

Fabrics 101: Embroidering on T-Shirts

T-shirts are the most popular garments to embroider on. Get our best tips and tricks regarding design choice, positioning, stabilizers, and hooping to guarantee excellent results while embroidering on T-shirts.



Project Needs & Notes:

- T-shirt
- Medium-weight (2.5 ounce) cutaway stabilizer
- Air-erase pen for marking
- Temporary spray adhesive (Gunold KK100)

This project was featured in the following:

[Embroidering on T-Shirts Lookbook](#)

Products Used

Love to Sew (Sku: ESP38572-1)

Steps To Complete



T-shirts are made of cotton, or a cotton and polyester blend.

Wash and dry the shirt before embroidering on it to get all the shrinkage out of the way.

Choose designs that are light with open areas.



Avoid designs that are heavy or blocky. Heavy fills will drape poorly, and may result in the fabric puckering, too.

Light and open designs will drape the best on T-shirts.



A template, or printout of a design, is an excellent tool to help with placement.

Print a template of the design from your embroidery software. If you do not have embroidery software, [Wilcom's TrueSizer](#) is a free program to use.

Design placement is largely up to your personal preference.



Use the template to arrange on the shirt to find the placement that looks good to you.

Traditional placement has the top of the design about 3" down from the neck, centered between the sides.

That measurement may vary when working with very large or very small shirts.



After the template is in the right spot, mark the center point and the vertical and horizontal axis lines. Those marks will be used to hoop the shirt straight.



Turn the shirt inside out.

Spray a piece of medium-weight cutaway stabilizer with temporary adhesive.



As a general rule, avoid using tear-away stabilizer on t-shirts, as that can lead to shifting, gapping, and misalignment of the stitches.

Smooth the cutaway stabilizer on the inside of the shirt, on the back of the area that will be embroidered.



Turn the shirt right side out again.

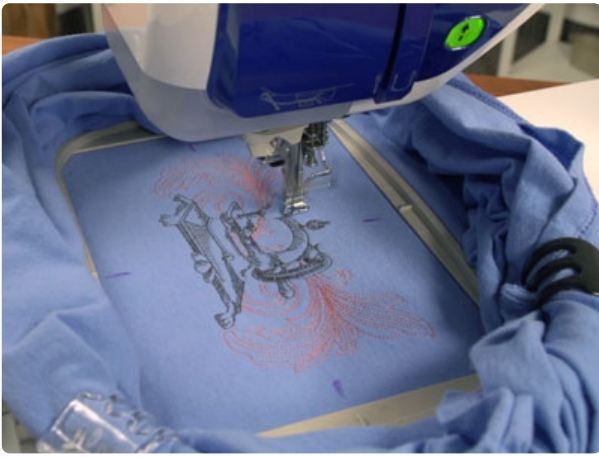
Slide the outer hoop inside the shirt.

Press the inner hoop in place, lining up the marks in the shirt with the marks on the hoop.



Roll the excess shirt up and out of the way so it doesn't get caught while embroidering.

Use clips to keep the excess shirt secure.



Attach the hoop to the machine and load the design.

Move the hoop so the needle is right over the center point, and embroider the design.

A size 11 or 75/11 embroidery needle will work well.

After embroidering, trim the excess stabilizer away from the back. Leave about 1/2" around the design.



A good-quality cutaway stabilizer softens after a wash or two.

If you're concerned about the stabilizer or the thread feeling rough against the skin, use an interfacing (like Cloud Cover Stitch) on the back of the embroidery.



The [Love to Sew design](#) shown here is light and open, so the fabric is draping very well.



Here, the [Crafty Diva design](#) is shown on a V-neck T-shirt. When embroidering on this style, place the design about 2" down from the point of the V.



Usually, designs are embroidered on the front of a T-shirt. In this example, the [Angel Wings](#) were embroidered on the back instead.



Experimenting with various color combinations will add a whole new look to your apparel. Here three [Victorian Butterfly designs](#) were embroidered in several colors on a deep blue shirt.



On this shirt, the [Fabric Lover Swirls and Curls design](#) was embroidered in a color that was just brighter than the blue of the shirt. Even more color contrast was used in the words "Fabric Lover".



T-shirts are also an extremely popular embroidery project for guys. Stitch the [Knight Helmet with Shield](#) or [Wild Side Guitar](#) for your husband, brother, son, or nephew.