





Doodle-Stitching

Fresh & Fun Embroidery
for Beginners

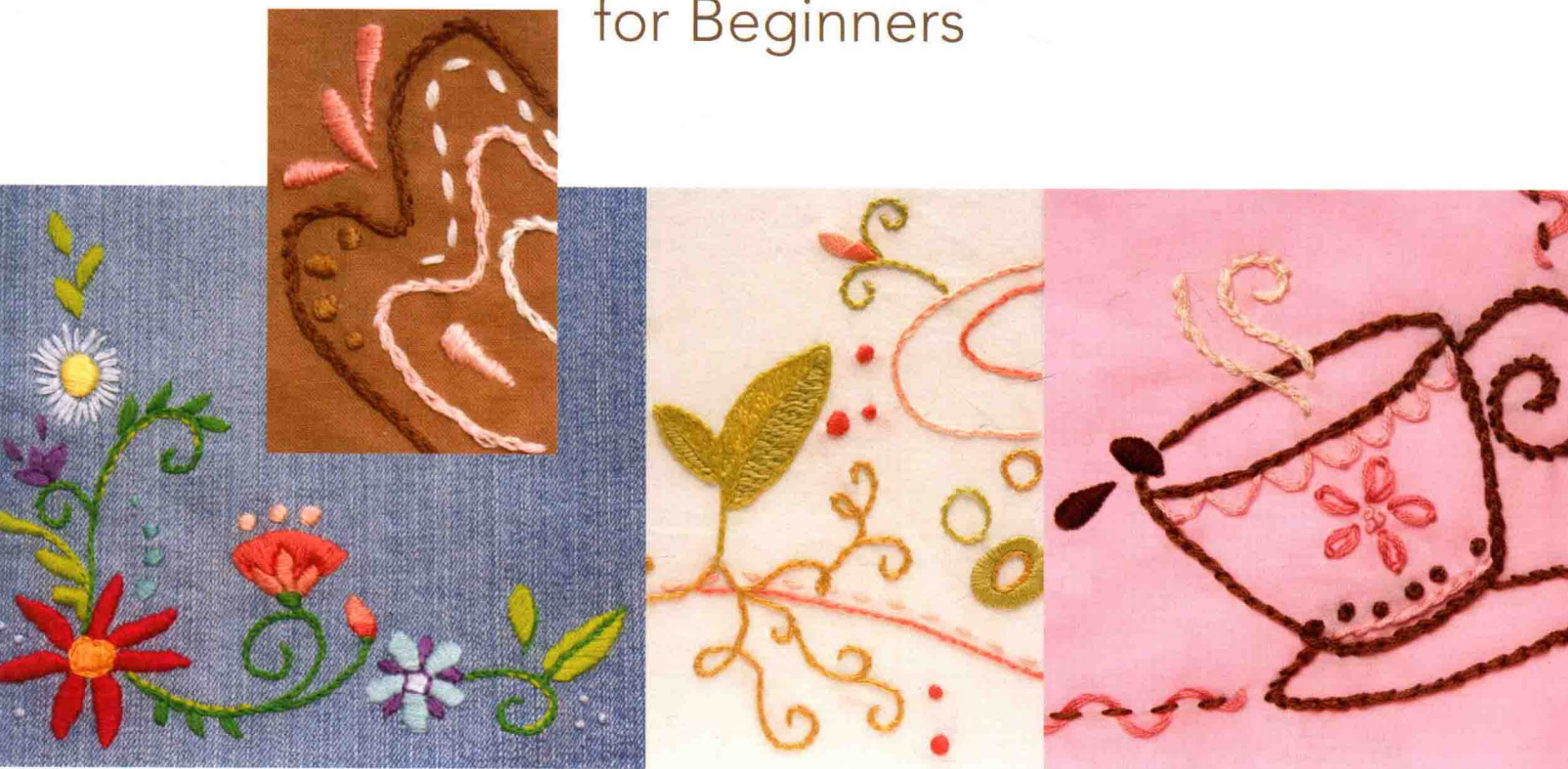


Aimee Ray



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Dedication

*For my grandma,
who first showed me how.*

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Embroider Your World

No one knows how long embroidery has been around. For thousands of years people from all over the world have been using colored thread to embellish clothing and household items and to create artwork. While styles change with cultures and years, the techniques are basically the same: passing a needle and thread

through fabric. Today, we can use this timeless technique to create fun, fresh, contemporary designs and embellishments.

Embroidery is one of the easiest crafts you can learn. If you're just starting out, there's no need for a huge commitment to buying a bunch of new supplies. The tools are simple and inexpensive; all you really need to get started are a needle, embroidery floss, and some fabric. Learning the basic techniques is simple for someone of any age or experience level. (Thanks to my mom and grandma, I first picked up a needle and thread at about the age of five.)

