Cuddle Fabrics & How to Master Them



Kayly's Corner

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By Kay Brooks

Cuddly and Sweet, but easy to work with?

In keeping pace with my last article in which we learned how to stitch a small stretch item such as a baby T-Shirt or Onsie, I want to stay with my "gift theme" and explore different options for embroidery and embellishment using cuddle fabrics such as Minky, Cuddle Soft and other similar fabrics. We are still in gift sewing mode for all our many showers, weddings and graduations for loved ones....what better gift to give than a plush embroidered baby blanket, or oversized "luxury" pillows for the graduate or new couple?





Design and Quilt by Anita Goodesign

In almost every fabric store we enter these days there is an entire section of these sensationally soft, feel good fabrics. They have every theme imaginable to appeal to your gift idea from whimsical owls, rabbits and puppies, sports or music, fleur-de-lis and other fantastic styles for home dec and luxury! I recently worked an event in Salt Lake City and got to visit the fantastic store of Nuttalls Bernina – wow! I have never seen so much feel good fabric under one roof! Wandering through each isle, I counted off all nephews, nieces, sisters and whoever else had a special occasion coming up in the next 10 years just so I could by this fabric – love it!





How do I work with this fabric successfully? Does it need to be pre-washed? Do I need a topping? Why does the design registration not align? Do I hoop it or stick it? These are a few of the questions we have received over the years through Ask Kayly concerning this fun fabric. Below are suggestions for working with this plush textile and other similar styles.

- 1. **Do I need to pre-wash?** Check the label content with so many styles of this fabric now emerging into the market-place it is important to know what you are dealing with. The biggest majority of styles and brands will not shrink. If the label says 100% cotton it may shrink a bit so I recommend pre-washing. However, the fabric may be pre-shrunk or suggest dry clean only. Some will have a nylon backing which means you must be very careful with high temperatures around it. Some styles may be 100% polyester and will not shrink at all! Most bolts have a suggestion for laundering and care and as always, I recommend testing a swatch before beginning your project.
- 2. I cut quilt squares and fuzz went everywhere! Back the fabric with our Dream Weave or Dream Weave Ultra before cutting! This will help with the fuzz and control the fabric much better during the cutting (and stitching) process. **Tip this fabric has a very definite grain line it is stable parallel to the selvage and stretches perpendicular to the selvage. If using pieces for quilting be sure you mark the direction of the nap as you cut! When you begin your piecing of the blocks use many pins and a walking foot for your machine will make stitching much easier.
- 3. This fabric stretches and my outlines are off for embroidery, do I treat it as a stable fabric and use a tearaway or as an un-stable fabric and use cutaway? Having worked with several different styles of this fabric, I have been the most successful fusing one layer of our Floriani No Show Nylon Mesh (light cutaway) to the back of the fabric as your main stabilizer. Once the fabric is stabilized, it can be embellished because the mesh will prevent stretching or shifting.





For embroidery and the hooping process, place one layer of Floriani Perfect Stick in the frame and then stick the now stabilized fabric down to the sticky surface – baste into place for best results. **Tip – Floriani No Show Nylon Mesh Fusible has a very low melting point making it ideal for fusing it to delicate fabrics. However, if you find the fabric has a lining that makes it extremely heat sensitive, you can simply stick the fabric down to Floriani Wet N Stick Cutaway for ultimate stability and control.

**Pressing Tip — When fusing the No Show Nylon Mesh to the back of the fabric, line your pressing area with a high pile towel — the nap will help protect the loft of the fabric. Don't forget to use your Floriani pressing cloth between the stabilizer and your iron!

4. Do I use a topping? Definitely! Use either of our Water Soluble products, Wet N Gone or Water Soluble Topping. Most styles of this fabric have a very high pile which is why Wet N Gone might be the better choice to make that pile behave. Wet N Gone is a fibrous, solid water soluble stabilizer used primarily for free standing lace. It will not perforate and can withstand high density strikes by the needle. However, clear Water Soluble Topping will come away quickly and doesn't require submersion to remove. This may be a better choice for a gift. If the pile is extraordinarily high — use Wet N Gone Tacky as the topping. Test to see which one works best for your fabric and design. The tack of the stabilizer will hold the nap in place while you stitch! **Tip — Use Floriani Embroidery Perfection Tape to hold the topping in place securely.



5. Do I need a serger in order to be successful with this fabric?

A serger is a wonderful tool for any type of fabric that is fuzzy, prone to ravel or is stretchy all of which describes this fabric! Imagine constructing a baby blanket in 30 minutes – yes you can with a serger! If you don't have a serger, wrap the edges of this fabric with our 1" Wet N Gone Tacky Tape. It will keep the fuzzy's at bay and makes the seams stable if you are piecing multiple blocks or textures together for a quilt. Wet n Gone Tacky tape is a water soluble sticky tape and is a real life saver for stabilizing edges, taping down zippers and trims while you stitch, combining quilt batting pieces, etc.





There are so many possibilities and ideas for having fun with this amazing fabric. I hope you get a piece out of your stash and make something with it this weekend! See, I know you are like me and have it already stacked up in your favorite colors and textures – you now know how to use it – so go for it! Wishing you stress free stitching and perfect outlines,

Kayly