

Lesson 5 – The Appliqué Stitch and an Outer Curve

I have a fun exercise that I do when teaching my workshops. It is a quick and easy method of learning the appliqué stitch. It also has one huge advantage. I don't have to stand beside you to view your work to see if you are doing it properly. You will know yourself if you have made the stitch correctly because you won't be able to see the appliqué stitch in your patch.

So let's set aside Block 1 (Outer Curves) of our QuikPrep Appliqué Sampler. We will return to it after we have learned the appliqué stitch.

For my class I always provide batik fabric for this exercise. Batik is slightly harder to appliqué as the stitches, if not done properly, can reside on top of your patch and not melt as easily into the appliqué fabric. So if you learn to hide your stitches in batik fabric, you will be able to work with any fabric and have the confidence of knowing your stitches will not be seen. This makes batik the perfect fabric to use when learning the appliqué stitch.

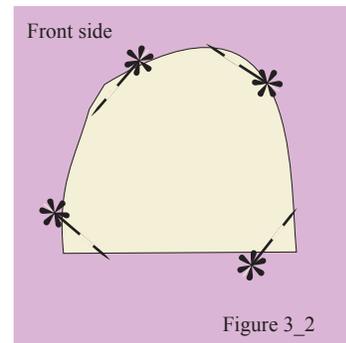
If you have batik scraps on hand, by all means, use them. If not use a good quality, firmly woven, high thread count, 100% cotton fabric.

Preparation

1. Begin by cutting a 6" square of medium colored background fabric. Be sure this fabric is not too dark. You need to see the pattern through the background fabric when placed on a light box.
2. Trace the pattern in Figure 3_1 (at end of PDF file) onto the wrong side of your background fabric. This is an outer curve. Actually I have drawn 6 curves. You can practice on as many as you wish. If you are confident after one, that is all you need to stitch. Now we will, learn to do the appliqué stitch and we will also learn to stitch an outer curve at the same time.

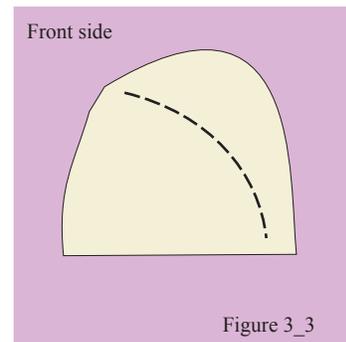
3. Cut a 2” square of light pastel-colored batik scrap fabric for our applique. It is important that it be very light in color. It can be almost white. It must be a good contrast to the background fabric.

4. Thread your QuikPrep needle with a dark thread such as black.



5. Pin the batik fabric in place on the front of your 6” square, over the arc that you traced on the back. Use the pin method of placement or hold the two fabrics up to the light. (Figure 3_2)

6. QuikPrep stitch the curve on the wrong side of your background fabric using the QuikPrep Stitch. It will look like Figure 3_3 on the front.



7. Thread your appliqué needle with either a very dark brown or a black 100 wt. silk thread. Didn't expect to use a black thread, did you? By using a black thread you will immediately see if you are doing the appliqué stitch correctly.

8. Place an appliqué's knot at the base of the needle and a quilter's knot at the end of the 100% silk thread.

It can't be said too often, don't use your regular piecing thread for fine, hand appliqué. That thread is too heavy. It will be too bulky particularly in the points – both inner points and outer points.

If you haven't purchased a light-weight thread such as 100 wt. silk or 60 wt. or lighter, 100% cotton thread, re-read the section on appliqué thread. **Don't continue until you have a suitable appliqué thread.**

Trim seam allowance

Now, take out a ruler or tape measure. Study 1/8".

Then working on the right side of our example and using your serrated scissors, trim the seam allowance to 1/8". Check the seam allowance with your ruler or tape measure. Be sure you are **not under** 1/8". It can be a little wider. It could be as

much as 3/16" wide. DO NOT USE 1/4" seam allowance as this is too wide.

