



## “Should I Purchase an Embroidery Machine?”

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**Description:** These tips and instructions were written to provide a basic idea of what to look for when considering the purchase of an embroidery machine for the first time. There is also a template showing how to machine embroidery a name using a Brother PE 770 embroidery sewing machine. The built in Fonts of the machine will be used. Although we are showing a Brother machine, the information will be very helpful to anyone researching machine embroidery. The pictures and details will highlight features of the machine and may assist the consumer who is considering purchasing a machine for a new hobby or profession. All comments and information have been gathered through my own use of this model. The opinions expressed are my own as well. I hope this will help you in your sewing endeavors.



*Brother PE 770 Embroidery Machine*

To follow or sew along

The materials needed for the tutorial are:

**Embroidery Machine of your choice—We are using the Brother PE 770 model**

**Material to embroider**

**Embroidery hoop (our hoop is a 5X7)**

**Embroidery Thread of your choice ( we are using the Polystar brand)**

**Stabilizer - Tear Away and Water Soluble**

**Fabric marking tool**



**Machine embroidery is a fun hobby.** If you have never sewn before and are unsure if you could learn how to operate an embroidery machine, my hope is that this tutorial will ease your concerns. I have sewn for many years and when I upgraded to a new sewing machine my crafting world opened up. I saw many new decorative stitches that are being put on modern electronic machines. For years I sewed on a basic Singer and it is still running today. Although it is really a workhorse, the stitches are limited. Sewing on my newer model made me want more and that is how I found the embroidery machines. I researched them very well before I made my purchase and you should do the same. Take your time and think about what you want to do with your machine. Be careful when purchasing older machines also. Like all things electronic, there will be software built into the machine and hardware components that may become obsolete or may already be. Here are the questions you need to ask:

1. What is my budget for a machine?
2. In addition to the machine, what other tools or hardware items will need to be purchased?
3. Will I use the built in fonts and graphic art or will I need to purchase software?
4. What kind of soft items like fabric, stabilizers and thread will I need?
5. What size embroidery do I want to do?
6. Will this be a hobby or a profession?



#### **Q1—What is my budget for a machine?**

**As with any purchase budget is huge. When I researched machine embroidery I initially set my budget very low because I was not sure it would be something I would do on a regular basis. At that time, I had not even seen a machine in action. My advice to you is to visit a sewing machine shop that will allow you to see a demo but don't bring your checkbook. Once you see them doing the beautiful work, you will be hooked and want to buy that day. They can be pricey. Get information and go home to do more research. Really think about what you want to use the machine for. Once you are well armed with information you can either go back and get your best deal or you may find one through an online source also. My budget increased with knowledge. You will see why below.**



**Q2—In addition to the machine, what other tools or hardware items will need to be purchased?**

When you purchase a machine it may come with a couple of additional hoops like the one in the picture below. Some of the smaller or less expensive machines will only embroider patterns up to a 4X4 Hoop. This may limit the kind of projects you want to do. I chose the Brother PE 770 because it will embroider up to a 5X7 Hoop. This allows me more freedom. I also needed a USB stick that allowed me to transfer patterns from my computer to the machine. Some machines will even allow you to connect directly to them with an external cord so you can send your patterns to the machine. There are older machines that have proprietary external cards and others that don't use the more modern USB thumb drives. This may mean they become obsolete quicker. Do your research online and look at additional items for sale that go with the machine of your choice to make sure they are still readily sold. A couple of other items that I use all of the time are a marking pen and tape measure or ruler. If you have a computer research the operating system to make sure it is compatible with embroidery software. These are all things that you want to do a lot of looking into before you make that purchase.



