

# May Flowers Pincushion

## Freeform Embroidery on Felt



Our May Flowers Pincushion grew from a desire to achieve several project goals:

- Use basic embroidery stitches on wool felt.
- Project materials should be inexpensive and easily available.
- Embroidery should be quick and colorful and able to be enjoyed on several levels: basic beginner to advanced and fearless.
- The end result should have a purpose – not another ornament or something to be framed.
- Project should have the capacity to be expanded to reach new embroiderers, including young people.

The idea is that embroidery on wool felt can provide a fun and quick “taste” of embroidery and that makes it suitable for a beginner project. This type of embroidery can also be very forgiving of skill and technique in the same way that folk art imperfections provide the “charm” that we admire. Getting people started in embroidery is the goal.

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## Suggested Supplies

- Good quality **craft felt** in a variety of colors. If you want to really splurge, 100% wool felt is wonderful. The pictured project uses craft felt. The largest piece I used was a 6.5 inch circle. It's a great way to use up those scraps you've been hoarding for "some day."
- **Cotton embroidery floss** in a variety of colors to coordinate with your felt. Bright colors are fun. I used the floss mostly as three strands (out of six) threaded in the needle and used all six strands together in a couple of places. Pearl cotton (#5 and #12) would be suitable also. This is a great place to use up partial skeins.
- **Chenille needles** – these have a large eye and a sharp point. The large eye is helpful for threading and the sharp point is essential for piercing the felt. I used mostly size 24 needles and size 22 needles when I used all six strands of floss at once. The picture below shows the needles I used.



- Craft **buttons** or recycled buttons or whatever you've got. The picture above shows the buttons I used. I found the buttons at Michael's.



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- A base for your pincushion. I used a **clay saucer** (like a flowerpot saucer) from a craft store. Mine measures about 4.25 inches from outer top edge to outer top edge. Many sizes will work.



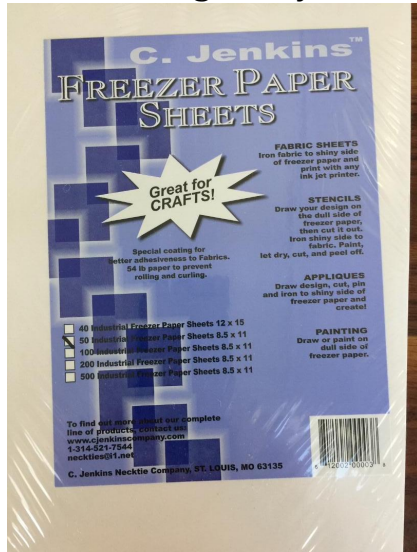
- **Quilt batting** (I used Warm and Natural) and miscellaneous stuffing.



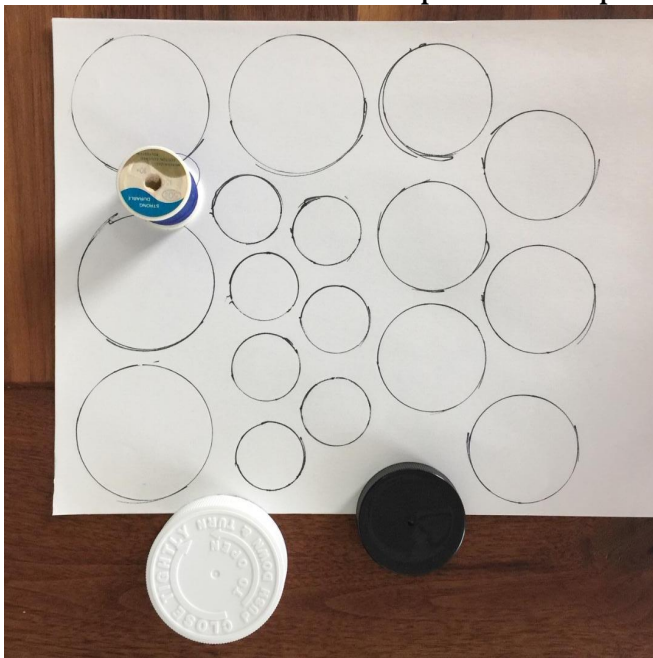
- **Comic Book Boards** – This item is acid-free and comes in sizes useful for finishing small items. Acid-free cardstock works too, but the comic book boards are thicker and stiffer.
- **Polyester batting/stuffing scraps.** (Optional) You can use these to pad your pincushion if you want to save your more expensive batting for the final layer.

