

Embroidering on a Baby Onesie

by Michelle of Abigail Michelle Embroidery

Sewing on knits such as T-shirts and baby bodysuits doesn't need to be a daunting task. There are a few tricks of the trade that will help you create beautiful, one-of-a-kind creations and coordinate ready-made items with your own sewing projects.



Pre-wash the bodysuit before you begin your embroidery. Shirts and baby items will most likely shrink a little once they have been washed a few times. Even if the item is advertised as "pre-washed," it is a good idea to wash it again. Don't forget to throw it into the dryer afterwards. It's the heat of the dryer after washing that actually does most of the shrinking.



Centering is the next important step. Decide where you want to place the embroidery design and mark it with a pin. I like to place my designs on the center of the shirt. To do this, I fold the shirt in half vertically, front side out. I place the pin on the fold approximately where I want the center of the design to be. Open the shirt and lay it flat onto your work table. From this view you can see if it needs to be moved up or down. Gently move the pin to where the center of the design will be without varying from the center fold line.



It doesn't only matter where to make the center of the design on the garment, it also matters whether the design is stitched straight. An easy trick to make sure your design is straight is to place a piece of transparent tape (masking tape also works) horizontally, approximately 3 inches under the pin.

Hold up the shirt in the air to be sure it is straight across. If not, place it back down and readjust. The tape should be parallel with the bottom of the shirt hem or bottom of the baby bodysuit.

Now you have your shirt with a pin where center of the design will be, and a piece of tape to show where the bottom will be.

Next, turn your shirt inside out.

Prepare your hoop by hooping either sticky stabilizer or using a cut-away/tear-away with adhesive spray. Attach the hoop to the embroidery machine and load your design. The needle on the machine is now pointing to where the center of the design will be.

Bring your shirt over to the machine while it is still inside out. Place it onto the sticky hooped stabilizer, having the *inside* of the font of the shirt stick to the hoop. Your pin and tape will now be stuck to the hoop, facing up. Gently move the back of the shirt away from your working space. The tape should be placed parallel to the bottom of the embroidery hoop and the pin should be directly under the embroidery machine needle. It can take a few tries to maneuver it into place. Take your time. Once it is in place, gently press the shirt onto the sticky stabilizer with your finger to assure a good contact is made. Gently remove the pin.

The tape can stay where it is. If you happen to embroider over it a little bit, that's okay. It tears away very easily once you are done.

Place a piece of water soluble stabilizer over the hoop where your design will be stitching. This will "float" on top of the hoop. Once the machine starts, hold it into place until it gets going enough where it will hold itself into place. Always keep your fingers away from the moving needle!

If you have a built-in basting stitch on your machine, now is a great time to use it. This will help hold the shirt to the stabilizer and help to keep away unwanted movement of the fabric. If you don't have one built into your machine, you can get some for free at SWAKembroidery.com in the "free" category.

Begin stitching as usual, being sure to watch it as it stitches in case part of your shirt gets caught under the needle. Slowing down your embroidery machine can help when you are stitching in tight spots. Don't be afraid to stop the machine and start again as needed to be sure everything is clear and out of the way. Do not move the fabric of the shirt, though. Keep it as stable as possible.



Once stitching is done, remove the hoop from the embroidery machine. Remove any basting stitches, water soluble stabilizer, transparent tape and backing stabilizer. Trim any excess threads off the back of the embroidery, leaving about 1/2" thread so it remains secure. If there is any water soluble stabilizer left in the design, spray with a water bottle and blot with a clean washcloth.



The back side of embroidery designs can be quite itchy, especially to a baby. **Cut a piece of fusible mesh slightly larger than the design (leave about 3/4" extra) and place it over the backside of the design.** Spray with a water bottle and place a pressing cloth over it. Press with a hot iron for ten seconds or following manufacturer's instruction. Using a press cloth is important to avoid any scorch marks or debris being transferred from the iron. Special press cloths are sold at sewing stores or a simple cloth that is specifically used for this purpose is fine. I use an old cloth wall calender, the kind where you use them as a dish cloth once the year is over.



After pressing, remove the press cloth and leave it for a few seconds while it cools down. Check it to be certain it has fused well.

Turn your shirt right side out and press again if needed.

It's done! What a wonderful job and a special item. Shirts and baby bodysuits are perfect for one-of-a-kind gifts.

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