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## Supplies



- o Bath towel, choose a bath towel with a woven band if possible. If the towel band has distorted by shrinking with washing that is okay.
- o Medium or Heavier Weight Zipper at least 22" for Bath Towel
- o All Purpose Thread
- o Embroidery Thread and Embroidery Bobbin Thread
- o Optional for two sided towel embroidery, use Quilters Select 80 wt. Para-Cotton Poly thread in a color to "match" towel
- o Cut Away Stabilizer, choose from:
  - No-Show Mesh or No-Show Mesh Fusible
  - Floriani Medium Cutaway and Spray Adhesive
  - Aqua Set Cutaway
- o Topping for Embroidery, choose from:
  - Water Soluble topping
  - Heat Away Topping
  - Fine tulle in a color to match towel
  - Color keep topping by Floriani
  - Embellish Mylar

## Instructions

### *Select a Towel and Embroider It*

This project works with just about any size towel, but a standard bath towel makes a good size pet bed or comfy picnic pillow. This is a good project to practice embroidery on towels. I use towels that are still good, but are starting to show their age with fading, shrinking along the woven band or fraying along the edge. If you are using a new towel, wash and dry the towel to pre-shrink it. Add embroidery in the center front just above the woven band.



### *Stabilizer for Towel Embroidery*

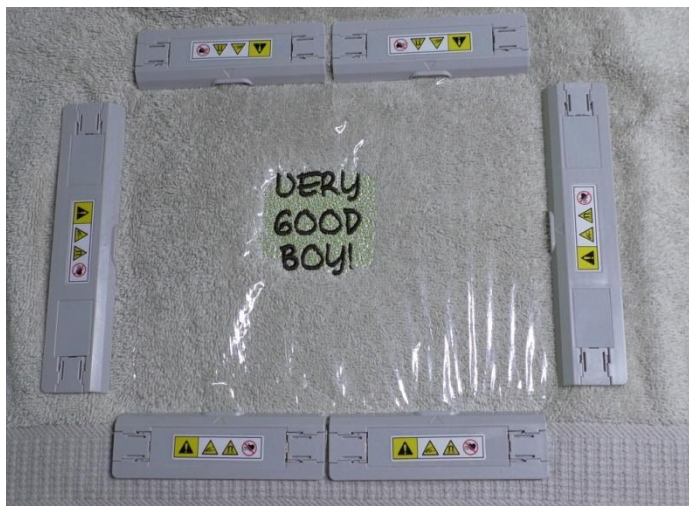
Terry cloth toweling can be very thick and plush or thin depending on the quality. No matter the quality of the material, basic guidelines for embroidery on this fabric is the same. Terry cloth is actually a loose weave fabric because half of the weft fibers are pulled up to create the loops or pile. Use a cut away stabilizer for this loose weave fabric that will stay with the embroidery and support it during the life of the project. For this project, the back of the embroidery will not be seen. When embroidering on a towel where the back will be seen, use a no-show mesh and trim away the stabilizer near the stitching after embroidery. Use a black no-show mesh on a dark towel. Spray adhesive on the no-show mesh will help keep the towel from moving during embroidery. Adhesive backed stabilizer such as Perfect Stick stabilizer can be used, but may pull away the nap fibers when being removed. Water activated stabilizer such as Aqua Set work well and pull away easily when re-activated with water. Wait for the water to loosen the adhesive before pulling the towel away from the stabilizer.

### *Topper for Towel Embroidery*

The pile of the terry cloth will escape to the top of the embroidery without the use of a topper to trap the pile under the embroidery threads. Even with a topper, designs with fine lines will not show well as the pile will cover the stitching after the topper is removed. Topper is only needed in the embroidery area, but don't skimp on the size of the piece. Pin

the topper securely to the top of the towel in the hoop in an area where the needle will not hit the pins. Use the basting feature on the machine to hold the topper in place. If the topper is not secure, the embroidery foot may catch on the edge of the topper and the result is not pretty or easy to repair. Heat away topper is a good choice for designs with large bold areas and not a lot of fine detail. Follow instructions on the package to remove this topping with an iron.