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- **Freezer paper** – this is useful for making your circle patterns. The paper I used comes in sheets. It also comes in rolls. The rolls are available in grocery stores.



- **Strong sewing thread** – such as Quilting Thread. This is helpful for gathering the quilt batting and the felt circles in the finishing step.
- **Small round objects to use for tracing circles.** I used a large thread spool, a plastic bottle top, etc. My circles are 1.25", 1.875", and 2.375". My large felt base is sized for my saucer and it's 6.5" wide. The saucer base is 4.25" wide. To determine the size of my felt base, I added 1 inch to each side and rounded up since I'm padding the base.



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## Basic prep for stitching:

1. Gather your basic supplies.
2. Fill a piece of freezer paper with circles in a variety of sizes. I used three sizes: 1.25", 1.875", and 2.375".
3. Rough cut your freezer paper so you have individual circles. Do NOT cut on the drawn lines. You're just separating the pieces.
4. Heat your iron to a "wool" setting. Iron the freezer paper pieces (shiny side DOWN) onto your chosen colors of felt. I used 3 small circles, 2 medium circles and one large circle to create my three felt "flowers."
5. Cut out the circular shapes from your felt. You can discard the freezer paper patterns at this stage, or you can keep them to make more circles in the future.
6. Cut ONE felt shape large enough to cover your chosen base (clay saucer). Be sure to allow at least 2 inches across LARGER than your base. You'll use the excess for gathering and to tuck under so no raw edges show.
7. TIP: Now is a good time to use that same large felt shape to cut a piece of Warm and Natural quilt batting for use in the assembly stage. Put the cut quilt batting circle aside for later.
8. Lay out your chosen felt pieces in pleasing way. Here is my initial layout:



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## **Stitching instructions:**

I decided to stitch the individual components of my “flowers” together and THEN applied the finished “flowers” to my green felt base. I stitched in hand and let inspiration guide me.

I used basic embroidery stitches. You can find general stitch diagrams of these stitches (and others) here:

<https://www.bhg.com/crafts/embroidery/basics/embroidery-stitch-basics/>

EGA has some additional good, basic embroidery information (but no stitch diagrams) here:

<https://egausa.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/LittleBook 8x5 Nov2016.pdf>

If you haven't downloaded the above Little Book from EGA's website, please check it out. It's got a lot of useful information and it's FREE to anyone.



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Here's how I stitched my flowers. Let your inspiration guide you. My method is only a suggestion.

## **Gray blue flower with lazy daisies:**

(Note that I decided NOT to use the buttons seen in my initial layout.)



1. I used gray blue floss (3 strands) and yellow floss (3 strands) to create a circle of lazy daisy stitches radiating from the middle of the flower. The gray blue floss goes beyond the wine colored felt circle.
2. I filled the center of the flower is a variety of French knots. Use 3 or 6 strands of floss in your needle.



I attached my finished flower to the green felt base (positioned as per my initial layout) with straight stitches using 3 strands of cotton floss.

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**Bright blue and yellow flower with buttons:**



Using 3 strands of cotton floss I stitched a circle in chain stitch around the edge of the yellow circle stitching **THROUGH** both layers of felt to attach the two pieces.

For the center, I placed 5 small craft buttons in a circle and attached them to the felt using 3 strands of cotton floss.



I attached my finished blue and yellow “flower” using spaced cross stitches overlapping the edge of the flower and stitching through the green felt base. Note that I overlapped the first flower just slightly to create a sense of dimension.



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**Big red and pink flower:**



I used Blanket Stitch to attach the pink center to the red base. I then placed a button in the center.

I got kind of carried away with this flower as I attached it to the green base. Note that it overlaps both of the previous flowers. Details are on the following page.

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## Steps:

The yellow button was attached with 3 strands of cotton floss in the previous step.

