

Bustle & Sew



Love to Sew and Sew with Love



Transferring your Pattern To Fabric

This is one of the most commonly asked questions and there are lots of answers and methods. How do you get the design from the paper to your fabric? The problem seems insurmountable. Well, unless you have a specially printed iron-on transfer then I'm not telling you it will be easy – but it will most definitely be worth it.

There are many different ways of tackling this task and it seems that every stitcher has their own favourite way. What I'll do here is describe some of the most popular methods I've heard of, plus how to make your design larger or smaller if you don't have access to printer or photocopier ...

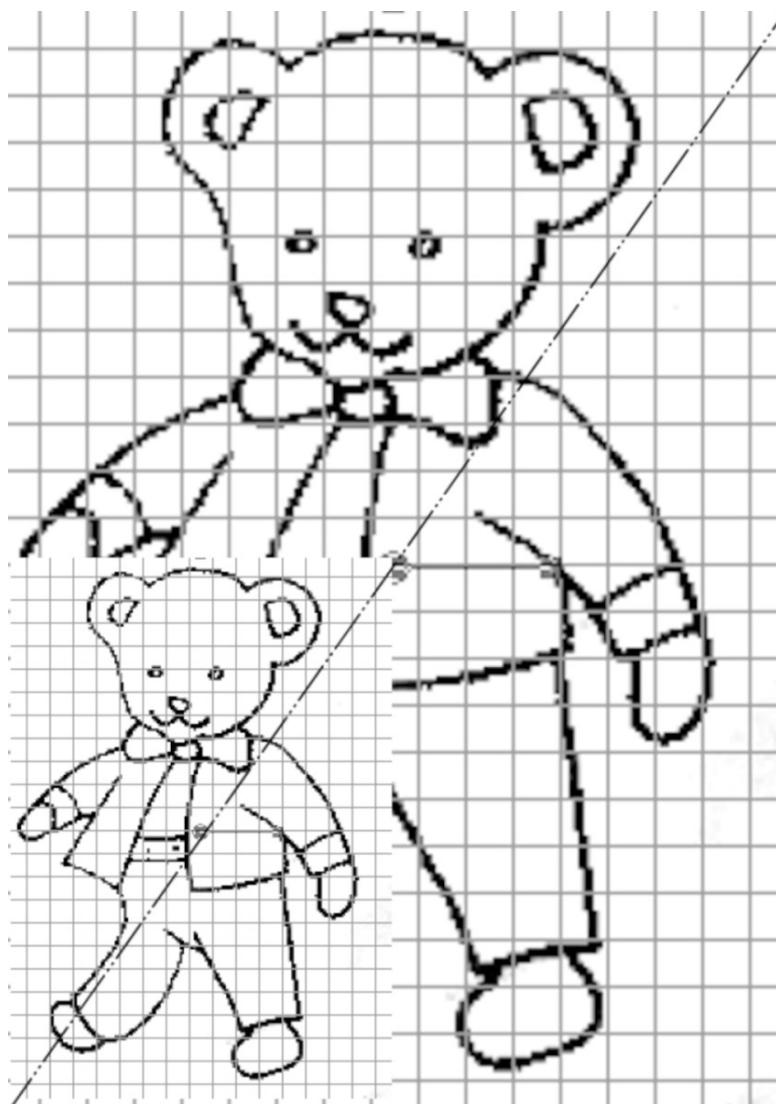


Changing the size of your design

This is easy to do if you have access to a photocopier or to a computer and printer. Many printed designs that need to be enlarged will advise the size of enlargement.

But do remember, if you are increasing or decreasing the size of the design by more than the stated amount, the quantity of floss you require and also its thickness may change and indeed, you may need to use a different stitch to the one suggested. If you don't have access to modern technology you might want to resort to the time honoured

Grid Method:

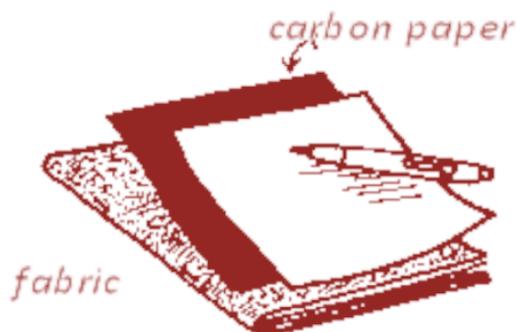


Draw a small grid with equal squares over a tracing or copy of your design. Then draw an extended diagonal line through the corners of the grid to create an enlarged rectangle or square with the same proportions.

Draw another grid with the same number of squares as the first in the enlarged box, then copy the design as accurately as you can from the small to the large grid.

Take a look at the example on the left: –

From Paper to Fabric



Don't be tempted by the availability of iron on transfer paper – the sort you run through your printer and then iron onto your fabric. They seem so easy ... all you need is an ink-jet printer and some special paper and you can transfer just about any design to fabric.

