

# BOBBINWORK BASICS

BY JILL DANKLEFSEN

**B**obbinwork is a technique that places heavy decorative threads on the surface of the fabric, sewn as machine-fed decorative stitches or as freemotion stitches. Typically, these threads, yarns, and cords are too large to fit through the eye of the sewing machine needle. So, in order to achieve a “stitched look”, you sew with the heavy decorative thread wound onto a bobbin and placed in the bobbin case of the machine.



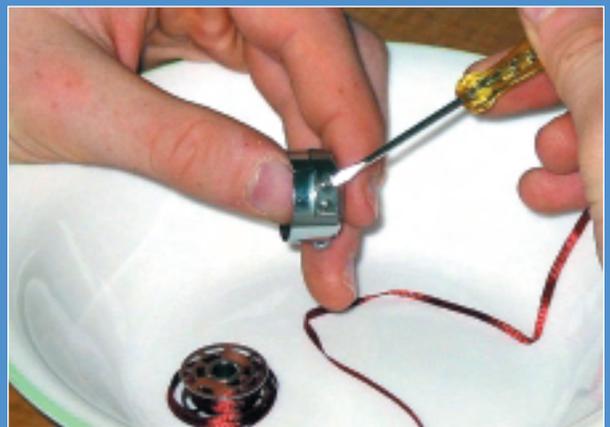
## YARNS AND THREADS SUITABLE FOR BOBBINWORK



- Yarns (thinner types, often used for knitting machines)
- Glamour/Candlelight
- Ribbon floss
- Embroidery Floss (Cotton, Rayon, Metallic)
- Perle Cotton
- Pearl Crown Rayon
- Decor 6/ Designer 6
- Silk Ribbon (up to 4mm wide)

## GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL BOBBINWORK

1. *Select threads/yarns/cords that are uniform in dimension.* It is very difficult for the bobbin case tensioning mechanism to work with variances in thread diameter.
2. One of the most important things to remember is that *sewing will be done “upside-down” from the wrong side of the fabric.*
3. In order for bobbinwork to be successful, the *bobbin case tension must be significantly lowered.* It is strongly recommended you purchase a second bobbin case to be set and used solely for bobbinwork and other creative sewing adventures! A rule of thumb to remember when checking the bobbin case tension for this type of sewing is that the “bobbin yarn” needs to feed the same or slightly looser as regular sewing thread.
4. The *type of stitch* chosen as well as the *type of “bobbin yarn”* selected will dictate how loose the tension needs to be adjusted on the bobbin case.
5. Remember the rule of tension adjustment -- “*Righty, Tightly -- Lefty, Loosely*”
6. Use a “*construction quality*” thread on the “*topside*” of your machine, as the needle tension will usually be increased. Think of the top thread as literally pulling the “bobbin yarn” into place to form the stitch pattern.
7. Bobbins can be wound by hand or by machine. Whenever possible, *wind the bobbin using the bobbin winder mechanism on the machine.* This will properly tension the “bobbin yarn” for a better stitch quality.
8. *Bobbinwork can be sewn with the Feed dogs up or down.* If stitching freemotion, a layer of additional stabilizer or the use of a machine embroidery hoop may be necessary.
9. *Select the proper presser foot* for the particular bobbinwork technique being sewn. When working with the heavier “bobbin yarns”, the stitches produced will be thicker. Consider selecting a foot with a large indentation underneath it, such as Foot #20/#20C. This foot will ride over the stitching much better.



When adjusting the tension on your bobbin case, please do so over a plastic bag or small container. You will be loosening the tension on your case and you might loosen it too far causing the screw and tension mechanism to come off. The plastic bag or small container will contain the parts if this should happen.

## BOBBINWORK STITCHES

Choosing a stitch that responds well to bobbinwork can be a challenge when first learning and experimenting with this technique. Tips:

- Look for stitches where the *stitch Length is not too short* – such as “compact” satin stitches.
- Look for *stitches where there is not a lot of stitch overlap* – you don’t want a pattern that has a lot of “triple straight stitch” in it.
- Remember that *Stitch Length and Stitch Width adjustments can be made*. More often than not, the widest stitch width and the longest stitch length will give the best results.
- Don’t forget that *computerized sewing functions can alter how a stitch looks* and how it is actually sewn. Try functions such as Mirror Image, Pattern Extension or Long Stitch.



**Pattern extend**



**Long stitch**

You simply need to “play” and stitch out many of the different stitches on your machine. Decide which ones you like best and experiment. Try some of the “practical stitches”, especially the reverse-motion or stretch stitches. Since these stitches go back and forth as they are sewn, they can create beautiful textures. Practice on a heavy muslin fabric and use a permanent marker or pen to note the stitch adjustments on the fabric.