**Q3 -Will I use the built in fonts and graphic art or will I need to purchase software?**

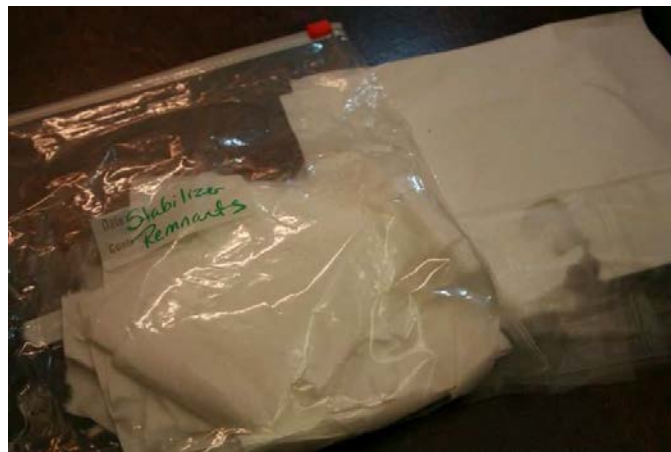
Depending on the type machine you are considering, they each have their own built in fonts and graphics that will allow you to begin doing projects immediately. Each machine according to the manufacturer will also read particular file types. For instance, my Brother will open and stitch an embroidery file if in a .PES format. If you purchased a different brand it would be a different file type. There are a multitude of online sites that sell embroidery patterns for immediate download or you can purchase cd's. Make sure you buy one that will work with your machine type. If you decide to purchase software it can get expensive. I started with a program called SEW What Pro. I purchased the entire suite at a very reasonable cost and installed it on my laptop. This allowed me to learn before I made a larger software purchase. Once I was comfortable and wanted to begin designing my own patterns and have more options to move stitches and control finer points in each design, I purchased the Brother Embroidery software. It comes with a USB Stick or "dongle" Both of these programs are great. The Sew What Pro is robust and does some wonderful "auto stitching" where it will take a clip art file and change it into a file that can be stitched. I highly recommend the company for their service and ease of updates. If you purchase a program with a dongle, you have to keep the USB dongle inserted in your computer when in use. This means keeping up with it and the value of the program being the actual hardware piece itself. If you lose or damage it, you have lost your investment. The more expensive programs are similar to any Vector art program and will mean spending a little more time learning all of the many functions





#### **Q4—What kind of soft items like fabric, stabilizers and thread will I need?**

In order for your embroidery machine to stitch beautifully, the fabric you are working with must be stabilized with your hoop and some type of stabilizer that will be layered with your material. There are so many different types on the market. I was confused in the beginning and actually went to a local sewing shop for a class. It is very frustrating to get your pattern perfect and uploaded into your machine, then hoop the fabric and stitch it out only to have it pucker or pull. Having the correct stabilizer type for the fabric you are using will greatly help this. Sometimes I have used all the right items by the book and my project still does not turn out the way I wanted it to. That is a part of sewing I'm afraid. I have learned to keep all of my stabilizer remnants in a small bag and use them to do test runs before I actually sew my project. It is an extra step but really worth it.



