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## Beautiful Bobbin Work Stitchery

It's easy to use upside down stitchery, (also known as bobbin work), to embellish tea towels, table runners, pillows, scarves, jean jackets, & more! In fact, most any item made from fabric will look beautiful with bobbin work trim. Let's explore this exciting technique together!



Bobbin work is an embellishment technique designed for threads that are too thick to go through the eye of a needle. The featured "thread" is wound on a bobbin and all stitching is done with the wrong side of the fabric facing up.

### Bobbin work for all kinds of machine models:

For bobbin work, you'll need an alternative bobbin case that is set with a looser than normal tension. This may be an optional, special accessory available for your machine. No special accessory? No problem. Simply purchase a second bobbin case, loosen the screw, and adjust it to accommodate the thicker thread. The tension on the bobbin case may need tweaking for various threads and thicknesses. Mark bobbin case and keep it exclusively for bobbin work. For different threads and techniques, you'll need to loosen or tighten the bobbin case screw as necessary. Thread should reel out freely, without pulling or catching. For balanced bobbin work, it is also necessary to tighten the upper thread tension two or more numbers higher than usual, or as recommended by the manual.

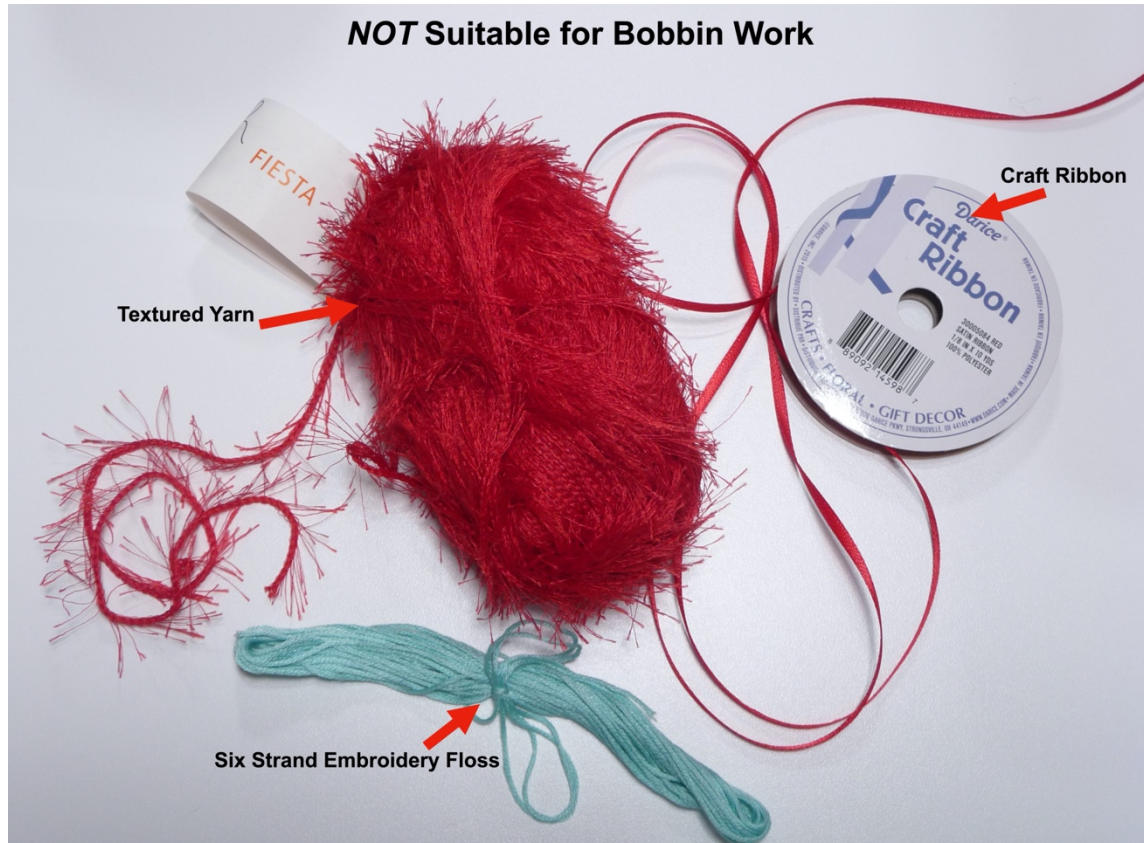
## Basic Supplies for Bobbin Work:

- Fray Check or similar seam sealant for securing threads on the wrong side.
- Secondary bobbin case and small screwdriver for adjusting bobbin case.
- Good quality all-purpose polyester sewing thread **or** embroidery thread for use in the needle. **Note:** It's best to match needle thread to bobbin thread. You can also consider using monofilament thread in either clear or smoke to blend in with your bobbin thread.
- Standard embroidery needle, size 11 works for most projects.
- Large eye tapestry needle to feed the thick thread to the wrong side.
- Novelty threads such as pearl cotton, thin yarn, fine crochet thread, 2-4 mm silk ribbon, or other specialty threads. **Note:** Many decorative threads designed for use in serger loopers work beautifully for bobbin work. Threads and ribbons design for hand work are yet another possibility.

