
Birds of a Feather Maxi Skirt with Anna Maria Horner

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

(gentle music) - Today, we're going to be making the feather maxi skirt. It's a maxi skirt because of the length, and it's a feather skirt because it's got some gorgeous hand applique of feathers down at the bottom. We're gonna be drafting this pattern from your body measurements, so it's gonna fit you perfectly. We're not only gonna be drafting the pattern, but we're also gonna be covering techniques like strip patchwork, strip piecing, and also hand applique. So this one single project is gonna give you so much foundation for not just drafting a pattern on your body measurements, but also for lots of patchwork projects, and hand applique projects. You're gonna absolutely love this. And another thing you're gonna love is that even though this is an elastic waist skirt, it's cut on the bias, and it's cut slim, so it's gonna flatter your figure beautifully. (gentle music)

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials you will need

- The materials for the feather maxi skirt are three main fabrics. One solid fabric for the main foundation of the skirt. I used 1 1/2 yards plus another 1 1/2 yards of 44 inch wide fabric. And I mention that in two segments because, even though we have a continuous three yards that we'll use, I actually cut it into 1 1/2 yard lengths and then seamed it together to create a wider fabric to encompass this whole maxi skirt bias-cut pattern. If you have a wider fabric that's at least 54 inches or 60 inches wide, you're probably gonna be able to accommodate the length of this skirt just fine. The second solid fabric that we'll use is some contrast solid that will make a center stem in our patchwork feathers. And then you can use a selection of your favorite prints to create a new fabric, basically, we're creating some strip piecing which is like building your own new striped fabric made from various prints. To do that, I find it easiest to use a rotary cutter when I'm cutting out lots of strips, and I use that in conjunction with this clear quilt ruler to get some nice straight lines. And then we'll sew together that fabric on the sewing machine, and then I cut from that stripped fabric these templates that will create our feather. So, in addition to that, we're gonna be using some one inch wide elastic in a length that will go around the circumference of your waistline.

Chapter 3 - Create Feathers

Cut fabric

- To make our striped feathers, our patchwork feathers, we're first gonna be actually creating a striped fabric. And so I've got a selection of prints here, I've got about five different prints, and I just have one full width of 44 inch wide printed fabric. I've got about a half a yard here. Giving you an actual yardage requirement can get a little bit funny in this type of a project because, honestly, it's just, you can just choose whatever you have around the house. If you were to buy fabric specifically for this project, you might want to, I don't know, have at least a quarter of a yard, have at least a half of a yard of each of your favorite prints to include. And I'm layering up three different fabrics that are all folded at the center so that all the selvages are lining up here. And to cut the strips, I'm just gonna use a rotary cutter and this clear quilting ruler. Now, the strips are gonna get sewn at the machine with a quarter inch seam allowance. So whatever you cut here, you're gonna end up taking off a quarter of an inch on either side. So, half an inch of whatever you're visually seeing is gonna go

away. So if you want to have a reveal of two inch wide strip or a one inch wide strip, just be sure and add a half inch to that. But I don't think too hard about any of this, honestly. I just tend to not cut anything smaller than about an inch and a half or so, so that means none of my strips are any skinnier than one inch once they're sewn together. So I just line up my ruler, carefully press down, and slice all the way through. I'm going through six layers right now. And with a typical quilting cotton, that is plenty of layers to get several done at a time, and you'll want a nice sharp blade, certainly. So I just kind of keep cutting. Maybe these I'll do a little bit wider. I vary the width. And I can just, you don't even have to pick them up, 'cause you can see your cut line, to line up your ruler along with the cut line of your previous strip. I chose a wide variety of colors. And I sort of like to match up color families just a little bit, or create a color family of all, say, pinks, oranges, and browns, and piece those fabrics together. And then maybe piece together fabrics like the purples, the blues, and the greens. And then, basically, it's like I'm creating whole other printed fabrics by making this strip patchwork. So that's enough of those for now, I think. And I'm just gonna continue cutting some more strips in various widths until I have enough built up to have a lot of variety on my patchwork fabric. You're only gonna need to cut as many of these strips as will create two lengths of fabric that are roughly 12 to 13 inches high by the full width of the fabric. And you wanna do that twice. You can see that I have one section here that's more blues and browns and greens. And another that's more pinks and reds. So that gives me a little variety of what I might wanna choose to create these feathers. And we're only gonna make these swatches of fabric 13 inches or so high, because that's what's gonna fit this feather template as we lay it out at an angle to cut eight right sides of the feather at an angle, and then flip it and get eight left sides of the feather at an angle to create these pretty angled strip piecing in a full feather. So now, it's time to grab all your strips and head to the sewing machine.