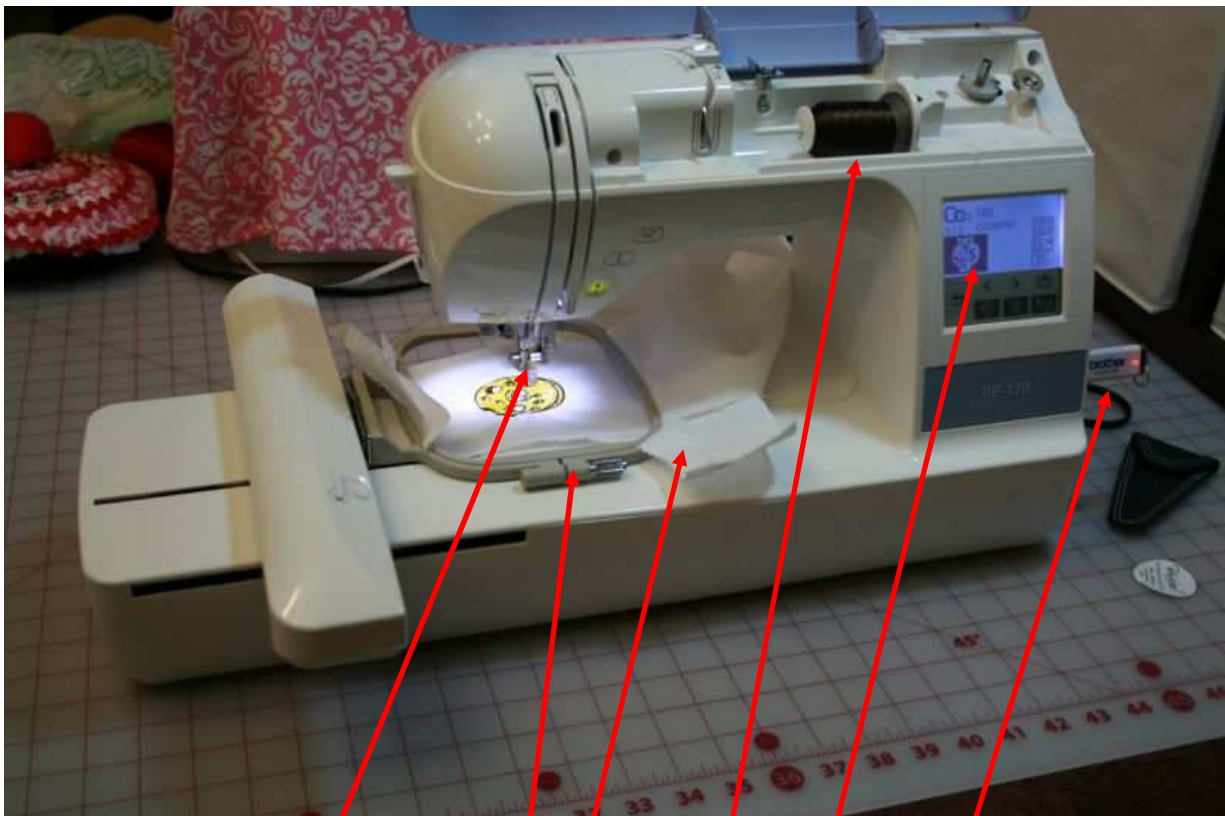
The thread that you use for embroidery is special also. When I purchased my machine I bought a package deal. It came with the machine, hoops, thread, several stabilizers, scissors, a disc full of designs and many other small items. I never realized how fast the embroidery machines sew. They are faster than a regular sewing machine and all of that friction can cause regular cotton or cotton blend thread to break. Embroidery thread is made with polyester to withstand those speeds and it is also much shinier so that the stitches lay nicely and look beautiful reflected in the light. Part of my kit included pre-wound bobbins. I have to emphasize how simple it makes your projects when you don't have to wind the bobbin. It really is a time saver. If you purchase a machine that has a single needle like mine you will have to change the thread manually each time the design changes color. When a design is created in the software it tells the machine when this needs to happen and the sewing will automatically stop giving you time to change out each color. If you purchase a machine that has 6 needles or even 10 needles, you will have all of your colors on the machine and it will never need to stop while sewing as long as your number of colors in the design does not exceed the number of needles on your machine and you don't run out of thread.





### Q5—What size embroidery do I want to do?

As mentioned earlier, each machine will have a certain size that it will be able to sew. When a design is created in software the designer tells the program how big to make it, what colors to sew, what order to sew each item in, what size hoop will be used, how fast to sew the stitches and on and on. With a single needle some machines are limited to a 4x4 size hoop. This will affect how big you can embroider. For beginners it may not matter but once you become comfortable and friends and family realize your new hobby, you may get requests for larger items. Software will allow you to split a design, but it may mean sewing a portion of the pattern then re hooping and trying to match up the exact place you left off sewing. There are times when you have to do this on long or extra large designs but most of the projects I have been able to create utilized a 5x7 hoop just fine. If you think you want to do embroidery as a profession, the Brother PE 770 is a good place to start. Once you build up your client base, you may either need to get a second machine or upgrade to a multi needle machine because the individual color changes most certainly mean you have to stay with your machine to avoid wasting valuable sewing time during color changes.



