



GillyMac Designs

## Free Motion Applique Class Notes

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### What is Free Motion Applique?

Applique is sewing one fabric on top of another. Most often this is associated with using a satin stitch (small very tight zig zag) around the edge of the top fabric. With free motion applique, the design is fixed with free motion sewing, using a darning foot to create a 'drawn' or 'scribbled' effect.

### Requirements for Success

- ✓ A picture / stamp
- ✓ Background fabric (for a small zipped purse size you would need a piece 10" x 7")
- ✓ Various small pieces of coloured fabric
- ✓ Selection of coloured threads
- ✓ Wadding or Foam (same size as background fabric)
- ✓ Cheap fabric for back of drawing (same size as background fabric)
- ✓ Steam a Seam Lite 2 (double sided)\*
- ✓ Pencil
- ✓ Frixion Pen
- ✓ Sewing machine
- ✓ Darning foot
- ✓ Paper scissors

\*Other products are available for first fix – such as glue, bondaweb, 505 spray



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### Design Considerations

For success, especially in the beginning, it is important to keep your designs simple. Even complicated subjects can be summarised in a few lines. This is easy to do when you practice. You will find some good starting points for many subjects can be found on Google Images.

Don't be concerned about making drawings perfect. This type of sewing is not about perfection, it is about conveying the essence of your design.

### Background Fabrics

Avoid lightweight fabrics. I often used linen or linen mixes. I avoid polyester or anything that feel fine to the touch. Before you throw away clothes, consider if they would make good background fabrics for your pictures. Often old clothes will have good weight to them which is ideal for free motion applique.

In my samples, I have also used high quality wool felt which is thick and lovely to free motion sew across.

### Coloured fabrics

This type of sewing is perfect for scraps. You need tiny pieces of fabrics to create brilliant effect with your applique pictures. Start a box or bag or off cuts and scraps, don't throw them away and get used to asking people for their scraps as well. Keep an eye out for scraps from shops. These are often sold at a hefty discount. Ideally you will need a full spectrum of colours available for our designs, so make it your mission to build up a stash of scraps.

### "First Fix" for the Applique Pieces

It is necessary to fix the applique pieces to the background ahead of sewing around them so that the sewing is successful. Without this "first fix", it is likely that the applique pieces will move, ripple and pucker whilst you are sewing them down.

There are a variety of methods which can be used to do this – these include, but are not restricted to ..

- Steam a Seam Lite 2 Double Sided Fusible Web (Expensive – circa £9/m - but allows reposition of the first fix before ironing to secure and fuse)
- Bondaweb Double Sided Fusible Web – (Less Expensive – circa £4m/m – pieces need to be ironed down to fix, so no repositioning is possible, the bonaweb sheet can separate when old or unused for a time)
- Glue – (cheap but messy)
- 505 Spray Glue – (cheap but messy)

I use Steam a Seam Lite 2 because it gives me the opportunity to reposition my designs.



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## Transferring Your Design Onto Fabric

Transfer your design onto the Steam-a-Seam Lite 2 (onto gridded side) by tracing around the shape of every part of your design. For example, if your design was a face, you would trace the shape of the face, then on another piece of the Steam-a-Seam you would draw the nose, then on another piece you would trace the eye, then on another piece the lips and so on until all the separate pieces that will go together to build your design are traced.

## Building Your Applique Design

Roughly cut around the drawn pieces on your Steam-a-Seam. Remove the blank side (the one not drawn on). It will now be sticky. Press it onto the wrong side of your chosen coloured fabric. And now cut precisely around your drawn design (attached to the back of the fabric). Peel off the gridded side, leaving behind the glue webbing and now press the piece onto your background. Continue in this way to build up your applique picture.

## Adding in Design Detail

Once my applique fabric pieces are in the correct position on the background I use a frixon pen to add in the lines of detail that I will shortly sew over. As I will be sewing over the top of these, I am not concerned that the frixon pen ink only disappears on heat and is not removed, because it can't be seen in either case.

## Free Motion Applique Sewing

Attach a darning foot to your machine. I find that you do not need to make any other changes to your machine. Traditionally for free motion sewing it would be required to set the stitch length to 0 and lower the teeth (feed dog) underneath the sewing area or cover them up. I find that there is no need to do this.

As a good habit to get into, always bring your bobbin thread up to rest on the top of your fabric. Do this in exactly the same way as bringing your bobbin thread up when you first put a bobbin into your machine. By bringing the thread to the top of your fabric, it will not get knotted into the start of your design on the underside of the fabric.

You are now in charge of moving the fabric, the machine will not do it for you. If you have drawn a frixon pen outline onto your fabric, then just follow this. Introduce colours as needed. You can draw outlines with your machine, but also test out colouring in smaller areas with the machine. This is sometimes called thread painting.

Your machine will be running quite quickly and the stitches will be small. In this case – that is exactly what you are looking for. I also encourage over drawing your design – repeating sewing over the line – to give a 'scribble' effect.

To finish off, your stitches are small and simply cutting your end is fine !



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### Using a Normal Sewing Foot (not free motion)

It is possible to do this type of applique with a normal foot. In this case the feed dogs would be moving the fabric and it would be a little slower, but perfectly possible. If you use a normal then turn the stitch length down to 1.4-1.6 and sew over your drawn design

### Using an Embroidery Hoop

I don't use an embroidery hoop. I hold my fabric taught with the palms of my hand. You may want to experiment with using a hoop and make up your own mind.

### Using Stamps

Stamps to mark your fabric can be a good alternative to other ways to mark. Any stamp can be used, with any ink – just make sure that you have covered the stamp print with thread and no one will ever know that you didn't draw it yourself in the first place !

### Additional Things

Essex Linen with Silver/Gold Metallic Thread – [www.sewhot.co.uk](http://www.sewhot.co.uk),  
[www.thevillagehaberdashery.co.uk](http://www.thevillagehaberdashery.co.uk)

Cotton Wadding – Quilters Dream, Cotton Select from [www.cottonpatch.co.uk](http://www.cottonpatch.co.uk)

High Quality Wool Felt - [www.buttoncompany.co.uk](http://www.buttoncompany.co.uk)

Frixion Pens – Amazon

Seam a Seam Lite 2 – [www.sewhot.co.uk](http://www.sewhot.co.uk)

Threads – Isacord (shiny) or Aurifil [www.barnyarns.co.uk](http://www.barnyarns.co.uk)

Zips and all Haberdashery – [www.jaycotts.co.uk](http://www.jaycotts.co.uk)

Leather Scraps - Etsy

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