

Fusible Web Tutorial For Applique Quilts by Morning Glory Designs

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Pretty much the only purpose for most fusible web products is to hold your applique in place while you stitch it down. It is not meant to replace stitching! HOW you stitch it down is the topic for a later tutorial. Some brands are marketed as “no sew” products, but they are not meant to be washed or they use gobs of glue to hold the patch in place (think knee patches for Jeans.)

When choosing a fusible product for applique there are many products to choose from and it can be confusing. I want to de-mystify the world of web to help you make decisions about the best product for your project. Believe it or Not! There is no best fusible web. We all have our favorites based on successful experience and good advice. But here is what you need to know to be able to make a good choice for your particular project.

- There are several variables to consider: **THICKNESS**. Thick sheets have a LOT of glue and work great to hold big things, like patches on the knees of jeans. Most quilt projects don't need thick sheets. Medium or light fusible is great for quilting. If a product has a "Lite" version that will be the best choice for most quilt projects.
- Some products are adhesive sheets with paper backing which must melt completely off the paper. Its like cake frosting, because it covers or coats the whole surface of the fabric and applique patch. Other products are a gossamer web of adhesive coated fibers which melt to hold the fabrics together. These tend to be lighter and less stiff than adhesive sheets. Check out how the glue is **DELIVERED** to the fabric. It can affect the look and feel of the completed applique. Most brands have a light, medium and ultra hold product. Some brands even have an ultra light, feather light or “stretch” version of fusibles.
- Another variable is the **MELTING TEMPERATURE** of the glue sheet. Some products require a moderate (wool setting) temperature to melt the glue. Heat N Bond is a brand that requires a moderate heat setting. If you use a HOT iron with Heat N Bond the adhesive properties of the product are gone and you are left with "falling applique". Some products require a hot (cotton setting) temperature to melt the glue. Products like Steam A Seam 2 and Soft Fuse are in this category. Steam A Seam 2 requires a hot iron and moisture from a steam iron or wet pressing cloth. Soft Fuse (by Shades) and Misty Fuse work best with a dry iron.
- **IRON TEMPERATURE** is a dicey subject because we really don't know how hot our iron is. The instructions for Soft Fuse instruct you to use an iron that is 270°. But who knows where that is on the temperature dial? Here are some guide lines. A hot setting is Cotton. Brands which require a hot iron also suggest the use of a wet pressing cloth. This moderates the temperature of the iron. When the wet press cloth is dry, the bond of the web to the fabric should be permanent, and you avoid over-heating the glue in the web or scorching your fabric. A medium setting is Wool or Polyester. This is a moderate iron temperature and is required for “low melt” brands like Misty Fuse and Bosal's Splendid Web.
- A light touch with a moderate iron is sufficient for low melt fusibles. Fusibles which require a hot iron also require more **PRESSURE** with the iron against the pressing surface. Because these products melt more slowly, the higher temperature and stronger downward pressure from the iron are what cement the bond.
- The next variable is **TIME**. Some glues are melted more slowly and require the use of a pressing cloth to avoid scorching (burning) your fused applique or background fabric. Slow melting glue will need to be pressed from both

sides of your applique piece before a complete bonding has occurred. Some glues bond quickly because they melt fast, and a quick touch of a hot iron is all that is necessary to hold them in place.

- Here is the bottom line: **READ THE DIRECTIONS!** I know, you sound just like the hubs who never reads the directions and takes twice as long to put stuff together. But all fusible web products are different and you need to know the TIME and TEMP for the product you are using. In addition, do a test fuse with your iron so you know the best temperature, pressure and time for the product you are using.

Hey! We re talkin' SCIENCE here!! Pay attention.

- Yup there is another variable you may not have considered. **STICKINESS**. Most products don't have it. They don't stick to your fabric or background until they are heated. But **Steam A Seam 2 Lite** and **EZ Steam Lite** by Pellon are different. These have a slight sticky surface, like what you would see on a sticky note. It will stick to the applique pieces and the background fabric with a light press of your fingers. It is repositionable which makes it a perfect choice for applique pieces that would otherwise slide around while you position them on your block.

