Great Scott!

By Scott Goodman

Scott Goodman, owner of Sewing Machine Warehouse & Kneedle. com has been servicing the sewing public since 1976.

Step One

The holidays are long gone. All the decorations are back in storage. One box remains. The embroidery machine that your significant-other gifted you, is there…in the corner…waiting…

Step 1. Open the box. Take your new machine out of the box. Revel in the new-machine aroma.

Step 2. Review the manual. Give it a quick read and get an overview. You can dwell on specifics later.

Step 3. Visit your local sewing machine dealer. Many offer free operation lessons with purchase. Others will offer fee-based lessons on machines purchased elsewhere. Either option will greatly shorten your learning curve. YouTube videos can help. Based on your model's popularity, there could be many instructional videos available. Your first lesson should include: threading, bobbin winding, proper bobbin insertion, screen navigation, thread choice, correct bobbin thread, basic hooping and stabilizer choice.

Step 4. Make friends with stabilizer. Know your new friend intimately. Proper hooping and stabilization will be the one concept that will give your projects that professional look. My favorite starter 6-pack of stabilizer is: tear-away, cut-away, wash-away, no-show mesh, pressure sensitive, and water-soluble topping.

Step 5. Look at all the pretty colors! You will need thread. Remember the 101 Crayola box with built-in sharpener? Select a thread collection with as many colors that your budget will allow. Breadth is better than depth. A simple rose may be rose-colored, but you might need five different shades to complete the design with all the visual dimension that the digitizing artist intended.

Step 6. Raid your closet! Look for diversity in fabrics and grab several items that have not been worn in a couple of seasons. These items will become your crash-test dummies, (perhaps never to be worn). Choose woven: denim, challis; knits: t-shirts, polos, sweats and more.

Step 7. Monogram and personalize everything. This is a good start that will teach you layout and design placement techniques. Most garments cannot be hooped in the expected orientation, so consider what direction you might rotate your design (yes, your machine has a rotate function) to ensure that your design will finish right side up. Expect to sew front and back sides together at least once. We all (me too) have done this, at least, once.

Step 8. Try a multi-colored design. The technique will be the same as single color, but after each color, your machine will stop and wait patiently for you to replace the upper thread with the next color. Repeat as necessary until your design is complete.

Step 9. Hit the internet. Enter "embroidery designs" in the search box and behold the plethora of companies offering designs, with many free samples. Find your happy category, we all have our favorites, and download your first design in a language that your machine will understand. Your instruction book or local dealer will advise the correct extension that is compatible with your machine. Most design companies will offer the same embroidery design in a choice of three-character file extensions, ART, DST, EXP, HUS, PES JEF, VP3, XXX. The XXX extension is NOT what you might think. These files tell your machine to move the hoop to and fro, back and forth, stop for a color change, and cut the thread (if your machine is capable). These formats are designed to work with specific brands and models of sewing machines. Make sure your design is downloaded in a size that will work with your machine.

Your first download will probably be in a ZIP format. Embroidery machines do not speak ZIP. Just click on the file, a window will magically appear with your file(s) in it. Copy that file on to the media that your machine requires: USB, direct connect, or integrated software.

Consider software. Basic lettering software like **SVP** "Premier+ Extra" or **Brother** "BLS Lettering" can add many font styles and options to your arsenal. This basic software enables design combining, resizing and other basic functionality. Programs like "**dime Inspirations**' *Perfect Stitch Viewer*" or "**Embrilliance Thumbnailer**" will allow you to "see" design thumbnails on your PC, instead of btfly14x.pes.

Need custom designs? Invest in an embroidery suite that includes: Auto-digitizing, manual punching, lettering, sizing, arraying, combining, appliqué, photo stitch, and more. Compare **dime** *Perfect Embroidery Pro*, **SVP** *Premier+*, **Baby Lock** *Palette v10*, **Brother** *PE-Design v10*. Mac owners can create wonders with *TruEmbroidery 3*.

Step 10. Join a club. Embroidery is a social pastime and you will learn much from other embroiderers. Many specialty-retailers sponsor embroidery clubs and your area may have a guild or meet-up group that encourages embroidery.

Step 11. Have fun. This is a rewarding and gratifying hobby. A wonderful way to express your creativity with color, texture, and theme.

Still have your first project?
Send a picture to: GreatScott@kneedle.com, and I will post it on the Great Scott! Facebook page.
Need a friend?
Friend me: Facebook.com/GreatScottSews