

Tattoo Cardigan

Tattoos are becoming more and more commonplace in today's society, and even if you aren't feeling like committing to some permanent ink, it's still a great place to find design inspiration. There are tons of embroidery designs you can use to create a tattoo look, including designs specifically made to make [tattoo sleeves](#), but with a little creativity, you can make something all on your own, using whatever designs you like! Combine it with the flexibility of the new [tattoo alphabet](#), any piece can get a little "ink" in a stylish way that doesn't sacrifice your skin.

Supplies

We've done projects similar to this before, but we'll walk you through the basics of designing and stitching your own tattoo top. Here's what you'll need:

A cardigan or



Steps To Complete



There's one foolproof way of getting a design on a sleeve ... opening that sleeve up! It may seem tedious, but it really has great results. Use your seam ripper and open up the sleeve from the bottom. You may need to even open it up down the side of your cardigan in order to get it to lay flat enough to embroider.



Building your own tattoo sleeve design is fun, and easy once you know what to look for. First, start with contemporary, light-stitching designs. Tattoo themed stuff is great, but any light-stitching motif will do. You can use mirroring to add balance, like the first example, or try for a cascade layout, like in the second. In many cases you'll find the 4"x4" version of designs will let you mirror and add more interest to your sleeve. Pick your favorites! It's your sleeve, after all.



Once you've picked which designs you think you want to work with, it helps a lot to [print templates](#) to lay out your tattoo design. Print mirror versions too, so you can get a full idea of the look.

The way we'll get cohesion on all these pieces is by stitching them in one color, regardless of how the original design was colored. When you stitch them all that way, it makes it all look like one large, intentional design.

Once you have your idea laid out, tape your first template in place, and hoop it up with some sheer mesh cutaway stabilizer.



I find it easiest to start at the top and work down, so I stitched the [Eye of Ra](#) first. After that, I re-measured the [wings](#), and stitched the left, then the right. It's a good idea with each new design to re-test your template placement.



In no time at all, you'll be stitching your last design! I finished off my sleeve with the [Blueprint Cogs](#) and [Spooky Drape](#).



To complete the look of your ink, adding a chic phrase, or even your own name, always looks good in a [tattoo alphabet](#). I put "VERITAS" across the back of my cardigan, which is Latin for truth, because... well, I thought it looked cool really. You don't need a better reason than that.

Once you've got a basic idea of your word and layout, check out this tutorial to learn how to arrange your letters just how you'd like 'em.



In no time at all, we've got a chic tattoo phrase on the back of the cardigan. The flexibility of the [Inked Alphabet](#) lets you add cool tattoo lettering to anything!



So now your back is done, and your sleeve is done. Now all we need to do is put our sleeve back together!



Turn your cardigan inside out, and pin together the raw edges and sew the seam closed again, making sure you catch both edges of that stretchy, rolled seam.



Back together and good as new!



Now everything, from the sleeve designs to the phrase on the back, is all custom designed by you, but all flows together in one polished, seamless tattoo look!



So whether you feel like using a ready-made tattoo sleeve design, or designing one of your own like we did in this tutorial, you've got a way to make a chic yet light stitching statement on any sleeve garment you own.

With tattoo style embroidery designs and now a [tattoo alphabet](#), there are so many ways of rocking an ink-inspired style without the commitment. Check out some of these other ideas!



This sleeve and back combination is great for anyone, guys and gals alike.

You can keep your sides simple and instead mirror the same design on both sleeves. Text and a bold design on the back make a dramatic statement on a hoodie.



How many different ways can you rock a lucky style letter top? Many ways! You could try layering a light stitching design behind it on the front of a tank...



Or run it down the side seam for a flirty, fun look. Even the same tattoo letters gets a different look depending on how and where you stitch it.



When stitching on tops, you don't always have to go crazy on the sleeves. Simple works too!

Try opening up just one sleeve, and stitch your first initial on top of a light stitching design. It's chic but doesn't get too overbearing in style.



Speaking of initials, monogramming is a great way to use the alphabet designs. Try layering a light design on a jeans pocket and then stitching your initials on top. If you want to know how to stitch on jeans pockets, [check out this tutorial](#). It's easier than you think!



If you want to go all the way with the tattoo inspired look, why not go full into rockabilly style! Layer some light-stitching tattoo flourishes with some mirrored sparrows on a fitted work shirt. Add a tiny star accent on the collars for a truly retro style tee. A tattoo phrase on the back would look killer here too!

If you're looking for the full tattoo inspired look, this is the bold way to go.



If you're not feeling like wearing your love of tattoos on your sleeve, so to speak, you can try it out on other things. These edgy looks don't just have to be for clothes! Try out some layering and lettering on a messenger bag for a look that can be for guys and girls alike.



Decor too! Try out lots of mirroring and some elegant text for a truly contemporary look on a pillow. Tattoo style can add an edgy, custom look to anything you like!

Keep the colors consistent, try combining designs, and add a little text. You'll have a whole inked masterpiece in no time on anything you dare to hoop.