

Are you  
ready?

Let's go sew!

Brought to you by Joanne Banko  
[www.letsdosew.com](http://www.letsdosew.com)

### **A Bit About Bobbin Work . . . Tip sheet for bobbin work style stitchery**

You can embroider and sew beautiful bobbin work using a simple straight stitch, decorative stitches, or using special bobbin work style embroidery designs. On the sewing side of the machine you'll find many built in decorative stitches work well for this technique. You can also create original bobbin work motifs by drawing an outline on fabric and manually stitching the motif using a straight stitch. If you are accomplished at free motion stitchery you can stitch designs using this method too!

You'll find special bobbin work embroidery designs included in the design menu of select [Brother model machines](#).

Whatever option you choose, the tips and techniques presented here will guide you as you experiment with stitching beautiful bobbin work. Take a look at the samples below, read the tips, and then get started with your own original creations!



This photo shows a variety of bobbin work projects with motifs from both the embroidery and sewing side of the machine.

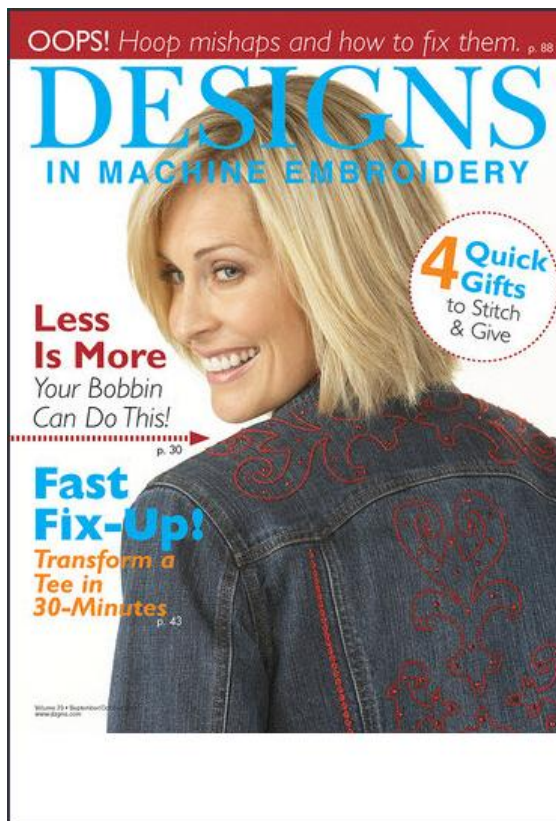
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This bobbin work sample was stitched on a basic sewing machine. I used a standard, secondary bobbin case with the screw loosened. The thread is ribbon floss hand wound on the bobbin. To finish the inner heart I simply tied the loose tails in a bow.

The denim jacket you see here was originally published in [Designs in Machine Embroidery Volume 70](#).



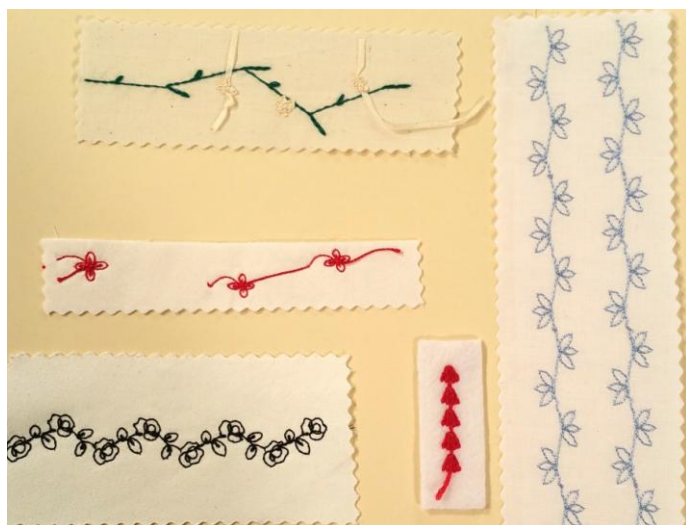
\*Superfine, washable knitting yarn (sock weight or thinner) for embroidered bobbin work designs.