Strip-piece fabric

- Time for some super simple machine piecing. I really just throw this pile of fabric right next to me. I don't think too hard about what I'm gonna put next to what, I just start going. Since we know that all of our pieces are equal length, because we cut them from the same width fabric, all we have to do is line up their selvage ends. And we're gonna sew long seams with 1/4 inch seam allowance, and we're just gonna use a straight stitch. And it doesn't have to be a particularly small stitch length, or particularly long, just somewhere in the middle. (sewing machine whirs) Don't even worry about backstitching at the beginning or the end. (sewing machine whirs) Do daydream, 'cause this gets a little monotonous. I don't pin here, just straight lines, kids. Easy peasy. (sewing machine whirs) Okay, so that's one finished. And now, just pick up any other piece that suits your fancy. I do like to start at the same end every time and sew down the same direction. If you were to switch you might have your fabric that's in the midst of those switched seams twisting just a tiny bit, so I like to sew in the same direction every time. And sew. (sewing machine whirs) Great time to practice your speed. (sewing machine whirs) Okay, three down. So you can see we've probably built up, I don't know, I have a little measuring device here, we've got about four inches here. So we only need about another eight to 10 inches, and we'll have our first swatch of patchwork fabric. (sewing machine whirs) We have our second group of patched fabric, we need to go to the ironing board. To prepare our patchwork fabric to be cut into feather shapes, we first need to press it nice and smooth. I start at the wrong side of the fabric, and I just press all my seams in one direction. Might wanna tug on the other side just a little bit to make sure you got it all flattened out. And you'll continue doing this for the whole length of both patchwork pieces. And then it's also not a bad idea to get it from the

right side as well, to make sure you got all those seams spread as flat as possible. Okay, I'm gonna keep doing this until it's all nice and smooth, and we cut out some feathers.

Sew feathers

- Now that we have two really smooth pressed pieces of patchwork fabric, it's time to cut out our feather sides. This is one finished feather ready to get appliqued to a skirt. But before we do that, we need to cut it out one side at a time. And you're gonna do that using this single template piece by just using it on its right side to cut the right side of the feather, and then flipping it to its wrong side to cut the left side of the feather. And let's get started now on cutting one side of the feather. You wanna lay the template onto the fabric, so that this bottom line is in line with all the lines of your patchwork fabric, and also aligned with the bottom edge. I'd like to use this clear quilting ruler on top of my template, just to kind of protect my paper pattern piece from getting any nicks in it, and keep my rotary cutting straight. So let's cut the first edge. I'll save this for something else. We're gonna carefully lift to keep it in place, and then reposition the ruler along the next edge and cut. And we're gonna reposition again along the other long edge. This paper kinda acts like a static cling to these rulers every now and then, so be careful. See, I got a little slice of paper, but no big whoop. And cut the final edge. If the ruler is too much of a pain for you, there is what's called quilt template plastic that you can cut this paper template out of a harder plastic, so you have a really nice, firm template to create your pattern pieces. So lookie there, we have one right side. And I'm gonna switch over to this other color fabric to cut the left side, so that we have a super funky feather. So you see what I did there? It's not on this right side anymore, it's on the wrong side. And if you wanna draw the word left here and draw the word right on the right side to help you remember, you do that. I'm gonna be super gutsy here and let my ruler go to get these short ones. Okay, so now we have a left side and we have a pair. And I love seeing how they line up and kinda don't line up and work together. And once you have eight right sides and eight left sides, then you can mix them up and pair them into whatever you think makes the prettiest couple. But the couple will need some stems, and so we're gonna cut the stems from the other solid fabric, and they're one inch wide. So, from this little quarter yard cut that I have, I'm gonna cut some one inch stems. And I'm gonna do that by aligning their salvages, and folding again. This saves me from having to do a long pass with my rotary cutter. Gonna lay the ruler on top until the raw edges are in line with this one inch marking here. Gonna cut through all the layers. We'll need eight, no, rather just four of these, actually. As long as you're using a full width of fabric, a 44 inch fabric, you'll be able to get two feather stems out of each width. So now we have our one inch stem strips that are gonna go in the center of our right and left side feathers. So let's go ahead and pin those together now before we head over to the sewing machine. My feather strips are about half the full width of fabric, so we can just cut that in half, and that's gonna serve us for two feathers. We'll lay the fabric down, and then right sides together. We're gonna send this feather in line with this one. And I wanna pin it. Be aware that, because you're sewing this fabric that has been cut at an angle, you're sewing on the bias, which means that it can stretch just a little bit as it passes through your sewing machine, which is why I like to pin these. And there's just eight of them, so it's not gonna take you too long. And because we're gonna applique these feathers on, and one of the hardest things to do in hand applique is to turn right corners and tuck everything under, we're gonna go ahead and turn this bottom corner and just kind of finger press it roughly a quarter inch up, along the bottom edge. Just press that crease with your fingers and pin it in place, and that's how it's gonna get sewn. I find it easier just to sew one side at a time, so let's go do that now. I'm gonna sew with a quarter inch

seam allowance. A little more carefully than with straight cut fabric, because we're on the bias. You don't want to tug this fabric through. You wanna gently guide it through to make sure you're not stretching that bias cut strip piecing at all. You do wanna backstitch here. We now have one side of the feather sewn. And keep in mind, that seam that we made, it went right over that folded up edge at the bottom, so that we have a clean folded edge at the bottom of this feather, and you're gonna love knowing that once we get to the applique step. It's time now to pin the left side of the feather on. You can kinda just finger press this right side over to stay out of your way. Just give it a little pinch. I don't like running back and forth to my ironing board constantly, so I do lot just with my hands here. So, we are going to use our fingers to press a quarter inch of that bottom edge up against its wrong side again to prepare it to get pinned in place. You have this other feather side here as a reference to position it close. If it's off this way or off that way a little bit, it doesn't matter. I've never seen a perfect feather in real life. So let's just put it on there with only a little bit of care. And pinning all the way along that long edge, keeping that right side out of your way. And one more. Now, I know that most people don't sew with the excess fabric to the right of the needle. Typically, most people would always sew with excess here. But doing that with these feathers would cause me to sew in a different orientation than I did before. Before I sewed from top down, so I wanna sew from top down again, so that I don't have any twisting going on in that center stem. And with the quarter inch from the other side. Be sure that that right side feather is staying free of your seam. So now we have a finished feather. Yay! Now, a simple pressing at the ironing board to press these seam allowances in towards the feather center, like you can see this one has been pressed nice and smooth, is gonna have these all ready to be hand appliqued to your skirt.