**Note:** You can use a wide variety of needlework yarns, ribbons, and novelty threads that would never work in the needle. All novelty threads should be **smooth, flexible, and relatively strong** to work well. In addition, the thread needs to be twisted or formed so it doesn't separate easily. As far as thickness goes, you'll need to use common sense and good judgement. Thread should feed easily out of the adjusted bobbin case. Thickness, pliability, and texture play a part in the success of Bobbin Work stitchery. Shiny, decorative threads geared for use in the loopers of a serger are ideal candidates for bobbin work. Ordinary pearl cotton designed for hand embroidery is also ideal and my recommended "fool proof" beginner thread for those who are new to bobbin work.

Below are some examples of threads that **are** suitable **and** those that are on my "**do not use**" list.

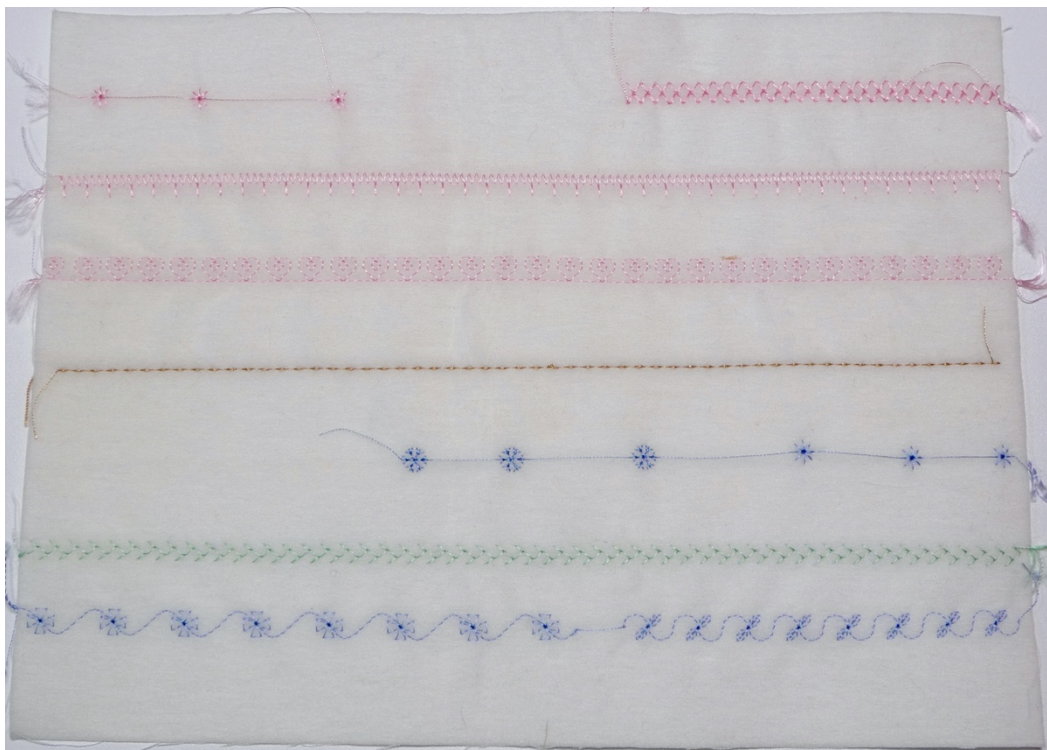
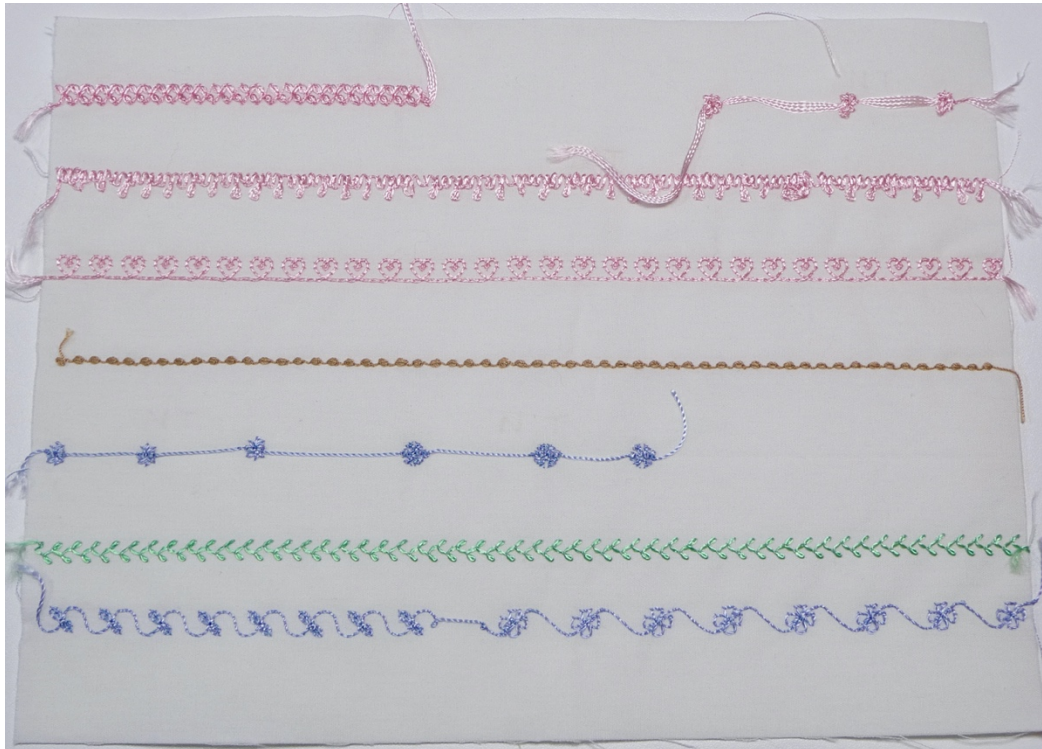




