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Customise a Cardie

CUSTOMISING YOUR CARDIE IS A REALLY EASY WAY OF GIVING A TIRED ITEM SOME NEW LIFE. IT DOESN'T COST MUCH AND YOU DON'T EVEN NEED A MACHINE – YOU CAN DO IT ALL BY HAND **By Sewoverit**

■ When customising or embellishing any stretch fabric or lightweight fabric, it is essential to use a stabiliser underneath to stop the fabric stretching. For these cardies, we've used iron-on stabiliser which is available from most haberdashery shops and departments. You simply iron it onto the reverse side of the cardie, where you are going to stitch, and then stitch over it. Simple!

Here is some inspiration and ideas

BUTTONS

Changing buttons is the simplest way of transforming the look of a top or jacket. You can remove the existing buttons and replace them with something more colourful or more chic – immediately you will love it all the more. Alternatively you can add buttons to the shoulders or in a little cluster on the front or back. Gold or silver metallic buttons will give it a military look, whereas pearls will make it oh so Chanel!

RIBBONS

The possibilities are endless! Here are some ideas:

- * Use ribbon as binding and wrap it around the edge of the neckline or cuff.
- * A selection of ribbons stitched in lines down the front or back will brighten up any cardie. You don't even have to stitch them in parallel lines – why not criss-cross them for a funkier look. Again you will need to use fabric stabiliser to prevent the cardie stretching.
- * Or fold and pleat the ribbon to make interesting shapes by adding a little texture

and a three-dimensional quality to the ribbon

- * Add little bows to the cuffs for that bit of extra detail.

MOTIFS

All sorts and colours of ready-made motifs are available in haberdashery outlets. They are one of our favourite ways of customising our cardies. You can buy motifs especially for the neckline – they usually come in pairs. Iron on the fabric stabiliser on the inside of the cardie – behind the motif and then using a double strand of thread, hand stitch the motif in place with little and discreet stitches – it doesn't matter what they look like on the inside – no one will ever see that!

If you're confident on the sewing machine and you can drop your machine's feed dogs then you can use free embroidery to fix on the motif. Pin the motif in place and hand tack it down with a few stitches so it doesn't move. Drop the feed dogs, change to a darning foot and select a zigzag stitch, stitch width 1.5 and stitch length 1. Then following the pattern of the motif stitch it down at the sides and the centre, moving the fabric in any direction (as the feed dogs are not feeding it through). Try to keep your stitches on the motif and not on the cardie so they will appear invisible!

JEWELLERY

This creates a quirky but very unique customisation. Pick up strands of beads from charity shops really cheaply and then you can attach them to anywhere on the cardie. The tricky bit is getting the beads to stay in place while you stitch them so use lots of pins – pinning across the string holding the beads together. Remember to add stabiliser on the underside of the cardie where the beading is to be placed to add support.

Once you have positioned the beads, take a double thread and hand stitch across the string in between the beads. Make your stitches neat on top but don't worry about underneath – just make sure you don't pull the thread too tight and pucker the cardie.

HANDY HINT

If you cut up a necklace remember to tie knots at the ends to prevent the beads falling off.

COMBO – ALL OF THE ABOVE!

Try using a little bit of everything to create a really unique cardigan. A combination of a string of pearls, some lace and new buttons will make any cardie the chicest in the office! □

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FURTHER INFORMATION

For more ideas on recycling and customising, visit www.sewoverit.co.uk