

Preparing Perfect Circles (and more!) for Applique

Julie Limbach Jones

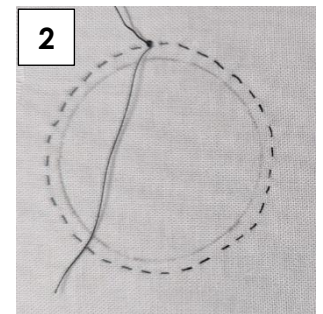
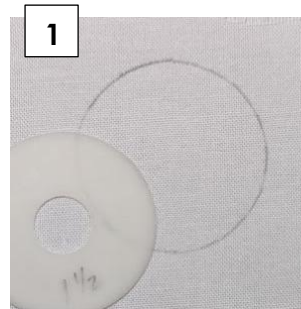
Learn how to prepare circles, ovals, leaves and more for hand or machine applique using Karen Kay Buckley "Perfect" templates and other alternatives.

Supplies

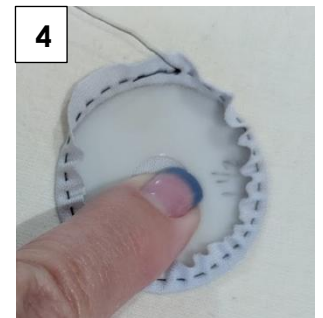
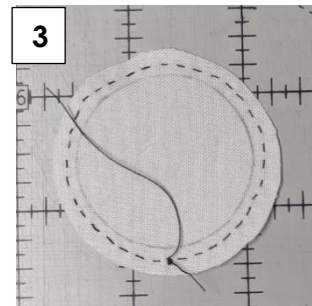
- Fabric
- Thin fabric marking pencil
- Thread for gathering
- Thimble (if you use one)
- hand sewing needles
- Karen Kay Buckley Perfect Circles templates
- Fine sandpaper (optional)
- Spray starch or sizing
- Small paintbrush or cotton swab
- Iron
- Small, sharp scissors
- Roxanne's Glue-Baste-It (or Elmer's washable school glue or other temporary fabric glue)

METHOD

1) **TRACE:** Trace around the template onto the wrong side of your applique fabric, making sure there is at least 1/4" fabric outside the line. Tip: Fine sandpaper underneath your fabric can make it easier to trace.

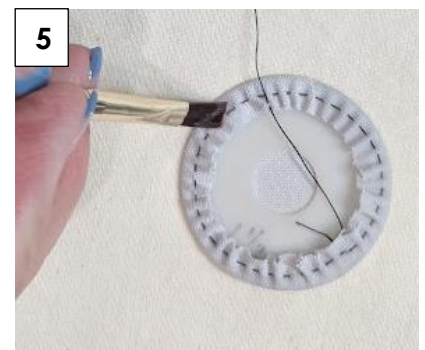


2) **STITCH:** Using a strong thread, make a knot then run a gathering stitch 1/8" outside your drawn line. The smaller and more even your stitches, the smoother your gathers. Don't knot the second end of the thread but do leave about 2" tail.



3) **TRIM:** Cut your fabric 1/4" outside the drawn line, about 1/8" outside the gathering stitches. I like using my small KAI scissors with teeth to grip the fabric.

4) **GATHER:** With your fabric right side down on the ironing surface, place the circle template inside your drawn line. Holding the template against the fabric, pull on the unknotted side of thread to draw up the gathers. Tip: use up random bits of thread if it is strong enough and won't show through.

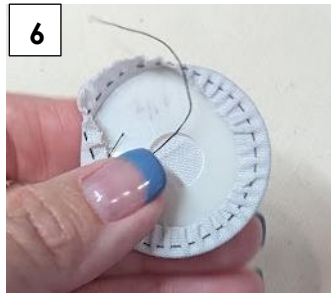


5) **STARCH & PRESS:** Protect your ironing surface from scorch marks and sizing buildup using a piece of old fabric. Paint a small bit of your liquified sizing/starch around the outside edge of the circle. Smooth out folds with the end of your paintbrush. With your iron **no hotter than medium**, set iron on the fabric circle for 20-30 seconds. Flip over and press the other side to dry the starch. Let cool. Tip: Use a clapper if you have one.

