
Make Over a Denim Jacket with Lesley Ware

Chapter 1 - Make Over a Denim Jacket

Overview

Hey guys, I'm Lesley Ware, the Creative Cookie and author of several activity books for youth. I'm also a fashion educator and lover of all things sparkly. I'm based in New York, but I'm originally from the Midwest. I believe that fashion is a form of self-care and the tool we can use to give us a lift when we need it. I had like a really dark time a couple of years ago, and fashion was what really helped me get up and get out the door on some days. I love to show my students how certain garments and accessories can help them cope and feel protected. I'm super excited to show you how to transform a denim jacket with patches, beads, fabric marker, trim, and other embellishments to create something that is one of a kind. You'll learn to find inspiration from the streets. You're also going to learn how to plan out your jacket. We're also going to learn how to add patches and last but not least, you'll learn how to sew on a trim. I think you're really going to love this project. This is going to be your happy jacket that you can throw on when you need a lift.

Materials

- This project is from my book, "How To Be A Fashion Designer." This book was published by DK Books and it came out in 2018 and it has lots of really cool activities and things you can try. The materials you'll need for this project are a denim jacket. I love to get denim jackets from thrift stores or from even fast fashion retailers like H&M or Forever 21. You're going to need a pencil. You'll need an illustration of a denim jacket. This is called a flat that you're going to use to plan out your design. You may need fabric markers. I really love the stain fabric markers by Sharpie, some trim, so check your trim stash and see if you have anything cool. I think I like to put trim around the collar of my jacket. You'll need a bunch of fun patches. So in this, we have a lot of letters and kittens and all sorts of cool things. I collect patches, but if you don't have a collection of patches you can order them from Amazon. You can also get them from this really cool store here in New York city called M&J Trimming and they have thousands of patches online. It's really great. You'll need, if you have any sort of buttons or beading or other things that you might want to sew on I like these cool metal pieces that have been kind of peeling the paint off of so that'll be fun to add. You'll need needle and thread, because this is a project that you could do by machine, but you can also do it by hand, your fabric scissors, you'll need an iron and a surface to iron on and last but not least, you're going to need some pins to hold your patches on.

Sketch design

- Before I start any project, I like to plan out what I'm going to do. We have this image of a denim jacket flat, and this is what you're going to use to plan out your design. I was looking at a lot of people's denim jackets on the street for the last couple of weeks just to think of new ideas and be inspired for the jacket that we're going to create in this class. So one of the jackets that I saw on the street, and I actually stopped the woman to ask her if I could take a photo of her jacket because I thought it was so cool. And she had like a trim around the collar of her jacket. So I went into my trim stash, and I found two trims that I think will look really good on the jacket that we're upcycling. One is this braided white one. And then this one is like a lot of fun, and it kinda reminds me of like Michael Jackson, like something Michael Jackson would wear because it's got like this gold running