Chapter 4 - Make Skirt

Measure and draft pattern

- Okay kids it's math class but don't be intimidated. With some simply arithmetic, your body measurements, tape measure, pencil and paper, have it ready. We're gonna figure out this skirt pattern in a jiff. We're gonna start by taking your waist measurement. I'm gonna do that with my friend the dress form here. Her waist measurement is 29 inches. I'm gonna jot that down so I don't forget it. 29. Her hip measurement which should be taken at the fullest portion of your dairy aire whether that's higher or lower is little different for all of us. Hers is 39. So I have 29 waist, 39 hip. Now the formula for creating this pattern, each of these measurements is gonna get divided by four. Here that is 7.25. 39 divided by four is 9.75. Or nine and three quarters and seven and one quarter. We're gonna add one inch for 8.25 on the waist and add one inch for 10.75 on the hip. That's gonna be the width of your pattern piece. Now your pattern piece only covers a quarter of the circumference of your waist because we are making one pattern piece. But we're gonna cut one for the front, one for the back and the pattern piece is actually only gonna be half of a front or a back because it's gonna be along a fold line. I can kind of exemplify that here by showing you roughly what our pattern piece is gonna look like. It's only gonna cover about a quarter of this skirt. The other measurement that you'll wanna take is the distance from your waist down to your hip line where you measured that fullest part of your hip. On our friend the dress form, looks like it's right around eight inches. From waist to hip is eight inches. The last remaining variable is how long do you want this skirt to be? For me I'm roughly 5'7" and a finished skirt length of about 38 inches gave me that nice maxi length that kind of hovers right about the ground. We're gonna take that measurement and we're gonna add an inch and a half to it to accommodate the turn down at the elastic waist and also the hem at the bottom. We want a 38 inch skirt but add an inch and a half. So

that's 39.5 length. So we have all our measurements including our length. This is my length, this is one and a half inch longer than my desired finished skirt length. To arrive at your desired skirt length, you can either choose a favorite long skirt out of your closet and just take a measurement of the finished length, add an inch and a half for your cut pattern length. Or just take the measuring tape and drop it down from your waist and find the length that you want. We are going to now go on to drafting our pattern. As you've seen with a lot of garment patterns there's sometimes a fold line down the center at the edge which represents where you will fold the fabric over and then place the pattern so that that fold line is in line with the folded fabric. You'll cut to make one then opened up fold symmetrical piece of your pattern. That's what we're gonna do. This outer edge along my tracing paper is gonna be my fold line. I'm gonna go ahead and draw a fold here. And get fancy like that. This first measurement is our waist measurement, 8.25. Take a ruler, line up the edge with your fold line edge. 8.25 is our measurement for that portion of the pattern. We're gonna count out to 8.25, make a dot, draw a straight line that's perpendicular to what will be your fold line. Here comes the important part of the distance between the waist and the hip. We're gonna measure now eight inches down. I have it at eight here. Going down eight inches. Make a dot, that's where we're gonna draw our hip line coming out off of the folded edge. So we line that up and it's 10.75. So we're gonna draw out and stop. From the waist line now we're gonna measure the 39.5 all the way out. But what's a little bit easier than starting with what will end up being angle is to start at the center. So I'm gonna measure 39.5 from the center. Since I have my measuring tape handy, I'm just gonna use that. Gonna line up that 39.5 right there at the waist line and make a mark down here at the end. Now we're gonna naturally graduate the width of this waist to the width of the hip with pretty much a straight line. Probably a little easier to do with this straight plexi ruler. For now I'm just gonna draw a completely straight line. Now to continue the line down towards the bottom of the skirt, we're really gonna have to determine how wide we want this skirt to be at the bottom. I find for a nice graceful A-line and kind of a slim maxi skirt that isn't too full and bunchy, I find that you're actually gonna want about a 60 inch circumference all the way around the bottom which would translate the 30 inches wide for a whole pattern piece. Since we're only drawing a quarter of a whole circumference, it's only gonna be 15 inches from the fold line. For now I'm just gonna measure our a straight line 15 and make a dot here. That is the point of width that we're going to come out. In fact I'm going to just go ahead and draw a little straight line here. So our next step is to get one continuous line from the waist line point all the way down to the bottom outer edge of our skirt. We're gonna kind of first be guided by this angle that's happening from the waist line to the hip. We sort of want to gracefully continue. You can see that if I were to keep that same angle for the side of the skirt, that I would eventually end up a little wider than I actually want the bottom of the skirt to be and a little bit fuller. So then we sort of just gracefully, we can start at that angle and it's just a matter of kind of drawing and gracefully heading your drawn, really more of a sketch, line towards that point. The great thing about tracing paper is you can take your time and perfect this line. Even if it means cutting another piece. What we wanna check for next, now that we have a rough angle going here, is the length of it. We want it to be the same length as it is down the center which is 39.5. So you see our point off this side edge, because it goes at an angle, it's a little longer. It's about 40. We are actually gonna make a new mark at 39.5. That's gonna be a reference point now for us to keep our hemline smooth all the way across. Let's go ahead. I like to start by drawing straight lines so I know how much I need to work it out by curving the line just a little bit gracefully. So there's a straight line. This is the 39.5 mark and so is this. I'm gonna gracefully curve this in. I sometimes just sort of keep turning my ruler as I head for it. They also sell these really cool

