

Flock of the Month Design Notes

The monthly patterns are original designs that I made to hang in my own home, and don't follow a consistent style. The colors and stitches you choose will have a dramatic impact on your finished piece. Below are my personal observations about what design choices fit different styles and you can take those into consideration (or not) to make it yours.

American Primitive / Folk Art

A lot of different patterns are labeled "primitive" but they tend to have a few things in common: a country theme, simple embroidery in muted, neutral shades with pops of color. Crows are featured prominently for some reason. If you like this style...

- Choose wools that have natural tones with patterns to them (plaid, herringbone, tweed)
- Use the buttonhole stitch in a contrasting color to attach your pieces
- Use simple embroidery stitches (running, back, fly) in muted colors (low contrast)

Whimsical

This is the playful opposite of primitive; think "fun" designs in cheerful colors featuring flowers, animals, and season imagery. Shapes are fairly simple but there is more varied embroidery and often dimensional elements and other embellishments. If you like this style...

- Choose wools in many solid colors; save the patterned wools for accents.
- Choose a soft background that contrasts with and sets off your applique colors; white or very light tones set off pastels; black makes bright colors pop.
- If you like the button hole stitch use it, but match the thread to your piece; otherwise use the whip stitch (or stab stitch) to attach your pieces for a clean edge.
- Use contrasting embroidery floss/fibers for decorative stitches
- Embellish with whimsical touches like buttons for flower centers, or beads for eyes.

Detailed / Ornate

This is a catch all for pieces that require a little more work one way or the other. That could mean intricate designs, small pieces, layers, fancy embroidery, or combinations of these. For example, Gorgeous Wool Applique by Deborah Tirico features layers, intricate designs and small pieces, but fairly simple embroidery. In contrast, Sue Spargo uses African primitive shapes that are pretty simple but heavily embroiders in many different fibers and complex stitches. If you like these styles...

- Choose wools in many colors and patterns – look at plaids or hounds-tooth dyed in bright colors.
- Use the whip / stab stitch to attach your pieces and either leave the clean edge (Deborah) or finish with embroidery (Sue).
- Precision is more critical, so trace, cut, and layer carefully.

Still not sure? Over the 12 months, there will be patterns with all of these styles. Follow the design as written and see if you like it. Better yet, keep up with your projects and win a kit!

Flock of the Month Basic Information

Materials

- Backgrounds can be textured, patterned or solid (whatever best suits your color choices).
- To save money, or add interest, backgrounds do NOT have to be wool. Try textured cottons or wool-like flannels.
- Finished size is 7" x 9" but the material you use and how you plan to display the piece will determine the actual size fabric needed:
 - Felted wool doesn't fray so it can be cut to size or cut just a little larger and trim before adding the backing.
 - Non-wool fabric will fray a little while you're working the design, so cut the fabric at least 1" larger in both directions.
 - Decide how you will display the piece. No extra fabric is needed if you plan to finish 7" x 9" and hang from clips. If you use wool and want an easy hanging sleeve wool, just add an inch or so to the top of the design but keep the backing at 7" x 9"; after you stitch the two together (matching the bottom edge), fold the extra fabric to the back and whip stitch to backing. Non-wool backings should be cut down ½" larger for seam allowance and bound.
- Materials (wool dimensions and any embellishments) are listed with each month's pattern.
- Applique shapes are made from felted wool. The dimensions given are after the wool is felted and shrunk.
- Use of decorative threads can add interest, but any of the designs can be stitched and embroidered with cotton floss instead.

Instructions

- Cut out pattern pieces along solid lines OR trace them onto freezer paper (dotted lines indicate where another piece will overlap; do not cut off on the dotted line).
- Pin (paper) or fuse (freezer paper) pattern pieces to front of wool.
- With sharp scissors, cut around pattern pieces.
- Pin or baste wool onto background using the pattern as a guide, starting with pieces furthest back in the design (order is listed in each month's instructions).
- Stitch pieces down according to the pattern instructions (either blanket or "stab" stitch).
- Repeat with remaining pieces using pattern as a guide.
- Add embellishments according to the pattern instructions.
- Trim piece to size for your finishing technique (don't forget seam allowance if you're not using a wool background).

TIP: cut a 7" x 9" rectangle in the center of a piece of cardstock and use it as a frame to decide placement for cutting.
- Pin finished design to backing and sew together with blanket stitch (wool background) or bind (non-wool background)