

# Dia De Los Muertos Skull



By: Carolyn Hasenfratz  
*Courtesy of Jacquard Products*

Do you want to have some fun with a mixed-media fabric project? This soft Dia De Los Muertos skull uses discharge paste, fabric paint, embroidery and embellishments - you can use a lot of your toys for this one! Enhance your decor with a small decorative throw pillow or attach a loop to the back and hang it on the wall.

This tutorial assumes you know the basics of cutting stencils and stenciling on fabric. If you need more of an introduction to those skills, see my tutorial "Fun With Stencils".

([http://carolynsstampstore.com/catalog/fun\\_with\\_stencils.php](http://carolynsstampstore.com/catalog/fun_with_stencils.php))

You'll need a few very basic sewing and embroidery skills too.

## Materials:

- Tracing Paper
- Pencils
- Tape
- Blank stencil material
- Permanent thin marker
- Hole punch
- Self-healing cutting mat
- Craft/hobby knife
- Fabric
- [Jacquard Discharge Paste](#)
- [Sponge brushes](#) or sponges
- Fabric paint such as Jacquard [Neopaque](#), [Lumiere](#) or [Textile Paint](#)
- Fine point washable fabric pen
- Embroidery and sewing thread
- Embroidery and sewing needles
- Embroidery hoop
- Sewing scissors
- A few beads and sequins
- Optional - wax for your sewing thread to makes it easier to handle
- Scrap chipboard
- Stuffing
- Pins
- Optional - beaded fringe
- Faux flowers
- Optional - ring for hanging



1. Draw a skull design in pencil on tracing paper. While developing the design, plan for large flat areas of color that will be developed with stencils, and detailed linear design elements that will be stitched in embroidery thread. Tape two pencils together with the tips aligned, and trace around the outer edge of the skull to make a seam allowance.

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2. Make some circles in what will be the waste fabric area for registration marks. I made mine the size of a hole punch so I could punch them out of stencils and templates later.



3. Decide which part of your design will be developed by knocking color out of the fabric with discharge paste. In my example, this was the eye sockets, nose opening, mouth opening, and some decorative elements on the forehead. These areas are a light red in my finished example. Place a piece of blank stencil material over your sketch and tape it down. Trace around the portion that will be discharged with a permanent marker, and include the registration marks. Cut the open areas out of the stencil with a craft/hobby knife while protecting your work surface with a self-healing cutting mat. Punch out the registration marks.

I cut a total of three stencils for this project and here is what they look like along with some of the tools I used to develop them.

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4. Choose some fabric samples in bright colors that are medium in tone. Run some tests on pieces of scrap fabric with Jacquard Discharge Paste to see what samples discharge well. Choose a fabric and cut out a piece that is large enough for your skull design plus the seam allowance.

5. Tape your stencil over the fabric and mark the registration marks with permanent marker. Sponge discharge paste into the holes in the stencil and iron and wash according to the directions on the bottle. Let the fabric dry completely.



6. Cut a second stencil to add another color in fabric paint. In my example this layer is yellow. Lay the second stencil over your discharged skull design and use the registration marks as an aid to lining it up. Sponge on yellow paint or another color of your choice and let dry.

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7. In my example I chose to develop the eyes further with a floral/sunburst design to be stenciled in lime green fabric paint. With another piece of blank stencil material, cut stencil for the eye design and punch out the registration marks.

8. Line up stencil #3 and sponge some fabric paint in lime green or another color of your choice in the open areas. Let dry and heat set the fabric ink.

9. Using your original sketch as a guide, draw on the fabric where you would like embroidered embellishments with a fine point washable fabric marker.

10. Place the fabric in a hoop and embroider your embellishments in thread colors of your choice. Sew on a few beads and sequins in appropriate spots to add some sparkle. Using thread with a metallic strand in it, like I did with the black and white thread, adds a bit of interest as well. I wanted

a lot of contrast around the eyes and mouth so I filled in some solid areas in white thread using running and satin stitches and outlined them in black.

11. Now it's time to sew the skull together and stuff it. You can make templates out of chipboard using your original sketch as a guide - include the registration marks to help you outline where to cut the skull out of the fabric. Cut another piece for the back, and wash and

dry it to prevent shrinking later. You can choose to decorate this piece also, or use a complementary print or a plain solid color if you want.

12. Place the front and back fabric pieces together with the "good" sides facing each other on the inside. Make a template to mark where the seam should be and trace with washable marker. Pin around the edge and sew together, leaving the chin area open. I hand-sewed mine together because I'm not that accurate on a machine with curves, but you can use a machine if you want to.

13. Turn the skull inside out and wash out the washable marker. Let it dry completely.

14. Stuff the skull with stuffing and sew the chin area closed.



15. If you want to give the appearance of "hair", you can purchase some beaded fringe and sew it to the top of the head right along the seam. Tuck your knots underneath to hide them, and if necessary, hold in place with a dab of clear glue.

16. Take some decorative faux flowers with wire stems and twist them together into a floral ornament for the top of the head. Sew to the top, hiding the knots underneath and strengthening the knots with a dab of glue.

17. If you want to hang your skull, sew a ring onto the back and glue the knots for extra hold.

You're done!