**Feather stitch sewn with various tensions settings.**

## COUCHING

Refers to a process in which heavyweight threads or yarns are laid on the fabric surface and are then secured to it by stitching over them, usually with decorative stitches.

BERNINA® offers several presser feet to use for a variety of couching techniques:



**Embroidery Foot #6:** The hole in this foot does a beautiful job holding a single cord in place for couching.

**Edgestitch Foot #10:** This foot can be used to couch yarns with interesting textures. **artista** 200, 185, 180 and 1630 owners might also choose to use Foot #10C, which is able to sew up to 9mm wide stitches, as an option.



**Bulky Overlock Foot #12:** This foot is usually used for making piping and is also able to be used for couching thick cords. **artista** 200, 185, 180 and 1630 owners might also choose to use Foot #12C as an option. It is a combination of Foot #12 and #21 (see below).

**Braiding Foot #21:** This foot has a beveled hole in the center of the sole and can be used for couching medium to heavyweight yarns or cords.



### Cording Feet #22 and #25

These feet enable groups of cords to be couched side-by-side, creating a flat trim. Foot #22 has 3 larger grooves and works better with thicker yarns, while Foot #25 has 5 smaller grooves and is best suited for finer yarns.



Couching can be sewn using an extremely simple stitch such as a zigzag stitch, thereby showing off the pretty thread, yarn, or cord. Sometimes, the use of .004 nylon monofilament is appropriate, especially when working with a yarn that has great texture. At other times, a more elaborate stitch using a decorative thread is a good choice and creates more of a decorative trim or braid look.

## CRAZY QUILTING



It has been many years since the first crazy quilts were made, but in many ways, there are similarities between that era and today. Women are still searching for ways in which to express themselves and show their creativity. Crazy Quilting uses bobbinwork techniques that combine heavyweight thread in the bobbin and the decorative stitches of the machine to “re-create” the heavy hand-stitched look of traditional Crazy Quilts.

When beginning a crazy quilt project, keep a few basic ideas in mind...

The five elements of design:

1. Color
2. Repetition
3. Balance
4. Fabrics
5. Embellishment

Just the “right” mix of all of these is important to the success of the project.

If you are planning to put the crazy quilting into clothing or another type of project, remember these helpful tips - - -

- Choose a simple pattern with very little design detail.
- Work on a foundation piece that is bigger than the finished project piece.
- Pay attention to the design placements, making sure they are positioned correctly on the finished project.

## FOUNDATION FABRIC

Your crazy quilt piece will be built on a foundation fabric. This foundation will become part of the final creation so choose a fabric that will not add a large amount of bulk or stiffness to the project. Some suggested fabrics include the following:

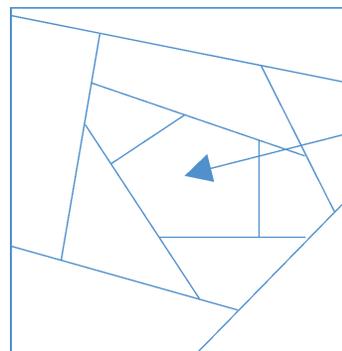
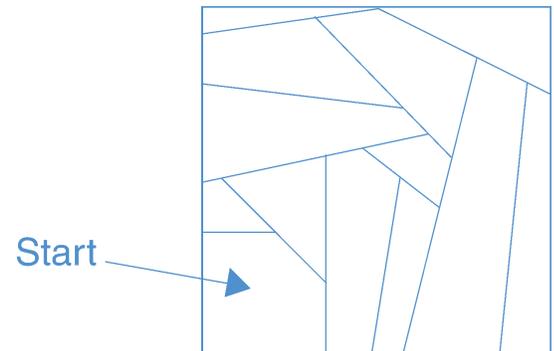
- An “old” washed sheet – these tend to be very soft.

- Fabric from your “stash” - the base fabric does not have to be a piece of pristine white fabric. Use what you have and what will work for the project. Don’t look for a high thread count fabric – these tend to be crisper and stiffer fabrics
- Fabrics that do not have Permanent press finishes – this adds stiffness.

## CRAZY QUILT PIECING METHODS

There are two popular ways to piece crazy patch fabric. They are similar in that they both use the “sew and flip” method; the main difference in the two methods is where the piecing begins.

