

3. USE THE 'GOOD' SCISSORS

Ensure you have a good, sharp pair of embroidery scissors for cutting silk ribbon into workable lengths and for snipping any long threads, or ribbons, from the back of your work. Take good care of your scissors, by protecting them before placing them back in your work basket. This will keep them sharp and prevent any unwanted nicks in the materials in the basket!

4. FABRIC-MARKING PENS

There are many types of fabric-marking tools available and it's really a matter of personal preference as to which one you use. Helen likes a fine-line, water-soluble, blue marking pen, which allows you to mark designs on most fabrics. The marks can be removed by gently dabbing them with a cotton bud dipped in cold water and allowing the fabric and completed embroidery to air-dry. If traces of the blue are still there, repeat the process until they disappear. There is a white, water-soluble marking pen which works in the same way for marking dark-value fabrics.

If you are unsure about using a marking pen on delicate or special fabric, test it first on a sample piece to ensure that any marks can be removed.

5. EMBROIDERY HOOPS

While some embroidery can be worked without a hoop, it's advisable to use one for ribbon embroidery, to maintain an even tension on the fabric. The size of the hoop depends on the how big your fabric. If possible, choose a hoop that fits outside the perimeter of the embroidery you've chosen, to avoid 'bruising' completed stitches.

Leave the surplus fabric around the embroidery, then trim it once the work is complete. If you are embroidering an unusual shape, mark it on the fabric, but don't cut it out until the embroidery is complete. By leaving the fabric in place, a hoop will be easier to fit. If the piece you have is too small for a hoop, you can stitch some waste fabric to the edges of it to enable it to fit the hoop. These strips can be removed after completion, then reused on another project.



6. TRANSFERRING THE DESIGN

There are two excellent methods of tracing a design onto fabric:

Use a lightbox – This is the easiest way to transfer a design. Just tape the design onto the surface of the lightbox to secure it, then place the fabric over it and trace with your preferred marking pen. You can improvise with this method by using a well-lit window the same way.

Tulle or netting – For thick fabrics you can use tulle or netting to transfer a design. Place the design on a flat surface, lay a piece of tracing paper over it, then pin the tulle to both pieces. Trace the design on the tulle with a permanent black marking pen – the layer of tracing paper protects the original design from these marks. There is no need to draw every small detail as it could become too confusing. When the pen marks are dry, place the marked tulle on the fabric and pin it in place, then draw over the black lines with your preferred fabric marker, through the netting and onto the fabric.

7. THREADING THE NEEDLE

A technique known as 'locking on' is used when embroidering with silk ribbon. One end of the ribbon is threaded through the eye of the needle, then the point of the needle is inserted approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ in from the end of the length of ribbon. The tail of the ribbon is then pulled to 'lock' the ribbon to the eye of the needle.

8. KNOTTING THE RIBBON

To prevent the tail of the ribbon being pulled through to the front of the fabric, there is a way to knot – or loop – the end. The ribbon is locked onto the needle as described in the previous point, then the tail is held and the needle is passed through the ribbon twice, about $\frac{1}{4}$ in apart and the same distance from the end of the ribbon. The needle is then pulled through the ribbon, the resulting loop at the tail end being sufficient to keep it at the back of the embroidery. This loop is quite flat and will prevent any bulk at the back of your work.

Or, you can tie a knot to begin, or leave a tail of ribbon to be stitched down with thread after several stitches have been worked.

Enjoy!



REFERENCES:

Embroidered Treasures for Silk Ribbon – Book 1 and *Embroidered Treasures for Silk Ribbon – Book 2* by Helen Dafter. Reprinted as a combined title – *Embroidered Treasures for Silk Ribbon* by Helen Dafter. Helen Dafter is an expert on many types of embroidery. For more embroidery inspiration, visit: www.helendafter.com.au