bendable rulers that you can just create that curve as you go. It's awesome for drafting patterns. Now up at the waist line we also wanna create a curve. Skirt patterns don't go straight across. They have a little bit of a dip from the side down to your navel or down to your center back. We wanna keep our length in place at the waist. So what we're gonna do is actually raise the side up by just a bit, no more than half an inch or so. And create a very similar, graceful curve at the top to the one we drew at the bottom. We want this curve at the waistline to just gradually happen similar to the way that it did down at the hemline. So guess what? We have a pattern, now it's time to grab your paper scissors and cut this bad boy out and we can get onto sewing.

Cut skirt pieces

- We are going to make a wider fabric out of these two lengths of 44 inch wide fabric, and to do that I am first going to snip off the selvages off of both one and a half yard lengths, and snip at the end. Look out for a rip. This ensures that you're getting the fabric torn right on the grain. Okay, and then we're going to do it to the next one. Fun stuff for later. Just be sure you're pulling equally with both arms. Pop, we're done. Now that's going to give us a few little threads hanging off, and I like to go ahead and get those out of my way now because these edges are going to be what we sew together to create our wider fabric. Okay, so we're going to take these two lengths over to the sewing machine. I'm going to sew them together with a 5/8 seam allowance, press it open. Instant wide fabric. This is a big mass of fabric, so I'm going to turn my needle down to keep it all in place as I move the weight and bulk of this fabric up on the table next to me, and you don't want it to put your seam out of line. Don't feel like you have to rush through it. We want this to be like and neat, you want it to be smooth. Okay, don't even worry about backstitching. We've just got ourselves some 80 inch wide plus fabric, and we're going to press this seam open at the ironing board, and then we're going to use this just like any other fabric to cut our bias cut skirt. Now we have huge fabric, extra huge fabric. To cut a bias cut pattern that has a center line fold, we are going to have to create a fold that is on the bias angle, at a 45 degree angle. To do that, we're going to grab a corner of the fabric and a side edge of the fabric, and we're going to make a triangular fold. You really just sort of have to eyeball how much space you'll need for your pattern to begin with. You can sort of ensure that you've got your lines at a 45 degree by looking at this side edge here, seeing that it's parallel with that edge, and seeing that these fold lines that kind of naturally happen in the fabric are perpendicular to each other, and even so much as looking at that grain weave of your fabric being kind of in line with the piece underneath it. And when you smooth your bias cut fabric, you want to smooth on the grain and smooth on the cross grain. You don't ever want to smooth on this because this will give and stretch, so you want to come towards it like this, or like this, vertical or horizontal, but not an angle. Okay, so we want a nice smooth angle. Take your pattern piece. Our fold was here, so we want to bring it up to the folded edge of the fabric. To save fabric, you can head as close to that top line of your yardage as possible. You can pin here if you like. I also sometimes just set various things that I have in the studio that have a little weight, rubber cement, hole punch, weights to keep it in place. So now we're going to cut. This is a little bit of a reach for me, but here we go. If you're a pinner, don't be scared. Go ahead and pin. Save yourself the anxiety. Before we yank it away, let's make sure that all our lines are cut clean because we don't want anything to get out of place, so I run my finger along the seam to catch my, I have a very nice worn in cutting mat, so I have a few little spots on it that need to be snipped with scissors. And clean cut. Skirt piece number one, front or back, doesn't make a difference. It's interchangeable. You can see we have this little tiny bit of that seam down at the bottom, no big deal. The other pattern piece is

probably going to end up with an angled seam maybe across the hip, but I think it looks kind of cool to have that patchwork fabric underneath. So this is skirt piece number one. We're going to cut a second one just exactly like this, and then we're going to move on to machine basting our feathers to the skirt pieces.

