

TRACING METHODS

Water-Soluble Pens/Markers

These pens create marks that disappear when washed with water. Draw directly on your fabric or trace through a pattern. Best for light-colored fabrics where you can see the marks clearly. Test on a scrap first, as some pens may leave residue on certain fabrics.

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Water-soluble marking pen or marker
- ✓ Pattern (printed or drawn)
- ✓ Fabric
- ✓ Scrap fabric for testing



Sarah Recommends: *Dritz Dual Purpose Disappearing Ink & Mark-B-Gone*

Heat-Erasable Pens

Similar to water-soluble pens, but the marks disappear with heat (from an iron or hair dryer). Great if you don't want to wash your finished piece. The marks can sometimes reappear in cold temperatures, so use them for practice pieces or items that won't be stored in cold areas.

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Heat-erasable marking pen
- ✓ Pattern (printed or drawn)
- ✓ Fabric
- ✓ Iron or hair dryer
- ✓ Scrap fabric for testing



Sarah Recommends: *Madam Sew Heat Erasable Fabric Marking Pens*

Tailor's Chalk or Chalk Pencils

Traditional and inexpensive, chalk brushes off easily. Works well on darker fabrics. The lines can be thick and may rub off while you work, so best for simple designs.

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Tailor's chalk or chalk pencil
- ✓ Pattern (printed or drawn)
- ✓ Fabric
- ✓ Soft brush
(optional, for removing excess chalk)



Sarah Recommends: *Dritz 3095
Chalk Cartridge Set*

TRANSFER PAPER METHODS

Carbon/Graphite Transfer Paper

Place the transfer paper between your pattern and fabric, then trace over the design with a stylus or empty ballpoint pen. The pressure transfers the design onto the fabric. Available in different colors for light and dark fabrics. The lines are usually permanent, so stitch accuracy matters.

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Carbon or graphite transfer paper
(in appropriate color for your fabric)
- ✓ Pattern (printed or drawn)
- ✓ Fabric
- ✓ Stylus, ballpoint pen (empty or non-working),
or tracing wheel
- ✓ Masking tape or pins
- ✓ Hard surface to work on



Iron-On Transfer Pencils/Pens

Draw your design on paper with the transfer pencil, place it face-down on fabric, and iron to transfer. Note that your design will be reversed, so draw it backwards if directionality matters. The transferred lines are permanent.

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Iron-on transfer pencil or pen
- ✓ Plain paper or tracing paper
- ✓ Pattern (to trace from)
- ✓ Fabric
- ✓ Iron
- ✓ Firm, iron-safe surface



LIGHT METHODS

Window or Lightbox Tracing

Tape your pattern to a window or lightbox, place your fabric over it, and trace the visible lines with a marking tool. Simple, free (using a window), and works well with thin to medium-weight fabrics. Less effective with dark or heavy fabrics.

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Pattern (printed or drawn)
- ✓ Fabric
- ✓ Marking tool (water-soluble pen, chalk, or pencil)
- ✓ Masking tape
- ✓ Sunny window or lightbox



DIRECT METHODS

Printing on Fabric

Use printable fabric sheets or stabilizer in your printer to print the design directly onto fabric. Very accurate and great for detailed designs. The ink is usually permanent, so your stitches need to cover all printed lines.

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Printable fabric sheets (pre-treated), or printable stabilizer
- ✓ Inkjet or laser printer
- ✓ Digital pattern file
- ✓ Scissors (to trim fabric sheets to size if needed)

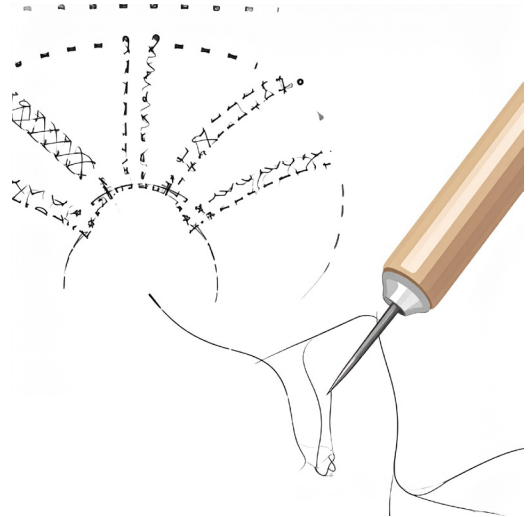


Prick and Pounce

A traditional method where you prick holes along the pattern lines, place it on fabric, and "pounce" (pat) chalk or powder through the holes. Creates dotted lines to follow. Time-consuming but works on any fabric color or texture.

