

Sewing Machine Applique

Cooperative Extension Service
College of Agriculture and
Home Economics



Guide C-217

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This publication is scheduled to be updated and reissued 3/06.

Sewing machine appliqué is fun and easy. All that is required is a zigzag sewing machine, fabric scraps, a design idea and some time.

Appliqué is a versatile art form that can be used on quilting projects, for garment decoration, for decorative home accessories and for many other items. Basically, appliqué is a technique of layering one fabric over another to create a colorful design. When done by machine, the design is finished using zigzag or satin stitches of various widths to secure fabric pieces to the desired location.

Materials Needed

Fabrics. Choose fabrics that are closely woven. Smooth-surfaced fabrics are preferred unless a special texture is required as a design feature. Fabrics should be light to medium weight. Preshrink all fabrics to be used to avoid varying amounts of shrinkage that will cause appliqués to appear puckered.

Background fabrics can be solid, colors, stripes, checks or other designs which are compatible with the appliqué design being used. Poplin, denim, broadcloth, gingham and other firmly woven fabrics are excellent choices.

Thread. An all-purpose thread can be used in most cases. Some sewing machines work better if cotton embroidery thread is used. A less expensive thread can usually be used on the bobbin, but it may create a lot of lint, so clean the bobbin case carefully after completing any appliqué project.

The top thread can be color coordinated with the appliqué design or a contrasting color. White bobbin thread will work for almost any project. For special effects, metallic, rayon or nylon threads can add glitter and shine.

Fusible interfacing. Use fusible interfacing to stabilize each fabric piece in an appliqué design. It will give a crisp appearance to the design and help prevent ravelly edges.

Fusible web. Use fusible web to fuse fabric pieces in place for the design.

Stabilizing fabric. Placed beneath the design, a stabilizer helps minimize waviness and puckering in the design. A soft, brittle paper such as newsprint can be used, but it dulls the machine needle.

Equipment Needed

Needles. Use size 11 sharp or ball-point needles for light to medium weight fabrics. Size 14 or 16 needles may be needed for heavier fabrics.

Glue stick. Small fabric pieces can be held in place using a glue stick.

Pins. Small, smooth pins with glass heads may be helpful in holding fabric pieces in place.

Scissors. Sharp thread clipping scissors will be useful to clip threads and trim fabric edges close to zigzag stitching.

Seam ripper. Be sure it is small and very sharp.

Iron. A good steam iron is necessary when fusible web and fusible interfacing are used. An iron is also important for smoothing fabrics before they are sewn in place.

Tracing paper. Translucent tracing paper can be used to copy designs for appliqué projects. It can also be used to transfer designs to fabric.

Heat transfer pencil. This marking device can be used to transfer designs to fabric. A hot, dry iron is generally needed to accomplish a transfer.

Water soluble marking pencil. An excellent marking tool for appliqué, this pencil can be used to transfer designs or to mark small details that are to be fin-

ished by hand. It is useful in situations when a heat transfer pencil cannot be used.

Fray retardant. This special sewing aid prevents fraying of fabric edges and is especially useful when loosely woven fabrics are used.

Press cloth. A press cloth is important to prevent vent getting a shine on fabrics. It will also protect the iron from coming into direct contact with fusible web.

Setting Up Your Machine

A neat zigzag or satin stitch is used to finish the raw edges of a sewing machine appliqué design. To achieve a good looking zigzag stitch, your machine must be carefully adjusted.

The width of the zigzag stitch used will be determined by the size of the design and the type of fabric being stitched. Smaller designs will require a narrow row of zigzag stitching. Larger designs can be finished with wider zigzag stitching. Firmly woven fabrics can be finished with a narrower row of zigzag stitching than loosely woven fabrics.

The stitch length or closeness of stitches should be adjusted so the stitches form a smooth line of satin stitches. If the stitch length is too long, fabric edges will ravel out from between stitches. If the stitch length is too short, the stitches will bunch up and cause the machine to jam.

Read the sewing machine manual to determine the exact machine settings required for appliqué work. The booklet will also give the position of the feed dogs and tell whether or not a presser foot must be used.

An adjustment of top thread tension may be suggested for some machines. Loosening the top tension will allow stitches to interlock on the wrong side of the fabric. Some machines have a bobbin adjustment that creates a smooth satin stitch.

Do a line of test stitching to be sure the top thread and bobbin thread are interlocking securely. The top thread should appear as a narrow row of color on each side of the bobbin thread. If the bobbin thread appears as a straight line of stitching, the top tension is too loose and needs to be tightened.