## Bobbin Work Overview & Tips:

- Threads can be hand wound onto the bobbin. Depending on the thread, it may also be possible to use the bobbin winder, carefully guiding the thread onto the bobbin using your hand. Depending on the thread, the bobbin winder tension disk may or may not be used. Take care to stop winding before the bobbin is overly full. With either hand or machine method, it's important to wind thread smoothly and evenly without stretching. Always begin with a full bobbin for large motifs or long lines of stitching. Larger motifs or longer areas of stitching will require multiple bobbins.
- **Important! Do not** use automatic tie off or the automatic cutting option when stitching bobbin work. Novelty thread is too thick for these functions to work properly. Instead, pull thread tails to the wrong side of the fabric and tie off by hand. You can use a large eyed tapestry needle to bring threads to the wrong side, treat with seam sealant, and clip excess, or weave the thread tails under the stitches. Secure all knots with a small amount of seam sealant, testing to avoid spotting.
- Bobbin work is possible both on the sewing side of the machine and the embroidery side, with motifs specifically digitized for bobbin work. Bobbin work greatly expands the possibilities of the decorative stitches built into your machine. For decorative stitching in the sewing mode, open style stitches work best. In fact, you don't need a fancy machine to stitch bobbin work. With the addition of a specially adjusted bobbin case, bobbin work is possible on virtually any machine model!

- Stitches are prominent and pronounced on the right side of the fabric, mimicking hand embroidery. On the wrong side, stitches look like a standard stitch. See examples of right side of fabric and then wrong side of fabric below:



- After setting the bobbin case into the machine, make sure to turn the handwheel slowly sending the needle all the way down and all the way up to make sure the stitch will form smoothly.
- As with most decorative stitching, it's best to stabilize the fabric on the wrong side. I generally use regular tear-away stabilizer, iron-on tear-away stabilizer, or adhesive backed wash-away stabilizer.
- Draw marked lines for stitching on the wrong side of the fabric, drawing lines, shapes, and other patterns directly on the stabilizer. Mirror image any motifs that are not symmetrical.
- Bobbin Work is created with the thick thread fed through the bobbin case tension or bypassed. Different threads and different types of stitching dictate which option to choose. For bobbin work with machine embroidery, you'll want to feed the thread through the tension as per usual. For decorative stitching I usually prefer to feed thread through the tension there as well. Bypassing the tension entirely creates a looser, more free form look to the stitch. Remember that the tension screw needs to be loosened considerably for thread to flow smoothly from the bobbin case. A bobbin case with standard tension does not allow for the thick thread to flow through.
- After making sure that novelty thread flows freely from the bobbin case, test your tension by sewing a straight stitch approximately 4mm long. Increase the top tension until the needle thread barely shows on the right side and the straight stitch lays smooth and flat. I usually start with a relatively high upper tension, and then make adjustments up or down after testing on a sample piece. Note that in some cases it's hard to get your needle thread to totally disappear. Monofilament thread may be a good choice in these situations. Once you have tested with a straight stitch you have a good baseline to follow for decorative stitches. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. If you like the way the stitch looks on the right side, great! However, if your decorative stitch looks too loose or too tight, you'll need to adjust the screw on the bobbin case accordingly. Remember, the *right is tight left is loose rule* and turn the screw  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  turn at a time until you reach the desired look for your stitch. Again, if the needle thread is showing too much from the right side, you'll need to gradually increase the upper tension.
- Always choose stitches that are open and airy for bobbin work. Increasing the length of decorative stitches is usually advisable as it makes the stitch even more open and allows for the thicker thread to lay on the fabric without bunching up. Dense stitches or those that have short stitches as part of the pattern are not suitable. An ordinary feather stitch lengthened slightly is a perfect decorative stitch for beginner bobbin work.
- Make a sampler with a variety of novelty threads in different thicknesses. Make notes on your samples for future reference, noting thread type and adjustments made to both the needle and bobbin case tension. A willingness to experiment and test a variety of stitches yields exciting results! Enjoy!