

Mastering Fusibles with Mary Gorfine

This information is based on personal experience. Try it, use it, reject it—you'll find your own favorite ways to use fusibles. I hope this information will give you a base of knowledge that helps you choose an appropriate fusible for your projects and avoid some "uh-ohs" along the way!

General

- Fusible stabilizers are a sheet of heat activated glue. They may be single or double-sided, backed or not.
- Read packages to make sure you have the right product and know the difference between a **type** of stabilizer and a **brand** name. Patterns often call for a specific product/brand—bring the pattern when shopping to see how the stabilizer is being used. You may find a similar product made by another brand that does the same job.
- Stabilizers come with instructions—read them! Each fusible is a little different. And, save them to store with leftovers to help you identify them later (and to remind you how to use them.)
- In general, you will cut your fabric and fusible larger than needed, apply the fusible, then cut to size. This ensures that the glue is all the way out to the edges of your fabric.

Protect your iron, fabric & pressing surface

- Cover both the pressing surface and your fabric with parchment paper or a nonstick pressing mat. Parchment paper can be reused but not forever. Recommended: Kirkland or Reynolds brands.
- Nonstick mats come in lots of sizes, shapes, weights and colors. They might be called applique pressing sheets, craft sheets, splat mats...I like to see my pattern/project through the mat.
- Clean any fusible "whispies" off mats between usage to avoid transferring any gunk to your iron or fabric! Use a scrunched-up paper towel or a kitchen scrubby pad on the mat/parchment paper.
- For fusibles with 2 release papers, avoid using the 1st paper you remove as a barrier between your fabric and iron. Glue bits may stick to the inside of the paper and transfer to your fabric or iron

Fusing:

- The mfg may suggest prewashing your fabric to remove sizing. I usually don't, but if you are having trouble getting the fusible to adhere, try washing your fabric. Exception: when making a washable project with a fusible that doesn't shrink, like placemats and fusible foam, wash your fabric to preshrink
- Iron temp should be hot enough to melt the glue but compatible with your fabric. Irons aren't all the same. You'll get to know the iron you are using.
- Use pressure and time to get a permanent bond for your final fuse. Stay in one spot for a minimum of 10 full seconds (read instructions for suggested time) and overlap when you move your iron so that you don't miss any spots. Be sure to get all the way out to all the edges
- If fusible requires steam, use a damp cloth following manufacturer's instructions or a non-stick breathable ironing mat like the Bo-Nash Ironing Mat which allows steam to reach fabric
- I like to press from the back side—the release paper protects the bottom of my iron—but pressing from the front of the fabric helps avoid wrinkles. You may need to press both sides for the best bond depending on the product and how many layers you are fusing
- Cool completely before peeling off release paper—your pressing surface is hot so move your project somewhere else to cool. I toss mine onto my tile floor....
- Working with fusible batting, fleece, *Craftex* or a similar product requires extra time and pressure. Be patient and always fuse from both sides.
- A wool mat under your project increases the radiant heat and tends to press both sides at once
- A *Fusamat* has a breathable layer that is designed to pull the glue into the fabric, keeping melted glue from sneaking out around the edge.
- Protect your fingers from steam and heat with silicone finger protectors

- Drag a straight pin across a corner then fold to make a perforation to start peeling release paper

Types of fusibles

- Single-sided are backed by a woven or non-woven stabilizer. You may see dots of glue on the fusible surface. Feel it! The rough side is the fusible side
 - Non-woven: made from an aggregate of pressed fibers and feels more like paper when fused. The weight will tell you how stiff it will be, from featherweight which is hardly noticeable, to flexible like fusible foam, all the way to super stiff and thick, like *Craftex*. Except for the featherweights, used more often in bags and craft projects than in quilts.
 - Woven & knit fusibles feel more like fabric after fusing. Great for taming stretchy things like t-shirts. The knit style also comes in rolled strips for fusing odd sizes of batting together into a larger, usable bat—works even if the pieces are different kinds of batting.
- Double-sided fusibles. Exposed fusible will stick to itself even if it doesn't feel sticky so watch out for folds or contact with the fused side of other fabric!
 - Exposed side isn't sticky after fusing so it isn't particularly messy to work with. Use pins to keep pieces in place before final fuse.
 - No release paper, such as *Misty Fuse* (looks like a spider web, super light-weight, their website is full of unique ways to use the product) and *Stitch Witchery* (I keep *Stitch Witchery* on hand in a narrow roll for hems or other projects where I just want to fuse an edge.)
 - One release paper, like *Wonder Under*. Easy to trace through it—make your pattern lines darker if needed for tracing.
- Two release papers like *Steam-a-seam*.
 - These will be fused twice! Once as a “tack” bond to adhere the fusible to the first fabric before cutting out your shapes. Move iron slowly (but not *too* slowly!) over the entire surface.
 - Let it cool and test by peeling away second release paper. If the glue is still stuck to the release paper it isn't cooked yet! If the glue adheres to the fabric but you can still see dots/pattern of glue, it's not melted enough. Adjust time and iron temperature as needed
 - After tack fusing, the exposed fusible is sticky. Pieces can be moved around, will stay in place without pins while you arrange your pieces. The second fuse makes the project permanent.

Sewing

- A bit of “sticky” on the needle is expected. Keep a cotton ball and alcohol handy. A lot of sticky means the glue isn't melted enough.
- I use a 90/14 topstitch needle. The sharp point helps pierce all the layers, the elongated eye reduces shredded thread and it has a sturdier shank. Needles are only good for 6 to 8 hours of sewing!
- Reduce bulk in multiple layers by cutting out the middles of fusible template pieces
- Basting sprays save time
 - Use in a well ventilated area
 - Best for smaller quilts and projects.
 - Spray a little at a time--start in the middle, smooth in place and work your way to each end
 - A lot of handling loosens the temporary bond—a few pins, especially on outer edges, helps
 - Protect surfaces and fabric from over spray
 - I prefer Sulky KK2000--it has less overspray & can be removed with the heat of an iron. Can is smaller because it is highly concentrated. You should get the same mileage as with a larger can

Of course, there is lots more to say....I'm in the guild directory—just call me if you have questions!