Single Needle

Hoop

Stabilizer

Thread

Design

USB Stick with designs

(Not dongle)

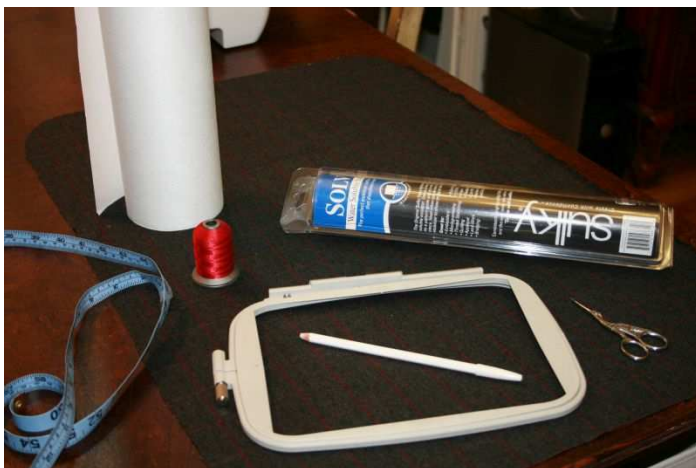


#### Q6-Will this be a hobby or a profession?

Machine embroidery is a very addictive craft. In the beginning you may have a little frustration as you learn your machine but if you take your time as with anything you will get better and better. Local classes are often available and there are so many online sources. People are very generous with their knowledge! If you have ever purchased clothing, towels, bags or other items that have embroidery on them, you have paid a premium price. Once you do a few projects you will see why it can be expensive. There is definitely an art to it. You may decide that personalizing some items for yourself will be enough or you might get so excited at the opportunity that this will be your new part time or full time profession. My best advice is to really do your research on the front end before you make a purchase. If you look online at the selling sites or even in your local trade magazines, you will probably see many used embroidery machines for sale. This is because someone might have purchased too much machine for their needs or they moved forward under pressure. Take your time so you are not unhappy with your decision later. This might become a burden to you that can take away the enjoyment of working with your new machine. If you decide to purchase a used machine I would ask for the age of the unit and the stitch count also. This will tell you if it has been used a lot. I would also ask where they have it maintained and if proof can be provided. Once a year is the minimum service to keep everything sewing and in order. On a used multi needle commercial grade machine; service records are a must.

## LET'S DO A PROJECT!

This project is actually a computer bag for my son. Before I could begin sewing the bag I personalized what would later become the front pocket with his name



Hoop  
measuring tape  
tear away stabilizer  
water soluble stabilizer  
Fabric  
Thread  
Marking Pencil  
Scissors





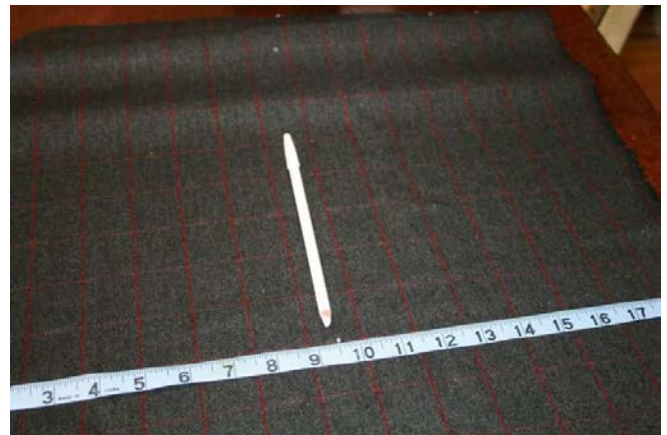
This is the view of the hoop from the side. The two little holes are where it will mount to the arm on the machine. Once it is attached the arm moves while the needle goes up and down.



The tear away stabilizer is stiff but pliable. It is cut slightly larger than the size of the hoop. The hoop has two pieces. It is taken apart so you can layer the material into it.



Measuring the exact location of the middle of the design. When your machine begins sewing you will place the needle on this mark. All designs will begin in the middle.



Using the washable fabric pencil to ensure you know where to place the needle. This is crucial. Once you hoop the fabric knowing the top and bottom is very important as that can get confusing. A straight pen through the fabric to mark which way is UP on the design will save you heartache later



Stabilizer and fabric are layered on top of the hoop with the pencil mark as close to the center as possible. This will allow the machine more room around the design so the needle does not accidentally hit your hoop.