"Doodle-stitching" is the type of simple embroidery you'll learn in this book. It is also called freeform, or freestyle embroidery. That means there are no rules. You won't have to carefully count your stitches or decipher strange codes. Just thread your needle and start stitching. You'll find lots of whimsical, doodle-style line designs you can use for your embroidery projects, or try your hand at doodling your own. Simply follow a line art design that you've transferred onto your fabric, picking out stitches and colors as you go. You're free to just have fun and be creative!



Embroidery is extremely versatile. You'll find lots of ways to use it in other craft projects or to create a work of art by itself. It can be as simple as a one-stitch decorative edging on a skirt or a tablecloth, or as complex as a full-color picture that you plan to frame and hang on a wall. You can pick and choose your favorite colors and stitches, use an entire pattern or just a small section of it, or combine different elements to custom-design a pattern for your specific project.

Once you learn the basics, you'll also find embroidery to be very relaxing. There's something meditative about filling in a design stitch by stitch and watching it gradually take shape.

Embroidery projects are great to work on while watching a movie on the couch, during long car or plane rides, or just as a way to unwind—wherever you are. Embroidery projects are very portable. Not a lot of preparation is required to get started once you have transferred your pattern to the fabric. Your embroidery also is easily set aside and picked up again whenever you have time to work on it. Whether your day allows you a few free hours, or 10 minutes here and there, you can literally put away your project in mid-stitch and pick it up again later if you need to, right where you left off.

This book will show you, step-by-step, the basic skills you need to start embroidering doodle-stitch style. You'll find lots of fun patterns and project ideas as well. I hope they'll inspire you to pick up a needle and thread and embroider your world.



Embroidery Essentials

Embroidery isn't complicated, but knowing a bit about the tools and materials will make your stitching a lot more fun. In this section, you'll learn what to look for and how best to use the items you buy. After you've gathered these essentials and picked your first project, see Getting Started on page 13 for more help. Soon, you'll be turning out great embroidery pieces.

Materials and Tools Checklist

Here's a list of supplies you'll need for almost every project in this book, plus a few extra items that are nice to have on hand.

6-inch (15.2 cm) diameter embroidery hoop

Embroidery and hand-sewing needles

Embroidery floss

Fabric stabilizer

Fine-lead pencil

Iron

Nonpermanent fabric marking pen

Ruler

Scissors

Straight pins

Thimble, leather or rubber

Tracing and transfer tools

Tweezers



Materials and Tools

You need to track down a few basic items before you can start embroidering. The materials and tools are relatively inexpensive, and chances are good that you probably have some of them already on hand. If not, you can find them at your local craft store, and they won't empty your piggy bank.

Fabrics

The most common fabrics used for embroidery are quilter's cotton, linen made for handwork, and Aida cloth (a heavy fabric with a large weave). However, almost any fabric is suitable for embroidery. Delicate materials such as chiffon and silk may require an extra bit of care while stretching on a hoop so the weave won't distort or stretch. Also make sure that the stitching isn't so dense that it weighs down—or is visually unbalanced by—a light-weight fabric.

Fine fabrics and stretchy fabrics like cotton T-shirts usually behave better if you apply a removable fabric stabilizer before you start stitching (page 16).

Heavier fabrics such as felt or denim are easy to work with. They don't pucker and may not need to be placed in a hoop (called hooping).

Craft felt is a sturdy fabric. It can handle hand- and machine-stitching and generally won't pucker when embroidered. You don't need to use a hoop with craft felt.

If you're just starting to embroider and need some fabric, take a look at your wardrobe or linen closet. You never know what might inspire you to add a touch of thread to it.



Ready to get started? Embroidery takes just a few simple tools, although you'll probably discover some neat things that you just can't live without.

Cottons, denim/twill, canvas, felt, satin, chiffon, organza, Aida cloth... almost any fabric is suitable for embroidery.



Embroidery Floss

Although you can embroider with just about any thread, the most common is embroidery floss. Each long strand is sold in a small bundle, or skein, and available in any color you can think of. Every color has a number designation, which is printed on the wrapper.

Manufacturers, distributors, and stitchers all use the numbers, rather than the names, to identify colors. Some colors are very similar. When you're starting a project, it's a good idea to jot down the numbers you're using in case you need to get more later.

Every floss manufacturer has its own unique set of color numbers.

To avoid confusion, the materials and supplies list (What You Need) call for floss by color name. At the end of every project, you'll find a list of the floss brand, color, and color names that were used for the sample shown in the accompanying photo.

