

Lacy Cutwork



Usually we add embroidery to garments to spice them up. This time, try a little subtraction! For this bold and intriguing new [cutwork](#) style, you'll cut a shape out of the fabric, then embroider a lacy mesh over it. It's a dramatic way to update a garment, and very very easy (and fun) to do! Let's show you just how simple it is...

To stitch your lacy cutwork, you'll need a few things...

- A garment/fabric to add your design to. I picked a drape cardigan because it's super easy to hoop! Substantial yet drapery fabrics will work best. You can stitch on wovens, but substantial knits will be a little more forgiving of any puckering.
- Your awesome [cutwork design](#)
- Cutaway stabilizer
- Very sturdy water-soluble stabilizer (we used Vilene)
- X-acto knife
- Regular 40 wt. embroidery thread (we used rayon, but you might also use polyester), and 30 to 50 wt. 100% cotton thread (we used Madeira Cotona)
- Temporary spray adhesive
- Masking tape



It also helps to have a scissors around, as well as a surface you can cut on (like a cutting mat, or just an old magazine) and a place you can soak your project to remove the stabilizer once it's done.



I want to point out that this kind of lacy cutwork requires two different kinds of thread, which is a little unusual in a single design, but trust me, you'll get the best results this way. I picked threads of the same color, but you could go for a contrast too.

The regular thread is just our everyday rayon embroidery thread. The other is the 30 or 50 weight cotton thread. You'll also need to wind a bobbin of the cotton thread, which I did ahead of time.

OK! Let's start with our garment. There are lots of places a design like this can go, but as I'm using the largest size design, I figured the middle of the back of the cardigan was the easiest spot to work with. When choosing your apparel to embroider, try not to pick out anything too paper-thin or stretchy, or the design will cause the fabric to bunch.



Start by generously spraying the back of your garment with adhesive and smoothing your cutaway stabilizer on the area you're embroidering. You really want a nice smooth, firm contact between your stabilizer and fabric, so things won't shift around when you're cutting pieces out.

Hoop up these two layers together, nice and taut, taking care not to distort or stretch your fabric.

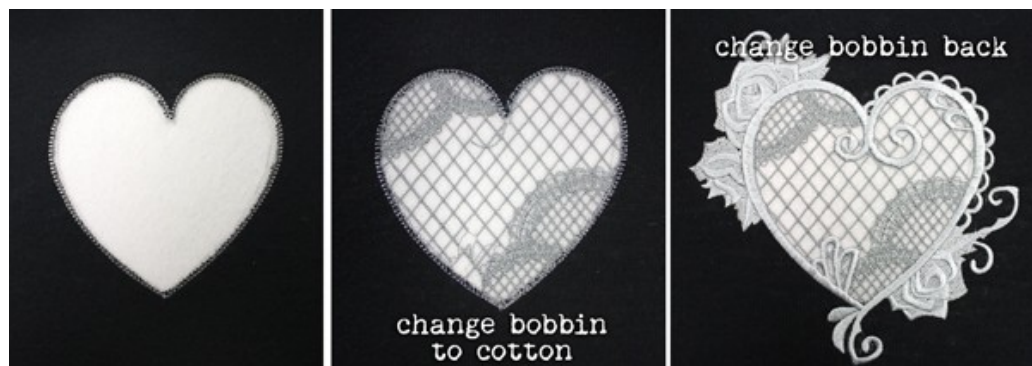


Start your machine stitching! As you can see from the thread list, your regular thread will sew first, with a regular bobbin, stitching out a double dieline.

Once that's done, carefully remove the hoop from your machine (but leave the fabric hooped), and place it over a cutting surface. Grab your X-acto knife, and cut IN BETWEEN the dielines. You're going to cut through both your fabric and your cutaway stabilizer. That's OK.

With the cut-out shape removed, slide a piece of water-soluble stabilizer just smaller than your hoop underneath the opening, and trace your heart shape. (We used Vilene, because it's sturdy yet soft and fabric-like.)

Remove that stabilizer, and spray generously right up to the edge of the shape so everything will stay put, but to the extent that you can, avoid spraying too much stabilizer on the inside of the shape where it won't be sticking to any fabric anyway. Then, carefully smooth it onto the back of your design, lining the opening up with the traced shape from before. Tape the edges of the water-soluble stabilizer to the back of your cutaway to make it extra secure.



Put your hoop back under your machine, and it will stitch a tackdown around those raw edges of fabric.

Next, change your bobbin to the cotton thread you wound before, and change the top thread to cotton too. The lacy overlay will stitch into that new opening.

Once that's done, change your bobbin back to a regular one, and the top thread back to your rayon or polyester embroidery thread. The final details will stitch out all around your heart and onto your fabric. Neat, huh?

When your design is totally done, unhoop it. Take your scissors and very carefully snip away as much of the stabilizer as you can. Trimming pretty close to the embroidery will help the finished result look good, but make sure not to cut the fabric!





Soak your project according to your water-soluble stabilizer's directions.

Remove your project from its soak, pat it down, and let it dry flat. We've found that especially with wovens, the finished embroidery will look best if you smooth out the wet fabric onto a flat surface like a countertop or plastic cutting board, then leave it alone 'til it's dry. Once it's dry, you can carefully smooth it out with an iron on the back if it needs it.

As with anything lacy, your garment will stay looking nicest if you hand wash and air dry it. If you must machine wash it, use a mesh laundry bag to protect it. If needed, press the back of the design lightly after drying to make everything lie flat again.

How easy is that? A plain cardigan gets a dramatic accent with a sexy pop of skin or color from your tee. It's such a simple update but really gives a big effect.

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Try it out on sleeves or the bottom hems of cardigans. Layer it on pillows, stitch it on the edge of curtains, add it to the end of a scarf. There are so many places this lacy design can add an unexpected detail. All it takes is a few cuts of fabric and a quick stitching design and you've got a romantic way to dress up anything!

