn inside each diamond. When you fill every diamond with 3 ½ diamonds you get this dense wave pattern.

Now you need to transfer the design to light weight tear away interfacing. The interfacing will serve two purposes: first it will show you exactly where to stitch. Second, it will stiffen your fabric so the stitching doesn't pucker the fabric.

I like to run the Interfacing through my computer's printer to transfer the pattern to the interfacing.

I buy Interfacing in a roll that's 8" wide and cut it to match a sheet of plain paper.

Using double stick tape you can stick the Interfacing to the paper along the top. Load this into the paper tray so the taped edge goes through the printer first. After the printer prints the design on the Interfacing, you can peel away the plain paper and the sticky tape.

If you have a big design, you can pin multiple sheets together on top of your fabric, just like a PDF pattern.

With all this careful sewing, make sure the stitching lines stand out so use a heavier thread such as top stitching thread or button & carpet thread.

Wind the heavier thread on the bobbin and use regular thread in the needle.

Looking at the bobbin case, turn the larger of these 2 screws. Remember Righty Tight-y, Lefty Loose-y. Turn the bigger screw $\frac{1}{4}$ of a turn to the left or counter clockwise. Now test the tension: thread the thread through the tension disc. Pull out a length of thread, the thread should pull out easily. When you hold the end of the thread up, it should support the weight of the bobbin and bobbin case, without unspooling more thread. If you jerk the thread, like a yoyo, a little thread should unspool, but not a lot.

It is good to stitch Sashiko using 2 layers of fabric: the fashion fabric and a lining fabric. Iron the 2 fabrics together with steam; the steam will help them stick together.

With the heavier thread in the bobbin case you need to put the right side of the fabric down on the sewing machine bed. When I'm done sewing, the bobbin thread will be on the right side of my fabric and the needle thread will be on the wrong side of my fabric, which is the opposite of how we normally sew.

After you make my fabric sandwich, I place the interfacing on the wrong side of the fabric sandwich and pin it in place.

Depending on the complexity of the design you might baste the interfacing to the fabric as the basting is less bumpy and more secure than a bunch of pins.

Following the stitching-order diagrams, start sewing in the center of the piece and work to one edge. Then turn the piece around and work from the center towards the other edge. Leave long thread tails as you will need to knot set of each tails later on.

Then sew the crossing lines, again starting in the center of the piece and working to one edge, and then working towards the other edge.

When you've sewn every line marked in the design carefully remove the tear-away interfacing. A pair of tweezers will help you get all the little bits of paper out of the corners.

Steam and carefully press the 2 layers of fabric and thread. This will help to settle the thread into place on the fabric.

Working on the wrong side of the fabric, pull the heavier thread to the wrong side. Knot the needle and bobbin threads together. Then using an easy thread needle, hide the knots and threads ends between the two layers of fabric.

If the design is not symmetrical, reverse it before printing it onto the tear-away interfacing.

Finally, you're ready take your Sashiko embellished fabric to the cutting table and cut out my pattern pieces.

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