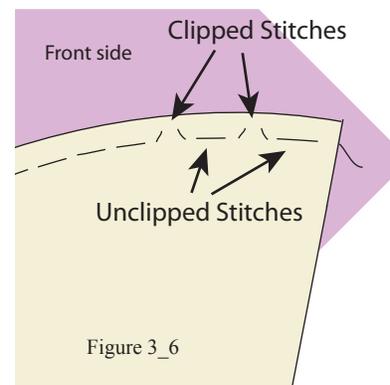
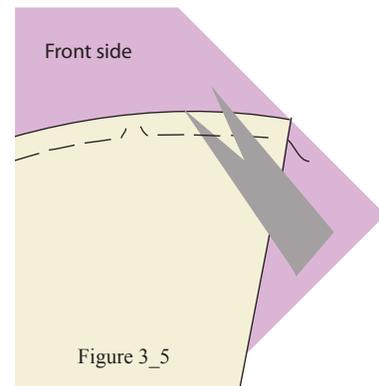
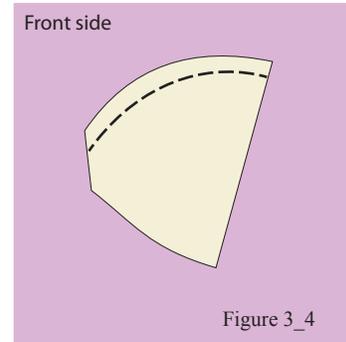
If necessary remove the appliqué fabric and try again. Just as piecers learn a 1/4" seam allowance by sight, you will also learn a 1/8" seam allowance by sight. It just takes a little practice.

Outer Curve

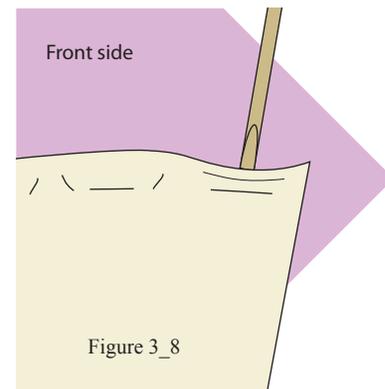
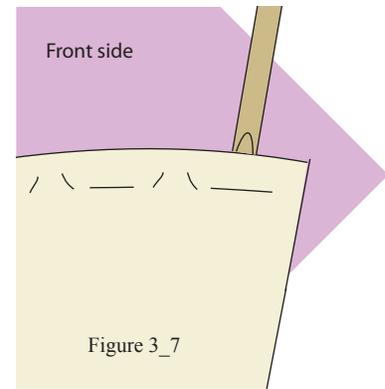
Figure 3_4 shows our outer curve after it has been QuikPrep stitched and after the 1/8" seam allowance has been cut.

We will break down the stitching of our outer curve into simple steps. Just follow the steps carefully to a perfect outer curve.

1. Clip every other QuikPrep stitch, twice. (Fig.3_5) and Fig.3_6)
2. Using the cuticle stick or appliqué turner, gently lift the first QuikPrep Stitch away from the background fabric. (Fig.3_7)
3. Using the cuticle stick or appliqué turner, gently flip under the seam allowance. (Fig.3_8)



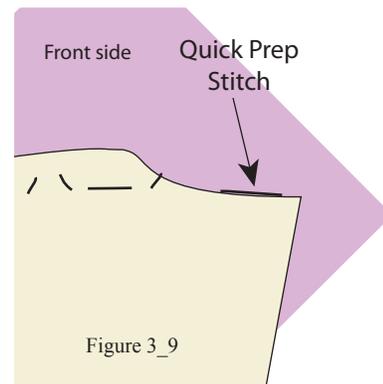
4. **Check your edge.** (Most important step.)
5. Finger-press the seam allowance and edge.
6. **Check your edge.** (Most important step.)
7. Take an appliqué stitch
8. Repeat step 7 up to 3 more times.
9. Gently tug on the appliqué thread to snug the appliqué fabric to the background fabric.
10. Repeat steps 2 through 8 until you are close to the next unclipped QuikPrep Stitch.
11. Repeat steps 1-10 until patch is completely applied.



Now let's take the time to thoroughly understand each of these steps.

1. Clip every other stitch, twice. Figure 3_5 shows one QuikPrep stitch that has been clipped. Figure 3_6 shows 2 stitches that have been clipped. Please note there is one unclipped QuikPrep stitch between each of the clipped stitches and one unclipped stitch to the right of the first clipped stitch.

2. Place the cuticle stick or appliqué turner between the appliqué fabric and the background fabric and under the first QuikPrep Stitch. Gently lift the QuikPrep Stitch away from the background fabric



pulling the clipped end of the QuikPrep thread through the background fabric so that the end is between the appliqué fabric and the background fabric. (Figure 3_7) This leaves the QuikPrep Stitch in the appliqué fabric.

