

# Back-to-Basics

A free beginners pattern to teach yourself to machine appliqué.

## Here's what you will need:

(a lot of which you probably already have...)

- A sewing machine capable of straight stitch and zig-zag.
- An "open" foot for that sewing machine (this foot looks like a football goal post, sort of like this: **U**).
- A darning foot for that machine (this is the one with the spring-action in it).
- Six to eight cotton prints in 1/4 yard pieces, or fat quarters (an assortment of light, medium, and dark) for the rabbits and the background).
- 1/8 yard of gold lamé would be nice for the rabbits' eyes, but not absolutely necessary, you could substitute a different fabric for the eyes.
- 1/2 yard of fabric for the binding, 1 yard of fabric for the backing, 1 yard of batting (we prefer Warm & Natural®) Thread to coordinate with the fabrics, generally five shades darker.
- An iron and an ironing board.
- A light box to trace drawing lines onto the fabric, but you could use a window with sunlight shining through it.
- Rotary Cutter, mat, and straight edge.
- Marking pen, pencil or chalk.
- Straight pins, 1" Safety pins, "T" pins (also called wig pins).
- A Homosote (a kind of insulation purchased at a lumber yard) board or broad-loom carpet (you'll need this to stretch the quilt, when you prepare to quilt).
- 1 yard of paper-backed iron-on fusible web (Wonder-Under® or similar).
- Tear-away fabric stabilizer.

## Section A: Preparing to Appliqué

Cut the rabbit drawing (*page 7 of this document*) 1/2" from the edge of the outline. Cut out a piece of fusible web the same size as the loosely cut out rabbit drawing. Fusible web is an adhesive which has a paper back purchased at fabric shops and quilt stores. When you iron it, it adheres to fabric. Peel the paper and it can be ironed to a background fabric. This will save you from basting.

Choose two fabrics: a medium colored one for the rabbit and a darker or lighter one for the background block. If you choose a fabric which is too pale for the rabbit, the fabric for the eyes will show through. Iron the fusible to the back side of the appliqué fabric. Pin the rabbit drawing to the front of the appliqué fabric. Cut out the rabbit around the edges. The eye must be cut out. Peel the fusible web paper away from the head of the rabbit, and place small oval pieces of dark fabric, which are 1/4" larger than the holes, behind the eye hole. Replace the fusible web paper back on the head of the rabbit over the eye fabric. Iron on the

wrong side of the appliqué to glue the eye fabric to the appliqué. Now, peel the paper completely away from the back of the appliqué. Using a light box or window, place the drawing down, and the appliqué on top. The light shining through the box or window will allow you to trace the details. Cut out a rectangle of the background fabric for the rabbit at least 2" larger the rabbit. Now, iron the rabbit onto the center of the background fabric. Place a piece of tear-away stabilizer behind the appliqué area of the background fabric.

## SECTION B: How to Machine Appliqué

LEARN THE TECHNIQUE: If you are a beginning sewer, you might want to practice the action of sewing appliqués. **DO NOT PUSH OR PULL** the fabric when sewing! **RELAX YOUR MUSCLES AND LET THE MACHINE DO THE WORK!** This is an important point to learn.



1. Fuse two pieces of fabric together, and draw some circles on it. Keep your first and second fingers in a "V" shape on either side of the foot to keep the fabrics flat. Don't forget to put a tear-away stabilizer behind the background fabric...this keeps the fabrics flat.



2. When sewing circles, make sure your left hand guides the fabric to the curve of the circle. Set the zig-zag width at 2.5 mm and the length at less than 1/2 and the upper thread tension at 3 or 4. The zig of your zig-zag should be at right angles to the edge of the circle.



3. When you need to reposition the fabric, leave the needle in the down position on the outside of the curve then lift the foot and smooth out the fabric, then continue to guide your fabric around the circle.



4. When you finish sewing the circle, change to straight stitch and stitch in place a few times to lock in the stitches.

**SEW AN APPLIQUÉ:** Choose a color thread that contrasts with the background fabric and the appliqué fabric. It is important to see the details of the rabbit when the appliqué is sewn. The color of thread that you have chosen should be tested on scraps of your chosen fabrics. Set your machine for satin stitch as described in illustration 2 above. Using a 2.5 mm width will be easier for your first try at appliqué. As your sewing gets better, you should use a 2 to 2.25 mm width. The "zig-zag" should overlap the appliqué fabric and just a little bit of the background fabric on the outside of the rabbit, and it should also cover your drawn detail lines. Remember to zig-zag at right angles to the edges of the rabbit. When sewing on the ears or tail, gradually decrease your zig-zag to zero as you sew to the point, turn the fabric with the needle inserted at the point, and then gradually increase the normal zig-zag width as you sew away from the point. You are trying to keep the stitches at right angles to the raw edge of the appliqué, not slanted.