This is the reason my favorite product is **Steam A Seam 2 Lite** from the Warm Company. If you have lots of little applique pieces this product keeps them in place until you are ready to fuse them down. It uses a hot iron with steam, which I am already using, and does not add bulk or stiffness to the applique.

My second favorite product is **Soft Fuse** by Shades. It is NOT sticky, but when I am layering applique this is the product I want. It is so thin that it is perfect when you have 2 or more layers on top of each other. I love the way it feels under my applique. It is a bit expensive, so don't get sticker when you go to buy some.

Misty Fuse is also a good choice for a product that is super thin and light. However, it does not come with a paper backing and you need to use a Teflon pressing sheet (they sell one called a Goddess Sheet) or parchment paper. What it gains in thinness and flexibility it loses in inconvenience. Bosal has a product very similar to Misty Fuse, called **Splendid Web**. It is also paperless, but they have a companion product **Splendid Web Plus** which has the backing paper! I have not used it but I just got a sample of Splendid Web and will be reporting on that soon.

Now, a few words about how to buy fusible web. Purchase a roll or yardage off a bolt if it is available. It will be as much as half as expensive compared with buying it by the sheet or in a prepackaged piece. For example a yard of Steam A Seam 2 Lite off the bolt will cost about \$4.00 a yard. That same yard will be over \$10 in a package of pre-cut sheets. Shop around for discount prices or go to JoAnn's with that % off coupon. Stock up when it is on sale.

If you buy fusible sheets you can run them through your ink jet printer to copy your applique pieces but you will have to trim them down to fit. NO you cannot use a laser printer. If you buy yardage you can cut pages to fit your printer with no waste. Load them one page at a time for best results. Make sure you are printing on the PAPER side of the fusible sheet. Let the ink dry before touching it or trying to use the printed templates. Don't get it wet. Ask me how I know this. The ink runs and will ruin your fabric.

You don't need a light box to trace applique patterns, but if you have one, it is nice. You don't need a fancy expensive one. Home made works just fine. I have a piece of plexiglass I got at the lumber yard glued to 2 cut pieces of 2 x 4 pine. I can set it on my desk and put my Ott Lite under it to make a great improvised lite box. Use blue painters tape to tape the template page to the lite box. Move the fusible sheet around as needed to make the most of your fusible sheet.

Save the big leftover chunks in a zip bag for those times when you lose a piece and need to retrace it.

Many quilters prefer to trace with a permanent fine point pen, like a Sharpie. I prefer to trace in pencil, not ink, because my hand is not always steady and I need to be able to erase wayward lines. But that is a completely personal choice. Work from left to right on the sheet if you are right handed. If you are left handed, work right to left so you don't drag your drawing hand in the pencil lead you just deposited on the fusible backing paper. Keep an eraser handy for those lines that need to be redrawn. Don't use a heavy hand when tracing. A light line is all you need.

LABEL each piece after you have traced it. Trust me on this. You will NOT remember where each piece goes after you have cut them out. Label with a letter or number from the template page and the fabric color.

Leave space between each tracing. You need to cut out your traced applique templates AROUND the traced line, NOT ON the traced line.

Once they are cut out, sort the pieces into zip top bags by fabric color. This way you can fuse all traced web pieces of one color at the same time. Position all the Color A templates on the BACK of the Color A fabric and fuse them down. Leave a little room between each template so you have room to get your scissors in there without damaging nearby pieces. Sort the cut pieces into new bags by flower or motif, so all the parts for flower A are all in the same bag.

Finally, use sharp scissors. It is actually easier to cut with larger scissors than smaller ones. I use my 4" or 5" scissors with a serrated blade or 8" Ginger shears. It makes cutting so much easier and more precise. Yes, you are cutting paper, glue and fabric with your good scissors. Some sacrifices need to be made.

I hope your courage has been bolstered by this tutorial and you are ready to plunge into the wide world of web on your own. Good luck!