

Embroidering with Alphabets

Embroidered alphabets are different from fonts. You don't use them to type out a word in your embroidery machine or software. To spell out a word, you lay out letters side by side, in embroidery software or just by stitching, exactly like you would arrange any other embroidery designs. We'll show you both ways to do this...



Laying Out Letters by Hand

Let's start with the old school way. This method involves laying it all out by hand, and this is the method you'll want if you don't have software that can lay out designs OR if you're working with more letters than can fit in your hoop. By the way, if you CAN lay it out in your software, it's a lot easier. Trust me. Skip down to the software layout section if you don't wish to do it by hand.

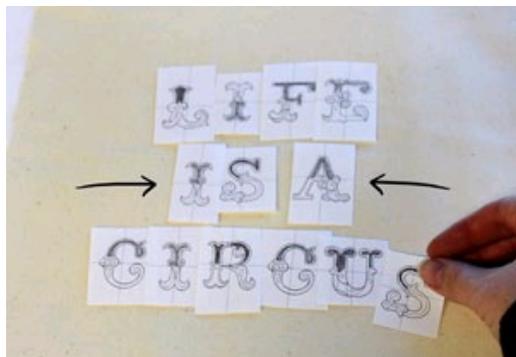


First and foremost, you'll need templates to lay out your words (we used letters from the [Cirque Alphabet](#)). You'll also want some scissors, a disappearing fabric marker, and something to embroider on, perhaps this first time, a fabric scrap.

You may want to test out your alphabet skillz before you go embroidering on that big ol' pillow you already spent 8 hours on.

Start by roughly laying out your letters. See if you can get your word or phrase to fit inside your available hoop size. This will save you from re-hooping during the project.

Don't worry if it won't fit, that's what all this measuring and marking is here to help with. However, if it CAN fit, it will make your life a lot easier. And we like easier.

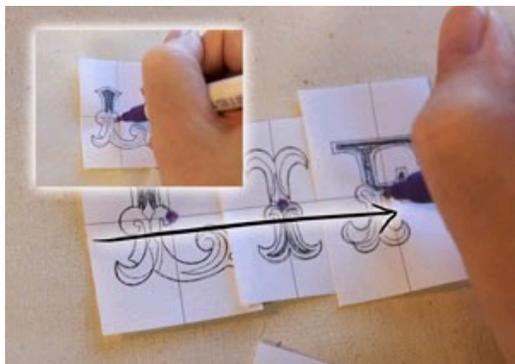


When laying out your letters, there are a few things to keep an eye on. The biggest one is going to be keeping your words centered above each other (or a matching design). Shift your templates around so that any stacked words look properly centered in relation to each other.

The next thing to keep an eye out for is spacing between the letters. Eyeballing it is usually enough. However, just keep it in mind when you're making your final marks.

Here's how we get our letters all lined up and pretty. You'll notice that your printed template has crosshairs on it. These lines go right through the middle of each design, and they're just what you need to line things up.

Move your letters so the horizontal marker on your templates all line up in one straight line. This is how you'll assure your letters will stay level with each other.

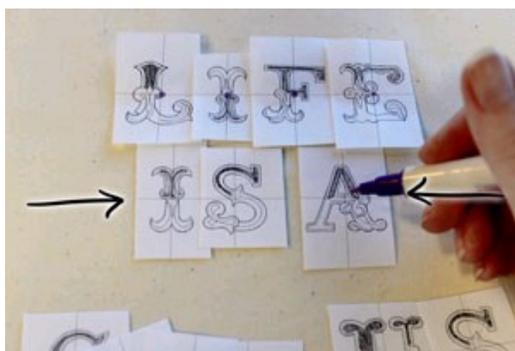
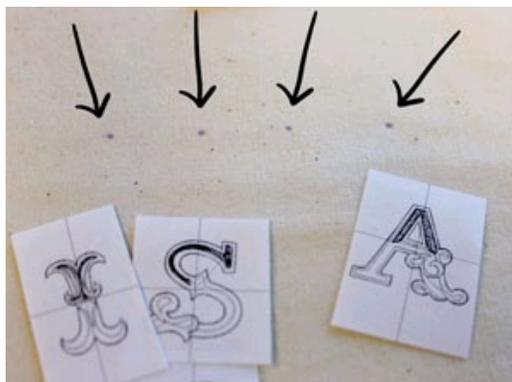


Keeping the letters even, poke a hole in the center of each crosshair and mark a dot with your disappearing fabric pen.

