

## Sewing Circles into a block

NOTE: The terms used here are *circle* which refers to a shape that is sewn into a block, and *background fabric* which refers to the other part of the block.

1. (a) Apply rick-rack or piping on the block background fabric to create a 'window'. Draw a circle on the right side of the background fabric. Sew rick-rack or piping to the circle, and cut out the 'window' with a seam allowance of  $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Clip the seam allowance to within a thread of the sewn-on rick-rack or piping. Press the seam allowance to the back of the fabric. You can press half of the rick-rack to the back or leave it all showing on the front. Place on the circle fabric and sew in place by stitching on the rick-rack.  
  
(b) Apply rick-rack on the circle. If you prefer you can sew the rick-rack (or piping) to the circle itself, iron under as above, place the completed circle on the background block and sew around the edge to attach it to the background block.
2. Use glue and washaway thread – For this method, you will create an opening or window in the background fabric. This method makes it easy to center a design and avoids fussy cutting.
  - (a) Draw your circle shape on the back side of the background fabric. This circle should be your finished circle size i.e. for a 4" finished circle draw a circle of 4". On the right side of the background fabric lay a piece of scrap fabric or an ironed used dryer sheet, making sure that this scrap completely covers the marked circle, so that when you sew on the drawn circle the seam will be inside the edges of this scrap fabric.
  - (b) Fill your bobbin with washaway thread. You can use any thread on top.
  - (c) Sew completely around the marked circle stitching carefully on the line. Now cut out the circle window (both layers)  $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the sewn line, and then clip carefully to within a thread of the sewn line. The more you clip the better your circle shape will be.
  - (d) Pull the dryer sheet to the back through the 'window' and adjust so the opening lies flat.
  - (e) PRESS WITH A DRY IRON.
  - (f) When the block (which now has an opening or window) is well-pressed, press again with a steam iron or use your dry iron and a damp pressing cloth. If you have steamed it enough, when you separate the layers they will come apart, and you will be left with a circle window with the seam allowance folded toward the back of the block.

- (g) Working on the wrong side of the block, apply a very small dab of glue to the seam allowance “fingers”. Now turn the block right side up and place on the circle fabric, centering as needed, and press down with your hand to bond the glued fabric to the circle. Let dry or press with an iron.
- (h) NOW CHANGE YOUR BOBBIN SO THAT YOU HAVE REGULAR SEWING THREAD.
- (i) Working from the right side of your block, lift the top fabric and sew along the circle line you made in step (a).
- (j) Trim the excess circle fabric.
3. A simple method to appliqué circles to your block.
- (a) Fill your bobbin with washaway thread.
- (b) Cut out your circle from your circle fabric, adding a seam allowance i.e. for a 4” finished circle cut out a 4 ½” circle.
- (c) Sew your circle with a ¼” seam allowance to scrap fabric or interfacing or a used dryer sheet with the right side of the fabric to the scrap.
- (d) Cut a slit in the dryer sheet so that you can pull the circle fabric through the opening (i.e. turn your circle sandwich right side out).
- (e) Press with a DRY iron.
- (f) When well pressed, press with a steam iron (or dry iron plus a wet pressing cloth). The washaway thread will disappear and you will be left with a perfect circle.
- (g) Using **regular** sewing thread, attach the circle to the block by hand or machine using a buttonhole stitch or other decorative stitch. You can trim out the block fabric which is behind the circle to avoid too many layers.

**Note:** You can use school glue if that is all you have, but apply sparingly with a toothpick. It will dry hard, but can be washed out. A better choice is a fabric glue which should remain pliable. A container with a long spout allows for very small amounts of glue to be applied.

**Note:** Use a presser foot which allows you to clearly see the marked line – i.e. an appliqué foot rather than a ¼” foot.

**Note:** These methods can be used for shapes other than circles.