

In-The-Hoop Plush Orca



**4x4
and
5x7**

SILVER SEAMS
open source sewing

**Versions
Included**

Materials

Minky or fleece (or other low-fray knit fabric)
Tear-away or cut-away base stabilizer
Water-soluble (topping) stabilizer
Polyfill or other stuffing

Optional:
10mm safety eyes for 4x4 orca, 16mm safety eyes for 5x7 orca

Preparation

You'll need three hoops' worth of base stabilizer.

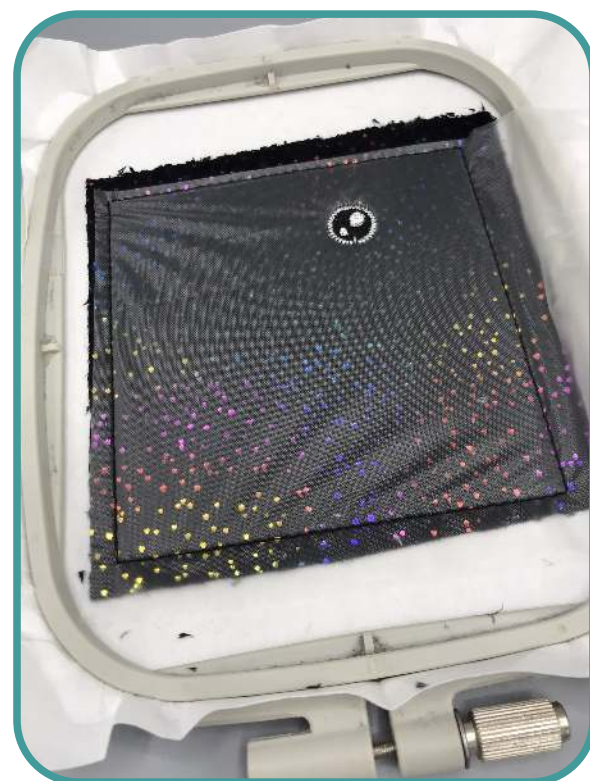
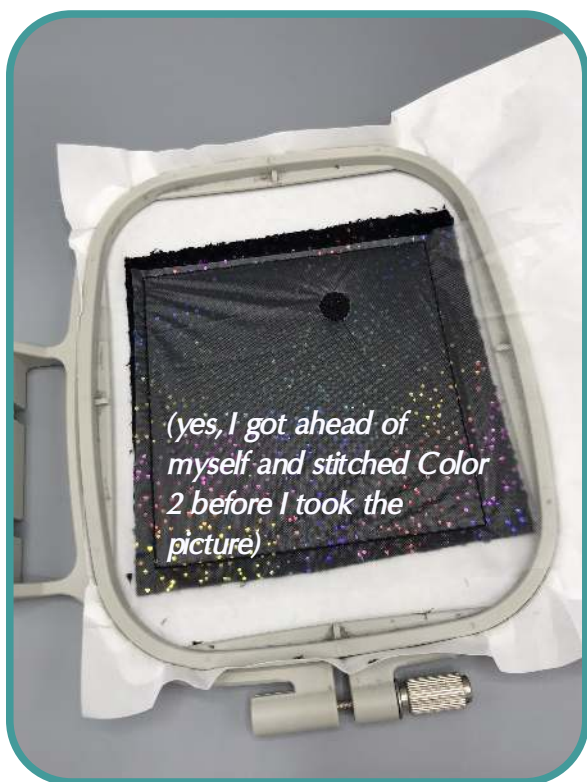
Cut three pieces of fabric, two black and one white: 4.5"h x 4"h for a 4x4 hoop, or 7"h x 5.5"w for a 5x7 hoop. The nap should go in the direction of the height.

Cut two pieces of white fabric, 2"h x 1.5"w for a 4x4 hoop or 3"h x 2"w for a 5x7 hoop.