(Don't forget to keep an eye out on the spacing in between the letters!)

Make sure you're keeping that horizontal marker level each time you make a mark! This is what we'll use to not only keep our letters even, but also how to hoop it straight for sewing.

Ta da! Now we have the marked center dots for "L-I-F-E." They should all look level with each other.

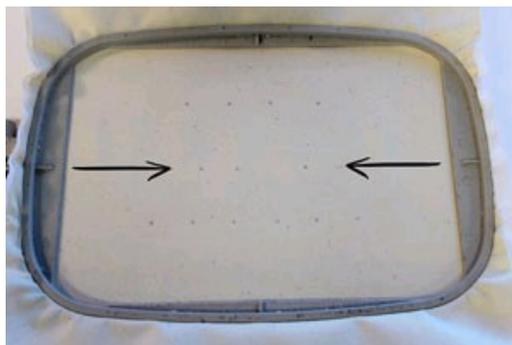


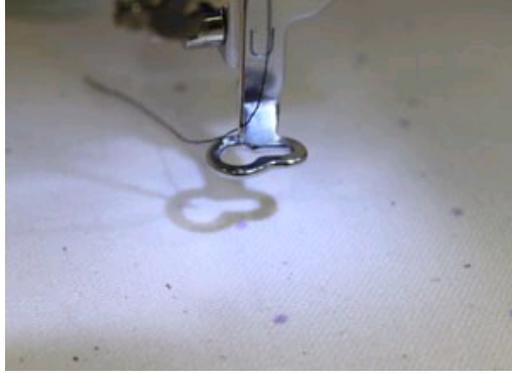
Moving downward, make sure your next letters and words are properly centered. I placed the "L-I-F-E" templates back on the fabric to better estimate.

Repeat the process, leveling the horizontal marker and adding a dot for each letter.

Once all your dots are ready, it's time to hoop!

When hooping, use the horizontal direction of all your dots to make sure your hoop is straight. The side markers on your hoop should line up with one row of your horizontal dots.





Now it's time to sew! Tell your machine to move the hoop so your needle is over the first dot of the letter you wish to stitch. Load up that design and get to it!

As long as your word or phrase is all going to fit inside your hoop, all you need to do is center the needle over the next design's dot, and you should be able to stitch out your words with precision.

If your design is too large, you may need to re-hoop, but as long as you use your markers to keep your hoop lined up horizontally, everything will stitch out just fine.

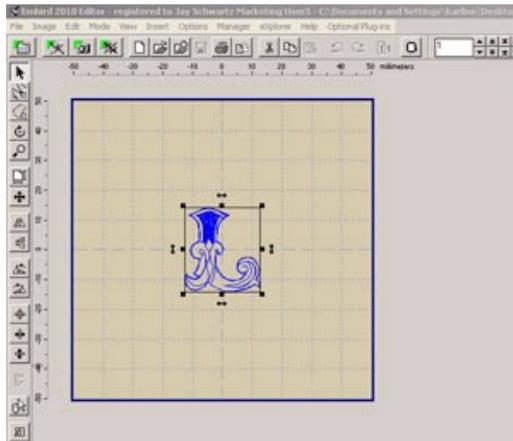


Laying Out Letters in Embroidery Software

If you have embroidery software on your computer, you might find it handy to arrange your letters into a word before you send the whole business over to your embroidery machine. The advantages of this, are that you can get the letters lined up all nice and precisely onscreen, and it requires a lot less thought and attention once you're actually stitching.

The main disadvantage is the size limitation -- your entire arrangement must fit within your machine's embroidery area, if you want to stitch it all in one shot.

