

Denim Dog Applique

An illustrated sewing tutorial with a full-size A4 tracing master



Turn old jeans into a textured dog portrait. Layer light and dark denim, secure every patch, then tease out a narrow fringe for a soft, handmade finish.

Finished applique: 17 × 23 cm (6.7 × 9.1 in).

Suggested practice panel: 30 × 35 cm (11.8 × 13.8 in).

Skill level: confident beginner. Technique: layered raw-edge applique.

This original, simplified pattern is inspired by the supplied reference. The new 3D illustrations explain the process; use the measured tracing master for cutting. The pattern has not been physically sample-tested.

Materials & measurements

Denim: approximately 30 × 35 cm total in lightweight, non-stretch scraps. Choose dark indigo for the foundation and ear, pale blue for the head and chest, and medium blue for the muzzle and body.

Base fabric: one 30 × 35 cm piece of firmly woven cotton. For a T-shirt, add a 25 × 30 cm piece of soft cut-away embroidery stabilizer behind the design.

Nose: a 3 × 3 cm scrap of black cotton or felt. Use sewn fabric details instead of metal hardware.



Tools: paper scissors, fabric scissors, tracing paper, pencil, ruler, removable fabric marker, pins or washable basting glue, seam ripper, iron and pressing cloth.

Thread and needle: all-purpose polyester thread; gold or ochre thread for visible stitching. Start with a jeans needle 90/14 for woven fabric. Test a suitable stretch needle on knit fabric. Use a heavier needle only if your machine and fabric require it.

Stitch settings: straight stitch about 2.5-3 mm long. Sew 3 mm (1/8 in) inside exposed cut edges. Internal hidden overlaps are 5 mm (3/16 in); these are added while tracing, as described on page 3.

Prepare: wash and dry the denim and base separately. Check for dye transfer with a damp white cloth. Press flat, remove bulky seams, and choose sound fabric rather than worn-through sections.

Your cutting plan

Print the last page on A4 at 100% / Actual Size. Turn off Fit, Shrink and borderless enlargement. Measure the 2 cm test square before cutting. The outer silhouette must measure 17 cm wide and 23 cm high.

The final page is an overlapping tracing master. Do not cut the master into puzzle pieces. Trace the whole outer silhouette for A, then trace each labeled overlay onto separate paper. Keep the original master intact for placement.

No seam allowance is added around the outer silhouette. For B, C, D and E only, add 5 mm beyond internal edges that will be hidden by a later layer. Keep all exposed edges and the outer perimeter on the printed lines. F, G and H need no added allowance.

A	Whole silhouette	Cut 1	Dark denim foundation
B	Lower body patch	Cut 1	Medium blue
C	Chest patch	Cut 1	Pale blue / reverse denim
D	Head patch	Cut 1	Light blue
E	Muzzle patch	Cut 1	Medium blue
F	Floppy ear	Cut 1	Dark indigo
G	Diagonal collar	Cut 1	Dark denim
H	Nose	Cut 1	Black cotton or felt

Trace the visible right-facing orientation directly onto the right side of the denim. If tracing on the wrong side, reverse the paper templates first. Mark letters with removable chalk; never cut labels into the fabric.



Build from the bottom up



1. Position the foundation. Center A on the cotton panel, leaving roughly 6.5 cm at each side and 6 cm above and below. Baste with a few pins or tiny dots of washable glue. Keep the fabric relaxed and flat.

2. Secure A. Stitch 3 mm inside its outer edge. The foundation provides a continuous silhouette under every patch. Do not join pieces right sides together or turn them inside out: all layers remain right side up.

3. Add the lower body B. Align its bottom and side edges with A using the master. Its upper internal edge extends under C by 5 mm. Baste, then stitch the edges that will remain visible.

4. Add chest C. Place C over the top of B. Match the neck and shoulder contours. Smooth outward, baste and stitch its exposed boundary. Keep the hidden top edge flat for the head and collar layers.

Give the dog its profile



5. Lay down head D. Position the pale head over the foundation and the top of the neck. The forehead faces right. Keep the exposed top contour aligned with A; leave the left edge beneath the ear.

6. Add muzzle E. Match the right-facing snout to the outline. Its left curved edge sits over D. Stitch that curve first, then the exposed muzzle edge. Use the master to keep the nose tip in the correct position.

7. Attach ear F. Place the dark floppy ear over the left side of D, with its rounded tip pointing down. Stitch around the ear 3 mm from the edge. A flat, single-layer ear gives the reference-style applique effect.

8. Finish with collar G and nose H. Set the collar diagonally across the neck as printed, covering the head/chest transition. Stitch both long sides and ends. Sew the black nose last using a narrow zigzag or small hand blanket stitches.

Secure first, then fray



9. Check every layer. Lift each exposed patch edge gently. Add stitching wherever an edge is loose. Backstitch a few stitches at the beginning and end. Stop with the needle down when pivoting around curves.

10. Control bulky intersections. Stitch slowly over the collar and layered neck. Turn the handwheel through thick spots; never pull the fabric. Trim hidden overlap bulk before sewing if needed, but retain enough fabric beneath the stitch line.

11. Create the fringe. After all stitching is complete, use a blunt needle or seam ripper to lift one or two threads from the outermost 1-2 mm of denim. Work away from the stitch line. Stop before the securing stitches; never cut into the base fabric.

12. Press and clean up. Remove basting and loose threads. Press from the wrong side with a pressing cloth. Avoid flattening the fringe excessively. Test washing on a scrap first; the amount of fraying varies with the denim weave.

A clean, lasting finish

For a quilt or wall panel: complete the applique on the cotton top first. Then layer with batting and backing, baste and quilt around the dog without stitching through its fringe. Trim and bind to your chosen finished size.

For a T-shirt: work with the shirt opened flat and keep the back out of the sewing area. Support the entire applique with soft stabilizer. Baste without stretching the knit and test a narrow zigzag on scraps. Denim reduces stretch, so avoid a tightly fitted area.

For a tote: applique the fabric before sewing the bag together. If using an existing bag, make sure the machine can reach the area without catching the opposite side.

Quick fixes

Puckered background: remove the affected stitches, press and rebaste flat with stabilizer. Do not try to press out stretched knit.

Fraying reaches the seam: stop pulling threads. Add a narrow zigzag just inside the damaged edge, catching sound fabric.

Dog looks unclear: increase contrast between the ear, head and muzzle. Return to the master to check the forehead and nose alignment.

Care and final check

Confirm that every patch and the nose are sewn securely, all pins are removed and the background lies flat. Wash gently in cold water with similar colors and air-dry. Trim loose fringe after washing; never pull long threads from the seam.

Next page: full-size tracing master only, with the required branded footer. Letters identify the overlays listed on page 3. Use the outer silhouette for A; the lines inside it define the overlapping patches.



