

Needle Turn Applique

This is a traditional method of hand sewn applique that uses the tip of the needle to turn or stroke the seam allowance around a shape inwards as the piece is stitched into place.

Materials required

- Card or plastic to make the templates for the appliqued shapes / motifs
- Background fabric the appropriate size for your finished piece
- Small pieces of fabric for the applique
- Needles - Sharps, Applique, Straw (size 10 or 11) or milliner's needles which are fine and long with a little flexibility.
- Thread to match the applique pieces – use a fine, strong sewing thread
- Pins or Appliqué pins or washable basting glue
- Embroidery scissors
- Fabric marker
- Toothpick (optional)
- Iron and ironing board plus protective sheet / parchment paper

Instructions (adapted from an article written by Kerry Green)

<https://www.thesewingdirectory.co.uk/applique-techniques/>

Step 1. Draw your design and create templates for the shapes or motifs to be applied

Step 2. Place the template on the right side of the fabric and draw round it with a removable fabric marker or a light pencil to make a fine line . This line will make the fold for the seam to be turned under. It will not be visible on the finished applique.



Step 3. Cut out the shapes with a sharp pair of scissors, leaving a scant 1/4" seam allowance around the edge of each motif. (This is the fabric you'll turn under to create a finished edge.) Repeat for all the appliques you have.

Step 3. Place the shape right side up on the background fabric in the required position. For a design with lots of shapes and precise placement it can be lightly traced onto the right side of the background fabric.

If your shapes overlap each other or are placed right next to each other then it is important to attach them to the background fabric in the correct order of sewing.

Secure the shape using either pins (small appliqué pins make it less likely to catch sewing thread), tacking/basting in place, or using tiny dots of washable basting glue placed at least 1/4" in from the seam fold line.

Before starting to sew It can help to gently pinch the seam allowance along the drawn line all around the shape to create a fold memory ready to turn in and sew.

Step 4. Applique – stitching



To start sewing needle turn appliqué, cut a length of fine thread – elbow tip to longest finger is a good measure – and knot the end.

Start on a straight section or an outward curve and away from any corners or sharp angles. Slide the needle through the back of the appliqué motif and direct it to the wrong side of the seam line so the knot is hidden. Use the side and tip of the needle to gently roll the seam allowance under for a short distance (approx. 1/2" or so), hold the turned edge with the thumb of your non stitching hand.



Insert the needle into the background against the folded edge and opposite where the thread came out. Turn the needle point upwards as it travels a little way under the wrong side of the background fabric and comes out to catch the folded edge of the appliqué approximately 1/8" further along.



Pull the thread away from the fabric edge and the stitch should almost disappear. Continue a straight or gentle outwardly curved edge stroking the fabric under and towards you as you sew and making small stitches. How close your stitches should be depends on the part of the shape you are sewing. On a straight section or gentle curve stitches can be a little further apart but less than 1/4".

When stitching close to a outer or inner point, or an inner curve, stitches will be a lot closer together. Concentrate on a small section, turning over only a maximum of 1/2"-1" seam allowance at a time.



On the back of your work, the stitches should look like small, straight and close together running stitches.

Once the appliqué motif is sewn, secure and knot off the thread on the back of your work.

Sewing Outer Curves

Outer curves are relatively straightforward. Smooth the fabric edge under using the needle tip as shown above. If there seems like there is too much fabric, trim the seam allowance a little.

Sewing Inward Curves

Use small sharp scissors to cut the seam allowance along the inner curve in small cuts that stop just before they reach the marked seam line.



Use the tip and side of the needle to swing the fabric edge under in one smooth sweeping movement with the needle.

Sewing Inner Points



In this example the inner point is at the top of the pink heart. Stitch to approx. 1/2" from the inner point, then cut clip seam allowance so the cut almost reaches the seam line at the base of the point.

Use the needle to swing the seam allowance towards you turning the seam under at the point and beyond. This is quite a tricky manoeuvre as there is barely any seam allowance at the inner point and you often only get one good go at this before the fabric starts to fray!

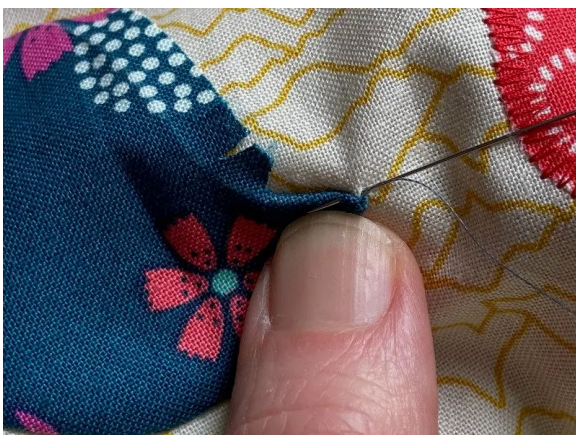


It can help to use a dampened wooden cocktail stick, instead of the needle to swing the seam allowance under, the dampness catches any stray fabric threads. Hold the turned seam allowance in place with the thumb of your non stitching hand and sew with close together stitches, stopping just before the base of the point. Then take a deeper stitch taking a slightly larger 'bite' of the appliqué shape fabric, then straight down into the background, angling the needle under the turned in edge. Pull the thread carefully, then continue with closely spaced stitches working away from the inner point.

Sewing Outer Points



Stitch using needle turn up to the point, your stitches should get closer together as you approach the point.



Make a stitch at the point, pull the thread, then swing the seam allowance under with the needle and hold in place with the thumb of your non-stitching hand and pull gently on the thread to ensure the point is still held tight and continue stitching.

Sewing an Acute Outer Point



This method is for a very narrow outer point and is an alternative to the outer point technique. An acute outer point can be worked in three stages. Firstly, stitch within 1" of the sharp point and then trim the seam allowance around the point to just over 1/8".

Next, fold the fabric across the top of the point, then use your needle to turn the seam allowance up to the point and stitch to the point.



Finally, use the needle or the tip of your scissors to push the seam allowance under to the point and about 1/2" beyond. This is quite tricky, there will feel like there is a lot of bulk in a small place! Hold in place with your non-stitching thumb and continue to sew.

Once all the stitching has been completed remove the basting or the pins and then press.