**Sew your lines in order!** If you sew the top of the head first, the back second, the belly third, the ears, and the legs, the beginnings and endings of the lines of stitches will be locked in by the next line of stitches. Do not sew completely around the rabbit first. It is less attractive than sewing a complete tail and a complete leg.

To outline the rabbit's eye, start at 0 mm width at one corner and gradually increase to 2 mm then back to 0 mm at the other corner. Then repeat the procedure to return to the corner where you started. For the pupils, use black thread instead of the appliqué colored thread. Start at the top of the eye at 0 mm width increasing to 2 mm and back to zero again at the bottom of the eye, to make a little dot. Repeat for the other eye.

Set the machine to **straight stitch** for the whiskers of the rabbit. Three whiskers each side of the area between the rabbit's nose and mouth is recommended, but you may choose to have more whiskers. If you are a beginning sewer, you may want to lightly draw the whiskers but you will find it hard to precisely stitch on those lines. I "wing it", without lines. Lock your stitches at the beginning and end of each whisker by changing the stitch length to very short.

### **SECTION C: Getting Ready to Quilt**

After your appliqué is completely stitched, press it, and then square up your background edges with a rotary cutter and straight edge. Each side of the block should be at least 1 1/2" from the rabbit. If you are going to make a placemat, choose four strips of fabric to go around your rabbit block. The four strips of fabric should be cut 3" in width. Cut the strips of fabric longer than the length and width of the block. Using straight stitch, sew one strip to one side of the block. Then, sew another strip of fabric to the other side. Iron the seams to one side and cut off the excess fabric at the top and bottom with the rotary cutter. Sew the remaining two strips to the top and bottom of the rabbit block. Press and cut off

the remaining excess fabric. You are creating a “Courthouse Steps” (a traditional quilt block) effect. So the next step would be to add two more strips to the sides. Press the seams and cut off the excess. Measure the block now. If it measures in the neighborhood of 18" wide by 13" high, go to the next step. If not, add more strips where needed.

Choose fabric for the backing of your quilt. Cut out this fabric slightly larger than your placemat top. Cut a piece of batting the same size as the backing fabric. We like Warm & Natural® cotton batting because it quilts up so flat. Using a board of Homosote (a stiff cardboard-like insulation purchased at a lumber yard) or carpet, stretch and pin the corners using "T" pins (also called wig pins), then the center of the edges of your backing fabric, wrong side up. Place the batting on top of the backing fabric. Stretch it the same way as the backing moving the pins to go through two layers now. Place your top over the batting, and move the pins again, stretching this new layer in place. Be careful to get those seam lines and edges at 90 degree angles. Use 1" safety pins to secure the top, batting and backing. Always pin the center of your quilt first, working your way toward the edge of the quilt pinning every 4". If the fabrics and cotton batting have not been stretched enough, the backing fabric will get little pleats in it when you quilt.

#### **SECTION D: Quilting**

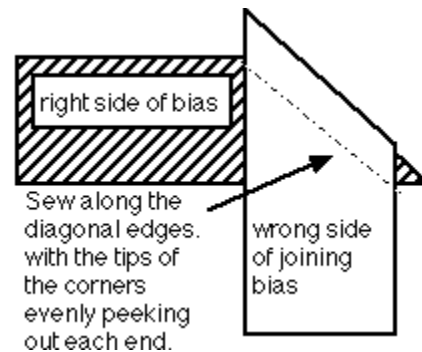
For your first quilt, use regular sewing thread to machine quilt. Set your machine to straight stitch, and switch to a darning foot. The darning foot is the one with a spring action to it. To practice quilting, iron or pin two scrap fabrics and batting together. When quilting, your stitches should be even in length. To achieve even length, go fast on the foot pedal and slowly move the quilt sandwich with your hands. The darning foot will allow you to move back and forth, and make intricate designs, such as circles, zig-zags, or wavy lines. After practicing quilting, take your pinned mini quilt, and begin quilting, echoing the outside of the appliqué, using the edge of the darning foot as your guide. Follow the shape of the rabbit, spiraling around the design using the width of the foot as your guide, until you get to the edge of the rabbit block. The quilting lines around the rabbit should be equal in width from each other. Now, the strips around the rabbit block need to be quilted. You may choose to do any design that you like on these blocks. It is fun to doodle with the sewing machine.

#### **SECTION E: Making Binding For The Quilt**

Again use the rotary cutter to straighten out the edges of the quilt, getting rid of the excess batting and backing fabric in the quilt sandwich. Sew with the darning foot all around the outside edge of the quilt using a 3 mm zig-zag (length 1.5 mm) and a firm grip to hold all three layers together. Using the darning foot prevents the top layer of fabric from pushing ahead and creating a mess.