3. Gently pull the cuticle stick or appliqué turner out from under the appliqué fabric. Use the cuticle stick or appliqué turner to gently turn under the seam allowance. Your QuikPrep Stitch should be on the fold of the fabric. In Figure 3_9 you can see the QuikPrep stitch on the fold. You will know exactly where the edge of your appliqué is because the QuikPrep Stitch is on the edge.

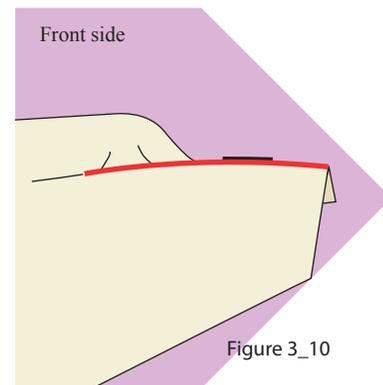
4. Check your edge. (Most important step.) I

can't stress the importance of this step enough. **Your eyes are your most important tool** in QuikPrep Appliqué. Use them now to check your work.

Allow your eye to create an imaginary line (see red line in Figure 3_10). This imaginary line will connect our QuikPrep stitches to the area we just turned under. This should be a smooth continuous curve. Eventually this imaginary line will also go through the area just turned under and will connect smoothly to the appliqué stitches that have already been taken.

If your edge is not smooth, now is the time to correct it. To make a deeper seam allowance, use your cuticle stick or appliqué turner to push more appliqué fabric under into the seam allowance.

If you turned under too much the first time, you can use your cuticle stick or appliqué turner or your needle point to pull the seam allowance out and then you can start over. Or

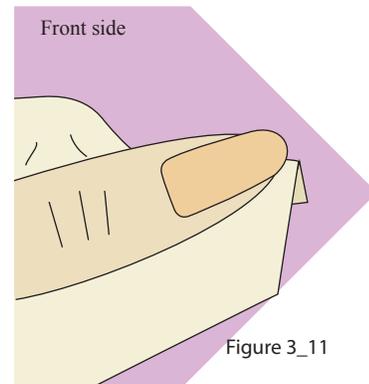


you could place the point of the needle in the seam allowance and gently pull out more fabric until the QuikPrep Stitch is directly on the fold.

Don't hurry this step. It is the most important step in hand-appliqué. You will be able to tell how your appliqué will look when you are done by checking the edge of your appliqué now. If it is not smooth now, it won't be smooth after you add stitches to it.

In hand-appliqué, you will know how your finished project will look before you place any stitches into your appliqué patch. True, it is possible to mess up your appliqué if you don't do the appliqué stitch properly. But I can guarantee that doing a perfect appliqué stitch will not make for beautiful appliqué, if the seam allowance has not been folded under properly to create a smooth edge. Take the time to watch the edge of your appliqué as you work so that there will be no ugly surprises when you are done.

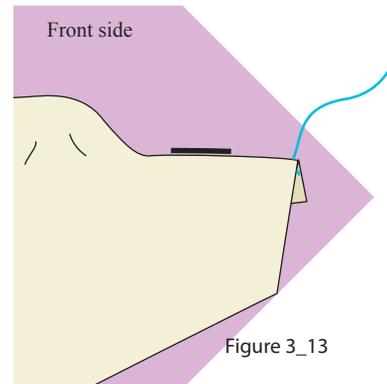
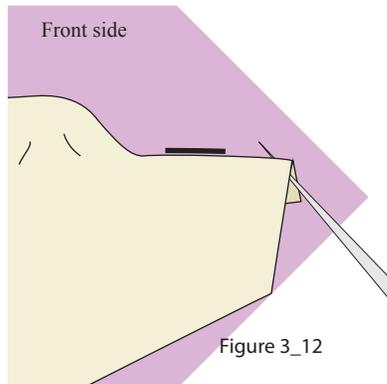
Step 5: Once you are happy with your edge, place your thumb (the one not holding the needle) over the turned under edge and finger-press by squeezing your thumb and first finger (under work) together. Finger-pressing tells your fabric what you expect of it. It is your way of communicating with your fabric.



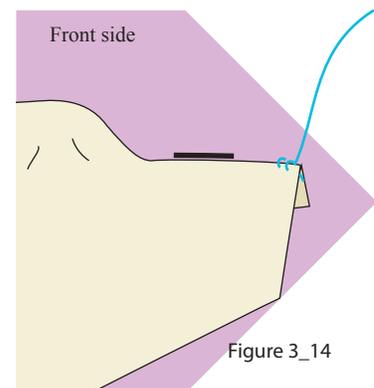
Step 6: Check the edge of your work again. Be sure you didn't push the edge out of alignment when you finger-pressed it.