through it, and it's very kind of just fancy. So I haven't decided which direction I'm going to go yet, but I'm just going to draw this kind of like scalloped looking detail for the trim on the collar. I also know I want to add a patch to the collar. I might add a butterfly. So I'm just putting an X right there. And then I definitely want to put some patches or something at the top of the jacket, and maybe we'll do one over here. And I'm just doing little squares for the patches. If you want, you can draw them out completely. But this is really just to give you an idea of placement for everything. This jacket I think is gonna be really busy. For now I just wanna leave the sleeves alone, and I'm going to just concentrate really on the bodice of the jacket and like filling that part up. I'll probably add something to the pocket so I'm just putting an X there, and then I have like a really cute crown patch, so I'm just going to draw that down here 'cause I think I want to put it towards the bottom. I have a W patch for Ware that I might put here. So I'm just really thinking about places where I might add patches. I feel like it might need something else over here. One last thing that I think I'm gonna add, 'cause this looks like a little unbalanced, is maybe we can put a patch or something right here. So I'll have to see what's in my stash. So I really like how things seem to be pretty balanced out. So now I think we can move to the back of the jacket. So I'm just going to do some trim around the edge of the collar, where that would go so it's like kind of continuing from the front. And then I have loved what people on the street have been doing with the back of their jackets. And I saw this woman a few weeks ago and I like stopped and asked if I could take a picture of her jacket. And she actually used a T-shirt that had holes in it. She cut it up and like put it on the back of a denim jacket. It really gave me the idea to cover the entire back of a denim jacket. And I think denim jackets are so cool because they have this like big rectangle that's almost like a canvas that you can do a lot with. And what I think I would like to do with my denim upcycle is do some sort of trim around the perimeter of this square piece in the back, which is really nice to work with. So I'm just drawing a line here to remind myself that like I will be adding a trim there. And then I think I wanna put the title of my first book on the back of it, 'cause it's something that I'm really proud of and it like makes me happy and it's a cute title. So I need to get letters, and I think I have them all, that say Sew Fab. So I'll write Sew, and I think I would like to have it kind of curve around the back of the jacket a little bit. And then we'll do Fab. And then I really love this little bear, so I'm going to try to (laughs) draw a picture of the bear, and it has like a little flower. So we'll put something in the middle here. And then if I have like more butterflies, maybe something could go here and here to balance it out. And these little pink metal things, maybe we'll sew one or two in place. If you want to add things to your sketch too, you can add like swatches to it. If you have any hardware or trim that you wanna add, you could also like, just add them too so you can remember like what things look like. So it's I think really cool to just make your flat as detailed as possible, or you could keep it simple, but it's just always good to start with some sort of plan for your jacket. So now that we have this all planned out, the next thing that we're going to do is start to pin the items like on the jacket and then actually attach them.

Prepare patches

- Right now, we are going to prepare our patches. As you can see in the sketch, I wanted to put sew fab on the back of the denim jacket. And I had these patches and they're just all white. And I was worried that they would kind of, because the denim jacket is light, like the wording would get lost. And so what we're going to do is we're going to use our fabric marker to outline each letter to make it pop out. So I'm going to show you how to do that now. So if you're using lettering or if you wanna just alter any of your patches, you can use fabric marker to customize your patches before you sew

them on. I think it's a really good idea to do this first because the marker can get a little messy. And so by doing it first, setting it to the side so it can dry when you get ready to sew it on, you won't have smudge marks all over your jacket. So this is just a really easy way to punch up your patches. I'm just using kind of tiny strokes to color in the edge. And these are patches that I picked up from M&J Trimming. I got like a little bit of marker in the embroidered part of my patch. I'll probably just leave it there because I don't feel like everything has to be super perfect. Like for me, it's just about getting things done. But if you're a perfectionist, you could use a little bit of white nail polish. You could use white out. Or if you have like a white paint marker, you could just kind of clean up that area using something white and no one will ever know that you colored outside of the lines. All right. So we're almost done with our F. Just a little more. And it would be really fun to play around with, if you wanted, you could do like a bunch of different color outlines. You can even color into the threads on the embroidered part of these patches. So this is just like a cool way to get really creative with making your one-of-a-kind happy jacket. So now that that's colored in, I'm just going to open up my paper and place all of them on the paper. And it should dry pretty quickly, but I would just let it set for at least an hour, just to make sure it's like completely dry and you don't smudge anything on to your jacket. I just like keep these guys with it 'cause they're all gonna go on together. All right, so now we're going to move on to the next part of this process, which is to start sewing on your trim and your patches.