But these are not suitable for transferring embroidery designs. If you have a line drawing on your computer and you print it onto this transfer paper, then transfer it to fabric to embroider, you will end up with the film from the paper on your fabric as well as the lines of the design. This gives an odd, stiff finish to the fabric and which is not a good thing when combined with hand embroidery.

Just saying.

If you want to try it, then go ahead, but don't say I didn't warn you.

Commercial Iron on transfers:

Just set up your fabric – with the grains aligned horizontally and vertically. The side of the transfer that feels as though the lines of the design are slightly raised or rough is the side that will transfer the design, ie the right side.

Place your transfer on the right side of your fabric with the transfer face downwards. Line it up carefully. Then, using even pressure and the correct heat setting for your fabric, press over the design. Don't move the iron backwards and forwards – you don't want the paper to move around as this will lead to a smudged or blurred design. Don't leave the iron in one place for too long or you may scorch the fabric, but be careful when you move it to avoid moving the paper too.

Be aware though that not all iron on transfers wash out. If this is important to you, then it's best to test wash first – most commercial transfers do come with a test design for this purpose.

Tracing the design:

This works best if you're stitching onto a fine, plain, light-coloured fabric. You can use either a water-soluble or a permanent marker with a fine tip.

Print, photocopy or trace the design outline and tape it onto a light box or window (bright sunlight is good here). You can even display the design at the size you want on your computer screen and max the brightness.

If you don't have a light box you can make your own using any empty plastic storage box and a light bulb. (but don't leave it unattended when on).

Now tape your fabric over the tracing, making sure the fabric is square (ie the grain is aligned horizontally and vertically). Trace the design onto the fabric with your marker. Use a smooth continuous line for best results.

Note: Air or light-soluble pens are not suitable for large projects as the design will fade and vanish over time, especially in strong light.

Dressmakers' Carbon Transfer Paper:

This comes in small packages containing about five different colours of carbon. It's not really carbon paper as we (used) to know it in the office, it's graphite & wax-free transfer paper that works just like that old-fashioned carbon paper used to. (If you don't remember using carbon paper in the office, then obviously you're much younger than me! Ask your mom or grandma!).

Place your fabric right side up on a clean, smooth, hard surface (you may wish to tape it down to stop it slipping).

Tape your carbon onto the fabric and your printed design on top of that. Using a sharp pencil, stylus or ballpoint pen and a firm steady stroke, carefully trace over the lines of your design in long continuous lines.

Be very careful not to puncture the paper as this will leave a nasty blob on your fabric. As the transfer paper is available in many colours, it's easy to choose the one that will show best on your fabric.

Transfer Pens & Pencils:

These are easy to use – simply follow the instructions that come with your pencil or pen. You trace the printed pattern with your pen or pencil, then turn the paper face down onto the right side of your fabric (again you might want to tape both paper and fabric to avoid slipping). The ink or pencil marks will be transferred to the fabric through the heat of your iron in the same way as a commercially produced iron-on pattern.

Bear in mind though that the image you will produce using this method will be a mirror of the actual design. This method is not suitable for some synthetic fabrics as you do need to use a hot iron. It is normally also a permanent image, so is not suitable if you don't plan to stitch over all the lines.

Prick and Pounce:

This sounds like some kind of old-fashioned music hall act – in fact it's a very old tried and trusted method of transferring a design to fabric. It does take a little while, but is very effective.

The pounce is a powder which comes in either black (crushed charcoal) or white (powdered cuttlefish – yes really!) – or you can mix the two to make grey.

You can purchase a special pad to apply the pounce, or make your own from a rolled up piece of felt. Then trace your design onto tracing paper and lay it on a folded cloth or ironing board.

With a hat pin, pin in cork, or even another special tool you can purchase just for this purpose, prick a series of small holes closely together all along the design lines.

Then tape your fabric onto a flat board or working surface and tape the pricked tracing paper onto the fabric. Dip your pad into the pounce powder and, using a circular movement, gently rub the pounce over the design.

Complete the whole design before removing the pricked tracing paper in a single nice clean movement. If you brush the pounce from the pricked paper it can be reused indefinitely.

Now, following the pounce outline, paint a fine line all along the dotted outlines on the fabric, using a brush and watercolour paint, or very fine marker. Then un-tape and shake your fabric to remove the pounce.

Tacking through Tissue Paper:

Once again this is a time-honoured, fairly time consuming method of transferring your design. It is great in that it leaves absolutely no marks on your fabric. It's suitable for all kinds of fabric.

Carefully trace your design onto tissue paper. Then position your tracing on top of the fabric and secure in place around the edges. Tack around the outline starting and finishing your line securely. Make sure the stitches are not too small or they will be hard to remove, and not too big so that you miss parts of the design.

Once you've stitched over the whole design, carefully tear away the tissue paper, leaving the tacking on the fabric. (you can also buy water soluble paper to help in this stage). If you're working on a light or delicate fabric, then be very very careful when removing the paper so you don't damage the fabric. The tacking stitch outline can be removed as you progress, or after the embroidery is completed.



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