

Monogramming on Fleece

Catch the latest fashion trend and boost sales with simple embroidery.

By Steven Batts, Contributing Writer

Monogramming has surged in popularity during the past few years and now has become a fashion statement similar to the way it was in the 1950s. Today, advancements in machines and hooping systems make it possible to monogram nearly anything.

When you combine monogramming with the ever-popular fleecewear, you have a surefire hit on your hands. Fleece is such a great medium for embroidery — specifically monograms. This is especially true with the American Apparel Classic Sweats (style HVT427 for the shirt; style HVT450 for the pants).

In addition to being super comfortable and warm, they provide a nice backdrop for monograms to pop.

Most embroiderers are pretty comfortable doing sewouts on sweat shirts. Getting the design to stand out usually is the only obstacle. Embroidering on sweat pants can be a little trickier. The embroiderable space is a lot tighter and there are pockets to consider.

In this *Impressions* Tech Tips newsletter, we will take a look at the various places to put monograms on these items and how to do it.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Fleece is thicker than the average golf shirt and has more surface texture. This means



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**H E A V Y
T E R R Y**

HVT316



HVT401



HVT427



HVT495



HVT450



—71% Combed Cotton Fleece
—29% Polyester
—13.0 oz/yd² (441 g/m²)

American Apparel®

it still will stretch and more care needs to be taken to ensure the stitching doesn't sink into the fabric, causing the final product to look unclean. Many people use a topping, such as Solvy, or other water-soluble toppings to prevent that from happening. While this is not a bad idea, you also could use a heavier underlay, including an edge-walk, to nail down the fleece and build a foundation for the top stitching.

This will keep the embroidery looking good even after the topping is dissolved when the item is washed. It also is good for those of us who absolutely hate picking out the little remnants of topping from tiny crevices in the letters.

This is not to say that using topping is a bad idea. It is even better to use a heavy underlay in conjunction with topping, especially the newer heat-dissipated toppings where little remnants can be removed with an iron. The added bonus of heat-dissipated topping is that it won't dissolve in the wash; it stays underneath the stitching.

Because sweat shirts allow for such large monograms, attention has to be paid to the length of the stitches in the letter columns. Monograms usually are done with satin stitches. As the letters get larger, the columns get wider and, on the front of a sweat shirt, it would not be unusual for the columns to be well over 1/2-inch wide. This can cause the stitches to easily snag and, over time, begin to sag and not hold the shape.

A good rule of thumb for satin stitches is to keep them under about 7mm, which is just over 1/4-inch. So when doing larger monograms, consider switching to a fill stitch instead of a satin. To keep the nice look of a satin and to cut your stitch count down, set the stitch length of the fill somewhere between 5mm and 6mm. Fleece is thick enough that no matter which stabilizer you use, you don't have to worry about it showing through the material. Because of the stretchy nature of fleece, it is recommended to use a cutaway backing. A good medium-to heavyweight cutaway will eliminate any stretch and keep the garment looking good for a long time.

Any time you are working with knitted goods, a ballpoint needle should be used to prevent nicking the yarns of the material and causing a run. This is no different when sewing on fleece. Because monograms tend to be a little less intricate than some embroidery designs, needle size isn't as critical. However, if you are looking to add a little



more clarity to the design, try a slightly smaller needle, like a 70/10.

FROM THE TOP

For fleece tops or sweat shirts, the options for monogram placement are pretty straightforward. Most people want one of three options: left chest, center chest or full front. Although occasionally someone will want a different placement like on the left side but down closer to the waistband.

Size depends on the customer. Monogram customers typically want their initials to be seen and flashy, so the typical 4-inch maximum width for a left-chest placement may be out the window. On the other hand, if a customer wants a full-front monogram, that may mean 10 inches tall or it may be only 6-8 inches.

Always show the customer an actual image of the design before doing the work. I usually present the design on the screen at actual size and clients sometimes use a tape measure to see how big it will be on the garment.

For left-chest monograms, designs should be centered just off the shoulder seam and the middle of where the sleeve is sewn into the body of the shirt. Aligning the left-chest placement this way eliminates having to find the placement based on the garment size. The center-chest placement is similar to this, except horizontally it is aligned in the very center of the shirt.

Full fronts will vary somewhat with the design size. Typically it is placed so that the top of the design is about 3-4 inches from the bottom of the collar. This means you have to do a little math to find where to put the center. (Hint: Divide the design height by 2 and add it to the 3- to 4-inch distance from the collar.)