Sewing on patches and trim

- So now we're at the fun part. We are going to start sewing on the patches and trims and taking this plain jacket and turning it into something that's lots of fun and that you can wear forever. I'm looking at the sketch and I like to work kind of like with one panel and then the other panel, and then I flip it over and work on the back. So I tend to, for some reason just always start on the right side, even though I'm a lefty. I love to start on the right. And so I'm looking at this top right. I guess it would kinda be a quadrant of the jacket. And I'm noticing that I have three things here. So I love these crests patches. They had to give me like girl scout vibes or I don't know, royalty. Like they're just really cute. So I think I want to put three of them up in this corner. I'll start with, let me see which one is kind of like the anchor. So you're going to want to play around with like the positioning to see where things should go. I think I like this one as kind of like the more prominent patch of this area of the jacket. So I'm going to move the other two to the side, and the coolest thing about patches is a lot of them have this kind of like iron-on adhesive on the back so it makes it really, really easy to apply. And I want this to be centered. And a good way to check for that is I'm just looking at the line from the button and the button hole. And then I'm looking to see if the bottom of the crest, like you just kind of want this like all in alignment. So that it looks really good. What I'm going to do next is I'm gonna take one of my pins. And when you're doing this, this is an important note. Make sure that you use either pins that are at glass or pins that have a metal head because if you iron on a patch like with the plastic pin, as you can see here, I was ironing something and then realize that this was one of my plastic pins and the ball on the head of the pin has started to melt. And I've even had that ruin a project once, which was not fun. I was at the end of a project and then I was pressing it and I had the wrong kind of pin and it heat onto the fabric. So make sure you have either glass or metal pins. So I'm just going to put that here to hold it in place, and our iron is all heated up and you usually would do this on the cotton setting. And then I will place the jacket on our ironing cloth, and you want to get it as flat as you can and make sure that your patch is in a good place. Some people like to protect their iron by putting like a piece of muslin or a piece of cotton on top of the patch. If

you want to do that you can. I sort of like to see the patch because sometimes they shift. And so I'll like kind of hold it in place. So I tend not to cover it just so I can hold it. And so you're just going to run the iron over the patch until it's completely stuck on. And it's fine usually to apply a little steam. When we iron on our letters on the back, since we use fabric marker, we probably won't use as much steam to prevent any residual smudging. All right. So this is on. Now a lot of you are thinking we could just stop here and move on to the next patch and that's true, you could. But I always like to secure the patches by sewing them on just so this jacket really will last you forever because it's your happy jacket. So you don't want stuff to start falling off, 'cause that would make you really sad. So we're going to do our running stitch to make sure this patch stays on forever. You could get really creative with thread, but I'm just going to stick with whatever thread is around the border of my patch. This jacket is gonna get really busy, fast. And so just keeping the thread consistent with the patch is going to be key. And the cool thing about this is because it's already somewhat sewn on, don't have to do your running stitch super tight. You can make it a little bit bigger than what you would for like a normal sewing project. 'Cause you really just want to like tack it on just so that it's like secure. So I'm tying a knot. I always like to cut off the tail so it doesn't get in the way. You can start from anywhere on the patch. I always like to start at the top corner. So I'm pushing it through and now all you're going to do is continue to do the running stitch all the way around your patch. And another reason why we can do a slightly looser running stitch is because there's no pressure being put on these seams. It's just really hanging on to your jacket. But I will note you can see all your stitching on the other side of the jacket. So it's important just to make it neat. 'Cause I liked the insides of my garments to be just as pretty as the outside sometime. So you still wanna do it neat, but you can do it a little larger. I'm just going around and as you'll notice, like you can't even see the thread. It's blending and really great. If you have a sewing machine, you can do this on your sewing machine too. And it's really fast. But I love to watch TV, like "Project Runway" and sew on and do hand sewing projects or any kind of like creative reality show. And so because then it just feels like you're being productive. So I'll probably be working on this or other jackets while watching something fun. It'll probably take you about five minutes per patch to sew them on, depending on the size of the patch and the intricacy of the design. All right. So we're almost at the top corner. Okay. and then another tip as you're sewing your jacket, if you don't have a dress form at home, it's always fine just to stop and try it on and look at yourself in a full length mirror and make sure that you're happy with how everything is coming together, because you can gain a lot of information from having it on a body or a form as to like how the placement of what you're doing is progressing and coming along. So I'll do one more stitch. 'Cause we were like back at that top corner that we started at. And so I'm going to push it through and then turn it over to the back and we're going to tie a knot, and cut it. And you can see the shape of the patch. And it looks like I like, there's like a little bubble, but that's okay, we can resolve that easily. But now you can see the shape of the patch. It's secure, it's going to be on there for forever. And now you'll just continue on. So I think this was the next patch that we're going to sewn on. So you'll go through the same process where you're going to iron it on and then do the running stitch around until your jacket is complete. There's one more sewing thing that we're going to do, and that is adding a trim around the collar. You can add trim in so many different places. Like I think it would even be fun to go over some of these seams in the jacket to further define them. You could do trim down the sleeve, you could do trim at the shoulder, but I really wanted to do it around the collar because I saw someone who had on a cool denim jacket with trim around the collar. So that's what we're going to do right now, is start to sew on the trim. So I have two choices for trim that I was having a hard time deciding which one to use. I

