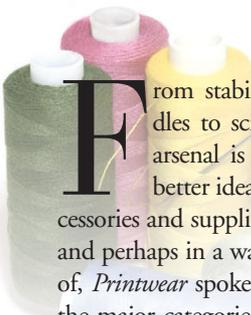


# Experimenting with Embroidery Accessories



The best applications for everyday embroidery products

BY CARLY HOLLMAN-LONG



From stabilizers to hooping, needles to scissors, an embroiderer's arsenal is well stocked. To get a better idea of how to use these accessories and supplies to their full potential and perhaps in a way you've never thought of, *Printwear* spoke to industry experts on the major categories of accessories and got the scoop on each one's best use.

## STABILIZERS

What better place to start speaking on accessories than at the foundation? Stabilizers are available in a wide variety of options, covering every type of application imaginable. Kay Brooks, Floriani Commercial Products, breaks down the stabilizer selections to four major categories

including tearaway, cutaway, water soluble and specialty.

Cutaway stabilizer is cut from the back of the embroidery design, whereas a tearaway stabilizer can be torn away without scissors or trimming. Cutaways offer the best support, notes Brooks, and should accordingly be used on unstable fabrics like knits or when doing a dense design. Tearaways, on the other hand work best with fabrics that carry a bit of heft.

Water solubles describes Brooks, are often used as a topping on the surface of high piled or nappy fabrics, like knit piqué or other textured fabrics. This helps to keep the stitches from falling back into the raised fabrics, but then washes away leaving a clean design.

Specialty stabilizers can include inner linings, heat removable toppings and fusible adhesives. This final category of adhesives can assist in adding multimedia designs to jobs. Brooks notes that she has seen this backing used to attach ruffles, cording and piping to bags and other accessories.

## HOOPS

Hoops help to frame and support different types of embroidery, all in a variety of different shapes and sizes. While the classic round hoop is always best, says Helen Hart Momsen, Momsen Enterprises, as this gives uniform tension all the way around, there are times a round hoop simply won't work with a design. In these instances, Momsen suggests using the smallest functioning size, regardless of shape, as this will always keep the design as stable as possible.

Certain hoops are limited to specific jobs, but others can work wonders on substrates for which they may not be obviously intended. Cap hoops, Momsen cites as an example, also work for any rounded substrate, such as the cuffs of Christmas stockings as it can easily slip on while maintaining its natural shape. Or, the smaller and longer design of cylindrical frames make it another alternative for rounded products, offers Henry Bernstein, Hirsch International.

Sleeve hoops are another diverse option. It works not only as the name implies, but also on smaller areas of a shirt, Jesse Mack, HoopMaster by Midwest Products, reports. Use them for cuffs or collars as well as for accessories such as ties and scarves.

The newest addition to the hooping game is the magnetic hoop, which can be adjusted to a variety of sizes in a simple snap. Without utilizing screws, the hoops allow for a snug grip without damaging fibers and accommodates for a variety of job sizes. Mack notes this particular style of hoop can



Experimenting with different thread, fabrics, needles and appliqués can lead to a unique design or a product use that makes life easier. (Image courtesy Hirsch International)



**Left:** Embroiderers need a well-stocked inventory of accessories to ensure that every job is done to its best capabilities and in a timely manner. (Image courtesy Floriani Commercial Products)  
**Below:** Avoiding finger hole hang-ups, snippers are wonderful resources for cleaning up unruly threads. (Image courtesy American Embroidery Supply)

accommodate everything from aprons, golf bags and towels to thick quilts, jackets and sweatshirts, depending on the hoop's size.

Another alternative when facing a difficult hooping job are clamps. "The uses of clamps are limitless," says Bernstein. Bamboo (in its natural form not as a fabric fiber), for example, has wonderful embroidery results, he offers, but it is also near impossible to hoop. By utilizing clamps, embroidering woven bamboo placemats or panels is possible.

### THREAD

The current top performers in the thread category, according to Brooks, include polyester, rayon and metallic. Rayon was originally created to mimic the appearance of silk and its lustrous sheen makes it appropriate for upscale designs and monograms. However, Brooks notes that the silky thread is losing popularity with the advancements made in modern polyester.