### Fan Style

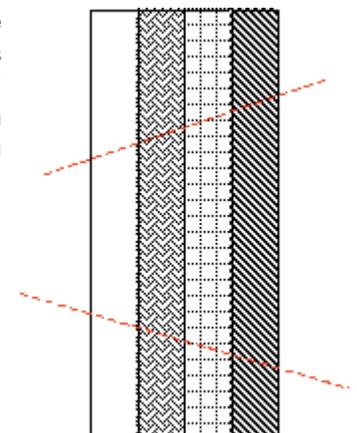


### Center Method

### Pieced Strips

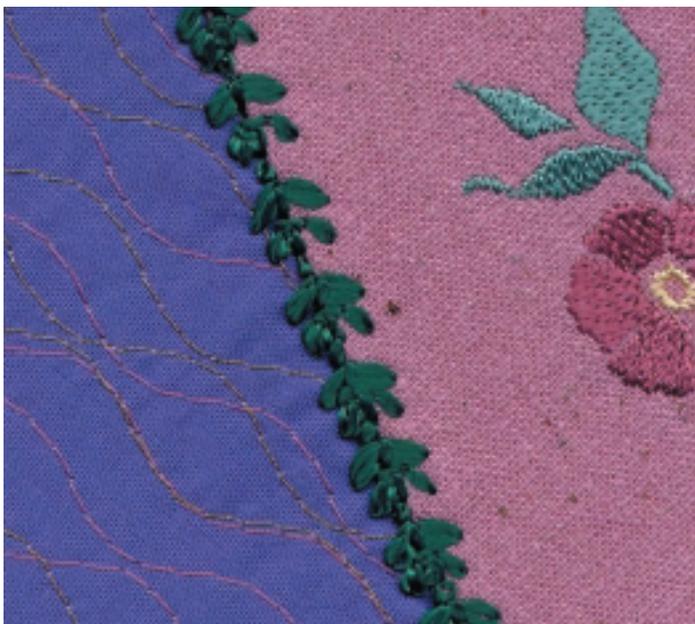
Instead of working with “whole cloth” pieces of fabric, sew groups of strips together and then “crazy” piece them using either the Fan Style or the Center Piecing methods.

- Sew strips of fabric together
- Cut strips diagonally to create “odd” shaped pieces as shown
- Stitch together in a traditional crazy quilt manner



## SEAM EMBELLISHMENT AND DECORATIVE STITCHING

There are several different embellishment approaches that will work for your crazy quilt project.



- Traditionally, the manner in which most historic crazy quilts were made was that all of the fabric was pieced first and then the seam embellishment was stitched afterwards. Any thread and trim ends had to be hidden or buried by hand. Keep in mind that these quilts, for the most part, were made by hand. If this method is followed today, “hand-work” will definitely be part of your project.
- A different approach that limits the amount of handwork involved in your project, would be to embellish each seam as it is sewn. This means, “sew and flip” your fabric pieces and then embellish the seam before you add the next fabric.



*Tip: If you have a “family” of sewing machines at home, set one machine for the simple seaming of the “sew and flip” process and set up another machine for the embellishment processes.*

For the embellishment process, there are several options to explore and play with. Stitch your favorite decorative stitches from the *right* side of the fabric using heavy weight embroidery threads.

- The standard for many machine embroidery threads is 40-weight.
- Look for at least 30-weight threads to use for your decorative stitching.
- Select your thread and needle combinations carefully.
- Remember to use the proper threading path for the thread selected.

Couch your favorite yarns/trims into place “next to” or “on top of” the seam. Don’t forget about invisible monofilament threads for this process

Combine Decorative Stitching and Couching together for an interesting seam embellishment

Stitch your favorite stitches from the *wrong side* of the fabric as bobbinwork stitches.

## MACHINE EMBROIDERY



With all of the exciting embroidery machines available, why not consider adding machine embroidery details to a crazy quilt project? Don’t forget that machine embroidery requires the proper use of stabilizers and possibly even interfacings to help add support to the fabric that is being embroidered on. When working with “pile” or “textured” fabrics, add a layer of water-soluble stabilizer to the “topside” of your work. This will keep your stitches from getting lost in the thickness and loft of the fabric.

## BUTTONS, BEADS, AND TRINKETS

Final details to a crazy quilt project may include interesting buttons, charms, or other little “treasures” or pieces of interest. These items make up the last little details of your creation. This is where you may choose to add just a little or an elaborate amount.

Depending on the type of beads you select, many can actually be sewn on by machine!

- When sewing on beads by machine, select a small size needle, either size 60/8 or 70/10. Nylon monofilament is a good choice to use in the needle of the machine. (Use something such as 50/3 cotton in the bobbin)
- Often, the choice to sew beads on by machine or by hand is based on how many beads there are to apply. If there are only a few beads to sew on or if they are bugle type beads, it is usually best to sew them on by hand. To do so, use a beading needle and Nymo thread. Since many quality beads are glass, Nymo thread is a great choice because the glass edges will not cut through this thread.

Flat buttons can be stitched on by machine using Button Sew-on Foot #18.



**No matter which direction your Bobbinwork techniques lead you, simply remember to “PLAY”, “EXPERIMENT”, but most of all, have “FUN” and find great amounts of “ENJOYMENT” doing it!**

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