Machine baste feathers

- We have a few last steps with these feathers before they're ready to be put in place. You can see the difference between these feathers and this one here, which is where we left it when we were last messing around with the feathers. We have a nice trimmed point here and nice pressed back stems. So let's finish off this fourth one here. I just need a straight edge and my rotary, and I'm really just going to follow the line of that top angle and cut. Turn and do it again. So now I have a nice clean point. I am going to move to the ironing board now for a few last picky steps with this feather. You can see here I have a little bit of excess points from having folded back that edge before we sewed sides to the stem. I'm going to clip those off. I'm just reducing the bulk underneath and then I press. This is our one inch wide stem. I'm going to fold it back quarter inch for the raw edges to meet down the center of the back. I'm going to press it, creating a nice folded crease on the edge of the stem. And why not, while we're here, go ahead and give everything a good pressing? From the wrong side, and from the right side as well. It's looking pretty and finished. Look at that. Oh I love it. It's like it was meant to be together all along when you see it pressed. It becomes one, awesome. We have four completely prepped feathers here ready to get machine basted onto one side of the skirt, which is really just doing exactly what you would think you would do at this stage, and that's just positioning them on the skirt. Now you could put them higher or lower. What I think is really cool about these feathers and the shape of the skirt is they both sort of taper up at the top, so one sort of mimics the other, so they, I just think the placement of this is a really beautiful thing. So keep in mind we're going to have a 5/8 seam allowance on each side, so they're probably going to be a little closer together than they are to the edge. And I chose to put my stem edges, the raw edges, all the way down at the raw edge of the skirt, so then after these have been hand appliqued, I can just include those in the hem, and once they're all pinned, it's time to head to the sewing machine and machine baste. You don't have to worry about hemming the stems because we're not actually going to machine applique the stems, so they're just going to sort of hang out. We're only going to machine applique the feather portion in place. To machine baste, we want to set our stitch length at the longest setting. On this machine, that's at a five, so I'm going to digitize all the way up there. We don't necessarily have to backstitch, but I'm going to start this machine basting stitch a little bit off the feather first before I start sewing onto it. I'm going to make my seam line a quarter inch away from the raw edge of the feather and that seam line is actually going to give me my guide as I turn the fabric under to hand baste when we get to that step. I'm sewing from the top down on one side. Go a little slowly because remember this feather is cut on the bias, as well as your skirt, which is actually pretty cool that they're both going to rect to the sewing the same way. The bias cut feather sitting on the bias cut skirt. I put my needle down at the turn to pivot, put the foot back down, and sew down the long edge. I try and keep my pins far enough away from where the seam line is going to happen so that I don't have to take them out. I sort of want them to stay in place just for an extra added assurance that my feather is staying in place the whole time I sew. I'm going to continue right off the feather, and don't forget, remember here we have the folded up edge. We want to make sure that stays folded up. Let me grab a pin. Grab the edge, make sure it stays folded up when you sew. And I'm going to sew right off of it. Now I'm going to slide back up to the top of the feather

and I'm going to go down the other side. Again we're sewing top down both sides, so nothing gets twisted or out of place. Needle down, like that, pivot, time to go down that long edge. What we're doing right now is taking the place of turning under a quarter inch and pressing all the way around this feather. Doesn't this seem a lot easier? That can get a little finicky, but many applique projects, you would turn edges up towards their wrong sides to prepare them. I think you're going to love this process, especially if it's your first time doing applique. Now we can continue to machine baste every feather on this skirt piece, and then we're going to repeat the same thing with the rest of the feathers on the other skirt piece, and then it's time to assemble this skirt at the side seams and put in our elastic waist.

Sew side seams

- We have our two skirt pieces here that have their feathers machine-basted to them, so they're ready to be placed right sides together. And we're gonna sew the side seams from the waist down to the hem. And I'm not a big pinner, I'm sure I've said that more than once, but because this is bias-cut and we wanna keep it all in line, I am for sure gonna go ahead and pin up at the top. Move down the side seam. Pin at least one more time. And then let's follow down to the hem. We're gonna sew the side seams at 5/8 seam allowance. And I've got to get my stitches back down to a reasonable, non-basting stitch. And backstitch at the top. (sewing machine whirs) Again, because we're on the bias, we don't wanna pull our fabric through, we don't wanna drag it. We wanna kinda gently guide from the front so we're not stretching. (sewing machine whirs) Another cool thing about fabrics that are cut on the bias, they don't ravel quite so much. But if you did wanna finish off the edges of this skirt with, like, a zigzag stitch, or some sort of edge stitch before you even assemble it, that is totally cool. (sewing machine whirs) So that's the first side seam, sew the other side seam exactly the same way. Press those seam allowances open, and we'll be ready to attach our waistband.

Create waistband

- It is elastic time. You're gonna cut a piece of 1" wide elastic in the exact circumference of your waist. And once you've done that, we're gonna join the ends at the sewing machine. Make sure you don't have it twisted. Overlap the ends by just about maybe 1/2" or so. Those are overlapped. Gonna do a couple rows of straight stitches to keep 'em together. Gonna backstitch all the way up. Move over, just about 1/4". And, again. Okay. Gonna go ahead and snip this excess thread, to get it out of my way. Just like our skirt, we have sides to our elastic, now that we have this loop. So, we're gonna call this stitched edge, one side, and keeping it folded it like this, we can identify the direct opposite side. And I'm gonna go ahead and place a straight pin in that side to mark it. With our skirt, we're gonna align one side of the elastic with one side seam of the skirt. Pin it in place. Need some kind of hefty-duty pins for this business. You know what, I'm gonna head up the other way. And then directly across, the other side of the elastic, which we've marked with a pin, to the other side seam. Let's pin that in place. The next step is going to be stretching this elastic to accommodate the full circumference of the skirt, and at the same time, zigzagging the two together at your machine. If you can remove the arm of your machine, (snaps) so that you have a free arm with space to move the fabric all the way around the circumference, you can do that now. It's not that big of a deal if you don't. Keep in mind that I've pinned the elastic on the inside, wrong side, of the skirt. But we're actually going to be sewing it from the right side. You want to keep your eyes on the material as you sew. Let's settle it underneath. This is why I kept my pinhead down here, instead of at the top.

