

# In-jean-ious Design

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Ahh jeans. They go with everything, and are always in style.



And usually, there's one special pair in your closet that you just can't live without...your favorite pair.

Most of us have a favorite pair of jeans. They might be old and a bit worn, but these days you pay premium for that same "distressed" look on designer jeans. And we did it all by ourselves, simply by loving them to death.

Well, the newest thing in designer jeans is...you guessed it, embroidery. (Funny how the fashion world is just picking up on things we've known all along). Embroidered, distressed, designer jeans are pricey though. I found pairs that ran anywhere from \$60 to \$200 online.

So, we have "naturally" distressed jeans AND embroidery designs. With a few quick stitches, we can swank up our jeans to boutique status. You can use your favorite old pair, or buy a new "favorite" pair of jeans, and dress it up with a little classy embroidery. Then if you like, you can sell them to boutiques for a 500% markup. Hurrah for free market economy...

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For this project, all you'll really need is a pair of jeans, a seam ripper, and some slick embroidery designs. I'd highly recommend printing out templates of your designs so we can get exact placement, especially if you want to use a repeating border design, like I have.

Embroidering on jeans is a fairly simple process, once you know a few tricks. There are a few places on jeans that lend especially well to embroidery. The back pockets and the bottom cuff of jeans are the easiest places to add a little embellishment, but if you're really ambitious and enjoy ripping seams, I guess you could embroider them just about anywhere.

Remember, when embroidering on pockets your design has to be smaller than the pocket or our little trick won't work very well.



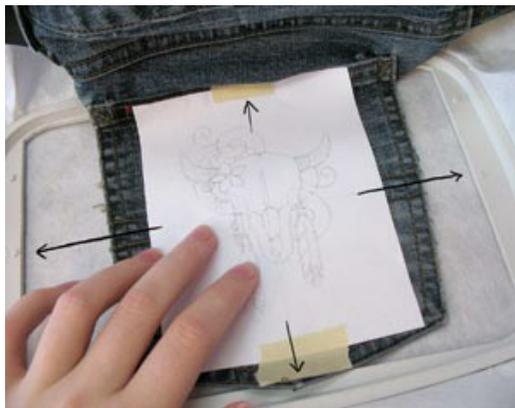


To embroider on pockets, we'll first need to free them from the jeans. You could do a big fancy embroidery design right on top of the pocket and stitch it all together, and you'll look very fashionable, but not very intelligent.

To free your pockets, grab a seam ripper and rip out the seams holding the pockets to the jeans, save the very top. Leave about 1/2 inch of seams behind, so your pocket is hanging on by just two small spots at the top. This will help us line it up exactly when we stitch it back onto the jeans.

Take your printed design template and cut it out so it's a bit smaller than your pocket. Now, tape it onto your pocket exactly where you want it.

To hoop it all, grab some stabilizer and hoop it by itself, then spray the back of your pocket generously with fixative.



Line up the cross hairs on your design with the markings on your hoop to get perfect placement, then press your pocket firmly onto the stabilizer, so it sticks. The rest of your jeans are just going to kind of hang out on the outside of the hoop. Once you're sure your pocket is where you want it, you can remove the paper template.

To make sure your pocket stays in place, pin the corners of it to the stabilizer itself. Make sure none of the pins are going to get in the way of the embroidery.

When you stick it under your machine, you might find you have to adjust the rest of the jeans a bit in order to make it all fit. An important thing to keep in mind: don't leave most of the weight of the jeans draped over the table while it's embroidering. Believe it or not, the weight of the jeans alone is enough to throw off the embroidery arm, and make your design all wonky. Keep it all up on the table and as much out of the way from the movement of the arm as possible.



Set your machine to sewing!



Keep a close eye on the rest of your jeans as it's embroidering. You don't want them to bunch up and impede the arm, or get stitched underneath. My little Futura was especially grumpy this time, and I had to watch it like a hawk to make sure it didn't eat my favorite pair of jeans.

Once your embroidery is finished, remove it from the hoop and trim the excess stabilizer so it's smaller than your pocket. You can embroider the other pocket if you want, for a little extra flare. I'd recommend doing all your embroidery first, before you switch to your sewing machine to stitch everything back together.

