

DESIGN TESTING

All right, you've decided on a project, you picked a design, a suitable fabric, and the appropriate stabilizer. You hoop the dress for your daughter you've just spent three hours sewing and start the machine. After six thread changes you watch as the machine is sewing the outline. Oh No!! The outline is far outside the edge of the fill stitches in several places.

You're almost there, all you are missing is a test sew to ensure you don't put your project at risk.

How do you avoid ruining the dress you've just spent three hours sewing together? When you buy fabric for your project, purchase enough to a test sew on the same fabric. If this is impossible, use a fabric that is similar in composition, weave and weight.

Design testing is a step that is too often overlooked. It's easy to be casual about doing test sews, because it increases the time and materials invested in your project. Whether you are a digitizer or embroiderer I highly recommend testing designs, especially in four specific circumstances.

- Test Sew if the design is from a designer whose work you are unfamiliar with.
- Test Sew if the fabric is something you haven't worked with before.
- Test Sew if the design is going to be placed on an expensive item or fabric.
- Test Sew any design you have digitized yourself.

Download the Test Sew Comment Sheet. Print out a copy and follow along.

Begin by using Pulse Ambassador or similar product to print out a worksheet of the design and color chart. <http://www.pulsemicro.com/ambassadordownload>

The steps to do this in Pulse are:

1. Start Ambassador go to **File>Open** and browse to the location of the file on your computer.
2. Once the design is on screen go to **File>Print Preview**
3. Click on the **Settings** button to open the Print Setting page
4. You can select the setting you prefer. I like to make sure these are checked:
 - Stitches
 - Print Actual Size
 - Hide Cross Hairs
 - Design Dimension
 - Thread Sequence
5. Click **OK**, that window closes and you can now Click **Print**.

Staple this worksheet to the Test Sew Comment Sheet.

Filling out the Test Sew Comment Sheet

Before you begin sewing, fill out the top portion of the Test Sew Comment Sheet with your information and that of the designer you are testing for (if that applies). Note any special instructions from the designer.

Write in the **fabric** content and weave (knit, woven, fleece). Is the fabric is light, mid or heavy weight.

In the **stabilizer** section let the designer know what type of stabilizer you are using, cut away, or tear away. List the brand and weight. If you are adhering the fabric and stabilizer write down how they are joined together.

Most embroidery **thread** is 40 weight, make note of any specialty threads you are using. What brands of thread did you use?

Hoop size and shape should be noted, as well as **Machine Format**. If you have a machine that has variable **speed** write down the speed at which you ran the design.

Now you are ready to start sewing. If you are testing a design of your own or for another designer you will want to watch the design sew. This will ensure you see anything that is amiss as it happens. Keep the Pulse Ambassador worksheet close by the machine and make any notes about the design as it sews.

If there is an area in question I like to circle it on the worksheet, and make a note.

Once the design is finished, unhoop and take a good look at the front and the back. If you are testing for someone else be sure to scan the design or take a digital photo to send to the designer.

Now answer these questions about the **Important Elements**.

Underlay: Were there areas that you felt needed more or less underlay? Were the stitches resting on top of the fabric or do they sink into the weave?

Lock Stitches: Are there any areas at risk of pulling out?

Jump Stitches: Are there areas that had a jump stitch that could be eliminated?

Trims: (For commercial machines) Are there jumps that need a trim? Are there trims that could be eliminated?

Stray Stitches: Are there any stray stitches that are out of place?

Density: Is there good coverage? Is the finished design soft and pliable, or stiff and “bullet proof”?

Registration: Do adjoining areas meet? Are all outlines in place?

Notes: This is where you put your notes from the worksheet. Also include your impressions of the design. The more information you give to the designer, the better. Be honest about any mistakes or areas in need of improvement. Designers are looking to create great designs which won't happen if the only feedback they get is that the designs are wonderful.

With this information you can easily evaluate designs for yourself or as a tester for a designer. Keep in mind that each designer has their own requirements for testers which may require more or less info.

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