Lower the foot. I'm gonna select my zigzag stitch. Every machine is a little bit difference with the width, and then the space between the stitches. I've kept it at a pretty wide zigzag. So the idea is to keep the raw edge of your fabric in line with the edge of the elastic. And as you send it though the machine, you're gonna be tugging a little more on the elastic and not tugging at all on the skirt. So that you've stretched the elastic to the circumference of the skirt, but passing them both through the machine at the same time. If you want to practice with a short length of elastic and a slightly longer length of fabric to get your tension and your moves down with stretching that elastic as you sew it through the machine, then, by all means, do that. Because it's kind of an awkward motion, you're pulling the elastic towards yourself as you're also pushing the fabric away from yourself as you go. So let's get started, let's see what happens. (machine whirs) I'm tugging, I'm keeping the fabric off the edge, close to my hand. You see, I'm not really holding the fabric with my right hand at all, I'm only holding the elastic. And I can stop and check, with my needle down, and pull on it, and that's right. I still have a little more excess fabric, so I haven't stretched my elastic out too much yet. So now that I'm close to that pinned edge on the side, I just can hold both the fabric and the elastic together. I would slow down here, 'cause I wanna leave that pin in place, but I'm gonna use the manual wheel to turn over that pin. See, I would have lost an eye right there. So I'm just gonna jump over, and then get the next length ready to go. Stretching the elastic, guiding the fabric. (machine whirs) Once I got comfortable doing this, I actually enjoy doing this kind of elastic waist, more than creating a channel, and feeding through. Then slow down again, now that we're approaching the pin. So now, this is just the first step of two that we're gonna do to complete this waist. I'm gonna remove the pins now. I'm gonna put my arm back on. And now, all we're gonna do is fold down towards the wrong side, just as much as the fabric is wide. Straight down, aligning your side seam. Make it nice and firm, and we'll want to do this pretty slowly as we go around. This is the zigzag stitch that you'll actually see from the outside of the skirt. So, I'm using a pink thread here, so that you can see on camera how smooth this is. But in real life, I probably would have used a thread that matches the fabric better than this pink. (machine whirs) And just stay right on that edge. On this zigzag, I actually changed the settings of my stitch a little bit, to keep it farther apart, and actually, a little more narrow, because this is the one that we're actually gonna see from the outside of the skirt. Continue to smooth the fabric with your left hand away, wrapping it around that elastic turndown, and keeping it nice and tight. (machine whirs) (machine whirs) If your machine can automatically default to having the needle down, this is a great place to do that, to keep everything in place as you stop and readjust. (machine whirs) All right, let's give this machine a rest. We have finished our waistband, we'll back at the machine later to finish the hem. But for now, it's time to move onto hand applique.

Chapter 5 - AppliquÃ©

Start needle-turn appliquÃ©

- It's time to begin our hand applique of the feathers to the skirt. You can see that I have this completed one here, and I have a second one sewn at various stages to show you all the steps of my technique to get the feathers appliqued to the skirt. What I do first is I keep a book between the two layers of my skirt, because remember, we already attached the side seams and we don't want to attach the front to the back with our applique stitches. So, I separate them by sliding a book in. Next, I'll pin with straight pens the stem of the feather to the skirt. Make sure you have them both lying flat and positioned the way you'd like. Now remember, these edges are already tucked in nice and neat and pressed, as are the bottom edges of our feather here. So, we can get straight to work

on appliqueing. Got a nice, sharp embroidery needle. You could also use a quilting needle, whatever's most comfortable for you, but not too big so it's not poking giant holes into your fabric. I like to thread a double threaded needle so that I don't have to worry about it coming unthreaded. You can definitely applique with just one strand, but I always tend towards two. I'm just gonna do a simple knot. And since we're gonna start from the bottom edge at the feather stem, I'm just gonna enter from the back so I don't have to worry about hiding a knot so much. Come through the skirt fabric and enter the stem through that side crease, and pull through 'til our knot is taught and we can get started. Now, what we're starting here is gonna end up getting hidden in our machine hem after all these feathers are finished. Typically, I would use a thread color that matches the color of my skirt material, but today, I'm using this bright one so you can see it nice and clearly as I stitch. Now that I have the thread pulled out and ready to go, I'm going to enter the skirt material. This process is just almost exactly like blind stitching, where you will sort of meander your needle from one material to the next, keeping it buried in the outer crease of your applique shape. I've loaded several stitches between the two materials there. You can see little glimmers of my needle in between. Now I'm gonna pull through. Getting started on the edge is a little tedious, just because there's not much weight where you are in the material to hold it down. I probably sort of over threaded my needle here a little long, but that's alright. And we'll continue just like that. The thing that's a little bit different about this and blind sewing, is blind sewing you very frequently have two folded edges coming together that, say you're closing a pillow shut or you're closing some other thing shut where they're both treated exactly the same, this is somewhat different because you have a flat surface and whole shape sitting on top of it. So, what you can do a little bit differently is grab that folded edge, not at the very outer edge with your needle, but slightly underneath so you're actually kind of meandering to that folded underpart, but still very close to the outer edge. That might sound confusing to talk about it, but in practice, if you're practicing along with me, which I hope you are, it makes a little bit more sense. And you'll notice how I'm pinning with my fingers a little bit. I'm keeping it in place with the tips of my fingers. And you wanna go straight across the straight here, no angles. Some people put applique work in a hoop. You could do that if you wanted to. I actually like doing applique at a table, because I wanna be sure that my skirt layer and my applique shape is flat. Don't worry if you can only load one or two at a time. Once you get the hang of it, you'll be loading several stitches at once and it'll get a little bit faster for you. And newsflash, if hand applique isn't your thing, you can still have a really cool skirt. You could do pretty much everything I've done up to this point, but rather than machine basting these on, you could fold in all the edges with an iron and press a crease, pin them to your skirt, and just topstitch with a sewing machine. No reason why you shouldn't have a gorgeous skirt like this just because you don't love handwork. So, you're gonna continue hand appliqueing all the way up the stem until you get to the corner, and then I'm gonna show you how we'll do that. Definitely most comfortable to remove these pins as you go so you don't prick yourself. And in fact, I only pin one feather at a time. I don't wanna pin all these feathers because they might poke you. So, I'm very close to that interior corner. The only thing that I wanna be sure of is that I finish a stitch either in the shape or in the skirt right at the corner. In this case, I'm gonna be finishing a stitch and coming out right in that interior corner there. And the reason for that is you wouldn't wanna finish here and then have to jump over. Your thread will end up showing, so you wanna come right out at the corner. And then head the other direction. Take a right turn. And you're gonna continue along this nice, folded edge, holding it down with your fingers to keep it in place until you get to where we've basted, and I'll show you how to do that. This technique is also frequently called needle turn applique. And the reason for that is you