Mylar or Color Keep topping can also be used. Mylar will add sparkle and Color Keep topping has the added benefit of enhancing light embroidery on dark towels and dark embroidery on light towels. These toppers are also best used for designs without fine detail that is not stitching on top of a fill area.



### *Choose a Design for Towel Embroidery and the Knockdown Stitch*

Keep the design the appropriate size for the towel when embroidering on towels that will hang on a towel rack. A large design on a hand towel will not display properly when the towel is folded into thirds for display. A 4" by 4" design should fit well on a hand towel. Likewise, a very small design on a large towel will look "skimpy". Generally, a design is centered on the towel and placed about 8" up from the bottom for a bath towel and 5" for a hand towel. Keep in mind the woven band on the towel when placing a design. Remember that a very large design on a towel will be stiff and not comfortable to use. Fold the towel in half lengthwise and press or mark a centerline. With the towel still folded, lay the fold along the center of the hoop. Fold the towel open and flatten on the hoop. When making a set of towels, carefully place the designs identically for professional results.

Select designs with bold areas of fill or satin stitching to cover the pile. Designs with delicate areas that are not on top of a filled area can be successful if the pile has been "knocked down". The knockdown stitch is a fill stitch with very low density and no under stitching. When stitched before the design, this loose fill stitch holds down the pile allowing any fine details in the embroidery to show. Use a water-soluble topping or fine gauge nylon tulle when stitching the knockdown stitch to hold the pile in place as it is covered with thread. Use a fine thread to stitch the knockdown stitch with a color to match the towel or use a contrasting color. Some designs created specifically for towel embroidery have a knockdown stitch included as the first color. Many embroidery software programs have a built in knockdown stitch or follow the directions at the end of the handout to create one with stippling in IQ Designer.

## *Thread for Towel Embroidery*

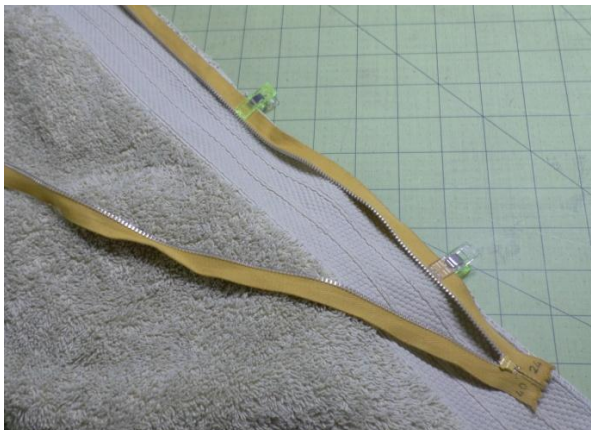
A towel or this pillow cover will be repeatedly laundered. Polyester embroidery thread will stand up to repeated washings and harsh laundry chemicals like bleach. If the towel is mostly decorative, use thread as you would for any embroidery. Standard embroidery bobbin thread will work well for this project, but could be very visible on the backside of a towel depending on the color of the towel. Choose a very thin thread to substitute for embroidery bobbin thread that matches the color of the towel as closely as you can. Quilter's Select 80 wt. thread has worked well for me. Some top thread does show on the back, but it is a cleaner presentation on the reverse side after any jump stitch cuts are trimmed.

## *Hoop for Towel Embroidery*

Because of the thickness of very plush towels, they are quite challenging to hoop the traditional way between two hoop rings. Float the towel and the topper on hooped stabilizer and secure the towel to the stabilizer in the hoop with spray adhesive, basting, pins along the edge and/or a combination of all three. Large towels can be heavy, so make sure the towel is very secure in the hoop and hoop so the bulk of the towel is to the left of the machine. Support the bulk of the towel with the table surface so it does not pull on the embroidery arm. A magnetic hoop is a fantastic way to easily hoop and embroider a towel.

