

Lesson 6 – Tweaking Your Appliqué

Seam Allowance

There are a few additional tips that will help you on your first appliqué block. Let's start after we have QuikPrep Stitched our patch on the wrong side of our background fabric, we then flip to the front. Then using our serrated scissors we cut out our patch. Do you absolutely have to use serrated scissors? No you don't but I guarantee that serrated scissors will make your life easier. It grabs the fabric and holds it as you cut it. Your cut will be less jagged and much smoother by using serrated scissors.

We will cut two widths of seam allowance. For our actual appliqué, we will cut a 1/8" seam allowance. Not all fabric will allow for a seam allowance this narrow. Coarser fabric may fray to the point that you don't have enough good fabric to turn under. If your fabric frays too much, cut a 3/16" seam allowance instead. This is another reason it is very important to use only fine quality, high-thread count, 100% cotton fabric.

For edges that slide under another patch we will cut a 1/4" seam allowance. One of the big advantages of QuikPrep Appliqué is that as we add patches we will never experience that moment when we discover that our patches weren't aligned properly and the next patch that we are ready to put on doesn't quite cover the patch under it properly. Our patches will always be in the proper place because we are working from the full design drawn on the back of our project.

Let's use the Entwined Hearts pattern in Figure 3_24 to illustrate. The red heart slides under the blue heart. It is our bottom-most patch and will need to be stitched first.

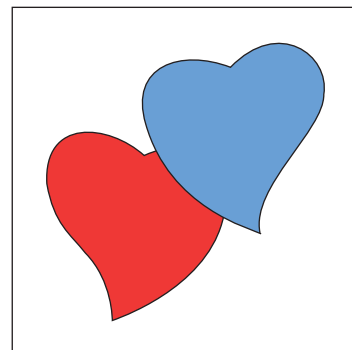


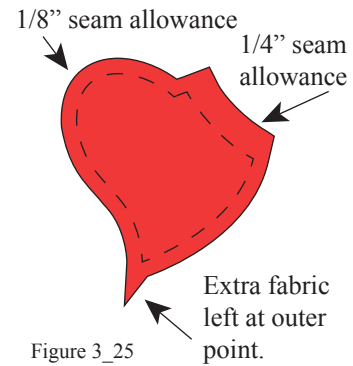
Figure 3_24

If the patch slides under another patch, I like to begin cutting at an edge that is under the other patch. We cut that seam at 1/4". Then we will switch to a 1/8" seam allowance as we cut the edge that will be turned under.

Later, when we learn to do outer points, you will discover that I like to have extra fabric at the outer points. I'll

explain why when we do outer points. For now we will leave extra fabric at the outer point.

We are so used to using a 1/4" seam allowance that we will probably be a little uncomfortable at first. It always amazes me when I teach a workshop, that many students actually cut the seam allowance too narrow. They will trim it to 1/16" or even narrower. Narrower is not better. It will create all sorts of problems when we try to turn under a seam allowance that is too narrow.



Top Tip

Use a ruler to check your seam allowances. Re-do your patch until your seam allowances are 1/8" wide.

allowance every time.

It is important to measure these first few seam allowances that we cut. Establishing good techniques at this point will benefit us in the future. So take out a ruler or a tape measure and check each seam allowance that you cut. Continue checking each patch that you cut until you are confident that you are cutting a smooth 1/8" seam

Needle Savvy

Occasionally, we have spots along the edge that aren't smooth. Often times we can make the edge lay down flat and smooth by pushing our needle under our appliqué between the background fabric and the turned under appliqué seam. We can then use either the point of our needle or the side of the needle to re-adjust the seam allowance until the edge is smooth. Then finger press it again. Just play with it a little until your edge is as flat and smooth as you would like. Remember, appliqué is all about having a smooth, pokie-free edge. Use your needle and the flip end of your cuticle stick to achieve that look.

Appliqué Stitch Length and “Pokies”

One of the most important elements of hand-appliqué is the applique stitch length. Our fabric likes to behave just like we do when we lay down. We wiggle and squirm until we are comfortable.

