

Perfect satin stitch circles

Perfect satin stitch circles are achievable and so satisfying when they turn out just right. Try the following method. I think that you will have the best satin stitch circle that you have ever sewn.

You will need a couple of scraps of fabric, some fusible web such as 'Steam-A-Seam', some tear-away stabilizer, some nice shiny rayon or polyester thread and some thread for your bobbin.

When you cut a circle out of fabric and look at it you will see that it has four straight grain lines (at 12, 3, 6 and 9 o'clock). Between each of these grain lines you will see bias edges. With very loosely woven fabrics these bias areas tend to move and the satin stitch puckers up. So the firmer, more tightly woven fabric will maintain its stability as you sew and give you good results.

Take a piece of 'Steam-A-Seam' ('Steam-A-Seam 2' is my preferred product) that is a bit bigger than the circle you want to sew. You are going to draw a perfect circle onto the 'Steam-A-Seam 2'. This product has a fusible web sandwiched between two pieces of paper. One side of the paper lifts easily, leaving the web attached to the other piece of paper. Draw the circle onto the paper side which doesn't lift easily. Take the paper off the side without the drawn circle, and fuse the web (with the drawn paper circle still attached to it) to the wrong side of your fabric. Cut the fabric and 'Steam-A-Seam' circle out as accurately as you possibly can as any wobbles will show up later. Now peel off the second piece of paper and fuse the fabric circle to the right side of your background fabric. Really press it well so the circle is completely adhered to the background. Using a pressing cloth is a good idea and then you can have the iron set at a high

temperature.

Using a marking tool, that can be washed away, mark a dot in the center of the circle on the right side so that you can see this dot when you are sewing the circle to the background fabric.

Now thread up your machine and put on your open toe satin stitch foot. Remember to change your straight stitch plate if this is on your machine. Engage your 'needle-down' function. This is very important. It is extremely rare for me to sew without using this feature.

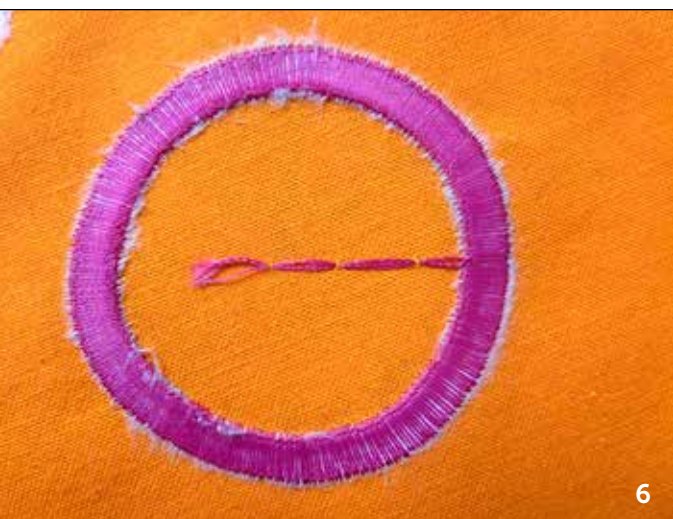
The width and density of the satin stitch is personal taste. I like mine to be wide and tight and so might set my stitch width at 6 and the stitch length very small at 0.15. I always make a sample first by mocking up the layers. Then I can see if I like the settings and whether the work is feeding through nicely. It is possible to get the stitches too densely packed which prevents the work feeding through properly and you just end up with lots of stitches on top of one another.

Begin with the needle position on the right and with the needle going into the background right at the edge of the circle (4). The reason for marking a dot in the center of the circle is to help you pivot and always aim for that dot when you



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move around the shape. Imagine that the stitches are very wide and would go from the outside of the circle into that central dot. You want every stitch to be aimed so that if it really were that wide it would fall into the dot each time (in the picture (4) you will see that there is a printed dot on the fabric of this circle which is perfect for this visualization!). I only stitch four to six stitches before I stop with the needle down in the work, and then lift the presser foot slightly with my knee lift bar to slightly pivot the work. Six stitches means you would go left and right three times each and end up with the needle on the right hand side, on the edge of the circle. The pivot is always with the machine needle on the right side—the outside of the circle. If I pivoted on the inside I would leave a small gap in my stitching. Stitch carefully around, pivoting often and finally dropping the last stitch into the hole where the first stitch was taken. Lift the needle and the presser foot. Very, very carefully ease the work out until you can get your hand in and pinch the end of the stitching between your thumb and forefinger—to trap it tightly as you remove the work from the machine. This will prevent the bobbin thread pulling tight and drawing up the satin stitch. Cut the thread tails leaving a good long length so that you can take these to the back of the work and knot them.

Remove the tear-away stabilizer carefully and then tug on the bobbin threads to pull the top thread tails through to the back of the work (5). Knot the tails together, not cutting too close to the knot. If dark colored thread will cause shadowing, then you can stitch the tails to the back of the circle (6). If the thread tails won’t pull from the front to the back this is because they have been caught by the stitching. Just thread them on a needle to take them through to the back of the work.

Any little gaps in the satin stitch (but you shouldn’t really have any!) can be filled in with a couple of hand stitches.

At this stage the background fabric might appear a little wavy. This is nothing to worry about, the density of stitch is just distorting things slightly. All that is needed is a good press. Press with steam on a firm surface from the wrong side. Don’t be afraid to put real pressure on the work, but do use a pressing cloth. The cloth will protect the fabric and will help to stop you really flattening the satin stitches. A piece of silk organza makes a great pressing cloth. It is very fine so leaves no pressure marks, can withstand heat and steam, and you can see through it. But any clean old tea/dish towel will work too. Admire your gorgeous satin stitch circle, you clever thing you!