

Machine Appliqué

PREPARE APPLIQUÉ BACKGROUND

Stabilize the background fabric so the stitching will not distort and the appliqué pieces will lay flat. Fusible lightweight stabilizer such as no show mesh or a light to medium weight tear away are good choices. If available, an extension table for the machine will also help keep the work flat and a transparent one can also be used as a light table. Use a light box for placement of designs on the background and tracing designs.



FUSIBLE APPLIQUÉ

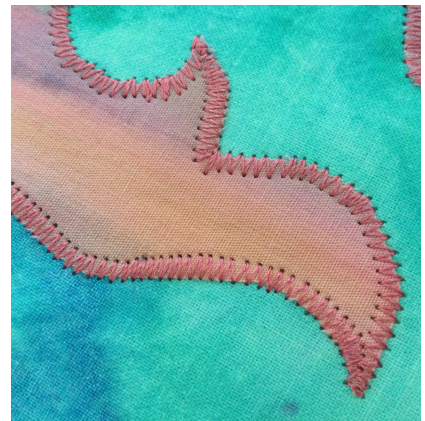
Create fusible appliqué using a product like Floriani Appli-kay Wonder. Trace a reversed image of the appliqué shape to the paper side of the fusible product. Some patterns have already reversed the image to be traced, so double check the images. Reverse an image by placing it “correct” side down on a light box and the fusible product paper side up. Make notes on the paper such as piece number to aid in placement and identification of pieces. Roughly cut out the shapes and fuse following manufactures directions to the wrong side of the appliqué fabric. Cut shapes on the line just and remove paper before adhering to background. Fuse following manufacturer’s directions, but never with a too hot iron. Any inside guide lines can be marked on the fabric using the light box with a light pencil or wash away marker.

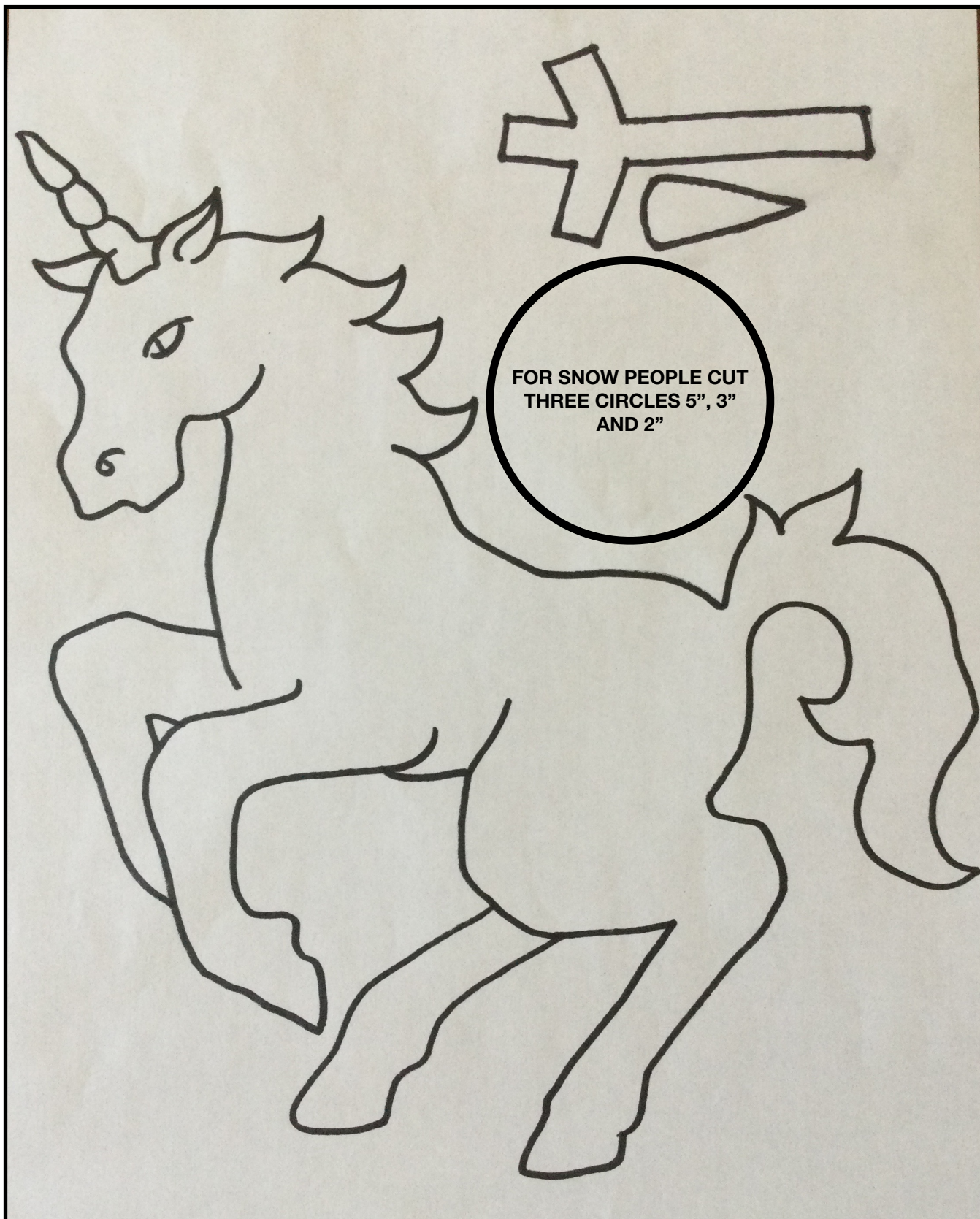


THE SATIN STITCH

A zig zag stitch that has been modified so the thread covers the background is called a Satin Stitch. Create a satin stitch by shortening the stitch length of the zig zag stitch. The thread thickness determines the ideal stitch length. Thread thickness is indicated by a number. Thread with a higher number is thinner than a thread with a lower number. Thicker thread will require a longer stitch length and thinner thread uses a shorter stitch length. Stitch a sample and modify the stitch length until the thread lies side by side without building up on the adjacent threads. An “open” satin stitch as shown in the photo below right can also be used.

