

Tips For Doing Appliqué

by Robyn Coots

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as a follow-up from being the Speaker at the Guild's June 2010 Meeting

Note: There are many different ways to do appliqué and how I do mine is just one of them. A lot of the tips I have found to work through trial and error, so I hope that if you love appliqué as I do, that you find them useful.

Tools:

- Small very sharp scissors
- Roxanne Glue-Baste-It™
- Clover Mini iron with tile and tea towel
- Tweezers
- Freezer paper
- Ordinary A4 paper
- Lead pencil
- Light box

Tips:

- Wash fabrics in hot water prior to any cutting especially reds, purples, dark blues and black.
- Press fabric well.
- Constantly press work to ensure it remains flat. Press means not to move the iron around as one would if doing normal ironing, but to just press the iron onto the work.
- Read all pattern and instructions really well first to make sure that you understand everything.
- Cut out appliqué pieces on the cross or bias of the grain. It makes the edges easier to turn under, they sit better and look neater.
- Clip all concave curves before turning them over to baste. Don't clip convex curves as they can end up with little points instead of being rounded. A way to remember which is which – concave curves are shaped like a cave that you walk in to.
- Always use sewing thread the same colour as the fabric on the top that is being appliquéd. It is worth hunting to find the same shade as the fabric, because if the colour matches, it makes it much harder to see your stitches.
- If doing appliqué by hand, buy the best fabric that you can afford. Become accustomed to the feel and quality of fabric because fabric quality can make a big difference to how easy or hard it is to sew. Cheaper fabrics can often be quite stiff and washing them can make very little difference. Such fabrics can be hard to push the needle through and can result in hand and wrist strain. I find good quality fabrics, such as Moda, Robert Kaufman, Benartex (eg: Fossil fern) etc etc etc the best for hand appliqué. That is, fabric that has a reasonably close weave but is soft to feel.
- Protect the sides of a block from fraying when there is a lot of appliqué to be done on it. . From a soft fabric such as lawn or voile, cut enough 4" strips to go around the edge of the block. Fold the sides over into the centre and press. You now have strips 2" wide. Fold them over and press so that the strips are now 1" wide. Open each strip out to 2" and lay the edges of the block along the centre of the strip. Fold the fabric strip over the edge of the block so that they are covered and protected. Use a large tacking stitch to secure the strips to the edges of the block and just pull the threads undone when the appliqué is complete.
- Make a ball out of masking tape with the sticky part on the outside. Use it to roll over quilts to pick up lint, especially from dark fabric. When the roll loses its stickiness, simply roll more masking tape around it.
- Don't actually cut thread from a quilt, just run the thread across the blade of the scissors. This eliminates the risk of cutting the quilt.

Roxanne Glue-Baste-It™

- Play with the Roxanne glue and become accustomed to how much to use.
- It must be used sparingly as it can be difficult to wash out – as with any glue. Therefore try not to get it on anything you don't want it on.
- Avoid putting it in the fold of appliqué pieces where the stitching will be done as it can be hard to push the needle through.
- It has a great applicator nozzle, like a syringe, and tiny droplets can be placed exactly where they are required; so it is relatively easy to use.

Making Bias: There are a number of ways to make bias:

1. Cut fabric strips on the bias ½" wide. Use a mini-iron to turn and press over one side, then the other. Use the Roxanne to baste the sides down and keep the strip intact. This width is good for plant stems and edging bias.
2. Cut strips ½" wide on the bias and thread through a ¼" bias maker. Use a mini-iron or normal iron to press. It is best to make this bias as it is used because it can unravel.
3. To make very fine bias for flower stems, make it as above (2) and fold it over on itself. Use the Roxanne to baste it.
4. Cut strips ½" wide on the bias and thread through a ¼" bias maker. At the same time thread through fusible tape that is made specifically for this purpose. It is then ready to iron to the work as it sticks when heated.

If making up a lot of bias prior to using it, store it by wrapping it round a cardboard roll from, for example, the centre of a hand towel paper roll.

Batting:

- The type of batting used is a matter of personal preference. I have found that they all shrink to some degree - some more than others. If you are after a lovely old world sort of crinkled antique look then don't wash the batting and it will shrink a little and give the quilt that look. I am generally not after that look so I wash the batting. All that means is putting enough hot water in the washing machine to cover the batting and giving it a bit of a dunking by hand so that if it is going to shrink it will do so. It is then put on the spin cycle to remove the water. I lay it on a towel over the clothes horse or line to dry. That way there is no shrinkage when the quilt is made up and the quilt will retain the original look when it gets washed.

An easy way to make Hexagons:

- Hexagons can be made to any size with just a pencil, compass and ruler.
- Use the compass with the pencil in it, to draw a circle.
- Without changing the width between the pencil and compass point, put the point on the circle (anywhere) and make a pencil mark on the circumference of the circle.
- Place the point of the compass on the mark just made and make another. Continue until there are 6 marks around the circumference of the circle.
- Use the ruler and pencil to draw connecting lines between each of the marks and you will have a hexagon.

Copyright:

- If designing your own quilt be aware of copyright laws. It is good to look at the work of others and use it as inspiration, but if you wish to call your own work "original" then it cannot be copied from another work. Information on copyright laws can be found in lots of places including the web.

Still Learning:

- I consider that I still have lots to learn about appliqué and quilting; therefore this list is by no means exhaustive. It is just an example of some of the appliqué methods I use.