can kind of actually use the needle to wrap that fabric edge around to create the crease as you go, but we already have a nice crease, which is so cool and helpful. But that needle becomes a little tool if you need to tuck a little corner in as well. I'm a couple stitches away from this basted edge, so I'm gonna show you how that's gonna work. We are just basically going to be clipping that basting every second or third stitch or so, a few inches at a time. You can kind of then use your closed scissor tips to get away some of those basting threads. You don't have to clear all those basting stitches away, but the closer that I can get to seeing a finished product, the more inspired I am to continue. So, that machine basting not only held this feather in place and all the feathers in place on the skirt so that you didn't have to have a bunch of pins hanging out of a work in progress, it also perforated the material during the basting process. The perforation is happening on the feather and it's also happening if you look real closely on the material of the skirt. So, I'm just gonna finger press tuck that edge in along the perforated lines. And continue my hand applique. And just like with the interior corner, we wanna complete a stitch at the edge. If your stitches get a little shorter to fit the next one in, that's fine. Better that they get a little shorter than get too long. And speaking of the length of a stitch, anything that is, you know, definitely less than a quarter of an inch. I'm guessing, I never really thought about it, but I'm guessing that my stitches might be about an eighth of an inch long. So, so you know I'm out at that very corner, so I'm gonna be able to anchor it down well in place. And we're gonna continue like this all the way up the side of the feather. As you get a few stitches away from your machine basting, just get your scissors back out, clip, give yourself several inches of clipped feather edge, tuck under, and applique. You might notice that the stitches you've been making are creating just the slightest ripple in the fabric of the skirt, but that is gonna go away once you give this a nice pressing when it's complete. You can see how nice and smooth this is on the finished skirt example because its been pressed. And now that we're near the end of this thread, I'm gonna show you how I knot. The cool thing about working on a garment is that you have a right side and a wrong side. Not everything is gonna get seen. So, we're gonna sneak the thread back to the wrong side. Right now, my thread is coming right out of the feather edge and that's a perfect scenario to just go straight down in the same position into the skirt fabric and poke it through. I'm gonna reach in to the inside of the skirt and pull it through. And now I can just work on the inside of the skirt to make a knot and finish this thread off. In here, by the way, is what it looks like on the inside. Just this pretty little row of straight stitches. So, keep in mind that your feather is on this side, so any kind of stitching you show, as long as it's right behind where your feather is, is not gonna get shown from the right side of the skirt. So, we're just gonna do a simple backstitch in just the skirt material, not going through the feather. To begin our knot with our fussy thread here. I'm just gonna go ahead and do one more backstitch. And before I pull the slack all the way through, I'm gonna pass through twice and tug to get a knot. And just so that I don't have too many tails hanging out on the inside, I'm gonna bury it. And I didn't go through the feather. I can tell by the way it feels that I've just gone underneath the skirt material. And clip to finish. You'll begin the next thread exactly the way we began the first thread at the base of the feather.