Best Advice
Your eyes are your most important tool.

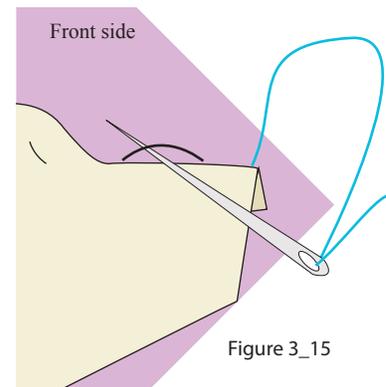
Step 7: When you are happy with your edge, place the point of your needle in the between the appliqué fabric and the seam allowance. (Figure 3_12) Pull the thread through until the knot is buried between the appliqué fabric and the seam allowance. (Figure 3_13)



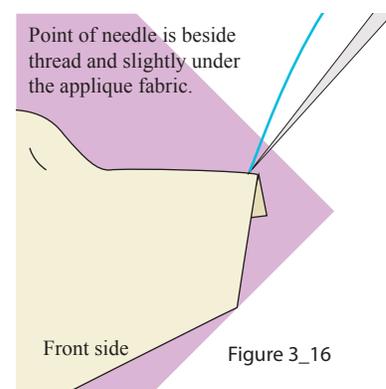
I like to take a couple of whip stitches in my appliqué project to secure the end. (Figure 3_14) These whip stitches will actually be in the seam allowance and will not show when our project is complete.



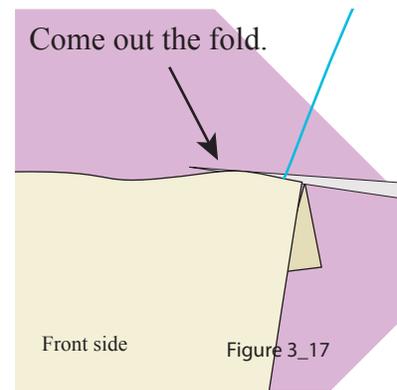
We will finish this step by removing our first QuikPrep Basting Stitch. We wouldn't want to accidentally stitch it into our project. Gently lift the stitch with the point of your needle. (Figure 3_15) Then grab it and pull it out.



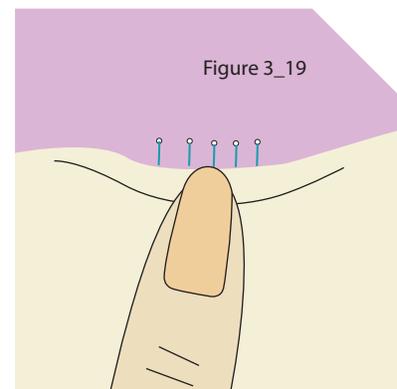
Step 8: We begin our appliqué stitch by placing the point of our needle beside the exit point of our appliqué thread from our whip stitches. (Figure 3_16) The point of our needle should be slightly under our appliqué fabric. Push down through the background fabric, then push forward 1/16" – 1/8", coming back



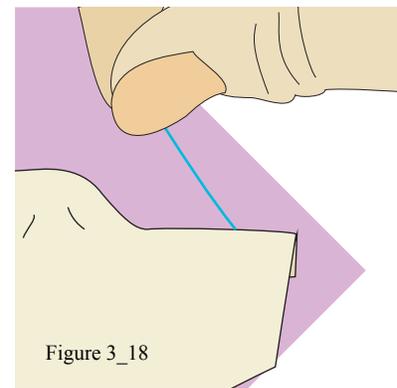
up through the background fabric and **coming out the fold** of our appliqué fabric. (Figure 3_17) Please note we are not taking a bite out of our appliqué fabric. **We are coming out the fold.** This will produce a soft, rolled edge on our appliqué. That's it. We've made our first appliqué stitch.



Step 9: We will repeat Step 8 another two or three times more. At that point, we will have made 3-4 appliqué stitches. Then we will stop, grab our appliqué thread and pull until the appliqué fabric is pulled firmly against the background fabric. **Do not pull until the edge of your appliqué wrinkles and gathers.** Pull just until the appliqué fabric is secure against the background fabric.



Take your thumbnail and try pulling the edge of your appliqué down. If your stitches show as in Figure 3_15, you need to pull the appliqué thread more firmly against the background fabric



It may not be possible to repeat Steps 8 and 9. This is true if we are stitching a very small patch. For these patches we will have to re-adjust our seam allowance and re-check our edge for **each stitch** that we take. Small patches are appliquéd one stitch at a time.

