

Fabrics 101: Embroidering on Polyester Shantung

On a recent trip to the fabric store, I was reflecting on all of the choices we have. It wasn't so long ago that choices in the fabric store were limited in color, quality, and print. With new and improved manufacturing techniques, fabric producers have managed to meet my every wish and whim.

Those numerous choices are apparent in this article's topic: polyester shantung. This fabric is one that tries to please everyone, and usually succeeds. It feels like silk, so it's smooth and fun to run between your fingers.



But it's got a sturdy feeling to it also -- similar to crepe-backed satin. It drapes very well, and flows beautifully in scarves, skirts, and dresses. It's comfortable and cool. But it's also sturdy and hearty enough to use in a variety of home decor projects, like curtains and this pillow that I made.

Polyester shantung is a jack-of-all-trades type of fabric, something a real renaissance man or woman can enjoy.

Designs on the above pillow are [Peacock Fashion Feather](#) and [Peacock Feather](#).



And above all that, it's available in a gazillion colors, and is absolutely a dream to embroider on. On my recent trip to the fabric store I found polyester shantung available in a rainbow of hues, including today's current trends: turquoise and cream.



Polyester shantung is a bit on the slippery side, and I found that it was tricky to keep the fabric from slipping in the hoop. One of my favorite tools in the sewing room is spray adhesive (I use KK100). Just spray a quick shot on the stabilizer.....



....and smooth the fabric on top. Doing this will prevent the fabric and stabilizer from separating during the embroidery. Separation can cause puckering, and also misalignment of stitches (also called poor registration).

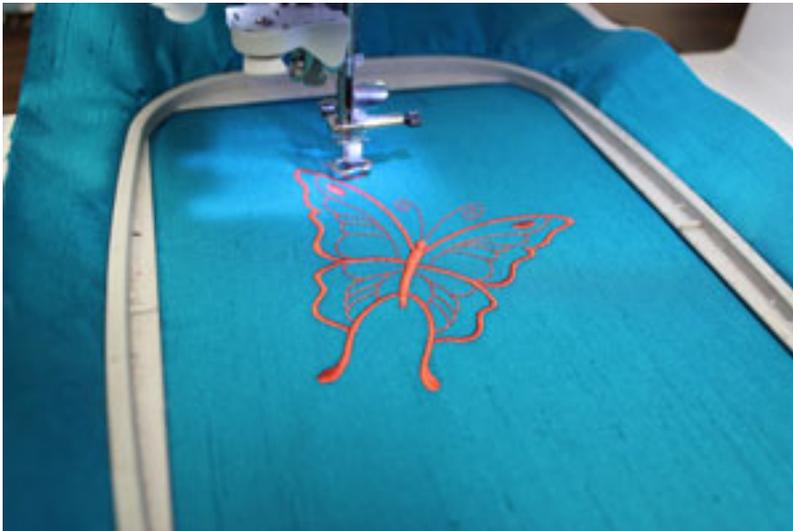
When working with slippery fabrics, you can also employ [Anne Campbell's tips of Wonder Tape and rubberized shelf liner](#). [That article is here](#).

Sometimes in the sewing room we need to think a little like MacGyver to get good results.



Polyester shantung is easily laundered, so there are no worries about [hoop burn](#). Hoop the fabric and stabilizer together, firmly.

I found that a medium weight (2.0 - 2.5 ounce) cutaway stabilizer did the best job of supporting the stitches. Using tear-away caused alignment and registration issues.



One-color butterfly from the Bundle of Butterflies collection.

I used a 75/11 sharp sewing needle on the polyester shantung. This size and type of needle makes very, very small holes in the fabric (smaller than a rounded-tip embroidery needle).

A wide variety of designs look great on polyester shantung. When choosing designs, consider draping. Will your project be worn, therefore draping is important? Or is it something like a pillow, placemat, or wall hanging -- items where draping isn't important?

For projects where draping is important, choose designs with open areas, like this butterfly. With this type of design, the fabric can drape and flow freely.



Shamrock & Knotwork design

When working on projects where draping isn't important, polyester shantung is sturdy enough to support solid-filled and complex designs.

If you use cutaway stabilizer (one piece, medium weight), spray adhesive (or those [perfect hooping tips](#)), and hoop the fabric and stabilizer firmly, you'll be able to stitch very complex designs on this fabric with great results.

Stitching tips for polyester shantung:

Needle	75/11 sharp needle; an embroidery needle may also be used
Stabilizer	Cutaway (2.5 ounce)
Design Choice	Choose designs of low to medium complexity, but consider draping.

[Click here for a printable version of this article.](#)

You'll need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer. If you don't have it, you can download a free copy by clicking on the icon below.

