

Doesn't it always seem that busy moms are even busier when the holidays roll around? If you're like me, you need projects like this that can be thrown together while the little ones nap! I really enjoy having special Christmas t-shirts that my kids can wear during the month of December, whether we're off to visit Santa or to enjoy the city Christmas tree lighting ceremony or simply to open gifts at Nana's house. I also love when those tees are handmade by me, and with a tee this simple to put together, there's no reason at all to even glance at those assembly-line tops on the store racks (well, except maybe to grab a solid tee as the base for this one)!



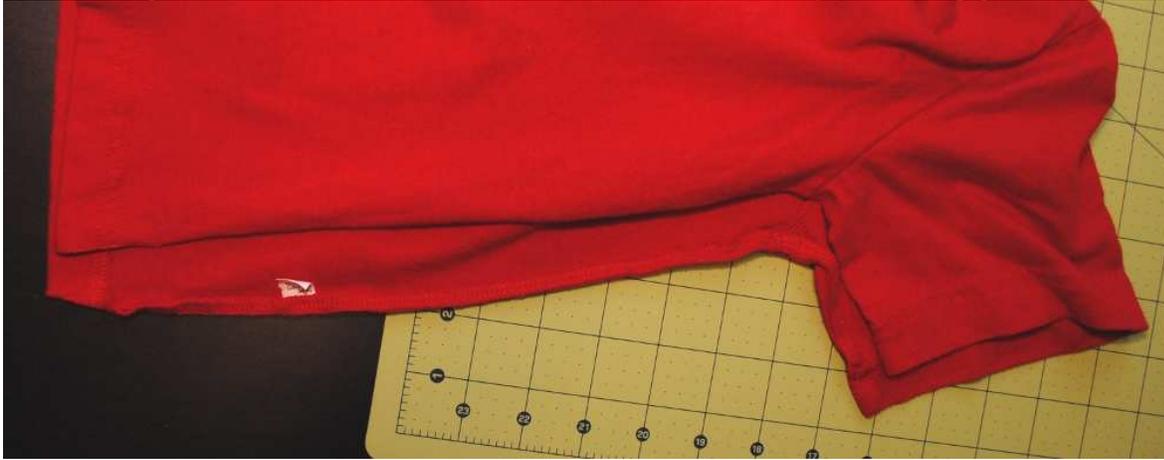
This easy top begins with a store-bought tee or, better yet, a hand-me-down tee from big brother or big sister. You'll want a t-shirt that is cotton jersey a size bigger than the recipient currently wears. (Jamie and Charlie wear sizes 7 and 4, and the tees I used for this project are Target Circo t-shirts in M 8-10 and S 6-7.)



Gather your supplies. You'll need that prewashed cotton tee that is one size too big, cotton quilting fabric for the sleeves and appliques, and a print-out of the Christmas tree template that you can find here: <http://www.skiptomylou.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/TreeOutline.pdf>. (A little side note: You will be working with a knit here, but since it's a cotton jersey without a lot of stretch, and you're combining it with a woven fabric, a walking foot is not necessary for this project.)

You'll also need sewable iron-on adhesive. I used Heat n Bond Lite.

Start by cutting your tee straight up one side and along the bottom of the sleeve, right on the seam. (Some tees don't have seams on the sides. If yours doesn't, use your steam iron to press a crease along the side where the seam should be, and use that as your cutting guide.)



Cut the sleeve off by following the seam around the armhole. (Don't discard these yet, though. You'll need one later to create a pattern.)



Repeat these steps on the opposite side of the tee.



Fold your tee in half, matching up the open sides and armholes. Grab a tee that fits your child well. Fold it in half, as well, and place it on top of the tee that you're working with. Line up the necklines and folds.