## *Construct the Pillow or Pet Bed Cover*

After embroidery, trim the towel just below the woven band on both the front and back and any side hems. If the towel does not have a back woven band, trim off the bottom edge the same width as the front band. If the towel does not have a woven band, trim 4" the bottom off both ends. The trimmed pieces are the gussets on the sides of



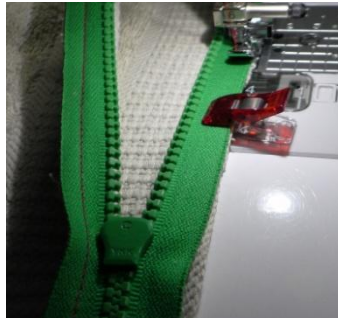
the towel pillow. These trimmed pieces are larger than needed. Terry

cloth loves to ravel, so clean-finish all the raw edges of the towel and trimmed pieces with a serger overlock stitch or zig zag on the sewing machine. Open the zipper and place one side centered on the bottom of the band with right sides together and





raw edges even. Insert zipper foot on machine and stitch the zipper using the woven guide on the zipper tape as a reference. Fold the towel in half and close the zipper. Align the zipper to the back band and clip in place, centered with raw edges even. Sew this side of the zipper using the woven guide on the zipper as a reference. With the zipper closed, stitch the seam on the ends of the zipper using the zipper foot to stitch close to the placement stitching. If desired, fold “lips” to cover the zipper and topstitch in place. When stitching across the ends of the zipper, stitch carefully to avoid the zipper teeth and not break a needle.



The side gussets will be the bands removed from the bottoms of the towel. They are too long, but we will trim them to size during construction. The towel is now a tube with a zipper. Flatten the towel tube so the zipper is along one fold. Mark the other fold along the edge of the towel on both sides. Pin the center of the short end of the gusset to this mark with right sides together. An even feed foot such as a walking foot or the Digital Dual Feed foot will come in handy to avoid any fabric slippage when sewing this bulky fabric. With the gusset on the top

and using a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam, stitch from the center mark to  $\frac{1}{2}$ " from corner. Leave the needle down and pivot the bottom fabric along the side of the gusset. Stitch this



side just stopping at the woven band and removing the fabric from under the needle. Trim the gusset piece  $\frac{1}{2}$ " past the woven band. Clean finish this short edge with a serger stitch or zigzag on the sewing machine. Finish sewing the gusset by starting where you previously stopped sewing. Pivot the fabric as before when you reach the corner. It is VERY IMPORTANT to pin the remaining long edge and small seam at the beginning before sewing the final side. Without pinning, the fabric may slip and create a tuck when you reach the opposite side. Repeat for the other side of the pillow with the remaining gusset after opening the zipper at least half way for easy turning. Insert a folded blanket or pillow into a kitchen trash bag and

stuff the pillow. This pillow is easily washed and re-stuffed. You probably will have to make two if using it as a pet bed. Make a third and take it to an outdoor concert or picnic. Toddlers love them as floor pillows, but **DO NOT USE FOR BABIES OR VERY SMALL CHILDREN** as it may be a suffocation hazard.

### ***IQ Designer “Knockdown Stitch”***

Create a quick knockdown stitch in IQ Designer if embroidery software is not available. This is a good beginner project for IQ Designer without too many steps. In Embroidery Edit, select the design or designs for the towel. If multiple designs are used, group them. Select the Flower icon to create an outline of the embroidery. Increase the distance of the outline using the plus key. Note that the greater the distance the outline is from the embroidery, the simpler the outline is. Set the outline into memory to be recalled later in IQ Designer. Place the design into the memory of the machine to be recalled after the knockdown stitch is created.

In the IQ Designer workspace, recall the outline of the embroidery under the Shapes key and the Flower icon at the top of the Shapes screen. Select the outline to send it to the IQ Designer workspace. In the Region area, select the Region Properties icon and then the stipple fill. Choose a color that will be easy to see, such as red. Select OK. At the workspace, touch the Paint Bucket icon and then touch inside the outline. Select Next and modify the stitch properties at the bottom of the screen to the smallest stipple density (middle icon) available. Select No Outline (rightmost icon) and then Set. Touch Preview to see the dense stipple. Touch OK to send the stipple to Embroidery Edit. Add a second off set layer of stipple by duplicating the stipple. Move it to the center and then move it diagonally by one touch of any of the diagonal move arrows. Create another duplicate and move it in another diagonal direction to create more density. Check the results by selecting the magnification key. Usually three layers of knockdown stipple will tame even the fluffiest of plush towels. Use only one or two layers for less plush piles. Recall the embroidery design from memory by selecting Add and then the design from where you saved it.