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To embellish the bottom cuffs of your jeans, you'll need to grab your seam ripper again, and open up the side seam about 6-8 inches, depending on the size of your hoop. Don't rip it up any more than you need to, or it will be difficult to fit back under your machine to sew back together again.

You can place any design on the bottom cuff, it doesn't have to be a border but just in case, I'll show you how to do a repeating border with perfect placement, all the way around the bottom of your jeans. If your design is not a border, you'll still hoop it in the same way you did the pocket, spray the back and pin down the corners.



As before, tape your template to the jeans exactly where you want it, then use the cross hairs on the design to line it up with your hoop. Be sure to pin down the edges of the jeans to keep it from moving about.

For a border design, I'd recommend starting at the seam. Use your template to roughly measure out how many times you'll need to repeat the design in order to go all the way around. Most jeans, unless they're huge flares or skinny jeans, will probably use three. When you're measuring, decide if you want your border to line up with itself, or leave a bit of a gap between designs. It will probably depend on the design itself.

Stick it under your machine, taking extra care to make sure no other part of your jeans are stuck underneath it, and let it sew.



To continue my cowboy chic theme, I'm stitching out the [barbed border](#) to coordinate with the [cowgirl skull](#). I'm not sure why I'm in a western mood. Maybe it's nostalgia. Like most kids through one phase or another, I wanted to grow up to be a cowgirl and ride ponies. This was a lot better than my previous phase, when I watched too much My Little Ponies and wanted to grow up to be a horse. I guess one naturally led into the other. Kids are strange.

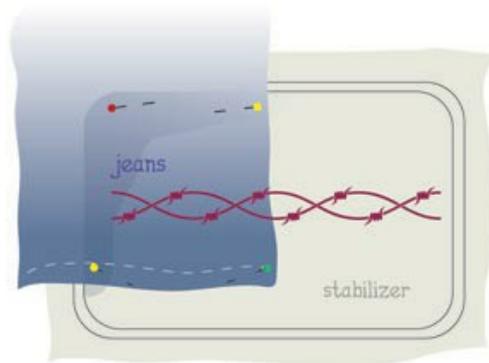


To get perfect placement, use your template to line up the edges of your borders. You can either have them touch, or even have them overlap just a little bit. Tape your template down and hoop up your design as you did before.

A quick tip I learned here is that all though your needle may look centered, it may not actually line up perfectly with the marks on your hoop, which kind ruins the whole idea of your placement. With the template still taped on and hooped, gently lower your needle to make sure it's coming down in the center of your design. Being a little bit off before wouldn't have mattered, but when we're lining things up, we want to make sure everything is perfect.

Repeat your border as many times as needed to go all the way around. Three times took me just shy of the seam, which was perfect. Truly, that was just luck on my part.

So what if you're not so lucky? If you find your border an annoying few inches short of the end, I have a little trick for you. Hoop up your last length of jeans, and line up your design as you did with all the others. When your design sews, it will stitch right over the edge of your jeans, and onto the stabilizer. When it's done, simply snip off the extra embroidery, and you're set!



Now it's time to stitch it all back up together again. Line up your seam as it was before, and pin it in place.

Remove the detachable part of your sewing machine, and stick the jeans under the foot. This will take some maneuvering, but since we didn't rip up the seam that far, it can be done. Just make sure that the pins stay in place and that no extra bit of jean gets caught underneath and stitched together. When you sew the seams shut, you can either match the thread to the same color used on your jeans, or use clear nylon thread, so it doesn't show. Stitch down both sides, copying the seams that were stitched before.



Now go back to your pocket and do the same.

Pin it in place, which should be easy, because it should just fall exactly where it was before, and re sew the seams all the way around the pocket.

Now stand back and marvel at how you turned an old worn pair of jeans into a high class boutique item! Custom embroidery touches add subtle class to jeans, and dresses them up a bit. You can stitch on pockets and borders and embellish the bottoms of jeans to all manners of fancy.





I put the [cowskull](#) on the back right pocket, and the border on the opposite left cuff. The [coordinating border](#) around the bottom of the jeans is a delicate accent to the whole ensemble. We have a [few different borders](#) you can choose from to dress up your edges, and all kinds of designs you can use to dress up any other pair of jeans. Have fun with it! You can make any ordinary pair of jeans a designer pair with a few quick stitches, and for a heck of a lot cheaper than boutique prices. Plus every pair is customized for you!

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