How to Appliqué

Step-by-Step Instructions for Needle-Turn Appliqué, Freezer-Paper Appliqué, and Fusible Appliqué

From That Patchwork Place® Quilt Collection

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Appliqué Basics

Looking for appliqué information? General instructions are provided here for needle-turn, freezer-paper, and fusible appliqué. Even when a specific method of appliqué is mentioned in a pattern, feel free to substitute your favorite method. Just be sure to adapt the pattern pieces and project instructions as necessary.

Making Templates

To begin, you will need to make templates of the appliqué patterns. Templates made from clear plastic are durable and easy to make. Because you can see through the plastic, it is easy to trace the templates accurately from the page.

Place template plastic over each pattern piece and trace with a fine-line permanent marker. Don’t add seam allowances. Cut out the templates on the drawn lines. You need only one template for each different motif or shape. Write the pattern name and grain-line arrow (if applicable) on the template.

Appliqué Methods

In traditional hand appliqué, the seam allowances are turned under before the appliqué is stitched to the background fabric. Two traditional methods for turning under the edges are needle-turn appliqué, which is usually done by hand, and freezer-paper appliqué, which can be done by hand or machine.

In fusible appliqué, the edges are not turned under because the adhesive secures the appliqué to the background. However, machine stitching is often applied to the appliqué edges for added security or decorative purposes.

Needle-Turn Appliqué

1. Using a plastic template, trace the design onto the right side of the appliqué fabric. Use a No. 2 pencil to mark light fabrics and a white pencil to mark dark fabrics.

2. Cut out the fabric piece, adding a scant ⅛"-wide seam allowance all around the marked shape.

3. Position the appliqué piece on the background fabric. Pin or baste in place. If the pieces are numbered, start with piece 1 and add the remaining pieces in numerical order.

Freezer-Paper Appliqué

Freezer paper, which is coated on one side, is often used to help make perfectly shaped appliqués.

1. Trace around the plastic template on the paper side (not the shiny side) of the freezer paper with a sharp pencil, or place the freezer paper, shiny side down, on top of the pattern and trace.

2. Cut out the traced design on the pencil line. Do not add seam allowances. You can cut multiple layers by stapling several pieces of freezer paper together.

3. Press the waxy side of the freezer paper to the wrong side of your appliqué fabric with a dry iron. Leave approximately ⅛" around each piece for the seam allowance. Place curved edges on the bias when possible, as this will make it easier to turn under the edges.
4 Cut out the fabric shape, adding a ¼" seam allowance all around the outside edge of the freezer paper. Clip the seam allowance on all curves, stopping two or three threads away from the paper.

5 You can use the point of a hot, dry iron to press the seam allowance over onto the paper side of the pattern piece, beginning at a straight or gently curved edge. Always press the seam allowance toward the center of the shape. For needle-turn appliqué, you can simply use the edge of the freezer paper as a guide for turning under the seam allowance.

6 Pin or baste the design to the background fabric or block. If the pieces are numbered, start with piece 1 and add the remaining pieces in numerical order. Hand or machine appliqué the design in place.

7 Remove any basting stitches. Trim away the background fabric behind the appliqué, leaving a generous ¼" seam allowance. Remove the freezer-paper shape. Use tweezers to remove any remaining paper. Note: It is not necessary to cut away the background of any piece that doesn’t contain paper.

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**Traditional Appliqué Stitch**

The traditional appliqué stitch or blind stitch is appropriate for sewing all appliqué shapes, including sharp points and curves.

1 Thread the needle with an approximately 18"-long single strand of thread in a color that closely matches the color of your appliqué. Knot the thread tail.

2 Hide the knot by slipping the needle into the seam allowance from the wrong side of the appliqué piece, bringing it out on the fold line.

3 Work from right to left if you are right-handed, or from left to right if you are left-handed. To make the first stitch, insert the needle into the background right next to where the needle came out of the appliqué fabric. Bring the needle up through the edge of the appliqué, about ¼" away from the first stitch.

4 As you bring the needle up, pierce the folded edge of the appliqué piece, catching only one or two threads.

5 Again, take a stitch into the background fabric right next to where the thread came up through the appliqué. Bring the needle up about ¼" away from the previous stitch, again catching the folded edge of the appliqué.

6 Give the thread a slight tug and continue stitching. Note that the stitches in the appliqué illustration are drawn large to indicate placement. The stitches should not show in the completed work.

7 To end your stitching, pull the needle through to the wrong side. Behind the appliqué piece, take two small stitches, making knots by taking your needle through the loops.

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**Fusible Appliqué**

Using paper-backed fusible web is a fast and fun way to appliqué. One of the most important things to remember about fusible appliqué is that the appliqué patterns must be the reverse image of the image on the finished project. All Martingale appliqué patterns that specify the fusible-appliqué method have already been reversed.
Remove the paper backing, position the shape on the background, and press it in place with your iron. If the pieces are numbered, start with piece 1 and add the remaining pieces in numerical order.

1. Trace or draw your shape on the paper backing side of the fusible web. Cut out the shape, leaving about a ¼” margin all around the outline.

2. Fuse shapes to the wrong side of your fabric.

3. Cut out the shape exactly on the marked line.

If desired, you can add decorative stitches by hand or you can machine stitch around the edges of the fused appliqués. Commonly used stitches include satin stitch and blanket stitch.

**Cutting Bias Strips**

1. Use a long acrylic ruler and your rotary cutter to square up the left edge of the fabric. Place a single layer of fabric on your rotary-cutting mat. Using a ruler with a 45°-angle marking, align the 45° line with the lower edge of the fabric as shown. Position the ruler so that it extends completely across the fabric. Cut along the edge of the ruler.

2. Measuring from the cut edge, cut strips of the desired width. Cut as many strips as needed to achieve the required length for the project. You are cutting on the stretchy bias edge of the fabric, so handle the strips carefully to avoid distorting them.
Making Bias Stems

Bias stems are easy to make with the help of metal or nylon bias press bars. These handy notions are available at most quilt shops and come in sets of assorted widths. The following steps describe the process of making bias tubes. First cut bias strips as described on page 4.

1. Fold each bias strip in half lengthwise, wrong sides together. Stitch \( \frac{1}{4} \)" from the long raw edges to form a tube.

2. Insert the bias bar into the tube, roll the seam to the underside, and press flat. Remove the bias bar and your stem or vine is ready to appliqué.

Embroidery Stitches

Many appliqué designs are enhanced or embellished with the addition of hand embroidery. A blanket stitch is often used to stitch around the edges of fusible appliqué.

- Blanket stitch
- French knot
- Stem stitch