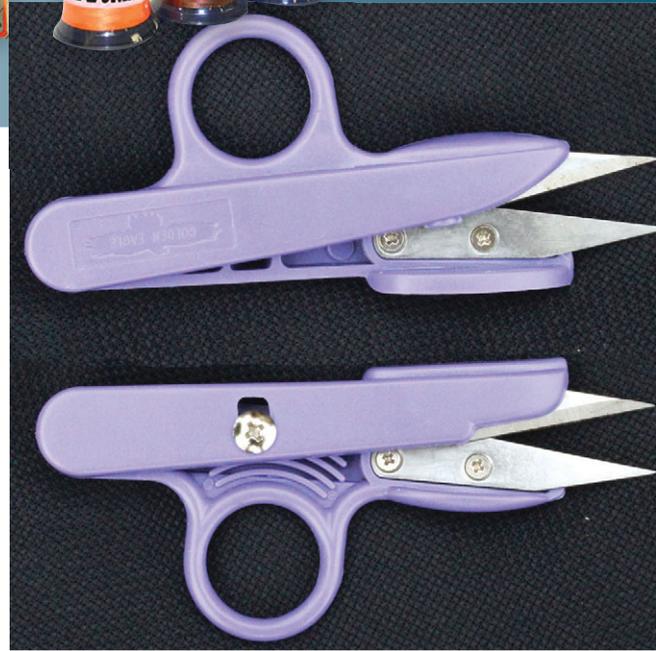
Polyester thread is what Momsen calls "customer proof." Maintaining colorfastness even under extreme temperatures, it can also withstand bleach and improper laundering. Momsen suggests using poly-

ester thread on jobs such as baby onesies and bibs, as well as outdoor items such as beach towels that will be exposed to intense UV rays and salt water. Another bonus: polyester thread is dishwasher safe, which makes for easy cleaning of baseball caps after a hot sweaty game.

Metallic threads have made great advancements in the past five years, Brooks reports. Some are now made with polyester, making it flexible and less likely to shred. But, to ensure the best operating metallic, Momsen suggests smoothing it out as this type of thread tends to hold the same shape as the spool. It needs to be straight before it hits the needle, she says.

### NEEDLES

Where would thread be without its partner in crime, the needle? Ballpoint needles are great at coaxing the stitches of a fabric apart as opposed to cutting the fibers and causing



snags, while sharp point needles can easily penetrate fibers, but needs to be used on a fabric that can withstand it, such as denim and linen. Finally, there is the universal needle, the go-to option. Whether a job calls for it or you have a questionable last minute job, the universal is handy to have around.

A unique standalone use of needles, says Bernstein, is to use it sans thread. He says to turn off a machine's thread break sensor and run the needles through leather. This creates

## EMBROIDERY ACCESSORIES

Hoops come in a variety of options to accommodate every job from the standard to the most awkwardly placed. (Image courtesy Hoop Master by Midwest Products)



a perforated design that can stand alone for a high impact design.

One important note to keep in mind regardless of needle type, says Momsen, is a machine's system number. This number measures the distance between the eye of the needle to the tip, which tells the machine at exactly what point the needle thread and bobbin thread should meet. Straying outside of this system number and installing needles which are either longer or shorter than what the machine is programmed for, leads to timing issues by throwing off the machine's components.

### BOBBINS

Believe it or not, this small piece of the stitching puzzle does have more than one use. While it primarily holds the thread specific to the understitching, extra metal bobbins can also be used as top thread. For

example, when doing a job that has a non-traditional color, Momsen suggests using self-wound bobbins in place of numerous spools. These bobbins can then be placed atop of the machine in place of the typical spool and ran as usual.

### SCISSORS

Scissors are an important component to embroidery work as threads inevitably need trimmed when finished. To accommodate the various trimming needs a selection of different pairs are important to keep around.

A squeeze snip is great for quick trims, says Floriani Commercial Products' Brooks, as it doesn't have finger holes and can do clean up. A curved point lifts up threads, reducing potential damage while getting as close to the base of the thread as possible. Duckbills are used as an appliqué

scissor, she continues, to trim patches and appliqués without actually cutting into the thread.

### STUDY ON

With the wide variety of accessories, and an ever changing market place, Hoop Master's Mack encourages embroiderers to take the proper measures to ensure they're in the know. Visit trade shows, he says, and read industry-specific publications such as *Printwear* to gain knowledge which can lead to better understanding a products potential.

Also consider, as Bernstein puts it, that products and developments "comes from some level of mistake." Experiment, play and push the boundaries of the manufacturer's suggested uses. It's not only a small way to feel rebellious, but it may lead to the discovery the hottest new trend along the way.

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