

eBook
SERIES

Just SEW It!

Machine Appliqué



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- Tools and Supplies
- Preparing the Appliqué Shapes
- Zigzag Appliqué
- Blanket Stitch Appliqué
- Invisible Appliqué
- Raw Edge Appliqué

Machine Appliqué

From the French meaning “to apply,” appliqué is the technique of applying fabric shapes to a background fabric and stitching them in place along the edges.

Typically, the edges are secured with a straight or decorative stitch, depending on the look desired. Additional stitching on the interior of the shapes can be added for more detail if desired.

The preparation of the background fabrics and applique shapes is an important part of the applique process. This eBook offers step-by-step instructions for preparing the shapes and stitching several of the most popular methods of applique:

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Tools and Supplies

Stabilizers

Used on the wrong side of the background fabric, stabilizers provide a foundation to support appliqué stitching, preventing tunneling of the fabric. Always test the combination of fabric and stabilizer for each project. The most common choices are:

Tear-Away: Excess stabilizer can be removed upon completion of all stitching; the stabilizer under the stitching will remain in place to support the stitches. If using multiple layers, tear each layer away separately.

Water-Soluble: All stabilizer is rinsed out of the project after the stitching is complete.

Cut-Away: Excess stabilizer is trimmed after stitching, about ¼” outside the stitching; stabilizer will remain behind the applique shape.



Adhesives

Some methods of appliqué use adhesive products to adhere the appliqué shapes to the background fabric. These two types are used in a variety of appliqué situations:

Paper-backed Fusible Web: Remains in the project after washing; some fusible webs have adhesive on one side, making it easy to fuse the web to the appliqué fabric, then peel the paper away and adhere it to the background fabric without using an iron.

Temporary Spray Adhesive: Dissipates after 12 to 24 hours; holds shapes in place temporarily for stitching.

Needles

Always start each appliqué project with a new needle to avoid skipped or malformed stitches. A size 90/14 is recommended for most medium weight fabrics. Some good choices for machine appliqué include:

- Microtex Sharp
- Embroidery
- Jeans

Presser Feet

The presser foot used to stitch appliqué should be selected according to the edge treatment of the appliqué shapes. Usually a foot designed for satin or decorative stitching works best because it will ride over the thickness of the layered background fabric, appliqué edge, and decorative stitching. The BERNINA presser feet most commonly used for appliqué are shown on this page.



Freemotion Presser Foot

Appliqué can also be sewn by lowering the feed dog and using freemotion stitching techniques, in which case any of the BERNINA freemotion presser feet will work. This method is especially useful for intricate and complex designs.

General Tips

General Tips for Machine Appliqué

- Insert a new needle in the appropriate size for the background fabric.
- Use a light weight bobbin thread (60-80 weight) in a neutral color.
- Use cotton, polyester or rayon embroidery thread (30-50 weight) in the needle.
- Sew a test to determine if stabilizer is needed and which type works best.
- If available, set the needle to stop in the down position.
- Adjust the motor to half speed.

Stitching Corner and Curves

Corners

Stop with needle in the fabric at the corner; pivot 90° to turn the corner and continue stitching. Pivot with needle in the outside edge for outside corners and the inside edge for inside corners.



Curves

Stop and pivot slightly on a frequent basis for smooth curves; pivots should be made with needle in the fabric at the outside edge of outer curves and the inside edge of inner curves.



Did you know?

Click the title of each presser foot to learn more about it!



Embroidery Foot #6

This all-metal presser foot is designed for satin stitching and has a small hole in the center of the front of the foot to hold a narrow cord or heavy thread for stitching corded appliqué.



Open Embroidery Foot #20/20C/20D

Similar in design to Foot #6, this foot has an open area in the front that offers more visibility of the stitching area.



Clear Appliqué Foot #23

This presser foot is designed for narrow (2 mm) satin stitching and is perfect for sewing small or delicate appliqué designs on children's and infant's clothing and heirloom projects. The clear sole of the foot is short, offering clear visibility and making it easy to maneuver around fabric shapes and curved edges.



Clear Embroidery Foot #39/39C

Identical in design to Foot #6 except the clear sole allows for more visibility of the stitching area and has red markings for precise alignment of stitches.