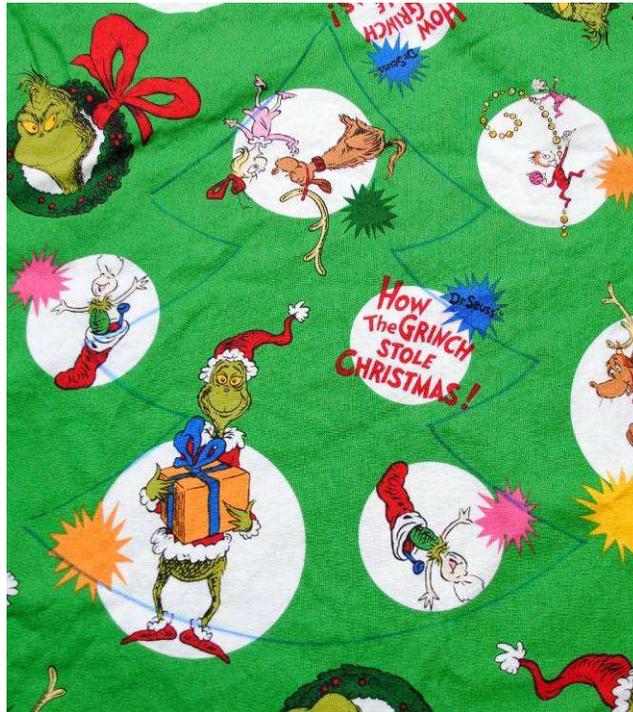
Use a straight edge to measure and mark a ½" seam allowance along the side. (I leave the length as is so that I don't have to re-hem, but if you find that your finished tee is just too long, you can go back later and shorten it.)



Trim away excess fabric.

Now, let's apply the appliquéés while the sides of the tee are open.

Place the Christmas tree template on your fabric and trace the design using washable or disappearing marker.



Cut out a rough rectangular shape around the appliqué.

If you'll be layering your appliquéés, cut your second piece in a rough rectangle, as well.



Following the manufacturer's instructions for your iron-on adhesive, apply it to the backs of both appliques.



Cut out appliques with adhesive backing attached.



Peel the backing from both appliques and decide on their placement.



Remove the top appliqué and set it aside. Iron the bottom appliqué in place.



Stitch all the way around the appliqué, approximately 1/4" from the raw edge. (When you wash and dry the shirt, the edges will come up and fray slightly, giving your tee a fun, casual look.) The easiest way to get a nice even seam distance is to set the position of your sewing machine foot so that the edge of the foot falls right on the raw edge of the appliqué. Don't worry, though, if your distance varies a bit, you want your tee to look handmade, so slight variances are perfectly acceptable!



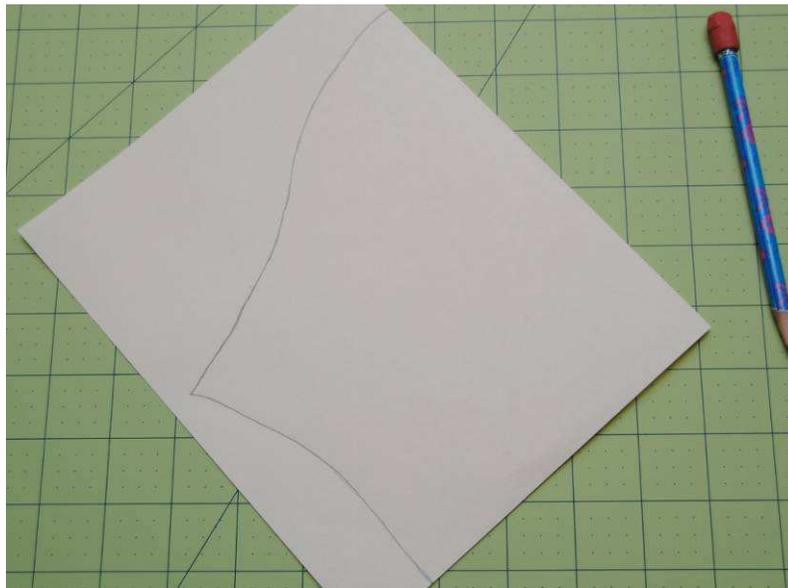
Reposition and iron on the top appliqué and stitch it in place. If you're going around curves like those on mine, go slowly and only lift the foot if you absolutely have to. If you do lift the foot, try to spin your fabric as little as possible to avoid sharp points in your stitching.



