

Stretched Canvas

Meet Danielle! Danielle is one of the newer members of the Urban Threads team. She's fit in quite well around here, as you can see. Here she is bonding with Craft Bunny. Or eating him. Not sure which... While also learning to be a digitizing wonder, Danielle, who is also a painter, thought she'd show us a thing or two about how to stretch embroidered fabric on a frame in her very first tutorial! So, let's hand things over to Danielle...



Supplies

To stretch your embroidery design, you'll need:

Stretcher bars

Wood glue

Fabric (any kind of heavy weight fabric)

Cutaway stabilizer

Staple gun

Staples

Eye hooks

Picture wire

Some tips: buying a staple gun at a hardware store is

Steps To Complete

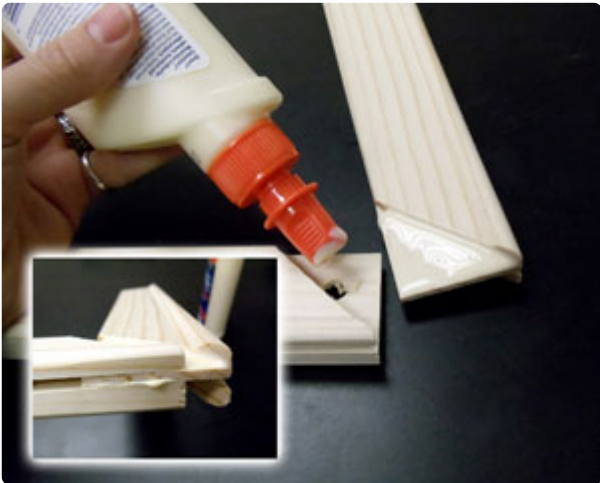
Lay your stretcher bars on a flat surface and organize them like so. I'm using two 12 inch stretcher bars for the sides, and then 10 inch stretcher bars for the top and bottom. I'm stitching out a 6 inch by 6 inch design, which will fit the canvas easily.



Make sure that the stretcher bars that are opposite are the same length as each other. Otherwise you will end up with a funny shape ... like a trapezoid. Trapezoids are a strange shape to have when presenting a picture on the wall.

We will be anti-trapezoid in this tutorial today. We are all about nice right angles and rectangles. Conform to the 90 degree angles!

On each side of a stretcher bar there lives a small triangle-shaped corner. This is where you need to add a dab of wood glue. Some people skip the gluing step, but it will prevent the stretcher bars from warping in the long run, so I'd recommend it.



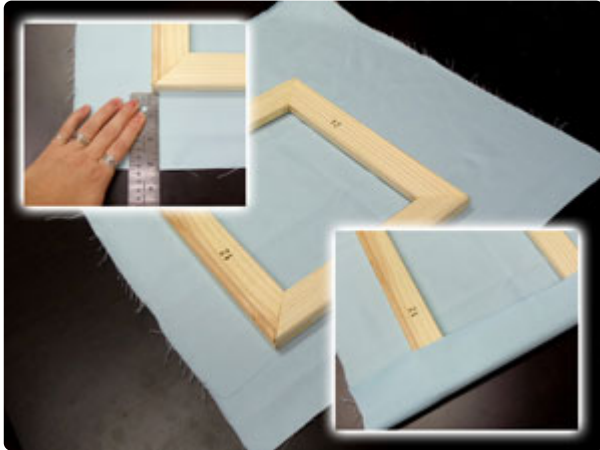
Grab another stretcher bar and put some glue on that triangle, and then slide the two together. It may be a very tough fit, but keep sliding. Trust me, they were meant to be together, they just may not know it yet.

If there are any gaps, I recommend gently smacking the back of one of the stretcher bars until they line up beautifully, like shown. When you push the two ends together, there's going to be some glue that oozes out of the seam. That's normal. Just go ahead and wipe off the excess glue with a damp paper towel.



You will repeat this step to the rest of stretcher bars, working your way around. Once you have all your stretcher bars into the right places and you've wiped off all the excess glue, you can put your new frame aside to dry.

After the frame of stretcher bars has dried, lay your frame on top of your fabric. Make sure your fabric has plenty of excess around the edges.



Measure around the frame about 3 inches out from the edge, and cut it to size. This measurement can vary depending on the thickness of your wood, but three inches is usually safe. Just make sure you that you have enough fabric to fold over the stretcher bars.

With your cut piece of fabric, slap some cutaway stabilizer on the back and mark where you want your design to go. Pick out your favorite Urban Threads design and meet up with your embroidery skills.



‘Sup, embroidery skills. I’ll be needing you today.

My mad embroidery skills produced this awesome raven design, which we’ll now stretch onto our canvas bars.

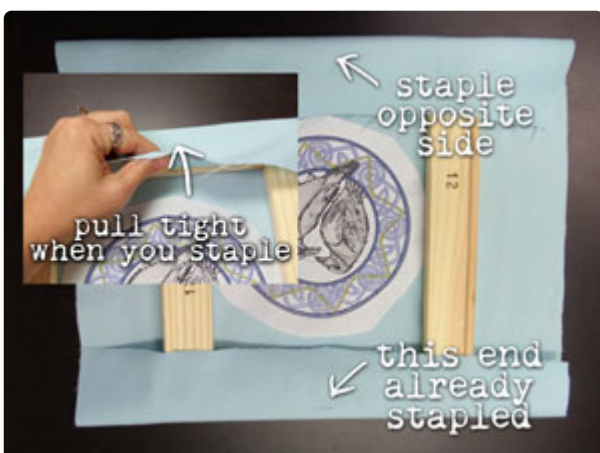
Take your embroidered fabric and place it face down on a clean surface. I recommend cutting some of the excess stabilizer away so your fabric has a little more movement to be stretched. Place your frame on top of the back of your design.