FANCY PANTS

Monogramming on fleece pants can be a little more challenging. The confined areas of the pant legs and the pockets can make it harder to place the design or get it in the hoop. It may require some input and flexibility on the part of the client.

Most sweat pants monograms are on the front of the left thigh, although many like the monogram on the right buttock. Both of these placements can possibly involve a pocket, which always presents a challenge for embroiderers. Most of the time it is impossible to get a hoop into the pocket and still put the item over the sewing arm. In cases where there is a small enough hoop to fit the pocket, it limits the size of the monogram that can be done.

Depending on where the pocket falls, and sometimes with some flexibility from the client, you can dodge the pockets altogether. I typically give clients the option of simply sewing through the pocket. You would be surprised on how

often they take that option, particularly when it comes to the back pocket that they wouldn't be using anyway. The front pocket can pose fewer problems, as it usually is large enough to either put the hoop inside the pocket or simply place the monogram below the pocket. Additionally, there are various alternate hooping attachments that allow better access to pockets, such as Fast Frames and Hoop Tech's Quick Change hoops.

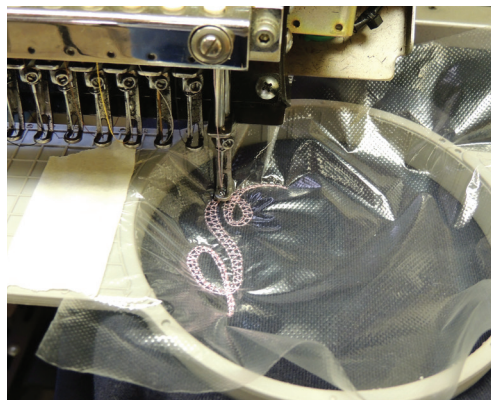
Both of these rely on adhesive stabilizer rather than pressure to hold the work. This way, the hoop takes up less room, allowing more embroidery area. Because adhesive stabilizer is a tearaway, slide an extra piece of it under the hoop for more stability.

Monogrammed items have returned to popularity. Why not capitalize on them? No matter where the monogram goes on fleece, it always looks good. Hopefully these guidelines will give you the confidence you need to create monogrammed sweat shirts or pants that will not only look good when made, but for years to come.

STEP-BY-STEP



STEP 1 For monogramming large letters that would be sewn on the full-front of a sweat shirt, use a fill as opposed to a satin stitch.



STEP 2 Use a heavy underlay and topping, especially the newer heat-dissipated toppings where little remnants can be removed with an iron.



STEP 3 Because of the stretchy nature of fleece, use a medium- to heavyweight cutaway backing.



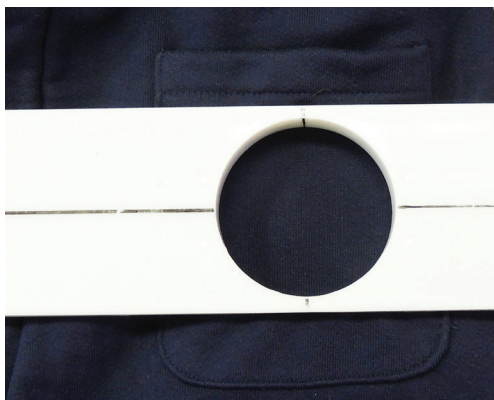
STEP 4 Measuring for a full-front, centered monogram.



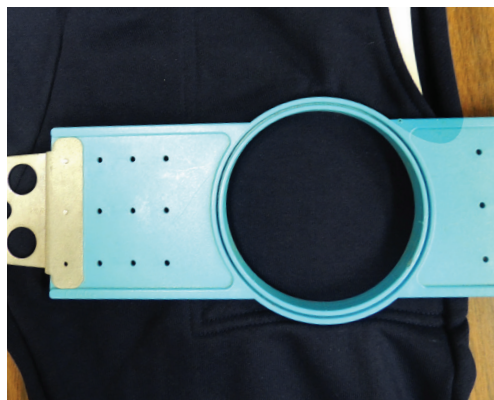
STEP 5 The full-front design is hooped.



STEP 6 The full-front monogram is centered.



STEP 7 It's good to use a smaller hoop to monogram the pocket of the sweat pants.



STEP 8 Here, we are hooping the front of the pant inside pocket.



STEP 9 The front of the pant is hooped below the pocket.



STEP 10 The final pocket monogram that is sewn over the pocket.