Frame 1, Stitch Color 1

Hoop a piece of tear-away stabilizer. Float a piece of black minky, in the direction that when you stroke it from top to bottom it smooths out the pile. This is the direction you'll align every minky piece.

Place a piece of water soluble stabilizer (WSS) on top, and stitch the tackdown stitch (any thread color). If you're not embroidering the eyes, you can skip the WSS.



F1, Stitch Color 2 & 3

If you want embroidered eyes, stitch these two colors in black and white.

If you're putting in safety eyes later, skip these colors.



F1, Color 4 & 5

Remove the WSS (tear it away, you can rinse any remainder out later). Place one of the small pieces of white minky, centered on the eye vertically and overlapping the smaller highlight. Stitch the tackdown in white, then carefully trim around the spots with applique scissors. Try to cut as little of the black pile as possible, then stitch the satin stitch in white.

Unhoop the first side, tear away the stabilizer, and set it aside.



Frame 2, Color 1-5

Hoop a new piece of stabilizer and repeat the same steps for the other side of the orca, but don't unhoop it yet.



Frame 2, Stitch Color 6

Take the first side and place it on top, carefully aligning the eyes and spots. Tape or pin it in place (if you use pins, be careful not to get them in the seam line).

This is a structural stitch, so you may want to adjust your machine's tension and speed and use regular thread.

Unhoop the combined back piece, tear away the stabilizer, and set it aside.



Frame 3, Color 1

Hoop a new piece of stabilizer and float a 4.5" x 4.5" piece of white minky in it. If you're going to embroider anything on the belly, add a piece of WSS, otherwise just stitch the tackdown.

Embroider any embellishment/personalization now.

Stitches after this are structural, so readjust/rethread your machine if desired.



Frame 3, Color 2

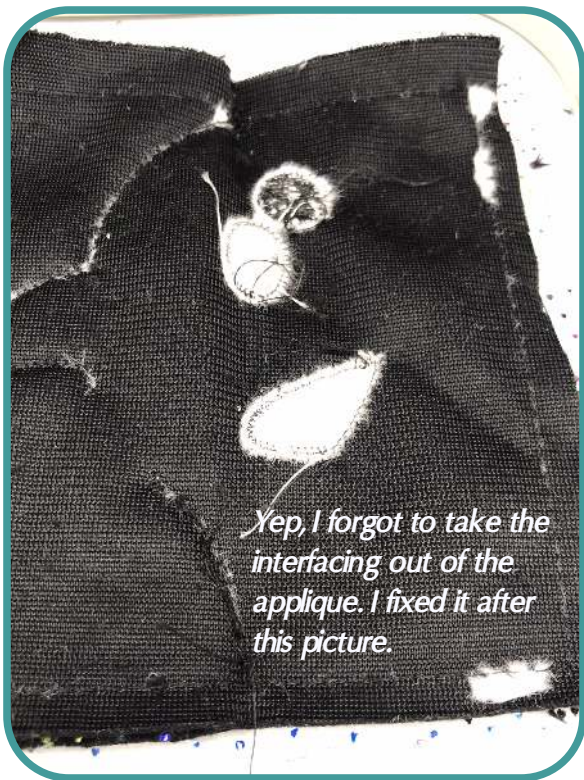
Here is where things get just a little complicated. With your machine positioned to the beginning of this stitch, open the back piece like a book and place it in the hoop, right sides together. Flop the upper back to the right so the back piece lays flat, and align the end of the back seam under the needle. Don't stitch yet.



Frame 3, Color 3 & 4

Raise your presser foot so it doesn't drag the piece out of place, and advance your machine to this color. Make sure the other end of the back seam (the "nose" of the orca) is aligned under the needle. Now go back to Color 2 and stitch it down, then come back and stitch Color 3. It'll run from the nose to partway around the fin. Color 4 will return to the tail and stitch from there to meet Color 3.

The key to this step is getting as close to the back seam as possible without catching the other side of the orca. Feel around (never put your finger under the needle though) and find the fold. If it's too far under the presser foot, hold the two sides where the fins will stitch and gently tug them apart, to make sure the "book" is fully open.



