

Sassy Feet!

How to Create Fabric-Collage Shoes

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These instructions will show you how cover a pair of shoes with small pieces of fabric so as to create a collage effect, like the shoes in the [Sassy Feet Gallery](#). Tip: Read the directions all the way through before starting.

Supplies needed:

- A pair of shoes to work on. These can be made of fabric, leather, suede or manmade “leather” or “suede.”
- 8 to 10 different prints of cotton fabric (ironed), approximately 4” x 8” of each one. Choose a combination of colors and prints as you might for a quilt. That is, choose fabrics that will work together but also allow for some contrast and highlights for the eye. Bear in mind that the color of the sole of your shoe (often it’s black or white) will become part of your design palette since it cannot be painted over or otherwise permanently colored.
- 1 yard of fold-over elastic trim (either 5/8” or 1/2” wide) in a coordinating color for covering the opening of your shoe. (This is easiest to find online. Try www.sewzannesfabrics.com, www.faysfabrics.com, or www.saf-t-pockets.com.) If you can’t find this in a shade you like, bias binding (purchased or sewn) in a similar width will work.
- Glue
 - If you are working with shoes made of fabric, real leather or suede, I recommend [Fabri-Tac glue](#).
 - If you are going to collage onto shoes of manmade leather or suede, I recommend [The Ultimate glue](#).
- Pinking shears
- Sewing scissors
- Thread in a color to match your elastic or bias trim.
- Sewing needle
- Erasable fabric marking pen or tailor’s chalk
- Measuring tape
- Some toothpicks & a small piece of aluminum foil



The Lonni Rossi Bootie

- Scotch-Guard or similar fabric protector spray (optional)

Overview

You'll be doing one shoe at a time. First you'll cut out fabric strips with which to make the collage. Then you'll glue them in place. Finally, you'll add an elastic or bias binding around the top edge of the shoe.

Step 1: Creating Your Collage

You can plan your collage ahead of time, choosing which fabrics will go where and exactly how wide each will be, or you can wing it. I prefer winging it because the results are usually just as good and it's a lot less work!

Using pinking shears, cut out about 30 narrow strips of fabric that vary in width, no narrower than 1/2" and no wider than 1" and are at least long enough to reach from the sole of your shoe to the top edge. (The short ends of these strips should also be cut with pinking shears.) Don't cut up all your fabric yet, because you want to leave some larger pieces of each print in case you want to use them on the toe of the shoe.

Now pick your first strip, apply a little bit of glue to the wrong side of one end, and press the strip into place at the back of the shoe. The end should sit right at the point where the shoe meets the sole (called "the sole line"). Use a toothpick to press the edge of the fabric into the seam at the sole line. (Do this on all the strips you will be gluing) Working from bottom to top, apply more glue (just a little will do) to the very edges of the strip and press them down, working all the way up to the top of the shoe. When you're done, use sewing scissors to trim the top of the strip even with the top of your shoe.

Choose another strip of fabric and repeat the process, overlapping the pinked edge of the first strip by just a little. Continue to work this way on both sides of the shoe until you are getting near the point where the toe of the shoe begins. Cut additional strips as needed.

Now you have a design decision to make. If you want to continue creating a patchwork collage, as on the [Quilter's Collage shoe](#), keep going the way you have been until the shoe is covered. Note: Not all the strips on the toe of your shoe need to go from the sole line to the top edge. They could be shorter and overlap other strips. Then go to Step 2, below.



If you'd rather emphasize the toe area by using just two or three fabrics, as on the [Lonnie Rossi Bootie](#) (which uses two prints), start by measuring the approximate dimensions of the areas you want to cover. Now choose the fabrics you want to use and cut out those shapes using your pinking shears. (It will help if you are not cutting along

the straight grain of the fabric since we actually want the fabric to be able to stretch a bit.) Don't worry about these shapes being exact. We'll deal with that in a moment.

Next drape these pieces over the toe of the shoe in varying positions until you have a look you like. (Be sure the pieces extend all the way down to the sole line.) Now put a drop of glue in the center of each piece on the wrong side of the fabric and press it in place onto the shoe.

Unlike the way you glued the collage pieces on the sides of your shoe (from bottom to top), you are going to work from the center out to the bottom edge. Working down, apply glue to the wrong side of the edges of your fabric pieces until you are about 1/2" from the sole line. You'll find yourself stretching the fabric over the toe as you go. That's fine. You'll also find there is extra fabric on the sides of the toe, but don't worry about it.

Now take your fabric marker or tailor's chalk and mark the fabric at the sole line. Using pinking shears or sharp scissors, cut along the marked line. Once you've made your cuts, hold the edges of the fabric flat against the sole line and make any additional trims that are necessary. Now apply glue to the cut edges and press in place. You'll probably end up with tiny folds on either side of the toe (because of the extra fabric that was there), but once these are glued down, you won't notice them. As you did earlier, use a toothpick to press the edge of the fabric into the seam at the sole line.

Special Design Considerations

- If you don't like the look of the pinked fabric edge ending at the sole line, you can glue a line of narrow 3mm leather or Ultrasuede lacing over the raw edge. (Use either Fabri-Tac or The Ultimate glue.) An example of this is on the [Kaffe Fassett Wedges](#). You can find inexpensive trim like this at many online sites. There's a good selection of colors at [M&J Trimming](#) online store.
- If your shoe has straps, you could wrap strips around the straps and glue to the inside of strap. Or you could cover the strap with a single fabric, wrapping and gluing to the inside of the strap.
- If you are working on a shoe with a colored heel that doesn't go well with the colors of fabric you are using, you could collage the heel, but heels get a lot of wear and tear. You'll probably have better luck simply painting the heel a complementary or matching color. Read the [how-to information](#) on this site for tips on painting shoes.



Close-up of trim on Kaffe Fassett wedge

Step 2: Finishing Touches

Using a toothpick, see if you can lift any of the glued edges of your strips. If so, squeeze some glue on a piece of aluminum foil and pick up a tiny amount of glue on the end of your toothpick. Push it under the loose fabric edge. Press the edge down. Go all around the shoe looking for edges that didn't quite stick down. Don't use a lot of glue, just a tiny bit will do the trick!

Now you'll put on the fold-over elastic trim or bias trim, which serves to protect the top edge of the collage strips from the friction caused when you slip your foot in and out of the shoe. (Look at the photos on the previous pages: This elastic is black on the Lonni Rossi Bootie, dark red on Quilter's Collage.) Measure the opening of your shoe, add 1/2", and cut your trim to that length. Find the point on your shoe that corresponds to your inner ankle, then go about an inch toward the back of your foot. This is where you are going to start gluing your trim (using either of the two glues recommended). It is the least-noticeable part of your shoe.

HOT TIP

The more glue you use, the stiffer your fabric will be when the glue dries. Use just enough glue to do the job, no more. You can always add more later if you need to.

Because your trim is folded, you'll need to glue it to both the inside and the outside of your shoe. Start by gluing it to the outside first. When you come to the point where your trim overlaps itself, glue it in place, but also thread a needle and take several small stitches to secure the raw end of the trim to the glued end. Now do the same gluing and stitching on the inner side of the shoe.

This takes a lot of words to explain, but it's very easy to do.

Step 3: Optional

Spray your shoes with Scotch-Guard or a similar product that will protect the fabric from stains and repel water. If part of your shoe is not fabric covered (the heel, for instance), hold a piece of paper in front of that part to protect it from the spray.

Step 4: Do the Other Shoe

Repeat the process for the second shoe, either varying the collage pattern or duplicating it.