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- 6) **REMOVE:** Loosen the gathering stitches on the tail end of the thread just enough to remove the template. Tug on the tail end again to flatten the circle and do a final quick press.



- 7) **GLUE BASTE:** Dab a few dots of glue on the seam allowance of your applique piece (but not at the edge!) and place onto your project. Press lightly to dry the glue, if needed. Tip: If your project is large or will be handled a lot while hand sewing, run a few large basting stitches through the applique



- 8) **APPLIQUE:** Stitch your circle to your project.
1) By hand: I like to use Superior 100-wt Kimono Silk Thread or a similar color 50-wt thread.
2) By machine: use a zig-zag or buttonhole stitch with a matching thread or monofilament.

- 9) **TEMPLATES:** If you don't have the KKB Perfect Circles/Ovals/Leaves templates (or the Simpliqué templates from www.piecingthepastquilts.com), you can make your own using:
1) heat resistant template plastic (I prefer Karen Kay Buckley brand)
2) cardstock
3) thick quilter's freezer paper (CutRite Heavy-Duty Freezer Paper from Quilter's Paradise)
4) be creative...I tried metal washers (whatever you use needs to be heat resistant!)
Note that cardstock or paper templates will lose their crisp edges with multiple uses. Cut out shapes very carefully with sharp scissors or craft knife to maintain a smooth edge.

- 10) **OTHER SHAPES:** You are not limited to circles; this technique works for leaf, teardrop, or irregular shapes to help form smooth, gentle curves.
1) Ovals are made in the same manner as circles
2) Leaf/teardrop shapes: run the gathering stitch 1/4-1/2" away from the point. Gather the fabric around the curved portion of the template holding the point in place. Before pressing, fold over the seam allowance on the point.



- 3) Leaf shape with both ends pointy: run two lines of gathering stitches, one on each side of the leaf. After gathering, fold seam allowances over each end before pressing gathers.

- 11) **TUTORIAL:** This is a good video using the Karen Kay Buckley Perfect Circles:

<http://buttontreelane.blogspot.com/2013/04/tutorial-how-to-applique-perfect-circles.html>

Twill Tape Application for a Flat Binding

Lynn Abelson (July 2025)

The purpose of this method is to make your quilt lay and hang very straight and not have a ripple along the edges, which can occur when your quilt has a bias edge, or even when using a crosswise grain of fabric for the borders.

Use $\frac{1}{4}$ " twill tape. I purchased a roll on Amazon. I bought a 30 yd roll from Beyond Trims.

Determine width and length of quilt by measuring the center and edges of quilt. Calculate the average. If there is a large difference between the center and edge, consider using an average of the side measurements. Cut the twill tape to those dimensions, one piece for each side.

Find the center of each side and the center of the twill tape. Apply the twill tape on the backside of the quilt along the edge. Pin the centers and the edges of the tape to the quilt. You may want to add additional pins depending on how large your quilt is and how much fullness you need to take up.

Use a zigzag stitch width that is approx. the width of the twill tape, and a stitch length that is long. I use 4.5 width and 4.0 length. Sew the tape to each side. A walking foot will be helpful. Ease in the fullness as you go. When you get near to the corner, cut the twill tape $\frac{1}{4}$ " inch so it is not overlapping at the corners. This will avoid extra bulk.

Apply the binding per your usual method. I use a $\frac{3}{8}$ " seam on the binding to make sure it covers the tape. The twill tape will stay in your quilt.

Bias, Pins, Needles and Threads, Oh my!

Carol Berg

A series of books by Harriet Hargrave are very useful in learning more about quilting. A few are available at the library. Look for 746 in the Dewey Decimal System.

