



## Crabby Maudie parts with some tips

Crabby shares her top tips for fusible appliqué and machine quilting:

1. Practice. Let me say it again – practice. Draw some shapes on the paper side of your fusible web, some hearts, diamonds, circles, squares, stars....you get the point. Cut and fuse to some ugly fabric you were going to throw away anyway. Cut these out on the line and fuse to some muslin or other fabric you can write on, and make sure you can clearly see your appliqué shapes. Set your sewing machine up for a zigzag or satin stitch with a length of 1.0 and a width of 2.5. **Slowly** test sew around a shape until you get a good idea what those settings look like. If they're crappy and you don't like the look of them, change your settings and try a new sample until you find one you do like. Use a fine point Sharpie or pen to write beside each sample what stitch and settings you used.

2. Practice some more. Go slowly as you sew and remember these rules for good-lookin' stitches:

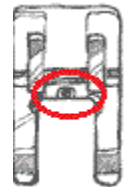
**Outer Curve** = Needle to **Right** when you stop to pivot ).

**Inner Curve** = Needle to **Left** when you stop to pivot .(

This applies to points as well – to the left on inner points and the right on outer points.

And this is important – **pivot often**.

3. If you are going to treat yourself to one excellent thing this year make it an **open toe appliqué foot**. It makes seeing where you are going so much easier. If there is no *dot* or line on the centre of the foot for your particular sewing machine then make one with a sharpie or whatever. Use this dot to know when to pivot. Use the dot to travel in a straight line on your shapes. When the dot (or line) is no longer on the edge of your applique it is time to pivot to move it back on. If it takes 6 pivots to get around a curve and keep your dot following the appliqué shape in a straight line, then that is the correct amount of pivots for that shape. The quality of your stitching will remain high if you follow the dot. No matter how proficient you get at machine appliqué, you will find yourself using that dot every time.



4. Stabilize *every piece* of appliqué that you do. Always. The only exception to this rule is when you have piled shapes on top of each other, like the centre of a flower. The bottom shapes will act as stabilizer for the ones on top.

5. Use quality materials. Flimsy cheapo cotton *will* show what's underneath, especially cheapo neutral coloured or white cotton. Cheap irregular thread will never lay nicely and evenly. If the appliqué is to be washed often such as a placemat, apron or oven mitts you are going to need a well made piece of fabric with good quality thread and not one that will shred after three washes. For items like wall hangings that are seldom laundered you might get away with it. Luckily, fusible appliqué uses smaller pieces of fabric and therefore the initial outlay is not as expensive as a queen size quilt would be. Take advantage of your local quilt shop's sales to buy good quality fabric for your stash.



6. Press seams open. I know, I know, the debate rages.....but if you are going to appliqué over seams and machine quilt over seams then try to keep your fabric as flat and level as possible. Pressing to one side causes bunched layers. For instance, if you are piecing 4-patches, by the time you have them all sewn together your fabric goes from a single layer to 4 layers in the middle to a single layer again. It is much easier to appliqué and machine quilt over even layers. I find it just as easy to match points with seams pressed open as I do with seams pressed to one side. However, this is just a tip, not a command. If you feel you must, press seams any ol' way you want to – it's your quilt.

7. Fluff your batting in the dryer before you baste your quilt sandwich. This helps to ensure the batting is as smooth as the quilt fabric and doesn't contain any lumps, bumps, folds or creases.

8. Prewash and dry your fabric. You don't want that one tiny patch of red fabric bleeding into the rest of your table runner as soon as somebody puts a cold beer on it - ask me how I know this..... Besides, you don't want any surprises the first time you wash that runner it took you three months to do, such as different fabrics shrinking at different ratios – again, ask me. Unless of course you are going for that super crumpled looks like the dog chewed it look. Your batting will shrink enough to supply that lovely “quilty” look.

9. Use fusible basting spray, such as 505 spray instead of eleven billion safety pins that you have to stop and remove every five flipping seconds when all you want to do is get this dang thing quilted! I have found 505 spray to be one of my most favourite tools in the sewing studio. Use a sheet or towel or other large washable item to protect the surface where you are spraying (make sure you have lots of ventilation too) and do not spray all over your sewing machines and cutters and thread. Sigh.

10. Practice your free motion work. It takes time and patience to master machine quilting. The best advice I can give is to practice, then practice, then practice some more. Draw the shapes on paper first until you can do it smoothly and your fingers and brain have “learned” the design. Then try the design on a spare quilt sandwich. And I don't only mean some dinky 9 x 12 sandwich –fat quarters are a great size to practice with. Go BIG! as well. And don't throw your practice pieces out – make little storage bags out of them or bind them and donate to your local animal shelter as cage beds. Or piece a small table topper or runner pattern you have been dying to make up, quilt it for practice, and use it on your patio table. Do *something* with your practice pieces – don't waste that lovely fabric. And don't expect to be a master at it in a month – give yourself a break and realize it will take time and effort. But it is also one of the most fun things I've ever done. The more you do, the better you'll be...the better you are, the more you enjoy it. So put some great music on your iPod, relax, breathe deeply and have a blast!