

Applying Sequins by Machine

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I love sequins on Christmas stockings and door banners, such as can be seen in this vintage-style snowman applique from a Christmas banner I made recently.



Because I intend the stockings and banners I make to become heirlooms, I want the sequins to stay put for many years of Christmases, so I want them stitched securely.

Until lately, my solution has been to use invisible (nylon) thread to hand-stitch the sequins in place. It's strong and long-lasting, and has the added bonus of blending in so the stitching is not as obtrusive.



However, I absolutely hate working with this stuff by hand -- it's hard to see to thread the needle, and the thread won't hold a secure knot, slips out of the needle as you work, and tangles horribly. You have to use shorter lengths, necessitating frequent knots, which can slip and come loose over time. In all, it's really aggravating.

Recently I was making several banners with rows of sequins as accents, and experiencing my usual frustrations.

I got to thinking how much easier this process would be if only I could somehow stitch them down by machine. Hey, why not? So I decided to see if I could do it.



I started by attaching the sequins with gem glue, and I let those dry completely. Here you can see a detail of the glued sequins which have not yet been stitched.

I threaded up my Singer 99 and lowered the pressure on the foot as far as I comfortably could, then set my machine to its largest stitch, which is about the same as the radius of the sequin.



I took a couple of stitches in place to anchor the thread, and then, operating the machine with the handwheel,

I stitched each sequin in place, moving the fabric by hand as I went.



The dashed lines show the path of the needle as it falls just before, then in the centre, then just after each sequin.

Here I'm just finishing off a group of sequins by setting the stitch length almost to zero before taking a few stitches in place.

I'd like to find a foot with more visibility to make this job easier, but so far haven't liked any of the ones I've tried. Maybe one of those old-fashioned darning springs . . .



Above: the stitched sequins on the sled applique. The invisible thread hardly shows on the sequins, and the lockstitch securely attaches them in a continuous line, with a minimum of knotting on the back. The ends are secured by stitching in place for a couple of stitches.

All of the sequins on this banner were attached by machine in this way. For the lettering, I embroidered the outline of the letters before gluing down the sequins, then stitched them in the same manner I used for the rest of the sequined elements.

It takes a bit of fiddling to stitch the sequins in place on the machine, but with a little practice it gets easier and is much quicker and more secure than sewing them on by hand with that annoying invisible thread.

This Snowman design, as I've described elsewhere, is a vintage one from a pair of Christmas stockings that have been in the family for more than 60 years. The original stockings have lost many of their sequins as the old thread has given way over the years. I'm confident that my machine-stitched sequins will stay put and look great for many Christmases to come.