If you want to stitch your version of a project with the same colors, but only have access to a different

brand of floss, there's an easy solution: Just use the color descriptions in the project's What You Need list as your guide. Or, you can look up the product name and color number on a color conversion chart to find the equivalent number that's available from another company. Almost all specialty shops have a conversion chart to help customers; some retailers sell them, and you can find several free on the Internet by typing "embroidery floss conversion chart" into an Internet search engine.

A length of floss is made up of six smaller strands, or *plies*, that are twisted together. You can use all of them to stitch a thick line, or divide them up and use two, three, or four plies for a thinner line on fine details. The designs in this book are meant to be embroidered with all six plies, unless indicated otherwise. However, if you're embroidering a design at a reduced size, you may want to decrease the number of plies.

There are a variety of specialty threads, such as linen, metallic, silk, and wool, which are also fun to try.

A rainbow of colors and textures are yours to explore when you shop for embroidery floss.



Needles

A good embroidery needle is medium sized, with a sharp point and a long opening, or eye, at one end, which makes threading your floss through it much easier. It's a good idea to have a small-eye needle on hand as well, for sewing fabric by hand with a single ply of floss or sewing thread. Buy a packet with several sizes and types of needles to ensure that you have on hand, whatever size you want to use.

Embroidery Hoops

An embroidery hoop is a two-piece frame. Plastic hoops are sturdier than wood and last a long time. Hoops come in many sizes. A 6-inch (15.2 cm) diameter hoop is good for almost any project; small designs will fit inside the circle and, for larger designs, you can move the hoop around as needed.

Scissors

Keep a pair of small sharp sewing scissors on hand while embroidering. You need them to cut lengths of floss and snip off any leftover floss when you're finished stitching.

Tools for Transferring

To transfer a design—and sometimes a pattern—from this book or from another source to your fabric, start by copying it onto tracing paper, as explained on pages 14 to 15, or by making a photocopy.

The next step is getting the design or pattern onto the fabric. Depending on the fabric and density of the completed stitching, you might be able to trace the lines with a lead pencil or chalk.

Otherwise, you can draw on your fabric using a nonpermanent fabric marking pen or pencil that's specially made for this purpose. (The instructions advise when a lead pencil or chalk is suitable.)

Nonpermanent fabric marking pens come in several varieties. Some make marks that wash away with water, and others have marks that simply fade over time. If you choose a fabric pen that has disappearing, or air-soluble, ink, be sure it's not for a project that you'll be working on for several days. Your tracing may fade before you're finished.



Don't let the transfer process intimidate you. It's easy, and you can choose a method that's most suitable for you. Options abound: transfer paper, chalk, a nonpermanent tracing pen, or try tracing using a light table.





Dressmaker's carbon paper can be purchased at most craft stores. It comes in several light and dark colors, to suit dark or light fabrics.

Iron-on transfer pencils allow you to trace the design onto tracing paper, and then iron it onto your fabric.

Marks from some transfer tools become permanent when ironed. Test, test, test on a scrap of the project fabric!

Other Useful Tools

Pins and a small pincushion are always good to have around when doing sewing projects.

If you have trouble threading your needle, a needle threader makes the job quick and easy.

You'll be glad to have a thimble on your finger when pushing the needle through tough fabrics like denim or canvas. A leather or rubber thimble will protect your fingers and also help you get a good grip on the needle. Place the thimble on the index or second finger of your dominant hand—whichever one you use to push a needle through any fabric. You also might want to place

another thimble on your opposite hand to protect the finger that receives the needle underneath your work.

The more embroidery projects you do, the more floss you'll accumulate. You might find it useful to organize the strands by wrapping each color on a plastic or cardboard holder; write the color number on the holder; and then store them together in a box. Special boxes are sold to contain these, but you can use an ordinary, clear plastic fishing tackle box.

Finally, although the real purpose of pinking shears is to keep fabric edges from fraying, their toothed blades can create decorative edges on appliqué shapes.



Getting Started

Beginning your embroidery project is wonderfully simple. All you need to do is transfer the design, hoop it, thread the needle with embroidery floss, and start stitching. For more tips—and information on a few simple techniques—read on.

Choosing a Design

In Doodle-Stitching you'll find lots of unique designs for you to use for your embroidery projects. You can stitch up these designs according to the project instructions, or mix and match them to create your own compositions.

Using a photocopier, you can even reduce or enlarge these designs so that each one perfectly fits your

project. Some of the designs in this book are the right size for the patterns and dimensions in the instructions. When a design (or a pattern) has to be enlarged, there's a note to this effect. You'll see it when you trace or photocopy the book page.

But don't stop here! Almost anything can be used as an embroidery



Grab your hoop, a needle, some floss, and a design—these items, plus a few basic tips will get you on your way.



One design, three very different results. Feel free to choose your favorite colors and stitches to make every design uniquely yours.