



Red Pine QUILT SHOP

Applique Tips & Tricks

Preparation

- Select a small needle to minimize the size of the holes in the applique shapes. I like to use a 70/10 if my thread allows it. My second choice is an 80/12 microtex needle.
- Set your machine to needle down position when you pause in your sewing. This allows the needle to hold your work in place while you pivot.
- If you have the option to set the machine to raise the foot slightly when you pause, turn this on. If not, get out your knee lifter. This allows you to use your hands to steady and reposition the fabric.
- If you have a sliding stitch width adjustment button on your machine this is a good time to use it as you can narrow the width of your stitches in small tight areas like points and then widen them back to your selected width when you move out of these tight spots.
- Change to your applique or open toe foot so that you have a good view of the area right in front of the needle.
- Select a matching or contrasting thread.
 - Matching thread will hide on the edge and not become a design element. It's usually not worth doing a more decorative stitch like a blanket stitch with a matching thread unless you want to give the piece more of a hand stitched look.
 - Contrasting thread becomes a design element and will edge the applique shape. This may be your best choice if you have a print that doesn't have great contrast with the background in places. Using a dark brown or black thread and blanket stitch gives a primitive/vintage look to an applique project.
 - Consider using monofilament thread so you don't have to keep changing colors. Monofilament works great with a straight stitch or small zigzag stitch. Use this only as your top thread, do not put it in the bobbin.
- Select your stitch. Options include the following:
 - Satin stitch – This is the most durable option as the raw edge is completely enclosed. It's a good choice for projects that will be laundered frequently such as baby blankets or children's items.
 - Blanket stitch – This stitch can be used to give the appearance of hand stitching. It's the most decorative of the stitches listed and also the most time consuming to use as turning corners must be done more carefully than with the other stitches.
 - Zigzag – This stitch is easy and quick to use and secures the raw edge of the fabric. Set the stitch so it's fairly small and short to make it easier to turn corners and navigate curves. One millimeter or 1.5mm work well or about 1/8" wide. Set the stitch length so it is fairly short typically between .5 and 1mm.
 - Straight Stitch – When using a straight stitch you should maintain a consistent distance from the raw edge of the applique piece usually around 1/8" in from the raw edge. This stitch doesn't enclose the raw edge so it is more prone to having the fabric fray a bit along the edges of the applique shapes when washed often. It's best for small pieces with narrow areas and sharp points.

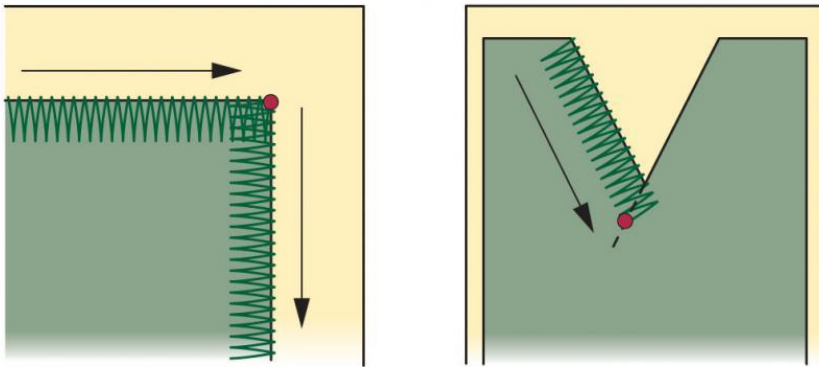
Things to Consider

- How large are your applique shapes? A blanket or satin stitch won't work well on small shapes. A straight stitch or small zig zag may be better choices.

- Do you have small areas such as pieces that come to sharp points or narrow areas such as the stem of a flower? A straight stitch might be best for these pieces so the stitches don't overlap from one side to the other.
- Are the curves gentle or sharp? The blanket stitch is hard to do when turning tight corners.
- Blanket, satin or zigzag stitches should be placed so the right hand swing of the needle just clears the edge of the fabric and the left hand swing takes a small stitch into the applique fabric.
- Can you use stitching your applique shapes as a way to quilt your project? Consider layering the top with batting and backing and then doing your applique. Little or no quilting may then be needed to complete the project.

Navigating Curves and Corners

- Turning Corners – Stop with your needle down in the fabric on the right-hand swing of the needle (with the needle in the background fabric, not on the applique shape). Use your knee lifter or the electronic function to raise the presser foot and rotate the piece to continue stitching.
- Pivoting Inside Points – Using a fabric marking pen draw a line to extend the angle of the point. Stich until your needle hits this line. Then pivot the fabric and continue sewing.



- Pivoting Outside Curves – Stop with the needle down in the fabric on the right hand swing of the needle. The needle should be in the background fabric. Pivot the fabric slightly and take a few more stitches and repeat. The number of stitches you can take between pivots depends on how tight the curve is.
- Pivoting Inside Curves – Stop with the needle down in the fabric on the left hand swing of the needle. The needle should be in the applique fabric, not the background fabric. Pivot the fabric slightly and take a few more stitches and repeat.