Preparing the Appliqué Shapes

Most appliqué techniques start with the cutting and preparation of shapes that will be placed on a background fabric for stitching. The method used depends on the appliqué technique being used.

Fused Shapes

Easy to do, fusing holds the shapes securely to the fabric all the way to the edges. This method works well for zigzag appliqué, satin stitch appliqué, blanket stitch appliqué, and decorative stitch appliqué.

Step 1:

Cut a swatch of fabric large enough for the shape; cut a piece of paper-backed adhesive the same size and fuse to the wrong side of the selected fabric, following the manufacturer's directions.

Step 2:

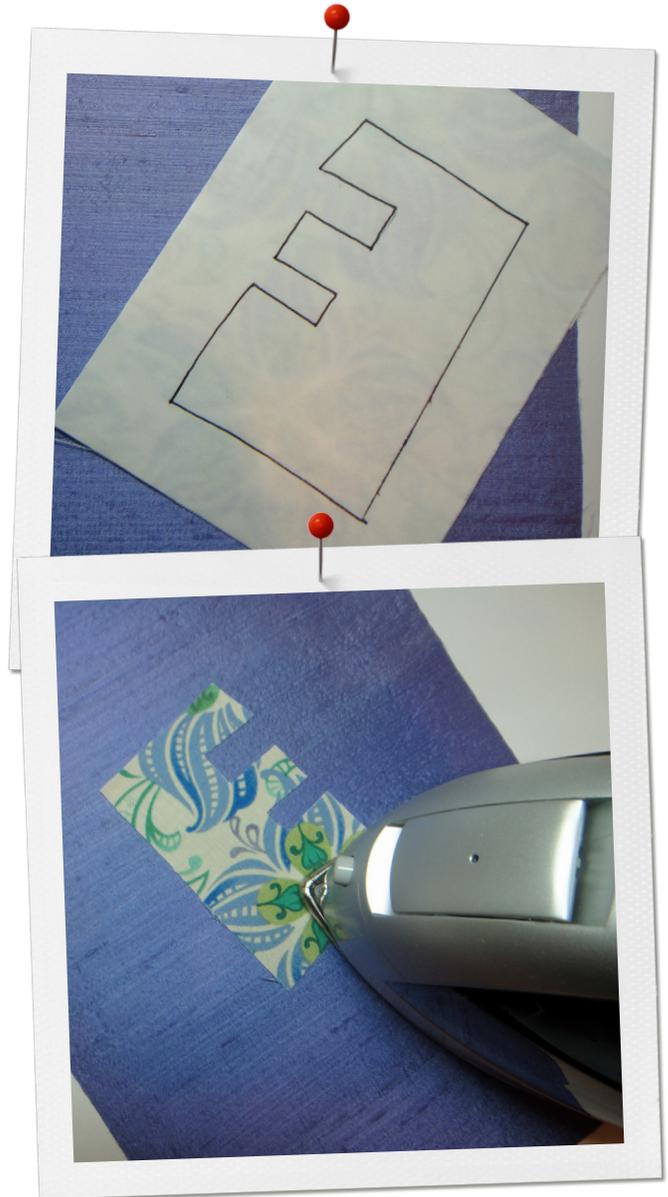
Draw the desired shape onto the paper; reverse the shape so that it will be the correct orientation on the right side of the fabric.

Step 3:

Cut out the shape on the drawn line. Peel the paper from the back of the shape; position the shape on the background fabric and fuse in place following the manufacturer's directions.

Tip:

Use a non-stick fusing sheet to protect your pressing surface. Position and fuse appliqué shapes to the background fabric on top of the fusing sheet; place a second sheet on top to protect the sole of the iron from adhesives.



Turned Edges – Freezer Paper Method

When stitching invisible appliqué techniques, the edges of the shapes need to be finished (turned under) before stitching them to the background fabric.

Step 1:

Cut out the desired shape in the finished size from freezer paper; lightly press the waxy side of the freezer paper to the wrong side of a fabric swatch.

Step 2:

Cut out the shape, trimming about ¼" outside the freezer paper. Clip the extending fabric up to the freezer paper along any curved edges.

Step 3:

Using gluestick, place glue along the edges of the freezer paper; fold the fabric edges to the back over the edge of the freezer paper and smooth into place.

