

Embroidering caps on commercial embroidery machines can cause struggles and stress. Most cap styles are very unique in their shape and the way they are made. In this article, we will talk about the different styles of caps and ways to hoop them. We will also talk about different types of cap frames. Keep in mind that the embroidery design digitizing is as important as hooping caps correctly. If you are not sure on how to digitize for caps, please contact a professional digitizer for assistance.

Caps can be made out of anything from heavy wool (like major league baseball caps) to thin nylon material (like wind jackets). On top of the material that the cap is made out of there might be a structure on the front of them. The material that makes up the front of the hat is called buckram. Buckram can be as soft and flexible or something that feels like heavy fishing line. In between these different parts the seam of the cap are created as to connect the buckram to the rest of the cap. Some caps can be very challenging to the hoop. Practice, practice, practice. The goal is to hold the cap as tightly as possible and keep the front panel as low to the needle plate for the best sewing.

Prepare the Cap

Preparing the cap before it is hooped will help the sew quality and ease the hooping process.

To prepare the cap

1. Remove any cardboard from the inside of the cap.



2. Straighten the bill as best you can. It can be reshaped after the embroidery is complete.
3. Pull the sweatband to the outside of the cap. Near the back of the cap, the sweatband may be sewn into the cap. At this point, it may need to be folded a bit to fit in the frame.



Hooping the cap using a wide-angle cap frame

1. Slide the cap frame onto the cap gauge.
2. Swing the metal strap open. Please note that some wide angle cap frames may have two straps.



3. Place a piece of cap backing over the gauge and the teeth of the cap frame. Make sure that the backing is long enough to support the full embroidery area. For most wide angle cap frames a length of 16" will be enough.

Some people find using a piece of double sided tape to hold the backing while they are hooping the cap. Also, you can take and precut cap backing to 16" and roll it up. Then you can put the roll of cut up cap backing into the inside of the cap gauge. When you need a piece, you can pull it out from inside the gauge.

4. Slide the prepared cap onto the cap frame with the visor pointing up and the frame going inside the cap. The bill should be pushed against the bill-stop on the frame. The bill should also be relatively centered on the frame. The centering mark on the bill-stop can be used for reference.

The sweatband may not touch the vertical ridge of the frame. That's okay. Different caps have varying sweatband widths and not all will appear the same when hooped.



5. The cap should ride over the two clip posts toward the bottom of each side of the frame.
6. Press down on the bill to ensure that it is falling in the bill trough of the cap frame. This will help keep the cap from slipping around or off the frame when the cap is being sewn.



7. Pull the side of the sweatband toward the cap frame and down. Smooth any bunching of the cap sides or sweatband. You may eventually need to fold the sweatband a bit to avoid the latching hook. But this will help with the placement of the cap on the frame. As you do this, watch the backing to ensure it is still in place.
8. When the left side of the cap is within the strap hinge post, swing the strap up and over the cap brim. On the side of the cap, the teeth of the strap should fall just above the seam attaching the

sweatband of to the cap.



9. Continue bringing the strap around the front of the cap. On the front of the cap, the teeth of the strap must fall into the seam for the bill.



10. Bring the strap down the other side of the cap. Make sure the teeth of the strap fall just above the stitching attaching the sweat band. This will help ensure a level sewout.
11. Hook the latch on the strap into the hook on the latch post. You may need to fold or adjust the sweatband of the cap slightly to accommodate the hook and latch. At this point, you want to hook the latch, but not close the latch.



12. The cap frame strap may need to be tightened if it does not fit the cap snugly or loosened should it be too tight to fasten appropriately. This is only necessary when hooping a different style of cap for the first time using the cap frame. Subsequent hoopings of that style should fit well after the adjustment.
13. Smooth the lower part of the cap while snapping the buckle closed. The buckle should be tight.
14. While pressing the cap material around the post, use a clip to secure the material to the post. Orient the clip handles toward the back of the cap. Some wide angle cap frames may have a

different way to hold the back of the cap.



These are only necessary when sewing the sides of the cap or if the cap is unstructured.

15. You may now remove the cap frame from the gauge.

16. The cap is now ready to be placed on the wide-angle driver on the machine.

There are several different types of cap frames other than the wide-angle. There is a conventional cap frame. The benefits to this cap frame over the wide-angle are that it holds the front of the cap from the sides as well as the bottom, by the bill. This minimizing the movement of the cap. It will only allow you to do the front panel of a cap.



There are a ton of tips on hooping caps that were not mentioned in this article but this will give you the basics. From there, do not be afraid of trying other methods that people mention on embroidery groups or social media.

Happy sewing,

Mike Doe