The width of the satin stitch should be enough to cover the edges of the appliqué. Try to have the needle penetrate just





outside the edge of the appliqué. Some electronic machines have a feature to convert the speed control slider to a stitch width control. This allows the width to be manually adjusted on the fly while stitching.

The stitch direction should follow the curve of the shape. When the needle is down on the outside of the shape, the inward swing of the needle should be towards an imaginary point in the center of the shape or part of the shape. The stitching on the inside of the curve will be closer than those on the outside edge. To turn a smooth curve, frequently lift the presser foot with the needle in the down position on the outside edge and adjust the fabric. Use the needle down feature to cycle the stitch if you stop on the inside edge. Some machines have a pivot function that automatically lifts the presser foot when the machine is stopped.

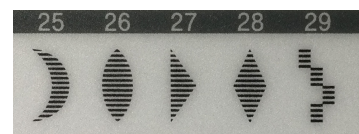
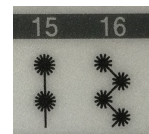
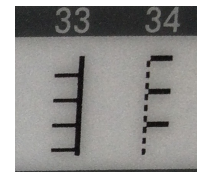


The satin stitch has height and volume. Most machines come with a special foot to accommodate decorative stitching. On BabyLock and Brother machines, the “N” foot is designed to not only allow the stitching to pass through a tunnel on the soul of the foot, but also has a tiny bit of extra height to slightly unbalance the stitching. This unbalanced stitch brings a little of the top thread to the back of the work. An Open Toe foot is a useful accessory for machine appliqué because the open area greatly increases visibility.

APPLIQUÉ WITH DECORATIVE STITCHES

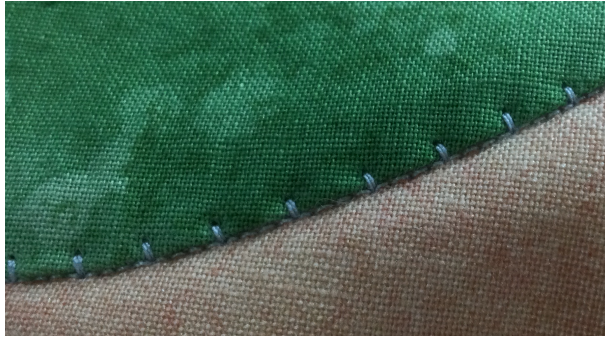
A variety of decorative stitches can be used for machine appliqué. The only goal is to hold down the edge of the appliqué shape. An electronic machine increases the variety of stitches available and enables the sewist to duplicate the look of the stitching exactly using precise controls. Mirror image, flip and the ability to combine patterns also makes this type of machine a good choice for machine appliqué.

- “E” or buttonhole stitch can give the appliqué an old fashioned look. Pay attention to turning corners if the stitch selected features double stitching. Turn this type of stitch just before or after the side swing of the stitch.
- Utility stitches can be surprisingly fun on an appliqué. Try a straight stitch or blind hem type stitch on the outside edge of a satin stitch to add a shadow or extra dimension to the shape. To hit the exact spot use an open toe foot for extra visibility.
- Straight stitch is a simple way to hold down the edges. Free motion quilting or thread painting will also work very well to cover the edges and will add extra detail that can change a plain appliqué to a realistic plat or animal.
- Candlewick stitching creates star shaped knots. This stitch may distort when sewing through uneven thicknesses, but used just once can be perfect for a dot, an eye or snow. Convert the machine to make a single stitch instead of a multiple run.
- Alpha-numeric character stitching can add interesting effects to appliqué, but may be challenging to stitch around a curve. Consider selecting one character and repeating for an interesting way to add to your selection of decorative stitch patterns.
- Shaped satin stitches can be combined and can sometimes be elongated without compromising density. These stitches can be wider and trickier to turn a curve or corner. Sew a test sample first. Consider these for a bolder look for appliqué.



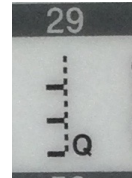
- Invisible appliqué stitch will mimic hand sewing on an appliqué piece with a turned under edge. See “Hand Stitched Appliqué by Machine” above for fabric preparation ideas.

“HAND STITCHED” APPLIQUÉ BY MACHINE



Hand stitched appliqué can be mimicked with the sewing machine. Use a fusible stabilizer such as Floriani Fusible No-Show Mesh to turn under the edge of the appliqué as is done with hand appliqué. Trace the appliqué shape onto the smooth, un-fusible side of the interfacing. Cut around the shape with a 1/4" seam allowance and place the shiny, unmarked side of the interfacing next to the right side of the appliqué fabric. Stitch around the shape using a short (2.0 mm) stitch length.

Carefully cut a slit in the middle of the interfacing only and turn the appliqué to the right side. Using a stylus or turning tool to push the edges out and rolling the stabilizer to the back side. The piece can be pressed on a silicone sheet to set the edges. The sheet will not absorb the adhesive and the shape will release for use when it cools slightly.



Use the hand look appliqué stitch on the machine to secure the shape. Allow the swing of the needle to just catch the edge of the appliqué. The swing of the needle can be increased by increasing the stitch width slightly. If it is challenging to see the edge, try using an open toe foot for increased visibility.