Look for Quilter's Academy Volume 2 – Sophomore Year by Harriet Hargrave & Carrie Hargrave Published by C& T Publishing, Inc, 2010 ISBN 978-1-57120-594-0 LOC 746.46—dc22

To learn more about fabric; From Fiber to Fabric by Harriet Hargrave Published by C & T Publishing, 1997. ISBN 1-57120-025-8

Warp, Lengthwise: Parallel to selvage

Weft or Crosswise: Perpendicular (think of right to left – left = weft)

Bias – 45o angle to selvage – the most stretch

Cut and sew lengthwise together. Sashing and Borders cut on Lengthwise grain.

Threads

It is important to know the finer the thread the higher the number. For example, a 12/2 thread is heavier than a 100/2 thread. The first number represents the weight of the thread, the second represents the number of plies or strands of thread. There is no system in use at present for the consumer to use to compare the different weights. The TEX system is used for industry. There are a few other words you might see:

Mercerized – A process which gives a greater affinity for dyeing. It also increases luster and adds some strength.

Gassed – process that gives high sheen.

Glazed – process that results in hard finish which protects thread from abrasion and holds the plies together. Should only be used for hand quilting.

Bonded – Used on nylon and polyester thread using a special resin resulting in a tough smooth coating that results in ability to resist abrasion and holds the plies together.

Refer to <https://www.superiorthreads.com/education/thread-weight> and <https://ylithreads.com/cdn/shop/files/yli-threads-thread-mastery-institute-booklet-2025.pdf> for more information.

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Needles:

The numbering system for needles is opposite that of threads so a 90/14 needle is for heavier threads than a 75/11 needle.

Most problems with thread breakage, skipped stitches or thread shredding is caused by the needle. It is important to change your needle for every project and sometimes more often.

Select the thread first to match the fabric, then select the needle type, the needle size. The needle eye needs to be 40% larger than the diameter of the thread.

Thread manufacturers have guides that tell what size needle to use for their thread. Here are three manufacturers:

Superior Threads: <https://www.superiorthreads.com/education/needle-guide> and a thread reference guide <https://cag-st-images.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/EducationalCenter/EcPdfs/home-machine-thread-reference-guide.pdf>

Wonderfil: A series of YouTube videos for more information:
<https://shopwonderfil.com/thread-talk/>

YLI: <https://ylithreads.com/cdn/shop/files/yli-threads-thread-mastery-institute-booklet-2025.pdf>

If you are at Road to California, take advantage of the lectures on thread given by the manufacturer's representatives. They teach several times during Road and teach about thread and needles. Plan on going the lectures are worth it!

Stitch Assist: A Quilter's Guide to Using Generative AI

Alex Tsubota

What Is Generative AI?

Generative AI (GenAI) refers to computer tools that can create text, images, or ideas based on your input (called a *prompt*). It's like asking a super-smart assistant questions or creative help—no coding needed!

Use it to:

- Estimate fabric yardage
- Come up with quilt names or themes
- Write artist statements
- Brainstorm color palettes or patterns


Free AI Tools to Try

You don't need to spend a penny to get started:

- **ChatGPT (chat.openai.com)** – Great for answering questions, writing quilt blurbs, or figuring out how much fabric you need.
- **Gemini (gemini.google.com)** – Helpful for brainstorming, list-making, or writing quilt descriptions.
- **Adobe Firefly (firefly.adobe.com)** – Generate images (limited use with free version)
- **Microsoft Copilot (in Edge browser)** – Built into Bing search; great for quick answers and summaries.

Tips for Writing Good Prompts

- **Be specific.** Instead of “help me with my quilt,” try:
“Suggest a creative name for a fall-themed quilt with pumpkins and maple leaves.”
- **Give context.** AI works better when it knows what you're doing.
“I need a 100-word artist statement for a modern quilt made with bold geometric shapes.”
- **Use bullet points.** For planning or summaries, ask it to give you a list.
“List 5 color palettes for a winter-themed quilt.”
- **Edit results.** Don't expect perfection—use the response as a starting point!

 *Think of AI as your brainstorming buddy—not a replacement for your creativity, but a great tool to help you get started faster and have more fun!*