Finish needle-turn appliqué

- I have this second feather just a little farther along in progression up the side of the feather. And it gives me an opportunity to show you how we turn the top corners. So I'm gonna rethread ... Beginning again, is just like beginning from the very beginning. First though, I'm gonna fold this raw edge in on the perforated line. And kinda use my needle to help me out actually. Needle turn applique. Alright, that's ready to go. I'm gonna enter in from the inside of the skirt and come out just

like we started. So that's where my last stitch left off so I wanna come in right beside it here. But I'm gonna do that, first through the applique shape, at the crease edge then come out. Now, we can stay on top. Once you get going on this type of project, and any type of handwork project, you find this really lovely rhythm that kinda gets established. And it's like you set little goals here yourself. Like I'm just gonna get to this corner and then I'm gonna stop. Then you sort of wanna see what it looks like if you get to the next corner. So again, I'm gonna get to the next corner and then I'm gonna stop. Little goals all along the way and before you know it, you have something beautiful. So I'm a few stitches away from that basted top corner. Then I take my scissors, clip up the basting. We have to kinda start prethinking this top corner too. So I'm gonna clip out a few of that next line basting stitches too. Sometimes just lifting ... the feather shape up. We'll pop some of that excess basting thread out of your way. This is some place where I like to employ the help of a pin. So I'm gonna tuck under, the first edge, pressing it on the perforated line. Bring it back down on the skirt's perforated line. And I'm pinning it here because we have some seam allowances right at this intersection that make the fabric a little bulkier. So it sort of wants to lay down for you a little less than if it were just one layer of fabric. So for now, I'm just gonna pin that one side. Make my nice corner here, hold it in place. And again, we wanna complete the stitch, at that corner. When it gets finicky like this, just do one stitch at a time. Be sure you got it right. There's one and then this next one is just gonna go into the skirt, back in right at the corner of the feather. I might be a little high there, but that's okay. Once I grab it, it will come down. So now, I'm gonna go right into the corner of that outer corner of that feather. And I'm just gonna make one more stitch. I wanna be sure I have this corner down anchored neatly instead of, you know, showing off on loading on some stitches. So now I could start, loading more ... Also don't forget that this fabric that the feather is made out of has it's own sets of seam allowances where the strips meet each other. So, you just need to take a little care in going through those layers. You don't have to go through all of them. The most important thing is that you just go through that top one. And this guy is apparently slipping out. So I'm gonna pin him down and make him stay in place. Make sure I get my pin through the seam allowance. Okay, now, he's gonna be still. You can see with all this somewhat fussiness of process, why it's nice to work on a completely flat surface and not your lap. And I get it, it's getting little bulky up here because of all the seam allowances in one intersection. So now I'm loading less stitches. This basting line that was here, and you can still see most of it, is gonna dictate where the point of this feather is gonna happen. So we have it going this way and then this one's gonna get folded under and it's gonna create the top point of the feather. I'm gonna do just about another one or two more stitches before I turn down the next point. I think on this feather shape, this step right here might be the trickiest. So be patient with yourself. Gonna go ahead and clip out this guy, get him out the way. Gently free it. Before I start stitching this corner down, I'm gonna resituate myself just a little bit here. So that I'm sewing in my right to left orientation the way I like to, so flip it. Alright, tricky corner. This is gonna get pin down to stay in place. I'm gonna fold along this perforated line. Use your needle to help if it like. So you see he wants to stick out here, no sir, get tucked back in. You can use a pin or a needle to do that. I'm just gonna place this pin here to keep the fold in place. And now as I go to stitch, I'm gonna use my needle to tuck and get that nice point. Really only have room for about one more stitch until I get to the tip. And I'm just gonna hold it back off the fabric right now, so I'm sure that I'm getting it. Cause I know where I need to go in and come out. And now, it can bury it to the fabric by pulling nice and tight. Like I said, probably the fussiest little spot on this feather. So you can still see my basting bob and thread underneath here. Let's me know I'm in line. Okay, now straight down at the tip to anchor it. And I'm only gonna take

one stitch cause I wanna get this right. And again, just one more. Taking just one stitch at a time here is a really important thing to do around this outer corner. Because when you're trying to load too many stitches at one time, the stitches previous to where you were, kind of loosen up their slack a little bit and you want each stitch to be really nice and tight to keep the point right in place where you want it. But now that I've done that, I'm gonna load them up. I have this funny habit of timing myself whenever I'm working on a project that requires multiples of the same thing. So eight of these feathers, so, I time how long it took me to do one and then get super excited if the next one take me a little less time. Truly though, based on this project, it's not about time for me cause I don't mind taking some. I've just shown you the knots and bolts of this hand applique process and we've already crossed over the threshold of the most difficult part of it. So I will just continue to hand applique these feathers. Then once that's repeated on all eight feathers of your beautiful skirt, were gonna just finish it up with the hem at the machine.

Hem skirt

- We are at the last step of this skirt, it's time to perform a roll hem. Before you do that, though, trim those feather stems to the same level of the bottom edge of your skirt. Now, if you prefer to do your roll hem first by starting at the iron and pressing a quarter inch crease and then another quarter inch crease to get it rolling before you come to the machine, feel free to do that. I tend to just roll as I go. Roughly a quarter inch, and then folding again towards the wrong side of your fabric, the inside of the skirt. And settling it under the presser foot. Lower my needle. And I get ready to grab these edges and roll as I go. I'm gonna set the speed of my machine down just a little bit 'cause I wanna take my time to get this nice. Rolling up a bias edge skirt is just slightly different. Start with a backstitch. It's just slightly different than if you were cutting, or if you were sewing, rather, with something that's on the grain. As you approach these stems that are folded up into your bottom hem, just take your time because those are several layers of fabric all right there together. The bias is gonna react a little bit differently as you roll up your hem, a little different than cross-grain fabric. No big deal, just something to be aware of. Just be sure and take your time and get a nice smooth turnout. So that is it, that's the last step to this skirt. After a final pressing at the ironing board, it's time to pick out a cute top to go with your new skirt.