Preparing the Design

Designs for sewing machine appliqué can range from simple to complex. The fewer pieces, the simpler the design will be. Designs can be taken from a variety of sources. One popular source is children's coloring books. These designs are usually simple and relatively large.

To prepare the design, trace it on tracing paper or on a stabilizing fabric. If the design is to be transferred to fabric, it can be retraced on the wrong side of the tracing paper with a heat transfer pencil. The design can be transferred to the right or wrong side of the background fabric, depending on the appliqué technique being used.

If the design has a direction or if letters or numbers are involved, be sure they will be correctly placed when the design is transferred.

Using Fusible Interfacing

To create a crisp design, stabilize each piece of fabric used in an appliqué design with fusible interfacing. Place swatches of fabric to be used over a piece of fusible interfacing and fuse. Then transfer the design shapes to the fabric and cut out.

In some cases, you may cut out all the fabric pieces of an appliqué design and arrange them on a single piece of fusible interfacing before fusing them.

In either case, fusible interfacing gives the appliqué design a crisp look and helps prevent ravelly edges.

Traditional Appliqué

Step 1. Transfer the appliqué design to the right side of the background fabric.

Step 2. Cut design pieces from desired fabrics. Be sure to cut pieces on straight grain whenever possible.

Step 3. Cut out fusible web in the shape of the complete design. Position where design is to be placed. Hold steam iron over fusible web for a few seconds and press gently with finger tips around edges to anchor it in place.

Step 4. Locate fabric pieces of design over fusible web. Touch center of each piece with tip of iron for a few seconds to anchor in place.

Step 5. When all pieces are securely in place, cover with a press cloth and press to fuse pieces. Follow the instructions on fusible web carefully.

Step 6. Put a piece of stabilizer behind the design.

Step 7. Zigzag around each piece to secure it in place.

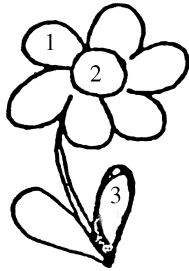
Step 8. Remove stabilizer fabric.

Reverse Appliqué

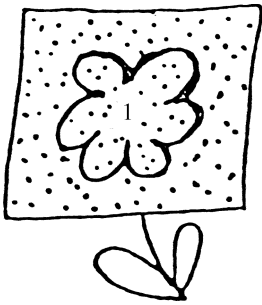
Step 1. Transfer design to stabilizing fabric.

Step 2. Secure stabilizing fabric to the wrong side of the background fabric.

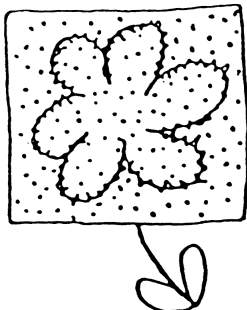
Step 3. Determine the order in which fabrics should be placed on the design. Mark sections of design and the fabrics 1, 2, 3 - in the order corresponding to how they will be sewn in place.



Step 4. Cut squares of fabric slightly larger than the areas they are to cover. Pin each one in place with wrong side against right side of background fabric. Pin from side on which the design is traced. Pin fabric 1 in place, be sure fabric is placed on straight grain.

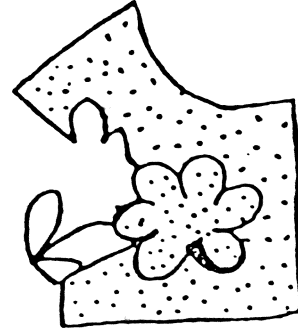


Step 5. From wrong side, sew a row of small open zigzag stitching around edges that will not be over-



lapped by any other layers of fabric. Straight stitch the edges that will be overlapped.

Step 6. Turn to right side of design and trim off excess fabric.



Step 7. Sew a closer, wider zigzag over first row of stitching to finish the edges.

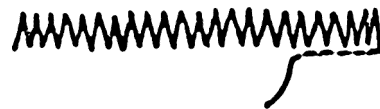
Step 8. Repeat steps 5—7 until all pieces are in place and design is completed.

Special Tips

At beginning of each line of stitching, backstitch 5 or 6 straight stitches to lock threads in place before zigzagging.



At end of each line of stitching, sew 5 or 6 straight stitches along edge of row of zigzag stitching to lock threads in place.



If fabrics are especially loosely woven, back the fabric with a fusible interfacing before cutting fabric pieces.

When turning corners, leave the needle down in the fabric on the outside edge of the design. Then raise the presser foot and pivot the fabric as needed. Lower

the presser foot and begin stitching so stitches overlap neatly on the corners.

When stitching hold the first two fingers of your left hand on both sides of the presser foot in a V-shape to keep fabric taut. This will prevent the fabric from forming a tunnel inside the stitches.