

Beginners Guide to Embroidery

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Getting Started

Hello! We are so glad you are here! Embroidery can be a wonderfully relaxing, portable and addictive creative outlet. It takes up little space and is great for at home or on-the-go. With just a hoop, fabric, floss, needle and scissors, you are set! Now, let's get started!

What you need...

Embroidery Hoops

Available in many sizes and materials, hoops are fairly inexpensive and a necessary part of the embroidery process. I prefer to work with wooden hoops, but they can be found in plastic, metal and other materials, as well. More often than not, I like to finish off my work, using the hoop to showcase the piece, though you can certainly finish off your final pieces other ways as well (framed, wrapped around a canvas, etc.).

Fabric

You can use any type of fabric you like! Have an old shirt or pants that you are going to donate? Cut them up and use them for embroidery!! I like to work with 100% cotton - NON-STRETCHY - fabric (a little thicker is better), but have worked on old tops, pillow cases, jeans and more. Play with different fabrics and see what works for you. You can always add a fabric stabilizer or double up thin or light coloured fabrics.

Embroidery Floss

Available in SO many colors, brands and styles, feel free to try different brands and textures. DMC is one of the most popular brands out there and is readily available at your local craft stores. Many patterns will call for 6 stranded floss, which you can then divide based on stitch and style.

Needles

Again, you can use what you have on hand for needles, but I do recommend embroidery specific needles. They tend to be a little more blunt and come in a variety of lengths (which can be helpful depending on your project).

Scissors

I use a small pair of manicure scissors. I like them because they don't take up much space and are very sharp.

How to transfer your pattern to your fabric:

Light Transfer using Pencil or Fabric Marker

My favorite (and the most accessible) way to transfer my pattern to my fabric is using light transfer. This method uses the light from a bright window or light box. Simply print your pattern and tape your fabric on top of the design.

NOTE: Make sure your fabric is pulled tight OR you can hoop your fabric BEFORE transferring the image to ensure that there will be no warping of your design.

Hold the design up to a bright window and using a pencil or fabric marker, start tracing! I like to keep my lines fairly thin and light so that they will not show through on my final piece. If using a water or heat erasable marker, this is a non-issue.

NOTE: Though a plain old pencil will do the trick, having a water or heat erasable fabric marker can be very handy. Once your design is complete, remove any visible tracing lines with heat or water.

Take your time on this step. It may feel tedious and I know you are excited to get stitching, but having clear, accurate lines will make a big difference!

Mount your fabric in your hoop (if you didn't before tracing). Pull it snug, but not so tight that you are warping the design. Now, you are ready to begin!!

Carbon Paper

For transferring your pattern onto darker colors, special opaque fabric carbon papers are a great option. Be sure to follow the directions with your paper.

NOTE: I do not recommend using regular carbon paper on lighter fabric. I tried this and almost ruined my finished piece. It left a purple mess wherever the carbon contacted the fabric. Thankfully, it came out after soaking it in OxiClean, but I definitely don't recommend this as an option.

Get Stitching!

Once you have your pattern transferred to your fabric, centre your fabric over the inner hoop, then place the outer hoop on top. Tighten the screw and pull the edges of your fabric until it is even (you want it to be fairly tight to avoid puckering or warping of your design).

Next, cut your thread (about an arms length at most, to avoid tangles and wear on your thread as you work). Your pattern will let you know how many strands to use (between 1 and 6). If required, separate your strands. 'Sharpen' your floss with a lick and a snip with your embroidery scissors for easier threading. You can also use a threader tool, if you'd like.

Tie a solid knot at the end of your thread (I like to double my knot and then snip off any excess thread before inserting it into my piece). A solid first knot is very important to keep your piece from unraveling - especially if it will be getting washed and worn. You will also want to fasten off your thread with a knot in one of your last stitches.

Now, HAVE FUN!! If your pattern has a suggestion of stitching order, follow that. If not, start where you'd like! Don't be afraid to try different stitches and if they don't work out or you don't like how they look, gently pull them (or cut them) out. Use tweezers if you'd like. Embroidery is very forgiving in this way, so practice, play and enjoy the process.

Finishing

The easiest way to finish off your work is by framing it in the hoop you worked it in! Even it out (pull it snug), tighten the screw and cut off / cinch in / glue back the excess fabric. If you don't wish to be able to see your exposed stitches, you can glue (or sew) a piece of felt, fabric or cardstock/chip board to the back of your hoop.

Other ways to showcase your work:

- In a picture frame or stretched over a canvas
- As a patch on clothing or a bag (use Heat N Bond or something of the sort to iron it on)
- Mini creations in jewelry

I truly hope that you will enjoy embroidery as much as I do. I am still fairly new to the craft, but have found it to be very relaxing and enjoyable. Check my site often for new free and paid patterns, kits, tutorials, tips and techniques! Video tutorials coming soon!!

<https://stonesandglassdesigns.com/embroidery>

One of my favorite things about embroidery is that if you can envision it, you can create it! Using a handful of basic stitches and colors, I love watching my pieces magically come to life and know that you will, too! Don't be afraid to grab a picture or a coloring page, trace the outline onto a fresh piece of fabric and just PLAY! So much can be learned through practice and who knows, maybe you will discover a new stitch or the next hot design!!

Enjoy!!!

Do you have questions? A custom design request?
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