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Pattern printed on sturdy paper
- ✓ Pricking tool (needle, pin, or specialized pricking tool)
- ✓ Fabric
- ✓ Pounce powder or chalk powder
- ✓ Pounce pad or felt (for applying powder)
- ✓ Felt pad or thick towel (to work on)
- ✓ Masking tape or pins



STABILIZER METHODS

Water-Soluble Stabilizer

Print or trace your design onto water-soluble stabilizer, pin or baste it to your fabric, stitch through both layers, then wash away the stabilizer. Perfect for dark fabrics or designs with fine details. No visible marking lines!

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Water-soluble stabilizer (printable or regular)
- ✓ Pattern (digital file for printing, or printed pattern for tracing)
- ✓ Marking pen (if tracing onto stabilizer)
- ✓ Fabric
- ✓ Pins or basting thread
- ✓ Printer (if using printable stabilizer)



Sarah Recommends: *Sulky Printable Sticky Fabri-Solvly (Stick & Stitch)*

Heat Transfer Paper (for printers)

Print your design on special transfer paper, then iron it onto fabric. Widely available and very accurate. Remember the design will be mirrored unless you use special "flip" settings.

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Heat transfer paper for inkjet, or laser printer
- ✓ Inkjet or laser printer
- ✓ Digital pattern file
- ✓ Fabric
- ✓ Iron
- ✓ Hard ironing surface
- ✓ Scissors (to trim transfer paper)





CHOOSING THE RIGHT METHOD

Consider these factors:

- ✿ **Fabric color:** Dark fabrics need light transfer methods (white chalk, light transfer paper) or water-soluble stabilizer
- ✿ **Fabric weight:** Thin fabrics work well with tracing methods; thick fabrics may need transfer paper or stabilizer
- ✿ **Design complexity:** Detailed designs benefit from printing or stabilizer methods
- ✿ **Washability:** If you'll wash the piece, avoid permanent markers unless lines will be covered
- ✿ **Reversibility:** Some methods (iron-on transfers) create mirror images

Most embroiderers keep several transfer methods on hand and choose based on each specific project. Experiment with a few methods to find your favorites!

PRO TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Always Test First

Before transferring onto your final project, test your chosen method on a scrap of the same fabric. This helps you check line visibility, whether marks will wash out properly, and how the transfer method interacts with your specific fabric.

Mark Lightly

You only need to see the lines clearly enough to stitch over them. Heavy, dark lines are harder to cover and may show through your finished embroidery. Use a light hand when tracing or transferring.

A decorative background featuring a light-colored, repeating floral pattern of leaves and flowers, possibly hydrangeas, in a soft, muted tone. The pattern is centered and fills the page, creating a delicate and elegant aesthetic.

Consider Your Fabric's Nap

If working with velvet, corduroy, or other directional fabrics, mark on the back or use a basting stitch method instead. Regular marking tools can get lost in the texture.

Pre-Wash When Necessary

If you're using water-soluble markers, pre-wash your fabric to remove any sizing or finishes that might set the marks permanently. However, if you're using iron-on transfers, wait to wash until after transferring.

Keep Patterns for Reuse

Trace your original patterns onto sturdy template plastic or cardstock before using them. This preserves the original and makes it easier to position and trace around the template multiple times.

Work in Good Lighting

Proper lighting is essential, especially when tracing. Natural daylight or a bright craft lamp helps you see faint lines and ensures accurate transfer.

Secure Everything

Use tape, pins, or pattern weights to keep your pattern and fabric from shifting during transfer. Even small movements can create double lines or distorted designs.

Store Marking Tools Properly

Keep water-soluble and heat-erasable pens capped and stored horizontally to prevent them from drying out. Check expiration dates, as old pens may not erase properly.

When in Doubt, Go Removable

If you're unsure whether your stitching will cover all the transfer marks, choose a removable method like water-soluble stabilizer or washable markers rather than permanent transfer methods.