



Fabrics 101: Embroidering on Gabardine

Products Used

A Art Nouveau Hummingbirds Design
Pack - Lg (Sku: EDP12750-1)

A few years ago I picked up a 1950s gabardine jacket at a great price. Trips to the vintage shops today don't have the same deals on gabardine as they once did -- and I'm pleased to report that my "investment" made in 2003 paid off. My jacket is now worth 8 times what I paid for it, although I don't think I'll ever be tempted to sell it.

Gabardine is known for durability, and remarkable ability to withstand daily wear and tear. As a result, it has found its way into a variety of clothing articles, including jackets, suits, and skirts. The twill holds its shape well, doesn't wrinkle very easily. It's comfortable to wear, and simple to maintain. Who can ask anything more from a fabric?

Steps To Complete

Gabardine was invented in 1879 by Thomas Burberry, of the renowned Burberry house of fashion. He drew inspiration for his versatile, protective fabric from two sources. The first was a garment from the Middle Ages called a gaberdina. It's a long, loose cape-like wrap that was typically worn over clothing in an effort to protect one from the harsher elements.

The second source was the linen smocks that shepherds and farmers wore to keep cool in the summer, and warm in the winter. Burberry applied all of these ideas to his new fabric, which he called gabardine. The material was constructed from worsted wool that was tightly woven to create one smooth side and one diagonally ribbed side. It was weatherproof and multi-seasonal, and wonderfully breathable.

Burberry used the gabardine to make variety of items, such as twill suits, trousers, and raincoats. Many of these items are still popular in gabardine today.

Between 1911 and 1924, many polar explorers donned Burberry clothing for their harrowing treks. Roald Amundsen, the first man to reach the South Pole, and Ernest Shackleton, who led an expedition across Antarctica, wore gabardine garments. George Mallory was wearing a Burberry





When embroidering on gabardine, it's important to take into account the draping of the fabric. While the twill weave has a beautiful drape to it, some gabardine items such as skirts and pants will have more fluidity than a jacket lapel or pocket.

Keep this in mind when choosing your embroidery design. Light and open designs will allow better draping than a more complex design. Save designs with higher stitch counts for areas where draping is less important, such as lapels or pockets.

For the skirt to the left, I chose the [Art Nouveau Hummingbird designs](#). They're nice and open, and permit excellent movement of the fabric.

Since the fibers in gabardine are so tightly woven, and I was concerned about needle marks in the fabric, I chose a small-gauge 75/11 sharp sewing needle. An embroidery needle will work fine, but stick to a size 11 or smaller.

Gabardine is a relatively light-weight fabric, so I selected a medium-weight (2.5 ounce) cutaway stabilizer. For a very light and open design (Redwork, toile, sheer, vintage), a tear-away would work fine, but because the hummingbirds have solid fills, a cutaway best supports the fabric. You'll find that using cutaway stabilizer will also give the fabric excellent support through wearing and washing, while tear-away will get weaker and

weaker each time the item is worn or used.

Laundering methods depend on the type of gabardine. Usually a wool gabardine should be dry cleaned, but hand-washing with Woolite or a similar detergent, and then line drying, is also an option. To avoid heartbreak, never put wool gabardine in the dryer.

Polyester-gabardine blends don't need the same careful treatment as wool gabardine. They can be machine washed in cold or warm water, but should be rinsed in cold water. Line drying the garment will help to maintain its shape, especially if the fabric contains any stretch components.

Stitching tips for gabardine:

Needle	75/11 sharp needle; an embroidery needle may also be used
Stabilizer	Cutaway (2.5 ounce)
Design Choice	Any (but consider draping).