I first stitched a row of running stitch in red floss spaced between the edge of the pink circle and the outer edge of the flower. This is stitched through the green felt base.

Second, I did a running stitch in two colors to attach the circle to the green felt at the outer edge. Stitch a regular running stitch using 3 strands of cotton floss in your needle. Fill in the “spaces” between your first stitches with a second round of running stitch in another color.

I used spaced French knots (3 strands of floss) in the same two colors of my filled in running stitch to create interest in the red part of the flower.

All three flowers are stitched, so it's time for assembly.

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Assembly and finishing:

To assemble the pincushion, I prepped a padded base to which I'll attach the green felt with flowers. Here's how I did it:

Cut a circle from the Comic Book Board that is about  $\frac{1}{4}$ " smaller than the upper inside dimension of your base (clay saucer). This allows some space for the layer of quilt batting and the green felt layer. I mounded scraps of spare polyester batting to pad the base and cut three layers of polyester batting in smaller circles for smooth padding.





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I made a running stitch with heavy quilt thread to gather my top layer of quilt batting.

Assemble the layers as follows:

Comic board base (bottom)

Scrap padding

Polyester batting/padding circles

Warm and Natural circle is on top.

Pull the gathers and cinch to the back. Use some lacing stitches from side to side to hold things in place. It will look like this on the back:



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Here's how the padded base looks in the saucer before adding the stitched green cover:



To attach the green felt cover to the padded base, use quilting thread (or strong sewing thread) to run a gathering stitch around the green felt top, just as you did with the quilt batting layer. Pull up the gathering stitches on the green felt and nestle the padded base with the quilt batting inside. Make sure your embroidery is on the OUTSIDE. Adjust the fit and use some lacing stitches from side to side to hold everything in place. It should look like this on the underside:



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Finished result:



Right now, my felt pincushion is just resting in the clay saucer, but I intend to glue it in place at some point.



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Here are some additional views:





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## Additional ideas for exploration:

If a less complex project is desired or you want to teach this to young people, you can adapt the same stitching process to create an ort container or canning jar lid. “Orts” are those snippets of thread that we cut off as we stitch.



I used a 4 ounce canning jar with a two-part lid to create an ort jar (or decorated container) featuring a single “flower.”



These are the canning jars. I got them at my grocery store. The right photo shows the components for the lid.

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To create the top for the ort jar, I made a single medallion to fit the liner of the lid.



To stitch the single flower, I used a small, medium and large felt circle. I stitched a craft button in the center and attached the small yellow circle to the medium purple circle with single lazy daisy stitches. I think added a running stitch in the purple circles and some straight stitches and French knots to finish the embroidery. My large circle was a little small to fill the top, so I attached the whole flower to a green background with tacking stitches. I trimmed the green felt to be the same size as the lid liner. This method uses only the felt and cotton floss and a jar with lid. You don't need the quilt batting, comic book board, or stuffing. You also don't need to gather the edges to fit the final product.



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**Bonus project: Make EGA pins for your new pincushion**

Supplies needed:

1. Corsage pins
2. Alphabet beads
3. Beads in EGA's new color palette
4. Glossy Accents – liquid product to hold beads onto the corsage pin.  
Note: I used this (found it recommended online) but didn't find that it held the beads very firmly in place. You may know of a better adhesive.

Here are four colors from EGA's new color palette along with some beads I found that coordinate. The blue and green are the primary colors for EGA's new brand palette, so I'm focusing on those.



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These are the alphabet beads and the corsage pins I found:



This is the Glossy Accents product used to assemble the pins. It dries clear.

My packet of alphabet beads had enough E's, G's and A's to make four pins.



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To assemble, line up your beads on a corsage pin to get them ready. Put a tiny drop of Glossy Accents between each bead, pushing the entire assembly toward the pearl at the top of the corsage pin. I shoved the assembled pin into a roll of unopened paper towels (keep the plastic cover on the roll to keep the glue from sticking) to keep the beads in place until they were dry. (Anything that you can pierce into to hold the pin and beads in place will work. The beads need to be supported in place until they are dry.) Repeat the same procedure with the colored beads. I used some small craft pearls I had as spacers.

Enjoy your new pins in your new pincushion!