Our seam allowances will do the same thing. This process occurs for several hours after we are done stitching a patch. As we handle the project and continue stitching other patches, the seam allowance of our earlier patches will wiggle and squirm, seeking out a comfortable position for themselves. Often times this means the seam allowance will fold and buckle on itself. This creates ugly points called “pokies”. It isn't unusual to stitch what we believe to be a perfect edge one day

Top Tip

To reduce “pokies”:

1. Finger-press all seam allowance after turning it.
2. Trim seam allowances to 1/8”.
3. Keep appliqué stitches close together (8-16 stitches per inch).

only to come back the next day to find “pokies” spoiling that edge.

To help prevent pokies we can first be sure we finger-press all of our seam allowances. Finger-pressing tells the seam allowance what we want it to do. We reduce the “wiggling and squirming” when we finger-press.

We can also reduce pokies by keeping our seam allowance at 1/8” and our appliqué stitches close together. The wider the seam allowance the more fabric has to be tucked under. That fabric will have a mind of its own. To fit itself into the space under the patch it will fold on itself and create a pokie. Trimming our seam allowance to only 1/8” will remove much of the excess fabric.

It is also important to keep our stitches close together. That way, when the seam allowance tries to fold and create a pokie, it will find a stitch in the way. A row of closely placed stitches is one of your best defenses against pokies. When the seam allowance relaxes and tries to fold creating a pokie, it will find it impossible to break through a barrier of closely placed appliqué stitches. Your edge will remain smooth and pokie-free.

Let’s return to look at the example we used earlier. This block has been designed with all outer curves. That is the only element in the design.

We left our first patch – a leaf – QuikPrep Stitched and ready to have it’s seam allowances cut.

Figure 3_27. Let’s cut those seam allowances now.

Cut the seam allowances that slides under petals

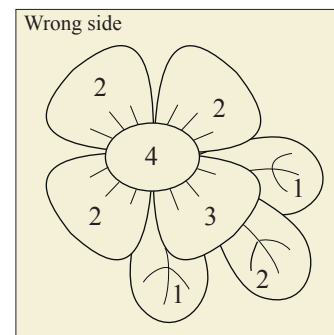


Figure 3_26

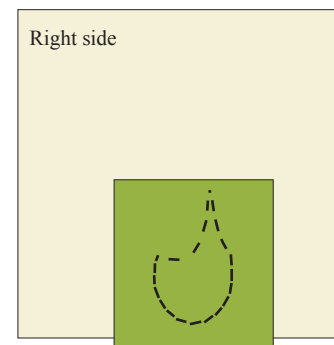


Figure 3_27

to 1/4". Cut the seam allowances that will be turned under and applied in place to 1/8". (Figure 3_28) Use a ruler or tape measure to check your seam allowances.

We are now ready to appliqué this patch. We will begin by placing basting stitches in the 1/4" seam allowance that slides under the petals using a short basting stitch. (Figure 3_29) This will anchor the edge that slides under the petals. When we place the petal fabric over this area to appliqué the petal, this

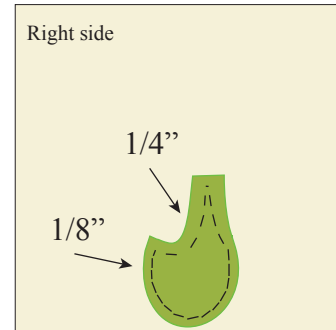


Figure 3_28

basting will hold our leaf fabric in place so that it doesn't slip. I'm using "red thread" in this example so that it shows up. You will want to use a thread color that blends into your appliqué fabric.

Now turn your work. Fold under the seam allowance using your appliqué turner and begin stitching the edge of your patch with the applique stitch. Refer back to Figures 3-5 through 3_17 as necessary

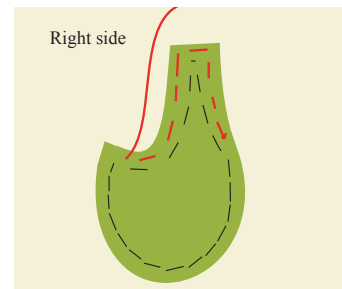


Figure 3_29

All of the patches in this block slide under another patch with the exception of the very last patch – the oval in the middle. That means that we will begin stitching each of these patches in the seam allowance that slides under another patch.

The oval in the center is a "top-most" patch.