Adjust the frame or fabric to the desired area that you want the design to be. Lightly trace the frame with a pencil just in case. This will help you in case you accidentally bump something later, you'll still be able to see where the frame should be.



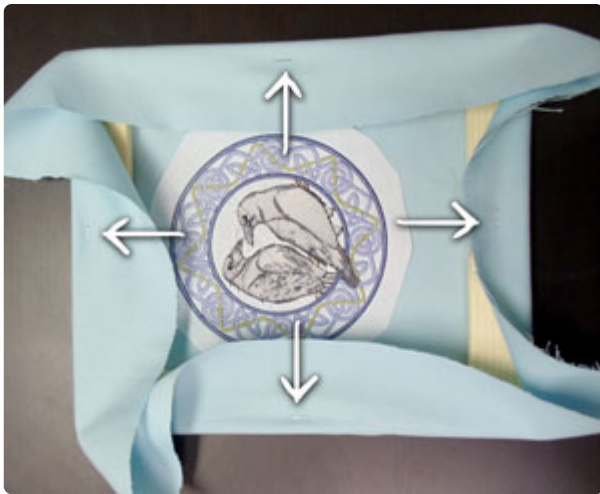
Pick one side and fold your fabric over on one side of a stretcher bar. Staple your fabric in place in the middle of the length of the stretcher bar.



Now move to the opposite stretcher bar and fold over the other side of the fabric. This time you will gently pull the fabric and hold it while you staple.



At this point I'll flip over the whole thing and look at it from the front to make sure everything is still where I want it. It is very easy at this point to readjust the fabric by taking out the two staples and redoing this step if needed. A heck of a lot easier than taking out a dozen staples later.



After your check, do the same step to the other two sides that have not been stapled yet. Staple one side, then gently tug the other side firm and staple it down as well.

At this point you should have one staple on each stretcher bar.



Now you're going to start adding staples out from the middle, but don't go along a line all at once.

Every time you add a staple, you need to cross over to the opposite side, tug the fabric gently, and staple directly across from the one you just did.

Usually I number the fabric sides to help me keep track of which side I am stapling.



Now, you don't just want to do only the opposite sides (like all of 1 & 3 for instance). You'll want to rotate around, so you do 1 and 3, then rotate the canvas, and do 2 and 4, then rotate again, back to 1 and 3, and so on.

Be sure to pull each side tight as you staple it, and continue stapling and turning (working out from the middle of each side). This will eventually evenly stretch your fabric until it's tight like a drum. It will also even out any ripples.

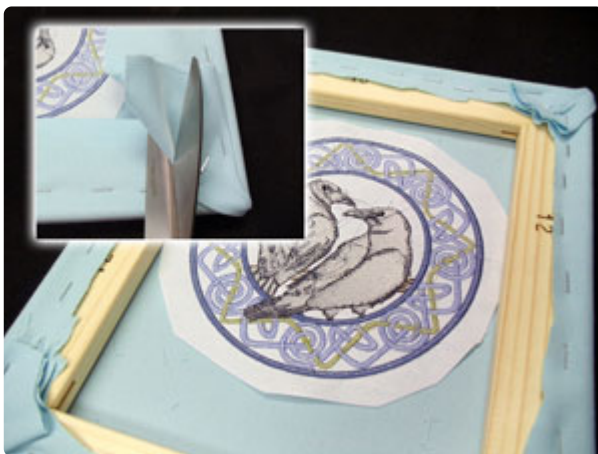
As you staple out towards the edges, you might notice that you are starting to hit the corners, and the corners the fabric have probably started to jut out in awkward ways.



To fix this, we'll have to fold them so that they'll lay flat against the back of your canvas. There are many different ways to fold a fabric at a corner, and the goal is to make it as flat as possible, and not make it too visible from the front.

So then, stroll on over to a corner of frame.

It will have a piece of fabric jutting out in an odd angle. Fold it over and down, and then pull tightly to make it as flat against the back as possible. Keep the excess flat to the back of the frame and staple it in the bars. Then take the excess at the other side and smooth it out so it lays flush against the back and staple it in place.



Now you may have noticed that after all that stretching and stapling of fabric it is starting to look a bit ruffy in the back. You can go ahead and cut off the extra fabric, this isn't just to give it a bit of a cleaner look, but also so that it will lay flatter against a wall.



To make the piece able to be hung, you will want to attach some sort of wire on the back. An easy way to do this is to mark a small dot on the wood, take an eye hook, and screw it into the side of the wood on either side. If the eye hooks don't want to screw in easily, you may lightly tap it with a hammer. Don't do it to hard, otherwise you may split the wood.



You can then run a length of wire through the eye hooks, and tada! Instant wall hanging wonderfulness!



Check it out! It's so hang-y! Canvas stretching is a great and easy way to display your favorite embroidery. Making all kinds of gallery worthy canvases is now at your fingertips.