

Machine Appliqué

There are two main types of appliqué, raw edge and turned edge. We will be discussing both today but will focus on treatment of the edges as they are applied. For raw edge appliqué, various machine stitches will be shown, with washed samples provided. Three methods of turned edge applique will be shown, but only the blind hem stitch will be used to stitch down these pieces.

Raw Edge Appliqué

-sometimes called fused edge appliqué

-examples of paper-backed fusible web include HeatnBond Lite, Lite Steam-a-Seam 2, and Wonder Under

Basic Fusible Application

- Prepare fabrics by washing and ironing.
- Trace design onto the paper-backed side of fusible web, reversing if the design is directional.
- Roughly cut around design and press onto wrong side of prepared fabric using the heat level recommended by the manufacturer. Make sure that the paper-backed side is towards the iron and the glue side (feels a little rough) is towards the fabric. A sheet of baking paper can be used to protect your iron from the glue.
- Carefully cut out the appliqué shape from the fused fabric along the drawn lines and peel the paper backing off.
- Once all appliqué pieces are prepared, press the pieces onto the background. Note any pieces that go under others and apply the under-layers first.

Reducing Bulk and Stiffness

- You can reduce the stiffness of a large piece by “windowing”. Draw the shape on the paper-backed fusible web and draw another line $\frac{1}{4}$ ” inside the desired shape. Roughly cut out the shape and then cut out along the interior line to leave only a window of fusible to be applied to the fabric.
- When layering shapes in a more complicated design, cut away any parts of the appliqué that are hidden, leaving only $\frac{1}{4}$ ” overlap between shapes.
- Once the appliqué shape is stitched down it is possible to carefully cut away the underlying background behind the appliqué shape to reduce bulk.

Stitching the Fused Shape

- If your project will not be washed then either no stitching or a straight stitch will work.
- For items such as bibs, table runners, placemats or hot pads that will be washed, it is necessary to stitch down the edges of the appliqué piece to keep the edges from fraying in the wash.
- Several stitches have been applied and washed for this demo. You can make notes on each one:
 - Zig Zag
 - Blanket
 - Straight
 - Feather
 - Satin (needs stabilizer)
 - Custom stitch
- It is worth experimenting with the stitch width and length before starting a project. Note that tension may also be an issue and should be tested.
- It is recommended that you use the same thread in the top and bobbin of your machine.

Use a heavier thread in a contrasting colour to emphasise the stitching on a shape and use a lighter thread in a matching colour to hide the stitching on a shape. Pull all threads to the back of your piece to finish the project.

Turned Edge Appliqué

In this method, the edges of the appliquéd piece are turned under before they are stitched onto the background. There are no raw edges and therefore no fraying. Three techniques will be discussed.

Fusible Interfacing or Used Dryer Sheets

Using fusible interfacing or dryer sheets works well for simple shapes such as circles, hearts, pumpkins or simple leaves – any shape with gentle curves and not too many points. One disadvantage of this method is that the edge of the interfacing or dryer sheet can sometimes show.

Prepare fabrics as for Raw Edge Appliqué.

Take your appliqué fabric and draw your shape on the wrong side of the fabric. Note that directional shapes will have to be reversed. Take a piece of lightweight fusible interfacing and place it glue-side up. Layer the drawn shape over this wrong side up (right side of fabric facing glue side of interfacing). There is no glue to worry about when using dryer sheets. Using a short stitch length (~2), stitch entirely around the appliqué shape.

Cut out the stitched shape ~ $\frac{1}{8}$ " outside of stitching line. Clip any curves, taking care not to clip into the line of stitching. Cut a short slit into the centre of the interfacing or dryer sheet and use this slit to turn the piece right side out. Use a tool with a dull point (a pen, a bamboo skewer, etc.) to press all edges right to the stitching, especially concentrating on any points. If using interfacing, do not iron the piece!

Place the smoothed appliqué shape where you want it on the background and press to fuse it into place (interfaced piece) or pin it in place (dryer sheet backing).

Freezer Paper Templates

Using freezer paper and liquid starch is a tried and true method of preparing appliqué shapes for either machine- or hand-stitched appliqué. This method works well for more complicated shapes with points or sharp curves.

Draw your appliqué shape onto the dull side of a piece of freezer paper and cut out the shape along the drawn lines. Press the freezer paper onto your prepared appliqué fabric. Cut out the shape $\frac{1}{4}$ " outside the freezer paper template. Clip any curves just into the freezer paper.

Using liquid starch and a Q-Tip, apply starch to the $\frac{1}{4}$ " edge of fabric showing around the template. Use the tip of your iron to gently press the $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance back over the freezer paper, smoothing any curves and tucking under extra fabric at points. (Note that you can use spray starch by spraying some into a small bowl and dipping the Q-Tip into this.) Once all of your appliqué shapes are constructed, pin them to the background fabric.

Stitching

The most popular machine stitch for tacking down turned edge appliqué is the blind hem stitch, a stitch that takes ~4 stitches in the background and then swings to the left for one stitch to take a "bite" into the appliquéd shape. You can use monofilament thread in the top and a light-coloured cotton bobbin thread for light-coloured fabrics, or smoke-coloured monofilament thread and a dark bobbin thread for darker fabrics. It is also possible to use any lightweight thread that matches your appliquéd shape. A smaller needle such as 80/12 is recommended for these threads.

Simple top stitching also works to attach pieces if you want to emphasise the stitching, however, this is where the edge of the backing can sometimes show.

Pull all threads to the back of your piece to finish the project.