That is, it doesn't have another patch placed over it. A "top-most" patch can have other elements under it as is true of this oval or it can be a stand-alone patch. That is, one that

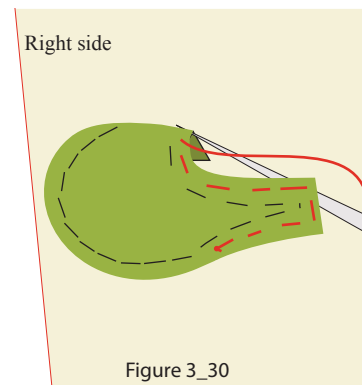


Figure 3_30

doesn't have any other elements under it. We start these "top-most patches differently than starting patches that slide under other patches.

For "top-most" patches, we will start on the **straightest** edge that we can find. Often there will be more than one spot where we can start stitching the patch. For this oval, it probably doesn't matter which of the two spots indicated by the arrow that you choose for your starting point.

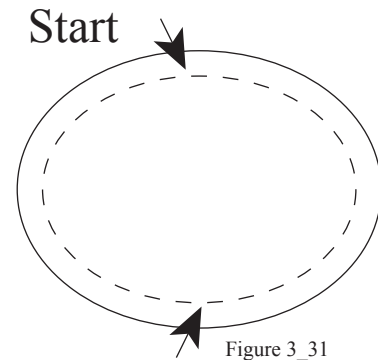


Figure 3_31

For these "stand-alone" patches, we begin by placing the point of our needle between the appliqué fabric and the background fabric. Bring the point up through the wrong side of the appliqué fabric through to the right side where our fold will be. Be sure to miss your QuikPrep stitches. We wouldn't want to stitch them into our project. Pull the

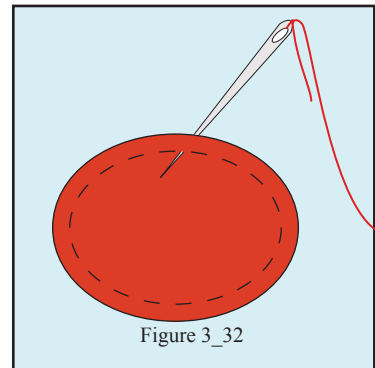


Figure 3_32

thread through so that the knot is buried in the seam allowance. That's all there is to it. We are now ready to use our appliqué turner to turn under the seam allowance.

Exercise: Stitch Block 1 of the QuikPrep Sampler Quilt. This block consists of outer curves only. If you are new to appliqué, I would strongly urge you to complete this exercise. Stitching outer curves will give you the confidence to continue on your journey to learn all the elements of QuikPrep Appliqué. To begin you will feel uncomfortable holding the fabric and needle. With practice you will make the techniques your own

Checking accuracy

As we go along our first inclination is to turn our work over after every stitch to see if we are directly on our pencil line. I know this is what I did. I couldn't believe I was directly the line. I kept expecting to see my stitching line waiver.

I would encourage you to check your work often by turning it over. This provides you with instant feedback. As you are appliqueing you actually have two goals. 1) The edge of your appliqué needs to be smooth. 2) Your stitches should be on or very near the pencil line to achieve the most accuracy.

If you do waiver from the pencil line, first check the front. Can you tell from the front that you have stitched off the line? Most of the time you can't. If you can, see the waiver on the front, you will want to take it out and correct it at this time.

There is a second reason to take these stitches out and do them over. If you are going to enter your quilt in a judged quilt show, you may want to make it as perfect as possible. In that case, you will want to re-stitch the section in error.

If the error doesn't show on the front, I will leave it in and vow to do better next time.

Needle Stitch

Sometimes we are hesitant to put in an appliqué stitch because we aren't sure it will be in the correct spot. May be our QuikPrep stitch pulled out and we aren't sure where the fold should be. So we don't know if we have turned under the proper seam allowance. There is a very quick and easy method to check this before putting in any appliqué stitches. Just place your needle through the background fabric only just under your appliqué edge where you would normally take an appliqué stitch. Don't pull the

appliqué thread through. Just use your needle to take a “needle stitch”. Flip to the other side. Can you see the “needle stitch”? Is it on your pencil line? If not, return to the front, reposition your seam allowance and test again with a “needle stitch”. When you are satisfied that you will be directly on the pencil line when you take your appliqué stitch, back the “needle stitch” out of the background fabric and take your next appliqué stitch.