As you stitch along you will notice that the edge of our appliqué is slightly rolled. This slightly rolled edge will produce a nice 3-dimensional effect for our appliqué.

Your stitches will be almost invisible. This is the value of practicing with black appliqué thread on a pastel appliqué fabric. You will immediately see if you are not doing the appliqué stitch properly. Yes, you will see a black shadow but you shouldn't see any actual stitches.

Signs of an improperly done appliqué stitch include

- stitches that show on the front of the appliqué fabric
- stitches that are over 1/8" in length
- stitches that extend beyond the edge of the appliqué.

Stitches show on
applique fabric.

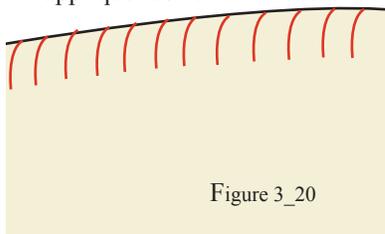


Figure 3_20

Stitches are too far apart.

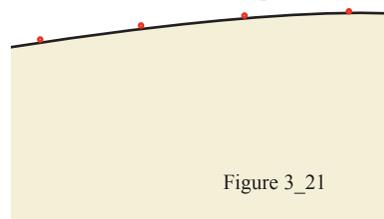


Figure 3_21

Stitches not under
edge of applique.

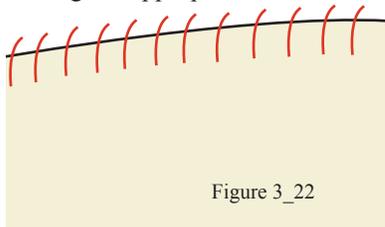


Figure 3_22

Stitches are just right.

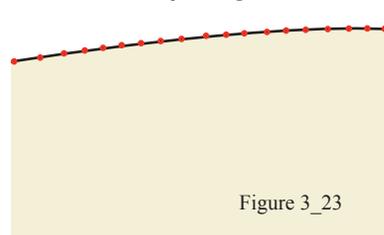


Figure 3_23

We have now stitched 3 or 4 stitches along the edge of our outer curve. We are getting close to our next QuikPrep Basting Stitch. We will go back to Step 1. We will clip two more QuikPrep Stitches and gently lift the next QuikPrep Basting Stitch and continue working through Step 7. Continue repeating this series of steps until your outer curve has been stitched.

Exercise: After completing your first sample using black thread. Repeat the exercise using an appropriate taupe thread or a thread that matches your appliqué fabric.

1. Cut another 6” square of background fabric. Trace the curve on the back.
2. Cut another 2” square of batik fabric. Baste in place.
3. Load your appliqué needle with an appropriate taupe thread.
4. Stitch the outer curve.

Exercise: When you are comfortable with the appliqué stitch it will be time for you to stitch the “Outer Curve” of “My First Appliqué Quilt”. This block is made up of nothing but outer curves. You will get a lot of practice.

Outer Curve or Inner Curve Practice

Full size pattern

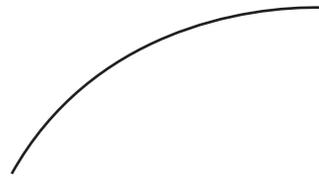
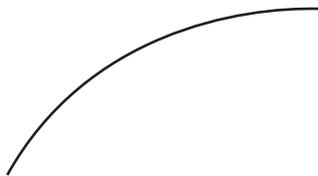
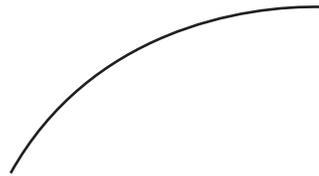
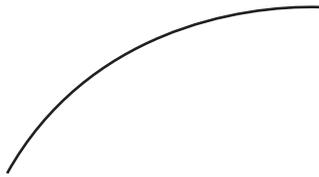
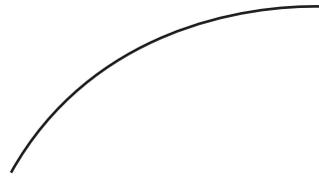
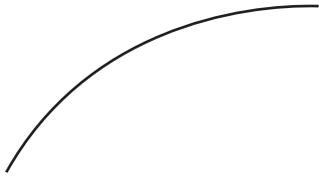


Figure 3_1