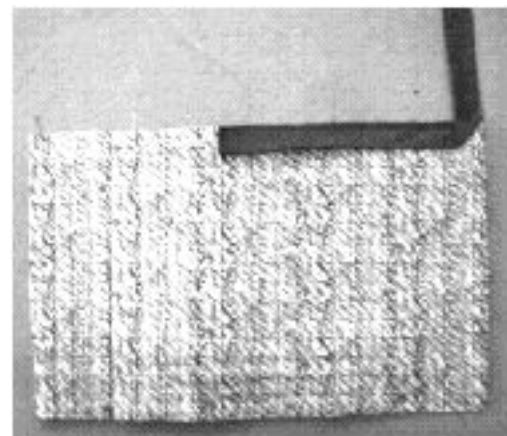
Choose the binding fabric. This fabric should be about a 1/2 yard in length. Cut all the sides so they are at 90 degree angles to each other. Hold your ruler using the 45 degree angle along one outside edge. Lop off a triangle and put this piece in your scrap pile. Now, using the lines on the ruler along that 45 degree cut edge of the larger piece of fabric, cut the width of the strips 2 1/2" wide to make bias strips. Sew the ends of the strips together until you have enough to go around the whole quilt with a little extra. See below.

Iron the binding strips in half along the length. Match up the raw edges of the binding with the raw edges of the quilt. Sew the binding in place on the wrong side of the quilt using straight stitching with the needle in the center position and the edge of the foot at the raw edges.



**Note:** When making binding for straight edged quilts, you may prefer to cut your binding on the straight grain. If you lop off the ends at 45 degree angles and sew them together to make a long binding, they will fold with less bulk.

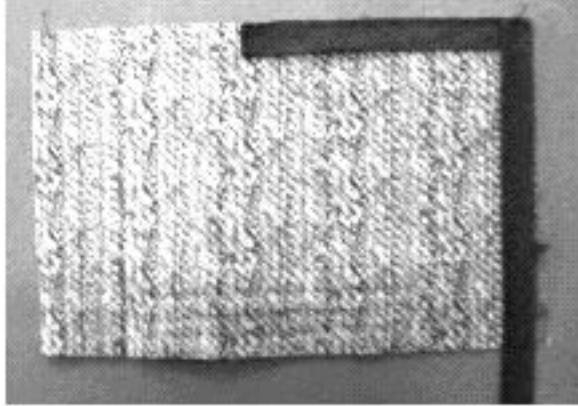
### Mitering the binding:



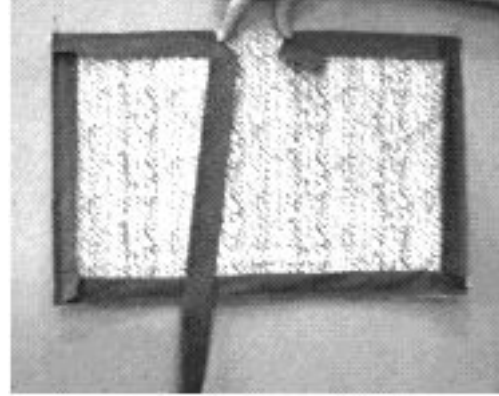
1. The binding end should be cut off straight across. Start the binding strip in the middle of a side. Start sewing 2" from the end of the tail. Stop sewing down the side 1/4" away from the next side...

2. Fold the binding as shown above.

(Step 3 – next page)



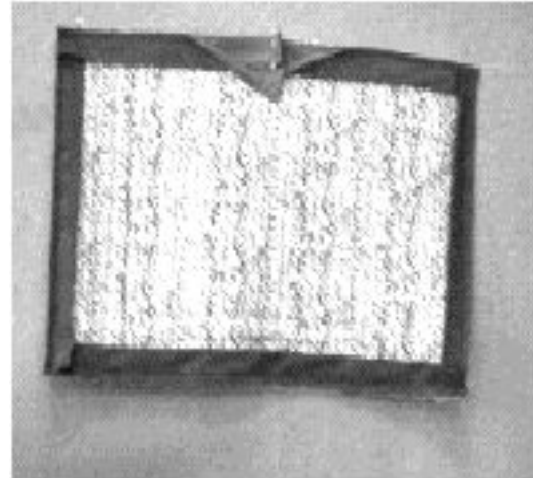
3. Fold the binding down as shown and start sewing from the top edge to within 1/4" from the bottom edge. Repeat the fold process for the remaining corners.



4. Stop sewing the binding to the quilt when you get to within 4" of the place where you began to attach the binding.



5. Butt the tails of the binding up to each other and cut off the excess fabric leaving only a seam allowance. Iron the area where they butt up to press in the seam line.



6. Open the binding and pin, then sew, on the seam line crease. Turn the binding back to right side showing and seam the remaining binding to the quilt. Fold and pin all the binding to the front side of the quilt, carefully folding the corners to miter them. Choose a decorative stitch and stitch in the ditch.

***And you are done! Give yourself a pat on the back!  
If you enjoyed making this, send us an e-mail at [info@criterpat.com](mailto:info@criterpat.com).***

*Deborah*

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