



STEP BY STEP: How to Hoop Baseball Caps

SUPPLY LIST

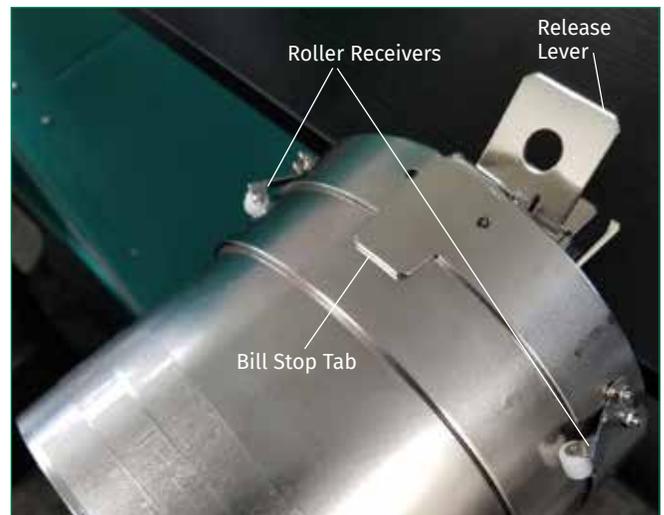
- Blank Baseball Cap
- E-Zee Cap Backing
- Cap Hoop Gauge (Jig)
- Cap Frame (Hoop)
- Madeira Spray Adhesive (for unstructured caps)
- Double-Sided Tape
- Optional: Hooping Station

Stitching a great design on a baseball cap starts with a great hooping job. Hooping caps is very different from hooping any other item. We will first explain the equipment you'll need, and then take you step-by-step through the hooping process so that you can get started embroidering stand-out caps!

EQUIPMENT

Cap Gauge (Jig) is made up of the following parts:

- **Padded Clamp with Finger-Tightened Screw** – Secures the gauge to the edge of your work table or work station
- **Bill Stop Tab** – The bill stop tab is centered on top of the gauge and fits into the notch directly in front of the bill stop when the cap frame is attached.
- **Roller Receivers** – The roller receivers sit on either side of the bill stop tab and lock the frame in place.
- **Release Lever** – Often located at the top of the padded clamp this handy lever releases the cap gauge, allowing both the frame and gauge to spin for 360° viewing. **Please note that not all cap gauge models feature a release lever.**



Cap Gauge and Cap Frame

Cap Frame (Hoop) is made up of the following parts:

- **Bill Stop** – A horizontal flap located at the top of the cap frame. The sweatband is tucked up underneath the bill stop and the bill of the cap is pushed up against it to ensure proper placement.
- **Bill Stop Guide Line** – Typically a red line or dot marking the center of the bill stop and used to align the center of the cap at the top of the cap frame.
- **Extending Arms** – Located on the bottom of the cap frame and are used with the bent arm binder clips to hold the fabric of the cap taut.
- **Bent Arm Binder Clips** – Foldover-style clamps used to secure excess material on the back of the cap. (continued on page 2)



Cap Frame (Hoop)

EQUIPMENT (continued)

Band and Parts:

- **Band (with teeth)** – Attached to one of the extending arms on the cap frame, the band wraps up and over the front of the cap to hold it in place for embroidery.
- **Band Teeth** – These are aligned snugly along the cap bill when the band is pulled over the cap and are inserted into the seam where the cap front meets the bill.
- **Hook** – Located on the extending arm opposite the band attachment and captures and holds the latching loop.
- **Latching Loop** – Located on the free end of the band and is looped over the hook.
- **Locking Lever** – Located on the end of the band with the latching loop. Snaps up to lock the band in place.



Band



Latching Lever and Loop on hook

Optional Hooping Station

A hooping station is a free-standing unit, usually made of metal framing and has adjustable bars to arrange according to your needs. It provides a stable ledge for hooping caps and holds necessary products and tools. If you're not ready to purchase one just yet, you can easily set up a table in your embroidery shop for a temporary or permanent solution. Be sure to adjust the height of your table so that you can securely attach the cap gauge just above waist height.

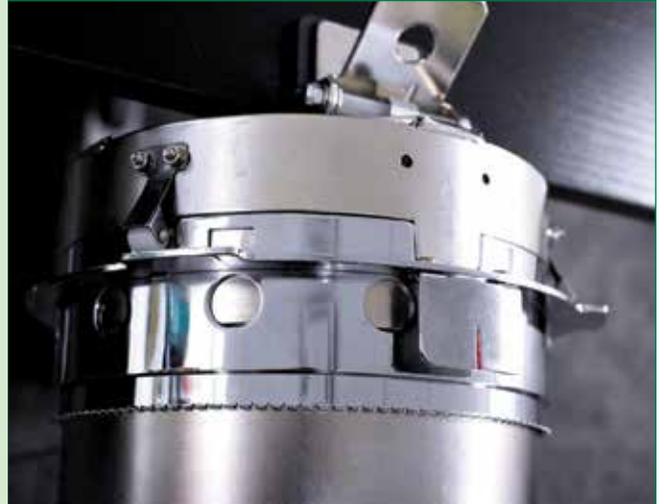


Hooping Station image courtesy HoopTech Product

TECHNIQUE

Step 1 Secure the Cap Gauge and Attach the Frame

- Loosen the finger-tightened screw on the cap gauge wide enough to fit over the edge of your table surface. Tighten and ensure that it doesn't move or shift.
- Slide cap frame over the gauge cylinder with the extension arms pointing toward you. Be sure that the bill stop is at the top center position, aligned with the bill stop tab on the gauge.
- Push the frame onto the gauge until the roller receivers on the gauge snap into the slots on either side of the bill stop on the frame.