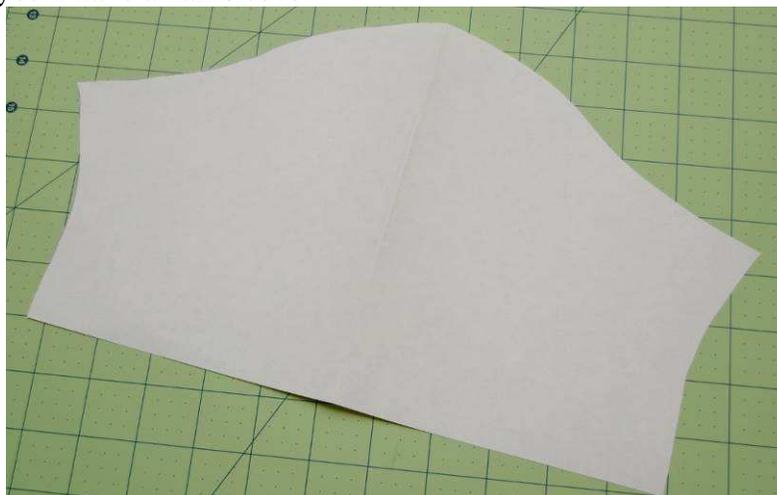
Now that your appliqué is done, set the body of your tee aside and grab one of those sleeves that you cut off earlier. Fold the sleeve in half and match up the underarm seams. If you have legal-size paper on hand, fold it in half and place the fold of the sleeve on the fold of the paper. If you only have letter-size paper, place the fold of the sleeve on one edge of the paper.



Trace the sleeve and add about 1" to the bottom for a hem allowance.



Cut out your pattern. If you're using legal-size paper, you'll have a whole sleeve. If you're using letter-size paper, you'll have a half sleeve.



Use your pattern to cut out two sleeves.



Create memory creases for sleeve hems. On each sleeve, fold in $\frac{1}{4}$ " then $\frac{3}{4}$ " and press well. (Do not stitch.)



I also like to fold my sleeves in half and press the center of the curve. Alternately, you can mark the center with a washable marker.



Before pinning the sleeves to the body of your tee, cut away any excess seam allowance that might be left on the tee from the original seams.



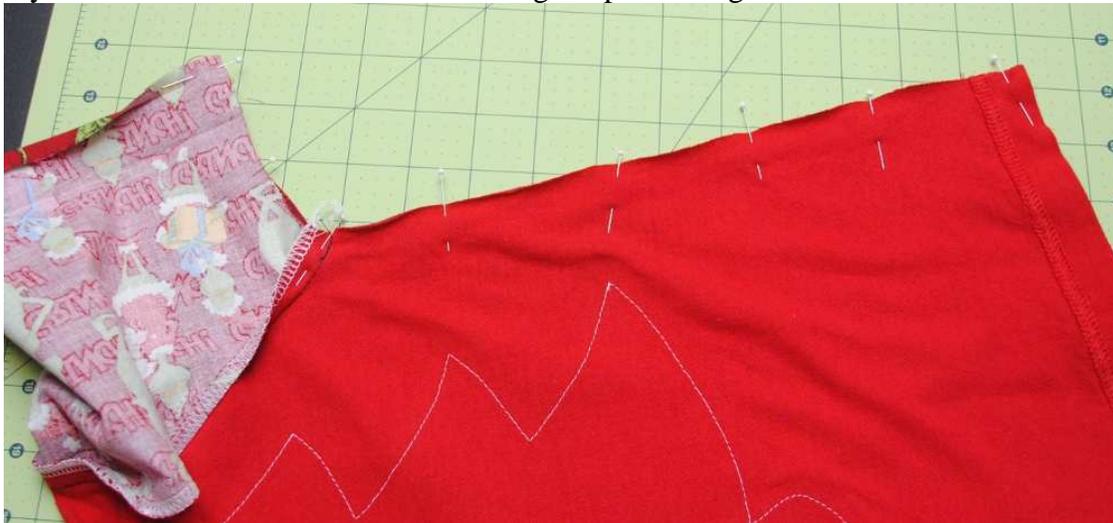
Pin new sleeves into armholes. Start by matching up the center of the sleeve to the shoulder seam. Ease the remainder of the sleeve around the curve in both directions.



Sew in sleeves. (Note: It is easier to sew the sleeve in neatly if you sew on the body side rather than the sleeve side.) Serge or overcast seam allowances to prevent fraying.



Flip shirt so that the right sides are facing and pin along the sides and underarm. Be sure that the memory crease on the sleeves is unfolded along the pinned edge.



Sew from the bottom edge to the sleeve edge. Serge or overcast seam allowance to prevent fraying.



Fold sleeve hem in on memory creases. Pin in place and hem.



And, in a twinkling . . . your tee is finished and ready for your favorite little boy or girl!



My little guys definitely appear to like theirs! (They would like to know if putting them on means that it's Christmas now?)

