

Embroidery Week: Machine Embroidery Hoops

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Mesmerizing. That's what it's like the first time you watch an embroidery machine stitch out a design. Sure, you have to get everything set up and threaded, but once you push that Start button, *whoa* ... it just takes off on its own. Imagine if all you had to do was put ingredients in a bowl, then step back and watch them become a frosted three-layer cake. Whatever your task, having the right tools makes your work easier, and your success more assured. The most crucial accessory to successful machine embroidery is the hoop.

Step 1: Get embroidery machine

For a full Embroidery Machine Shopping Checklist, take a look at our article, [What to Shop for in a Machine that can Monogram](#). The details are the same, since monogramming is really a sub-set of embroidery. To summarize, there are three basic categories of [embroidery machines](#):

Combination sewing and embroidery machines



These models do regular sewing as well as embroidery. This is a good choice if you're looking for one machine that can accomplish a range of projects.

Embroidery-only machines



As the name implies, these machines are *only* able to stitch embroidery designs; they cannot sew regular stitches. Many refer to this as a 'companion machine', because it is perfect for the person who already has a regular sewing machine, but wants to add embroidery to her/his range of possibilities.

Multi-needle embroidery machines



This type of machine is a good choice for someone who does a lot of embroidery, and may even be thinking of setting up a small embroidery business. It has multiple needles, and can be threaded with multiple colors at one time. Many large embroidery shops also use this type of machine as a 'test' machine, so they can check designs before setting up their very large and complicated industrial, multi-head embroidery machines.

Step 2: How 'bout them hoops?



Ya gotta have a hoop to do machine embroidery. So let's rundown the options. First, you need to be sure any embroidery hoop you're interested in will actually work with your particular embroidery machine. The mechanisms that attach the hoops to

the machines are model-specific, sometimes even within the same brand, so be sure to ask your dealer if you have any questions about compatibility.

Most manufacturers offer a wide variety of hoop shapes and sizes. You want your hoop size to match your design size as closely as possible. It's much easier to get accurate placement with a correctly sized hoop. One that is too large leaves that much more room for error. And, the larger the hoop field, the greater the possibility your fabric will shift slightly as the design is stitching, which means your thread path won't line up correctly within the design.

All embroidery machines should come with at least one standard hoop. Most Janome embroidery machines come with two standard hoops; the sizes vary somewhat from machine to machine, but normally there is one hoop in the 5.5" x 7" range and another in the 5" x 4" range. The Memory Craft 11000 Special Edition comes with a third standard: the SQ hoop, which is an 8" x 8" square.



Square hoops are not as common as their rectangular cousins, but they are especially useful, because most embroidery designs are square. The square hoop allows you to stitch out a huge number of designs in just a single hooping.

Step 3: How 'bout some more hoops?

Once you become addicted to embroidery ... and believe me, you will ... there are a range of unique hoops with specific uses you'll want to check out. The list below outlines some of the most common specialty hoops.

Macro Hoop

This is an oversized hoop, which can stitch out very large designs with only one hooping. Designs are specially formatted (digitized) for this hoop. Embroidery machines are programmed for a specific maximum embroidery field, usually something like 6" x 8". These 'giant' hoops hold more fabric (up to 8½" x 11" or more), and they allow you to stitch a larger design without re-hooping. On the Janome embroidery machines that can accommodate a Macro Hoop, when the maximum embroidery field has been filled, a special sliding mechanism allows the hoop to move into a new position on the remaining fabric to stitch some more. You need to see this type of function in action, so when you visit your local dealer, ask for a demonstration of your chosen machine's large hoop stitching.



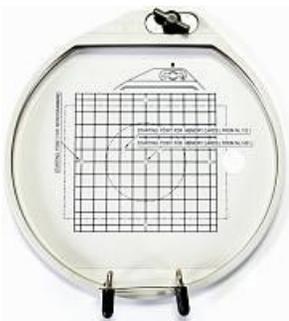
Free Arm Hoop

This is a very small hoop, specially sized to accommodate small designs for placement on a lapel, cuff, socks or any very small area. We used the Free Arm hoop for the design on our [Embroidery Week: Wristlet](#).



Round Spring Hoop

This hoop is designed specifically for bulky or layered fabrics like quilts, and contains a spring to aid in the hooping process.



Hat Hoop

This hoop is specially sized and formatted to accommodate a hat rim. In some cases, this may be an insert that fits into another hoop.



The Clothsetter®

Even though Janome hoops come with templates, some designs require very precise placement. Enter the amazing Janome Clothsetter®. This ingenious contraption is exclusive to the Janome embroidery machines, and allows you to hoop your fabric and stabilizer to ensure the embroidery design will fall *exactly* where you want it. The Clothsetter® is essential for a design that will require multiple hoopings. You just calibrate with the Clothsetter®, mark positioning with a pen, and you're ready to stitch. You can find instructions for using this amazing tool at the Janome website [here](#).



Basic steps for hooping

1. Loosen the screw on the side of the hoop so the inner hoop and the outer hoop can be separated.
2. Arrange your fabric and stabilizer on the outer hoop (this is the part that includes the mechanism to attach the hoop to the machine.) If necessary use the templates or Clothsetter to arrange your fabric.



3. Place the inner hoop on top of the fabric and stabilizer, and maneuver into place with the outer hoop. Depending on the thickness of the fabric, you may need to further widen the hoop by adjusting the screw on the side of the hoop.



4. Once the hoops are in place, tighten the screw to tighten the hoops together.
5. When the fabric/stabilizer is relatively taut, gently pull on the edges that extend beyond the hoop to ensure it is as taut as possible. You want the fabric to be as tight as a drum (and you can even tap your finger on the fabric/stabilizer to see if it makes a soft drumming sound. (Do not get carried away into a bongo solo.)
6. Tighten the screw as far as possible.

7. Place your hoop on the machine, and begin embroidery.



Hooping Sensitive Fabrics

Some fabrics, such as velvets, satins and silks are very sensitive to hooping and can retain a line from tight hooping, which some people call 'hoop burn.' These fabrics still require stabilizer, and may be hooped by placing a sticky stabilizer in the actual hoop, then adhering the fabric to the stabilizer. Sticky stabilizer comes in options that may be wetted to activate the stickiness, or they can have a backing that covers the stickiness until you are ready to adhere your fabrics in place.

A residue sometimes builds up on your hoops if you use these types of stabilizers frequently. To remove, some people use basic dishwashing detergent, while others find baby wipes the easiest way to clean their hoops.

When I'm done 'jumping through hoops,' what other stuff do I need?

Hoops are a crucial element for embroidery, but your new passion does require a supply of other notions and accessories: thread, stabilizer, tiny scissors, and needles. To learn more about what to look for, read our Monogram Week article: [Picking the Right Thread, Stabilizer & Other Notions](#).

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