Yep, I forgot to take the interfacing out of the applique. I fixed it after this picture.

Frame 3, Color 5

Raise the presser foot and flip the top of the back over. Depending on your clearance and the fluffiness of the fabric, you may want to take the hoop frame off the machine to do this.

Once again, make sure the fold of the other side isn't under the needle but is very close to it. If the first piece was stitched in the right position, this should happen pretty naturally.



Frame 3, Color 6

The last stitch will start at the nose and end on the other fin, and then you're done. Unhoop the orca and remove the stabilizer.

There should be no gaps (or only very tiny ones) in the seams at the two ends, and the fabric shouldn't be pinched at all.



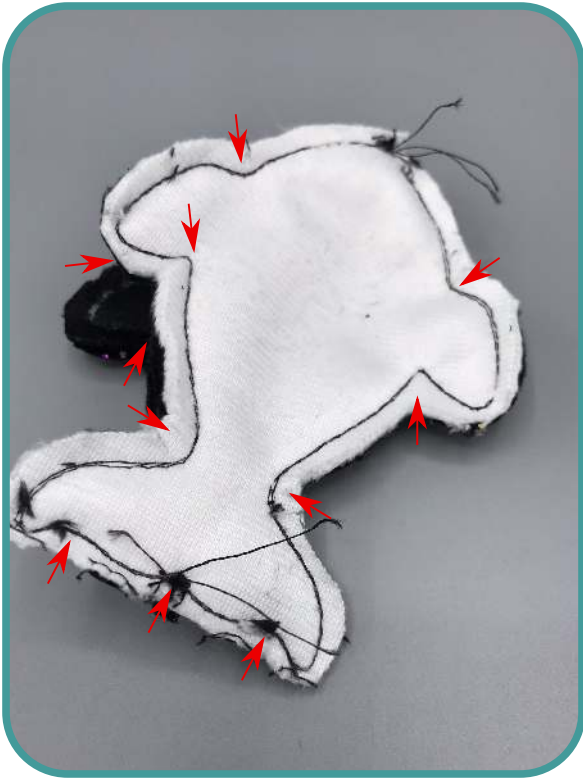
If you get a little "tuck" like this, you caught the fold.

The fabric stretch will forgive a little of this, but too much will show on the finished plush.

Troubleshooting

Tiny gaps, just a stitch or two are probably harmless - hand-stitch the gap if you're concerned. And a tiny pinch of fabric will probably not show when it's finished. But if you're getting large gaps or pleats, you'll want to try again.

A gap means you're not getting the end of the back seam close enough to the start of the next one. A pleat means you're getting the folded side of the fabric caught while stitching the flat side - either because you're starting too close to the fold, or because you haven't pulled the folded side far enough back.



Trimming

Cut out the orca all around the stitching lines, leaving about a 1/4" seam allowance. Trim a little closer on outside curves, like the tips of the tail and fins.

Clip the seams on inside curves and angles. Be careful not to clip through the stitching, but get as close to it as possible.



Turning

A turning tool makes this easiest. If you don't have one, a sturdy straw and chopstick or blunt end of a bamboo skewer will do. Start with the flippers and back fin: poke the straw into them, and use the chopstick to gently reverse the tip into the straw and pull it right-side out inside the body. Then turn the tail flukes, and bring them out the turning opening.



Stuffing and Finishing

If you didn't embroider eyes, install your safety eyes according to their directions.

Now stuff your orca, starting with the tail. Pay particular attention to where the tail meets the body - any narrow place like that will tend to develop creases. You can stuff the flippers and back fin or not, whichever you prefer. Make sure the nose area gets fully stuffed as well, then double-check that tail.

When you're satisfied with the stuffing, ladder-stitch the opening closed. If you haven't stuffed the fins, you can top-stitch across their openings (by hand or machine) if you'd like, or just leave them as-is.

You're done!

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