



How to "Appli-Quilt"

by Deonn Stott

This raw-edge technique is a handy way to stitch appliqué pieces and quilt at the same time, saving hours of time at the sewing machine.

I) *Prepare Appliqué Fabric*

OPTION 1: ADHESIVE.

Use a washable glue-stick or Elmer's glue product (Appli-glue by Jillily, Sue Daley, Roxanne's etc.) and position the appliqué pieces where desired. Hit with an iron to keep the fabric secure and in place until you want to remove it. You may also use a product such as Odif 505 temporary spray adhesive. Spray in a well-ventilated area and lay out newspaper to protect surfaces from overspray. Position pieces where desired. The advantage to this spray is that the pieces may be repositioned, and it does not gum up needles.

OPTION 2: STARCH.

Simply press the fabric with a light spritz of starch then cut out as desired. Pin in place. Or you can prepare fabric by soaking with a heavy starch. Allow to dry or iron it dry. You may want to use a towel on the ironing surface to soak up extra starch. Fabric will become very stiff, almost paper-like.

OPTION 3: FUSIBLE WEB.

Follow manufacturer's instructions to prepare fabrics using a light fusible web product such as *Heat'n'Bond Lite*, etc. Cut out pieces directly on the solid line of each pattern, then peel off the backing and press pieces in place. *Steam-a-Seam* is most commonly used for collage quilting as it has a sticky surface that may be repositioned until ironed.

II) *Thread*

Choose a thread that suits your project. To blend the thread with the fabric, use a matching color or try Superior's Microquilter or other 100wt fine thread. Use contrasting or specialty threads to add an accent or sparkle to the project. Specialty fibers, yarns or cording may be used for couching to really define the shapes.

III) *Stitches*

When appli-quilting on a longarm, layer the backing, batting and quilt top on the machine. The appliqué pieces can be positioned beforehand, or assembled as you go.

* Choose whether or not to quilt an overall design over the top or appli-quilt each piece individually. With an edge-to-edge design, you'll catch all of the pieces (hopefully), and get an overall texture. Tulle or netting may be overlaid to keep the pieces secure, then stitched over the top. Narrow "stick" stitching can be an effective quilting treatment.

* Determine whether or not to quilt the background prior to appli-quilting. If you are planning to use a computerized overall pattern, I'd recommend quilting the background prior to adding the appliqué (ask me how I know...). bit.ly/thosewhowish

* First, stitch each piece to secure the edges. A straight edge-stitch works fine. Use a ruler if you want a little help getting the stitching relatively even. Find a straight edge and a curved edge ruler that you like to help guide the foot.

* Freemotion a couple of lines around the edges for a more artistic look, or use a motif that suits the shape. For example a zig-zaggy pattern at the edge of a tree can give it tree-like texture and secure the edges at the same time.

* You can mimic various sewing machine stitches such as a blanket-stitch or zig-zag. For these stitches, I recommend slowing the machine way down to help give you more control. Use your sewing machine's decorative stitches as inspiration.

* Try any of your favorite longarm fill patterns in miniature. Think "micro-stitching" with a little stipple, teeny ribbon candy, tiny clamshells, etc. Or "scribble-stitch" the edges.

* If you want your appliqué to have the look of a soft rag-edge, stitch the pieces about 1/4" in from the edge, leaving the edges free to ravel.

* If you prefer the look of turned-edge appliqué, you can prepare shapes beforehand. See my series of appliqué lessons at bit.ly/ILoveApplique. Look for the "Turned-Edge" section. This is when Microquilting thread may come in handy. Use a blanket-stitch with a tiny bite and stitch slowly around each piece. It can resemble hand-stitching—not as invisible as actual hand-stitching, but it comes pretty close.

* Finally, don't be afraid to quilt inside the appliqué to add definition, dimension and texture to your piece.