



www.sayitinstitches.com

DIGITIZING FOR CUSTOM EMBROIDERY

Digitizing, otherwise commonly known as “punching”, is the process of converting a graphical image or artwork into an instruction file that an embroidery machine can read. Digitizing is undoubtedly the most important contributor to high quality embroidery. A skilled digitizer combines knowledge of the embroidery process, a keen artistic flair, and intimate knowledge of digitizing software and productivity tools. Many of the best digitizers have hands-on experience in operating embroidery machines and, as such, a strong knowledge of the physical forces in play when needle and thread interact with fabric. Digitizing involves many design choices which include:

- Selection of stitch type (i.e., satin, running, or various fill stitch patterns), based on both aesthetic considerations and embroidery mechanics.
- Properly “mapping” the sewing sequence, or the order for the various sewing steps that form part of the design (e.g., hats are generally embroidered from the center of the design outward and from the bottom up, in order to avoid distortions such as waves or fabric buckling).
- Use of underlay or an initial layer(s) of stitches to secure garment fabric to the backing and provide a foundation for top layer stitches.
- Design settings such as pull and push compensation (to offset physical forces that can create distortions in the design as it embroiders), density (number of stitches in a given area), stitch length, and many others.

Each design choice can have intentional or unintentional consequences on another design decision. Terrific digitizing takes into account all of these decisions to yield beautiful designs that embroider well and with no unnecessary stitches that increase cost to the customer. High quality digitizing also produces designs that are “robust” or that can embroider consistently well under a variety of fabric and other conditions.

When communicating with your embroiderer about a potential new design, consider the following steps:

- 1) Specify the proper design size, if known.
- 2) List all of the materials that the design will embroider on (pique material, leather, baby fabrics, high performance fabrics, towel, and fleece material all have different embroidery characteristics and digitizing requirements).

- 3) Indicate the location for placement of embroidery on the garment (hat and visor fronts imply different requirements and limitations than a shirt sleeve, for example).
- 4) Clearly identify all colors and indicate whether voided areas will be embroidered or left open.
- 5) Indicate any required special effects such as color blending or appliqué, bearing in mind the limitations of embroidery vs. printing (e.g., difficulty of capturing certain details such as very small lettering, multiple thin outlines, etc.).

Say it in Stitches provides world-class digitizing as part of its steadfast commitment to quality and leadership within the contract embroidery field. We can assist contract embroidery clients in developing the knowledge to be more effective in building their embroidered apparel business.