really like this because this gold just looks really nice and kind of like, I don't know, prestigious with the crest and like just the different patches that we're using. But then I also really like this more simplistic braided trim because it just looks nice with the color of the jacket and everything else that is going to be happening with this jacket is very busy. And so it really balances the jacket out. So my advice to you is you can just always like ask a friend what they think is a good option. I even love posting stuff on social media when I'm sewing and I'll say, hey, like, what do you think about this? And your friends have really good advice. So if you're torn about which trim to use or even some of your patch placement, I would say phone a friend, or you know, step away from it and then come back and look at it later and see how it makes you feel. And just notice maybe things that you didn't see before. So I phoned a friend and she said that, you know, we kind of talked about it a bit and we liked both of them for different reasons, but we're going to get rid of this guy. 'Cause he's like a little busy and we're going to stick with the simplistic braid. I've threaded my needle, and we're going to sew on this trim. Now, before we start sewing, there's a few things you could do to help hold this in place. One is you could use a little bit of fabric glue to help hold it in place. I don't wanna do that 'cause I don't wanna risk making a mess, but you could just do like the tiniest bit of fabric glue, hold it in place and then go around and do the restitching. But instead of fabric glue I'm just going to put in some pins. And you don't even need a lot of pins, just a few and you can kind of pin as you go because you don't want it to be so full of pins and you accidentally poke yourself. So when you get to the point in the collar, you can just come around that curve, and I'm gonna put one more pin. This is the first part that I'm going to start to sew. Now, depending on your trim, you can kinda work with this in a lot of different ways. Like if I were sewing on this trim, I would probably be stitching around the different loops on the edge of the trim. This one is kind of like more straight on. So I think I'll be doing more of a running stitch or you could do the whip stitch to hold it down. But I think I'm gonna try the whip stitch. So what I'm doing is I'm sliding my needle under one layer of the fabric. So I'm not going through both layers of the collar. Like I'm only using the top layer of fabric and don't worry about the tip, gonna resolve this at the end. Well, actually, let's just resolve it now. So to start sewing the trim on your collar, you're going to fold the edge so you just have like a nice clean finish. So we're gonna fold the raw edge underneath, and then you're going to put your needle through only one layer of the jacket. And then we're going to pull and then I'm going to come back around and I'm gonna do the same thing again. So remember we're only going through one layer of the fabric not both layers of the collar and you're going to pull and then that holds everything in place. And then we're just going to keep doing this all the way around. As you can tell the stitching is barely visible and you just want to make sure you push your needle through as close to the trim as possible. And if you get any little bubbles or snags here, it's important to pull them out because unlike underneath your jacket the collar is a bit of a focal point and something that people will see. So you want to do this as neat as possible. And I'm using a thread that matches my trim and I'm just going to keep stitching around my braid until this is completely in place. You'll probably run out of thread at some point. So you're just going to have to tie two knots and make sure that they're really close to the fabric. And then you're just going to pick up where you left off. When you get all the way back around to the other side of the jacket that connects to the button placard, you're going to want to fold under your trim the same way that we did at the beginning so that you close off the raw edges. So I am going to keep stitching this on and I'll see you once it's all done. As you can see, everything is all sewn on to our denim jacket. Looking at it I might add like one or two tiny little details, but for the most part, the jacket is done. The trim is stitched all the way around the collar. And we did all of our outlining of the letters on the back. These patches are stitched on. We added

these metal pieces just for some additional detailing. I think this looks really cool. Like I can't wait to wear it. So now it's your turn. I hope you'll challenge yourself to create your own happy denim jacket that you can throw on during times when you need a boost or you just wanna punch up your outfit with a really cool statement piece. Remember fashion is a tool that you can use to help yourself along the way.