



## The Hooping Basics

One of the most important elements in the embroidery process is the ability to hoop all of the items properly. You can have a great digitized design and a high-quality product, but if your garment is not hooped correctly the whole project can be ruined.

There are some basic rules that cover most applications.

- Use tear away backing on woven fabrics
- Use cut away backing on knit and stretchy fabrics.
- Hoop your garment taut so that there is no flagging in the hoop. Make sure that there are no ripples in either the garment or the backing.
- Do not tighten the screw on the outside of the hoop after you have the garment hooped. If it needs to be adjusted, unhoop the garment, adjust your screw and rehoop the garment.
- Do not over tighten the hoop, this can cause hoop burns on the garment especially on dark colors. You should be able to gently press the inner ring into the outer ring using your fingertips and the heels of your hands. If you have to use a lot of force to get the hoop onto the garment, then it is too tight. You will ruin your garment; break your hoops and you can cause damage to your arms and hands. This is not necessary.
- A properly hooped garment will lay flat against the machine table.
- Use the smallest hoop or frame possible for the size of the design. If a design is too small for the hoop, you will have too much flagging and have a chance of losing registration. Make sure to allow enough room in the hoop for the back of the presser foot in the top part of your

design. One half inch from the back edge of the presser foot to the edge of the hoop will allow enough space.

- After it is hooped, push the outer hoop up and the inner hoop down so that you can see the backed garment between the layers of the hoop. This is called seating. The garment must be properly seated in the hoop. If it is not, you can have flagging, poor registration and thread breaks.

## What is flagging?

The fabric actually jumps or bounces up and down as it is being embroidered. Sometimes it is hard to see that it is happening, but the results are definite. When the fabric is not hooped tight enough, it will slip or stretch and the flagging or bouncing will be more propionate.

The machine will be noisier as it is running and will sound as if the needle is being pulled up and pushed down thru the fabric. It is a definite sound that is not the same as if it were running on a properly hooped garment.

## Correct Backing

Backings are used to give the garment stability as you are applying your embroidery. Most fabrics will stretch as they are being hooped and it is very important to avoid stretching them even a small amount. If it is stretched during the hooping process, puckers will be created around the finished embroidery. Using the correct backing for the garment is extremely important for high quality finished products. For most applications it is advisable to use 2 layers of backing for true stability. A high-quality medium weight backing will work for most applications.

***DO NOT USE SCRAPs OF BACKING THRU THE CENTER OF YOUR HOOP!*** This is a huge mistake and I have found so many people doing this, trying to save money. They think that it is not necessary to use it any place other than where the embroidery is going. The backing ***MUST*** cover the entire hoop. If it does not, your fabric will pull in as it is being embroidered and the lines in the design will not follow each other in the proper place as you continue thru the sewing process especially if you are doing a multi-color design. This applies to all types of fabrics.

## Backing Needed for all Items

Some people are under the impression that you do not need a backing if your garment is heavy such as a bag or a jacket back. This is not true. All embroideries need a backing for stability. Often if I have a garment such as a

bag that is hard to hoop with backing, I will hoop it without the backing and slide a piece under the hoop when I put it into the machine. This applies only to very rigid fabrics. This will give it the stability and crispness needed for the finished product. It also gives you a piece of backing to rip against instead of your garment if you happen to make a mistake. For this type of application, one layer of backing is sufficient.

## **Hooping Ring or Hooping Blanket**

Some fabrics need to have a hooping ring or blanket between the fabric and the hooping frame to prevent pressure marks on the garment. This is especially important for protecting satins or soft knits such as cashmere. You may want to use a hooping ring for very thin fabrics such as Chiffons or Organza.

A hooping ring can be made of muslin, thin acrylic felt, heavy cutaway backing or even a couple of layers of water-soluble topping. Your selection will depend on how much grip you will need and the type of fabric you are hooping.

To create a hooping ring, choose the material that work best for the type of fabric that you are going to be applying your embroidery. Hoop it as you would normally hoop a flat piece of fabric. Cut out the center or the area where you will be applying your embroidery with a pair of scissors or an xacto knife. What you are actually doing is creating a cover to protect the garment from any crushing or abrasions caused by the hoop. It even helps if you have garment such as a satin that is very slippery. It will hold it in place more firmly. These hooping rings can be re-used many times.

Many embroiderers wrap their hooping frames with athletic tape or some other type of a bias binding, but I have not found this necessary. Using the hooping rings has taken care of most of my problems with slippage

## **Tape Backing Around Hooping Frame**

Taping the backing around the bottom part of the hooping frame is a shortcut to holding the backing in place when you do not have a hooping device. It is much easier to handle, and you do not have to fight to keep the backing in place as you are trying to lay it inside of the garment. This is especially true if you are hooping a large area such as a sweatshirt back, jacket back or even down the sleeve of a garment.

It does take a little extra time to do the taping but it will save a huge amount of time when you are inserting the hoop and the backing especially in any type of a pullover garment. Lay your backing down on your table. Lay the bottom portion of your hooping frame on top of the backing with the hooping frame facing down against the backing. Take a piece of masking tape and tape at least two corners. Tape opposite corners and then turn it right side up and slide it into place under your garment.

## **Hooping Device**

A hooping device is a must if you are doing any type of production. Many shops have a separate hooping device for every situation. This is impractical for a small shop so you need to know the basics without a device. You can purchase a hooping device or even make your own, but this takes a lot of time and if you are not totally familiar with what you need exactly, this is a tough task. There are several excellent devices on the market today that will save you a lot of time. The one that you choose will depend on your niche market and your budget.

There are two hooping devices that I highly recommend, the first one is the HoopMaster and the other one is the All-In-One Hooping Device. If you send me an email, I can let you know the best place to purchase either of these 2 hooping devices.

## **New Hooping Frames or Clamps**

There are new hooping frames or clamps on the market today to make hooping so much easier than it was when I was first starting my business. I refer to them in my Hoop Basics Inventory article. Make sure that you check out those new hooping frames through the resources that I suggested. It will make hooping much faster and some will make it easier on your hands. Your hands can get in pretty bad shape when you are repeating the same action over and over. You need to protect them as much as possible!

## **Magnetic Hoops**

The newest type of hooping frames are magnetic hoops. These are wonderful hooping frames that are great for heavy items such as Carhart jackets, bags and extra thick towels. They are made to work with the HoopMaster and are a valuable addition to your hooping frame inventory.

Print out this article and place it in your **Embroidery Binder** for future reference.