Step 2 Cap Preparation

- Remove the cardboard or plastic that is tucked inside the cap for shipping and set it aside for repacking later. Do not use it for a stabilizer.
- Pull out the cap sweatband and flatten it so it is sticking out all around. The side tacks holding the sweatband in place can be removed if needed for better alignment.
- Flatten the bill of the cap so it will be able to lie flat against the bill stop.
- If you are embroidering on structured caps, you can massage and/or steam the front of the cap where the buckram lining is located. This will make the material more pliable and easier to hoop.



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CAP DIGITIZING

- Designs should be digitized to stitch from the center out and from the cap bill up.
- Avoid placing initial stitches directly on the center seam.
- Digitize design in segments to avoid registration issues.

Step 2 continued

- For unstructured caps, you can add temporary structure to the cap by lightly coating a small piece of cap backing with spray adhesive and pressing it to the inside of the cap front. After embroidering, this piece can be torn away with the additional piece of cap backing used when hooping (see Step 3 below).



Step 3 Hooping Part 1: Backing & Sweatband Positioning

- Curl a piece of E-Zee Cap Backing so it conforms to the round cap frame and lay it in place on top of the cap gauge. A piece of double-sided tape can help hold the backing in place on top of the gauge.
- With the sweatband folded outward, place the cap over the top of the backing-covered cap frame and gauge. Wrap the bottom and sides of the cap around and underneath the frame. The bottom of the cap should wrap around the outside of the extending arms.
- Push the bill of the cap firmly against the bill stop, and use the red Bill Stop Guide Line to center of your cap. Align the center of the cap slightly to the left of the line to account for movement when the band is locked in place.



HELPFUL TERMS

Structured Caps have a stiff buckram lining behind the cap front. Buckram can have a rough surface that prevents the Cap Frame from moving smoothly.

This is why cap backing plays a vital role in cap embroidery.

Unstructured Caps are more pliable because they have no buckram lining. An extra sheet of cap backing can be adhered to the inside cap front to temporarily create more structure during the preparation of the cap before hooping.

Step 4 Hooping Part 2: Conforming the Cap & Wrapping the Band

- With one hand, pull downward on the bottom of the cap and rub the palm of your free hand over the front of the cap to smooth it out and conform it to the shape of the cap gauge. This will ensure that the front of the cap is as close as possible to the needle plate during the embroidery process.
- While still holding the bottom of the cap with one hand, use your other hand to grab the band and lay it loosely up and over the top of the cap.



Step 5 Hooping Part 3: Securing the Band Teeth and Locking in Place

- Make sure that the band teeth are riding snugly along the side seam of the sweatband and are inserted into the seam along the bill of the cap.
- Hook the latching loop at the end of the band onto the receiving hook. Do not snap the locking lever in place just yet.
- Visually check that the sweatband is folded outward and is tucked under the bill stop. The sweatband should be smooth and flat along the sides and run evenly all the way around the cap frame. Once you have everything aligned and positioned correctly, snap the locking lever down and lock it in place.



Step 6 Checking & Correcting

- The band length is adjustable. If it is too tight and you are having trouble locking it, try loosening the tension on the band. You can do this by adjusting the screws where the band attaches to the cap frame.
- Snap the Locking Lever in place and test the top of the Band by running your finger along it where the front of the cap meets the bill. The Band should be secure and should not move or ripple; if it does, you will need to adjust the Band and re-tighten the screws.



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Step 7 Securing the Cap with Binder Clips

- If your cap gauge allows, spin it around so that the bottom of the frame is facing up. Pull the excess material at the rear of the cap tightly and secure the fabric to the extending arms with the bent arm binder clips. If your gauge does not spin, you will need to do this from the bottom.
- You are now ready to bring the hooped cap to your machine to embroider!



THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Not all cap gauges and frames are exactly the same; expect some variations across different models.
- Offer a quality cap that “plays well” with your machine. This may require some experimentation and testing brands.
- Match the placement of the design to the available stitch field. Your machine and cap frame will recommend a maximum stitch field.



CAP ANATOMY AND DESIGN PLACEMENT

Besides the front of the cap, embroidery can also be placed on the side panels near the brim, above the keyhole, or even on the strap.

Graphic created by Erich Campbell <https://www.erichcampbell.com>