\*YLI Candlight Metallic for bobbin work decorative stitches on the sewing side of the machine.

What exactly is Bobbin Work? Simply put, bobbin work is upside down embellishment. With this technique, you place the featured “thread” in the bobbin instead of the needle and then stitch with the wrong side facing up. The bobbin case isn’t any different than the one you would use for standard sewing, with one important exception. The screw that we are all afraid to touch has to be loosened for the thicker threads to pass through. You may have this special bobbin case included with your machine, available as an accessory, or sold in a kit such as the one below. You can also purchase a secondary standard bobbin case, loosen the tension on the screw, and use it *exclusively* for bobbin work. Options for threads are plentiful. You can use a wide variety of needlework yarns, ribbons, and novelty threads that would be impossible to use in the sewing machine needle. Generally, the novelty thread should be flexible but strong. It should also be smooth, and not too thick. Threads designed for decorative serging are ideal and a great first choice for bobbin work. Silk ribbon 2mm wide is another beautiful choice. Avoid stiff, satin ribbon like the green spool seen below. Check with your local sewing machine dealer for available options and supplies.



[CLICK HERE](#) to watch a YOUTUBE video on the Brother bobbin work accessory option.



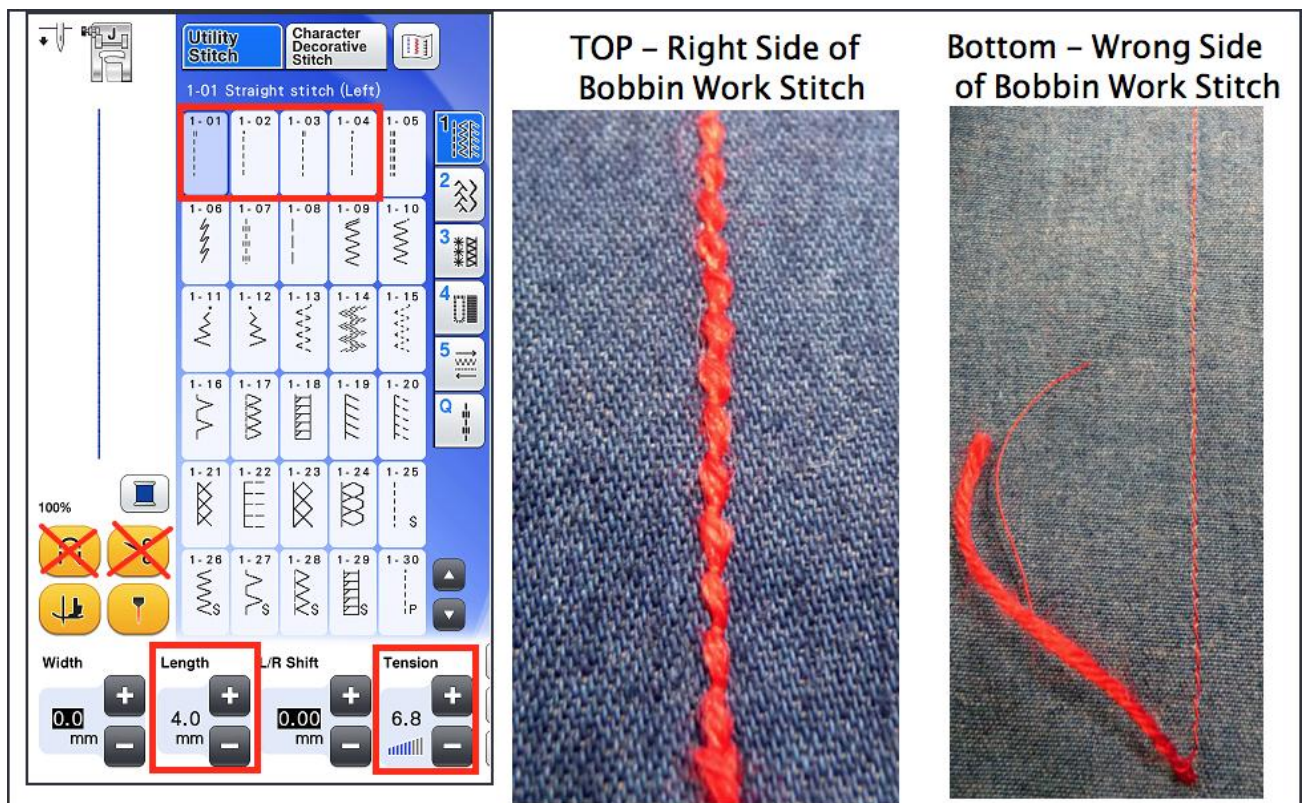
Once you learn the basics you'll want to experiment, make samples, and record the results for future reference.