Step 4:

Dab a bit of gluestick in the center of the freezer paper to hold the shape in place for stitching for stitching.

Step 5:

After stitching the appliqué shape in place, cut a slit behind the shape through the background fabric only. Trim away the background fabric behind the shape. Remove as much of the freezer paper as possible.



Turned Edges – Interfacing Method

A second method of finishing the edges of the appliqué shapes uses fusible interfacing to “face” the shape.

Step 1:

Draw shape on non-fusible side of interfacing.

Step 2:

Place fusible interfacing with fusible side down on right side of appliqué fabric; do not fuse. Stitch along the drawn line.

Step 3:

Trim outside of the stitched line. Clip curved edges.
Note: Trim outside of the stitched using pinking shears to eliminate the need for clipping.

Step 4:

Make a slit in the interfacing *only* and turn the fabric to the right side, using a point turner to smooth out the edges.

Step 5:

Position the shape on the background as desired; fuse in place following the manufacturer’s directions.

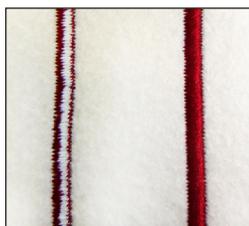
Zigzag Appliqué

Application:

Zigzag stitching is a traditional choice for finishing the edges of appliqué shapes. The stitch settings (width and length) can be set as desired according to the scale of the appliqué shape and the desired finished look.

Satin stitching is simply a zigzag stitch with a short length, giving a rich, filled look to the stitch. Use a lightweight bobbin thread and decrease the upper tension to balance the stitch, if needed.

The upper thread should show along the sides of the stitch on the wrong side if the tension is correctly adjusted.



wrong side right side

Machine Settings:

- Embroidery Foot #6, Open Embroidery Foot #20/20C/20D, Clear Appliqué Foot #23, or Clear Embroidery Foot #39/39C
- Zigzag stitch; Stitch Width 2-4 mm, Stitch Length 0.3-0.5 mm
- Far right needle position
- Needle stop down engaged

Step 1

Fuse shape to background fabric following previous directions. Place 1-2 layers of tear-away stabilizer behind the background fabric.

Step 2

Position the edge of the appliqué shape with the inner edge of the right toe of the presser foot; the stitch should fall mainly on the appliqué shape with the right swing of the needle landing on the background fabric.

Step 3

Stitch around the shape, covering the raw edges; follow directions to maneuver corners and curves.

Tip

Use motifs cut from printed fabric as appliqué shapes. For a more defined edging, sew satin stitching over a narrow cord using Embroidery Foot #6 or Clear Embroidery Foot #39/39C.



Blanket Stitch Appliqué

Application:

Sewn with an open blanket stitch (sometimes called a buttonhole stitch), this type of appliqué has a more casual look than satin stitched appliqué. Using thread that matches or blends with the appliqué fabric creates texture on the edge of the shape while a highly contrasting thread gives a more primitive look to the design.

Machine Settings:

- Open Embroidery Foot #20/20C/20D
- Zigzag stitch; Stitch Width 2-4 mm, Stitch Length 2-4mm as desired
- Far right needle position
- Needle stop down engaged

Step 1

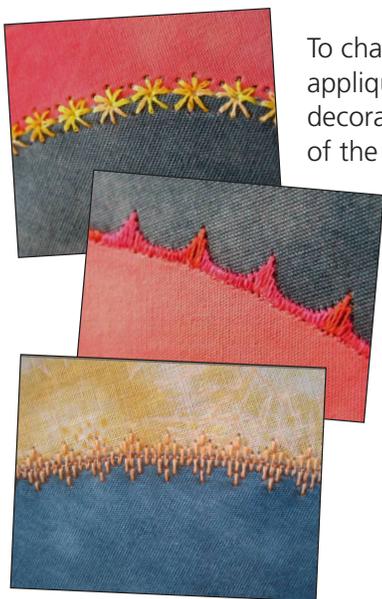
Fuse shape to background fabric following previous directions.

Step 2

Position the edge of the appliqué shape with the inner edge of the right toe of the presser foot; the vertical part of the stitch should fall on the background fabric and the horizontal part of the stitch should stitch on the appliqué shape.

Step 3

Stitch around the shape, covering the raw edges; follow previous directions to maneuver corners and curves.



