

How to Choose Embroidery

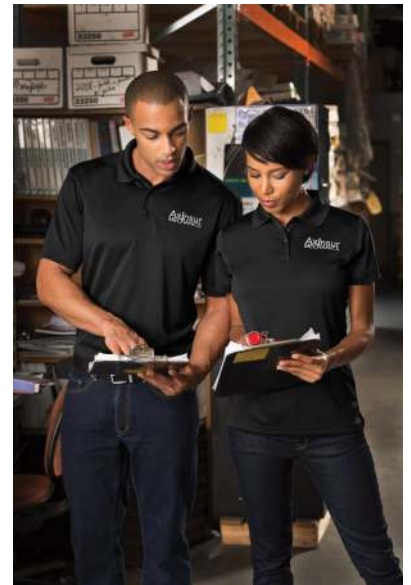
There is bad embroidery, good embroidery and sometimes like StitchMine, great embroidery. So what is the difference and why is there a difference?

It all starts with your logo design and the initial digitizing where your logo is converted to stitch files that run the embroidery machine. A good embroiderer will review your logo with you to determine if there will be any challenges in stitching it. Remember that your logo will most likely not exceed four inches in width so exceptionally fine detail and small type can pose a challenge in representation with stitches. As a rule of thumb, any type in your logo or slogans should not be less than 0.25" tall. Additionally, extremely fine lines and shading can present challenges in getting a great representation of your company logo.

Review Your Logo First

A thorough embroiderer will review your logo with you right up front and will point out any challenge areas and will make suggestions to modify the design slightly to get a better image. In most cases you will not even notice the adjustments.

After the initial evaluation, the logo will be digitized to convert it to the stitch file. This is a critical step and should not be taken lightly. Contrary to popular belief, the process should not be automated. There are some programs that can convert an image file to a stitch file, but these programs lack the judgement to adjust the stitch type, direction and other variations that separate a bad or sloppy image from a great one. At StitchMine we recreate the image manually giving us the freedom to determine what stitches will look the best and match the material the logo will be embroidered on. It is a meticulous process that time, patience, and talent to develop just the right file to reproduce the image. Many adjustments will eventually be made such as the density of the stitches, a compensation for the image pulling or stretching on certain materials and the detail of the image such as fine lines and small type. There are many companies that don't pay attention to these steps and simply scan the logo into an automated





digitizing conversion and begin stitching on your apparel or accessories with no regard for adjustments or the final quality. You may have experienced this when you see your logo look washed out, crooked lines or pucker on a light-weight shirt. This is all caused by not paying attention to the initial digitizing.

Have a Sample Stitch Out Done First

At StitchMine, once the image has been digitized it will be stitched on a neutral material such as felt to see how it looks and determine if any more adjustments need to be made. Sometimes it may take several stitch outs and adjustments to get the logo just right. Once the logo look perfect on the felt, we will stitch a sample on the material that will be used for the job. Lightweight “dri-fit” type apparel may require more adjustment to compensate for puckering. Heavy-weight or thick items require different adjustments such as stitch density. When the logo looks perfect it is time to move to the machines.

Embroidery machines are durable precision equipment designed to maintain strict tolerances in detail and registration throughout the design. There are some adjustments that need to be made on the machine that affect the look and function of the design. The main adjustment is the thread tension in both the embroidery thread and the bobbin. The tension of each need to be matched precisely to produce a perfect look for your embroidery. Tension that is too loose or too tight on either will produce a distorted or sloppy image impacting the look any durability of the design. Like all machines, the tension needs to be adjusted constantly to maintain perfection. It for this reason it is important to stitch a sample of the design on each machine head to product a perfect and consistent design.

Different Apparel Materials Require Unique Treatment

Once the machines are adjusted it is necessary to determine what materials should be used to stabilize the look of the design. Almost all fabrics, specially extremely lightweight materials, need an additional material to keep the design straight and flat. This is primarily a backing the is behind the fabric and design. This is commonly called a stabilizer. Not all backing or stabilizers are the same. Even though most embroidery companies will use the same cotton or cotton blend stabilizers, one type is not always good for all fabrics. You probably have seen this with your own embroidery. Turn it over and look. You will see the white material even if it is on a black or dark color shirt. This may work with some items but not all. If you have a polyester dri-fit shirt with a cotton backing and you wash it a few times the backing will begin to shrink but the shirt will not. This will cause the logo to wrinkle or pucker.

The backing needs to be selected to match the item being embroidered and the design itself. Some backings provide more stability when needed. Also, a black or dark backing should be used on dark color items and light or white on light color items. You should also consider how the backing feels against your skin. If it is a large logo you want to be sure the embroiderer uses a softer touch backing.



It does not stop with the backing. In some cases, especially with thick materials such as terry and poly fleece the embroiderer should use a topping on the material before the design is stitched. This topping is called solvey and prevents the design from embedding too deep into the fabric. This is especially important with designs that have fine detail, small lettering, or other small elements. In extreme cases with small designs with fine detail the embroiderer may choose to lay down a layer if stitched matching the fabric color to get the best reproduction of the image.

Finishing the Garment is as Important as the Stitching

Once the designs have been stitched with the correct adjustments, backing, and topping if necessary, the next step is the finishing. This is another step that separates bad from good embroiders. When the items come off the machines the backing needs to be trimmed, loose threads need to be trimmed and the design needs to be carefully inspected. The quality of the trimming can be almost as important as the quality of the embroidery. If the trimming is not done correctly you will have a sloppy design front and back. If it is trimmed too close the design will begin to unravel. When the items come off the machines, they almost always have a ring impression left from the embroidery hoop. This needs to be carefully steamed out along with steaming the entire garment so it has a fresh new look. At Stitch-Mine we “retail fold” all garments and pack and sort by size.

Take Some Time and Do Some Research Before You Decide

The worst time to discover you have chosen the wrong embroiderer is when you open the box. If you are choosing a new embroidery company be sure to ask to see their work. Even if there is a set-up or digitizing charge, they should be willing to do a sample stitch out providing you pay when you accept it. Do not be afraid to ask for a stitched sample on the garment you are purchasing before they decorate the entire order. And most of all, do not accept and pay for an order that does not completely meet your satisfaction. After all, it is your business and corporate identity that is being represented. It should look perfect every time.


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