Water soluble stabilizer is layered on top because our fabric choice is very soft. The top stabilizer ensures the stitches will not curl up or “fall” into the fabric after being washed. It also makes for a much prettier project



The top part of the hoop is put back and locked down with screws. As you can see the pencil mark is still visible through the stabilizer



The hoop is secured to the “arm” on the machine . Small clips can be used to roll up excess fabric around the embroidery. Once the arm starts moving, fabric can shift and get underneath the needle for sewing mishaps where you may catch parts of the material you don’t want to.



The hoop is ready to go. It is positioned right on top of the pencil mark in the middle of the pattern. On the machine the red light on the button signifies that the needle is in the up position so it will not begin sewing until you put the needle down and press that button.



Now you can go to the touch screen and choose Font styles and letters. This is also where you can choose the built in graphics on the machine.







Choose all of your letters



Then you will go to Layout so you can see how big it should be and if it will fit in your hoop size.



Now you can rotate the design and make it smaller or larger. Keep in mind that when you resize any design, it affects the density of the stitches. Too large and they may not stitch out evenly. Too small and they may become tangled.



Now you can check the position and make sure your needle will not strike the hoop. Your needle stays up and you press the button with the perimeter arrow



See how the arm moves the hoop around under the needle. If it doesn't get too close to the edge your position and size are good.





The way it looks on the screen is exactly how it will stitch



Rotate the design if you need to



Our design is turned 90 degrees now.



If you rotate your design always do another perimeter check on your hoop to make sure the needle will not strike it.



Ready to sew! Our needle has been put down and the green button is ready to be pressed to start.







Let the machine do the work but stay close in case you need to babysit your fabric or do a color change



The machine will tell you when it is complete



It may ask you if you are done with the current pattern and it will only delete it from the current process. This means that any settings like size or rotation will go away. If you want to sew another design exactly like it, make sure you write the size down if using the built in machine fonts.



You can then tell the machine you are ready to take the hoop off by pressing the hoop button. This will move the arm to the far left making it easier to take off.



It will not move for safety until you tell it to.







Now you can release the hoop with the lever



... and take your work off the arm



It is time to take the project out of the hoop.



You will loosen the tension screw so the top of the hoop can be removed



This is the back of the project once removed





The tear away stabilizer is removed from the back



Sometimes leaving a little on the back of the project will help it stay flat after washing. This project will be enclosed in a bag so that is what we did.



On the front of the project the water soluble excess can be cut away and stored for later small projects



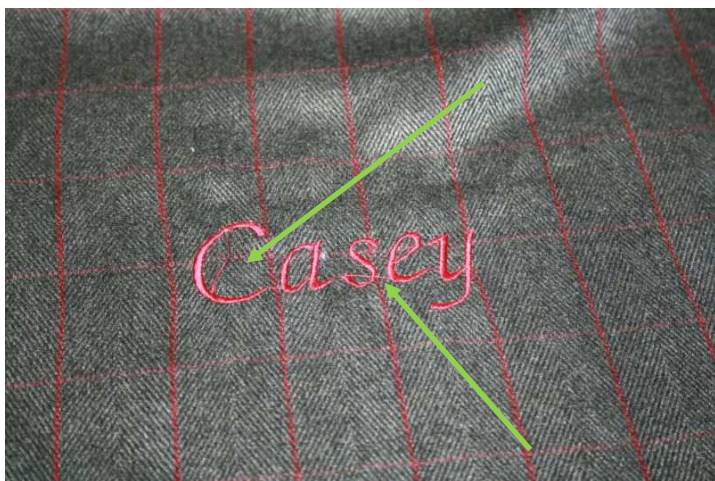
The front is ready for water removal. Make sure your fabric can tolerate moisture and heat before doing the next step



Use a dry iron and a damp pressing cloth. The moist heat will make the stabilizer disappear. You can also wash in your washing machine if you are going to wear the item.







The stabilizer is gone so you can see the “jump” stitches in between each letter.



Use a pair of tiny scissors and trim those closely



A very nice personalized name



The final product... A computer bag

**ENJOY!**

