



Stitching Appliqués to Background - a simple zigzag!

Appliqué. Don't let this word scare you, it is French for applied. In sewing it means to stitch the piece to the background or, used as a noun, it means the piece itself. For Quiltsmart's pieced-by-appliqué methods, we recommend a simple zigzag stitch with invisible top thread. This technique is fast, forgiving, and gives a pieced look to the quilt.

- Use 100% cotton thread in your bobbin and invisible thread (Nylon monofilament) in the top thread. If you can find it, Bobbinfill thread is good for this step for two reasons. First, the weight matches that of the monofilament top thread. Secondly, the fiber content matches. I find that I get a better looking stitch. OR, use a silk thread on the top in a color that matches the fabric. This thread almost melts into the fabric....very nice!
- Use a small diameter needle in your machine ... size 11 is recommended.
- You may need to loosen the top tension a bit to prevent bobbin thread from being pulled up through the fabric.
- Stitch so most of the zigzag stitch is on the appliqué (used as a noun) and allow the needle to skim the edge of the appliqué piece into the background fabric.
- Practice the stitch on a layer of two fabrics with a scrap of interfacing between to simulate your appliqué.
- The narrower the zigzag, the more invisible the stitch. Stitch length should be about 10 stitches to the inch. Try to achieve a zigzag about 1/8th inch wide in the beginning, and as you practice you will be able to get it much narrower, even to the point that it is barely a zigzag.
- No zigzag? No problem. You can use a straight stitch as close to the edge of the appliqué as you can sew consistently and without "falling off." Match the thread to the color of the appliqué piece and use a stitch length of 12-15 stitches per inch .

There are several other ways to appliqué. The ones most commonly known tend to be the scariest to the beginner quilter. These are not generally recommended:

- Invisible stitch by hand A technique of inserting and pulling the needle through the cloth so that no thread shows from the top. This give a hand crafted look to your quilt ... but be prepared to invest a lot of time.
- Blind stitch hem A few straight stitches followed by one zigzag. The problem here is that you won't wrap the edge of the appliqué well enough to keep the pieces down.
- Satin stitch zigzag stitches very close together forming a solid satiny looking row of thread. Satin stitches require a good deal of practice and patience.