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## Tips and Techniques for Successful Bobbin Work:

- Purchase a special bobbin work kit or a secondary ordinary bobbin case for your machine model. If using an ordinary bobbin case you will need to loosen the tension to allow various novelty threads to flow smoothly through the tension disk. This will require some experimentation. Loosen the screw over a protected surface to avoid losing it if you loosen it too much. Mark the bobbin case or keep it totally separate to avoid a mix up with your standard case. Be sure to follow your machine manufacturers recommendations for inserting the bobbin case.
- Make certain **automatic tie off** and **automatic cutting options** are both turned **OFF** on your machine before stitching bobbin work.
- Thread the needle to match your bobbin for best results. If your featured bobbin work thread is shiny, consider using embroidery thread in the needle. If your featured bobbin work thread has a matte finish you can use ordinary sewing thread in the needle. For both of these threads you will need to tighten the upper tension to balance the stitch. I usually use a setting between 6-8. Good quality monofilament is another option for the needle thread. Upper tension adjustments will vary when using monofilament.
- To test the tension for bobbin work, begin by selecting a straight stitch and sewing a line of stitching "upside down". If necessary, loosen the bobbin screw a very small amount at a time and then test again. Good results are achieved when your bobbin work looks smooth and relatively even on the right side of your fabric.



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The bobbin thread should always flow smoothly from the bobbin case. Most often it is necessary to “tweak” both top and bobbin tensions a bit at a time. If you are using matching thread in the needle, the prominent thread should be your bobbin thread. If your needle thread shows too much, try tightening the upper tension a bit at a time. Bobbin work produces a textured, three dimension look. With certain decorative stitches you may not achieve a perfectly balanced stitch. Various threads will produce different results.

- It is usually best to hand wind the thread onto the bobbin, especially threads that easily twist like ribbon floss and silk ribbon. With some threads it may be possible to use the bobbin winder, bypassing the pre tension disk, and carefully guiding the thread onto the bobbin using your hand. Be sure to stop before the bobbin is completely full. With either method, it is important to wind smoothly and evenly without stretching. Always begin with a full bobbin for EACH large motif or long line of stitching.
- Unless your fabric is very firm you will need to add a temporary stabilizer for bobbin work. I prefer tear away or wash out stabilizer. Since the stitching is performed upside down you can make your placement markings right on the stabilizer.
- For embroidery machines without built in bobbin work designs, explore your options for purchasing designs digitized specifically for bobbin work.
- For machines without embroidery capability, explore your options for creating bobbin work with free motion stitching. You can also trace a simple outline and stitch the motif manually using a medium to long straight stitch.
- For most bobbin work decorative stitching I prefer to place the thread through the tension spring on the bobbin case, as I believe the resulting stitches are more even and controlled. It also is possible to bypass the tension for different effects.
- At the end of your stitching, pull thread tails to the wrong side and tie off by hand. I like to use a large eyed tapestry needle to bring threads to the wrong side and then weave the thread tails under the stitches. Secure all knots with a small amount of seam sealant, testing first to avoid spotting.
- For decorative stitching in the sewing mode, open style stitches work best. Increase the length and width of most decorative stitches for best results. The feather stitch is a great place to start and is virtually fool proof.
- Bobbin work is possible on a wide variety of machine models. Test bobbin work designs or decorative stitches on scrap fabric prior to working on the actual project.

*Willingness to experiment and test a variety of embroidery and decorative stitches will yield exciting results. Bobbin work provides the opportunity to create designs that closely imitate handwork. Experiment with different threads and stitches and you'll be amazed at the results! Now that you know some tricks are you ready? Let's go sew!*