To change the look of the appliqué, substitute other decorative stitches in place of the blanket stitching.



Click for Video!

Invisible Appliqué

Application:

This appliqué technique is designed to simulate hand-stitched appliqué with tiny inconspicuous stitches holding the edges of the appliqué shapes. It requires that the edges of the appliqué shapes be pre-finished by turning them under to the wrong side (see previous directions using freezer paper or interfacing for shapes). Use a color of thread that matches the appliqué shape or a monofilament thread to make the stitching blend into the fabric as much as possible.

Note: Contrasting thread was used in the photos for visual clarity.

Machine Settings:

- Embroidery Foot #6, Open Embroidery Foot #20/20C/20D, or Clear Embroidery Foot #39/39C
- Blind stitch or hand-look appliqué Stitch; Stitch Width 2-4 mm, Stitch Length 0.3-0.5 mm
- Far right needle position
- Needle stop down engaged
- Mirror Image if needed (the stitch should “bite” to the left)

Step 1

Prepare the appliqué shapes using one of the methods previously described for turned edges; position as desired on the background fabric, fusing or using a gluestick to hold them in place.

Step 2

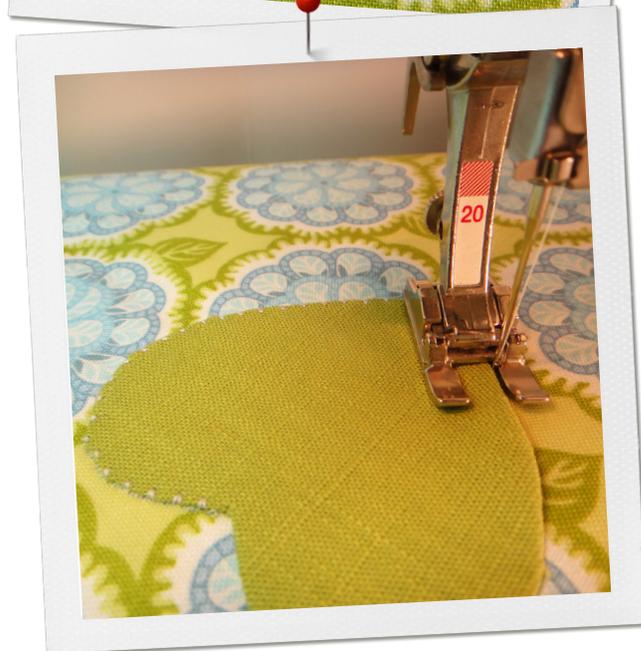
Align the edge of the appliqué shape with the inner edge of the right toe of the presser foot; the stitch should sew on the background fabric, swinging over to take a tiny “bite” of the edge of the appliqué shape as you sew.

Step 3

Stitch around the shape; follow the previous directions to maneuver corners and curves.

Tip

Adjust the width of the stitch to barely stitch into the edge of the appliqué shape as the horizontal part of the stitch swings to the left.



Raw Edge Appliqué

Application:

One of the easiest appliqué methods, the raw edge technique has a natural, relaxed look with a bit of an "edge." The shapes are cut to the finished size and no preparation is needed before stitching them to the background fabric. Sewn with a straight stitch, the edges are left raw and are planned to fray and ravel with use to add texture to the design. Using a free-motion presser foot makes it easier to follow the edges of the shapes in a continuous line, filling in interior details as desired.

Machine Settings:

- Freehand Embroidery Foot #24 or other freemotion presser foot
- Straight stitch
- Center needle position
- Needle stop down engaged
- Feed dog lowered

Step 1

Cut out the appliqué shapes in the finished size and arrange them on the background fabric; spray the wrong side of each shape with temporary spray adhesive, arranging and smoothing them into place on the background fabric.

Step 2

Stitch the shapes in place, sewing about $\frac{1}{8}$ - $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the edges. Retrace the stitching and add interior details as desired.

Step 3

Use a soft brush to loosen and fray the edges of each shape.

Tips

Trace the stitching path on paper to plan the movement of the needle. Stitch in a continuous line as much as possible, moving from shape to shape, adding details to the overall design.

For simple designs, this technique can be stitched with the feed dog engaged and an all-purpose presser foot.