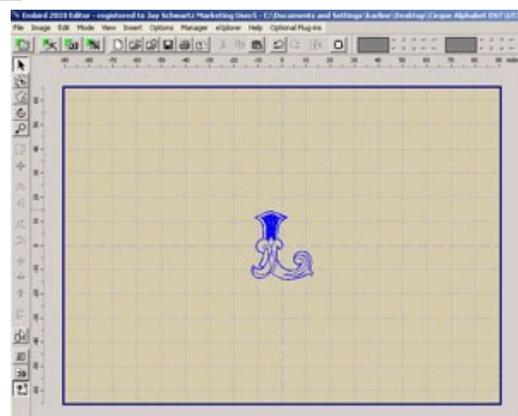
I'm demonstrating how to do this using [Embroid](#). If you're using different embroidery software, the process should be pretty similar -- as long as you have the ability to merge embroidery designs together, you're good to go.

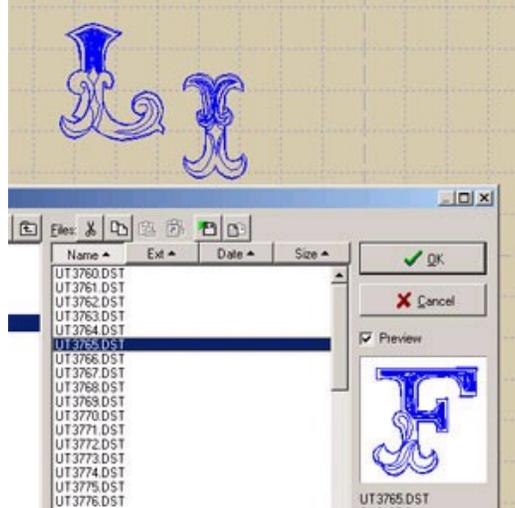


Ready? Great.

This might seem putzy at first, but once you get the hang of it, it'll go pretty quickly. Get a picture in your mind of how you want your text to look. Now open up Embird, and open up the first letter in your word/phrase. Click on "Editor" at the very top of the Embird window to go into editor mode. The colors might look strange -- don't worry about that.

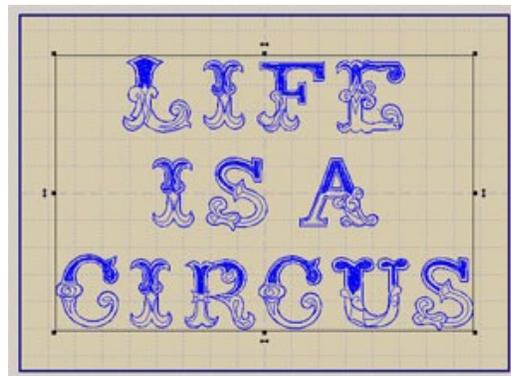
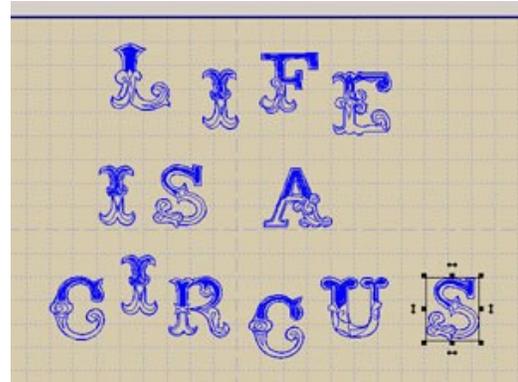
Under "Options," choose the hoop size you'll be working with. This is nifty because it'll give you a clear view of how much space you have to work with.





Time for more letters! Click the "File" menu at the top of the screen, then "Merge." Select the next letter you want to insert. (If you check that little "Preview" box, it'll show you which letter you're choosing.) Click "OK" to open the design.

