

Curved Seams 101

I LOVE CURVES! Quilts with curved shapes in blocks have a very special appeal... They add a sense of motion and dynamism to any design.

These rounded shapes in blocks are a very important design element because they keep the eyes moving around the whole composition.

How many times beginner sewists and quilters see a quilt with curved seams and would love to do it??

At the moment of cutting the most basic curved block (Drunkard's Path), they face two shapes: one concave and one convex. And it's there where the problems start!

They find it difficult to pair both fabrics right side together and find the beginning of the seam under the presser foot; they struggle to hold them while stitching a 1/4" seam; they see that sometimes they finish with one fabric longer than the other one and sometimes shorter.

If you have any of these problems, this tutorial is for you!

The method that I use doesn't use any piecing at all; in fact, the most simple way is to APPLIQUE!!

This will give freedom of choice. Once you have done the first curve, you will find that it's easy to use many other rounded shapes for next projects. You only have to draw new shapes and applique!!

This is the only method I use in all my patterns

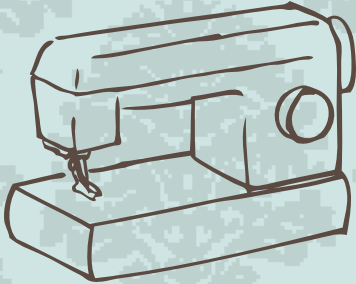
It's so easy, that you only have to cut squares for your blocks. Forget acrylic templates for ever..



Perfect appliquéd quarter circles

STEP 1

For each block you will cut 2 squares: one we'll be called **BACKGROUND SQUARE** (that will be bigger), and the other one **APPLIQUE SQUARE** (that will be smaller). You can cut them any size you want, but always respect the difference in size. For example, if you want a 8" block, you will need to cut your background square 8 1/2". For the appliqué square (that will be the curved appliqué shape), you will cut a 6 1/2" square.

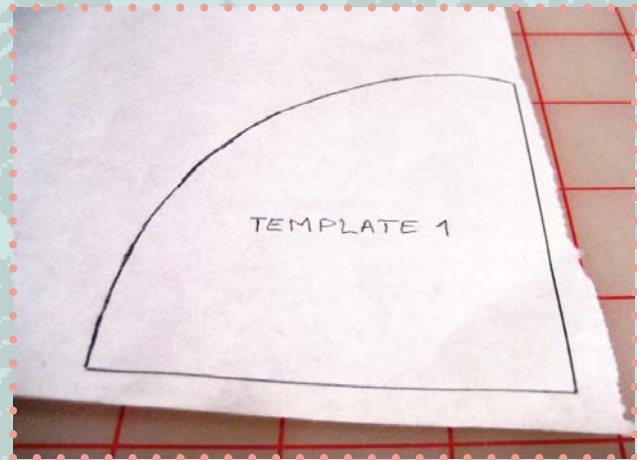


TIP:

If you want bigger circles, cut your appliqué squares slightly bigger...

STEP 2:

Trace a quarter circle 1/4" smaller than your appliqué square fabric on the dull or non-shiny side of a piece of freezer paper with a pencil (for the example in STEP 1, it will be 6 1/4" on each straight side). That will be your template (as shown on the right picture). Cut out.



STEP 3:

Press shiny side of the template on the **WRONG** side of your appliqué square, aligning straight edges (as shown on the right picture).



TIP:

You can work with a mini iron to ensure precision in this project.

STEP 4:

Trim fabric around curved edge of template, leaving 1/4" seam allowance (as shown on the right picture)



STEP 5: Press seam to the **WRONG** side along curved edge, using freezer paper as a guide for folding. Use a stiletto to help you hold the fabric (as shown on the right picture).
Once finished, remove paper template.



TIP:
Freezer paper templates can be reused several times.

STEP 6: Lay prepared template fabric on top of **RIGHT** side of the background square, aligning straight edges. Pin through all layers about 1" from corner of template fabrics to secure with only one pin. Tuck pressed seam allowance under (as shown on the right picture).



TIP:
You can use an extra pin on corner of the square.

STEP 7: Stitch along curved edge using machine blind stitch or any other appliqué stitch of your choice, with solid or variegated thread to give more color contrast. A clear view appliqué presser foot will facilitate this step (as shown on the right picture).



TIP:
Use a stiletto to help you tuck the seam allowance of the template fabric under as you sew.



This is how the block will look like!!

STEP 8: Turn the block over (on the **WRONG** side). Proceed to trim **ONLY** the background square fabric away, leaving 1/4" seam allowance (as shown on the right picture).



This is the finished block!!

The accuracy of this method is incredible! Because you are working with templates, each fabric shape will come out perfect and all the same each and every time... Need to do 5, 50, 500, no problem!!

Make mini units from these blocks and combine them to make bigger and more complex blocks...

This appliqué technique will give us a great opportunity to play with many stitches in our sewing machine and have a nice, relaxing time stitching...

And this is only the beginning!! Think about all the curvy shape templates you can use on a block.... Start drawing ovals, wavy, petal-like templates from freezer paper and let your creative juices start flowing!!

Look for more ideas in pattern design at my web site www.artgalleryfabrics.com under PATTERNS.

Handmade rocks.... so let's keep on stitching!

Patricia Bravo