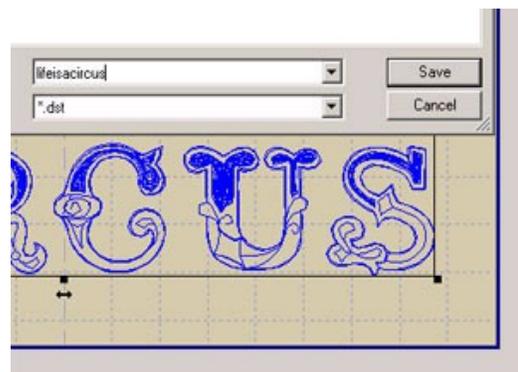
Once you've opened each letter design, drag it to about where you want it to be. We'll fine-tune the placement later -- you just don't want all the letters piling up in the middle.



After you've opened all the letters you're going to use, drag them around to arrange them exactly how you'd like. The grid lines are handy for this.

Select everything in your arrangement, then choose "Edit" --> "Center" --> "Both Axes" to center the design in the hoop.

When you're satisfied with your arrangement, click "File" --> "Save As" and save your design with a filename that you'll recognize.



But our letters have not quite come together yet, as you can see in the upper right corner of the Embroid window.

At the very top of the Embroid window, click "Manager" to go into Manager mode. Then click "Editor" to go back into Editor mode.

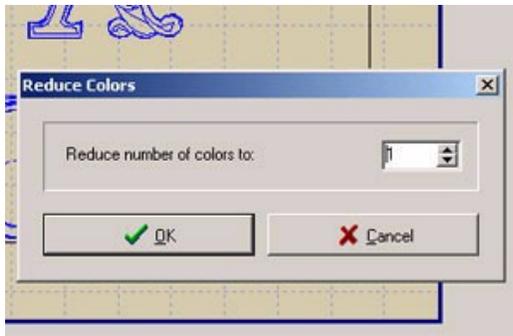
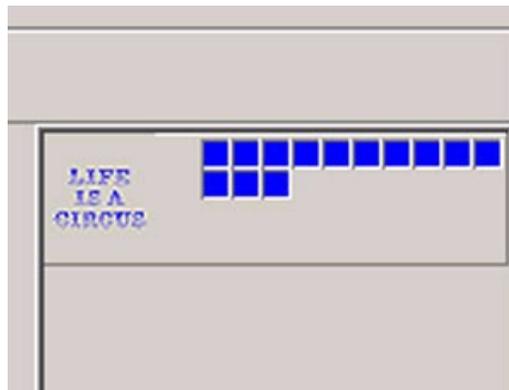
And voila ...

...you're looking at your design!

One more thing to do, MAYBE. See all those little boxes? They represent color stops, and right now there's one for each letter. Which means you'd have to poke your machine to start stitching again, every time it gets to a new letter. IF you're using one-color letter designs, and you want to stitch them all in the same color, we can make things easier than that. Hooray for computers.

(If you're using letter designs that have more than one color per letter, you're going to want to skip this step, and just get ready to change the thread a whole bunch.)

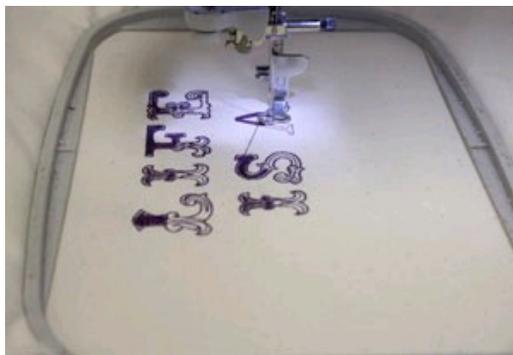
To merge them, right-click on the tiny image of your design next to the color boxes (LIFE IS A CIRCUS), and choose "Reduce Colors" from the menu...



...and set it to reduce colors to 1. Click "OK."

That's more like it!

Now you can save the design, then transfer it to your embroidery machine to stitch it out.



Your machine will stitch out everything for you as one seamless design, and you don't need to worry about measuring, marking, or aligning anything!

Either way you do it, the result is the same: you now have some awesome alphabet-ness to play with!





Use your [alphabet designs](#) to add whimsical accents or names to designs, or just let the letters shine on its own.

The point is, either with some simple marking or some slick computer work, you can add fun text to anything!

