

Chapter 4

PREPARATION

Dressing the Working Frame

Dressing a frame does require time but careful and thorough preparation very directly affects both the quality of the finished piece of work and the ease in which the embroidery is executed.

Step-by-step procedure is given for two methods of dressing a stretcher bar frame. Some embroiderers feel that the second method, the traditional laced frame, is mandatory but the author has used the first method for many years with excellent results and has never had fabrics loosen up while the embroidery was in progress. On the other hand, the fabrics on a laced frame do loosen up more easily, often requiring some tightening up before the embroidery is completed. The choice of methods is a matter of personal preference after both have been tried at least once. However, if the backing fabric is cotton muslin or humidity is considerable, it is urged that the laced frame method always be used—cotton fabric or excessive moisture in the air results in stretched fabrics and tightening up is much easier to do when the backing fabric was laced.

Procedure Required for Both Methods:

1. Preshrink the backing fabric and press. Press the embroidery ground fabric so that it is free of any wrinkles or creases.
2. Selvage edges on both fabrics should be slashed or removed. Fabrics should be mounted on the working frame so that their selvage edges run parallel with the side edges of the frame.
3. Use a stretcher bar frame which is at least 7" wider and longer for

Method #1 and at least 10" wider and longer for Method #2 than the design area. (Measurements are based on use of 1" wide stretcher bars.)

4. Assemble frame making sure it is perfectly square—always check this with a square ruler. Secure each squared-up corner with a small nail on both sides of the frame.

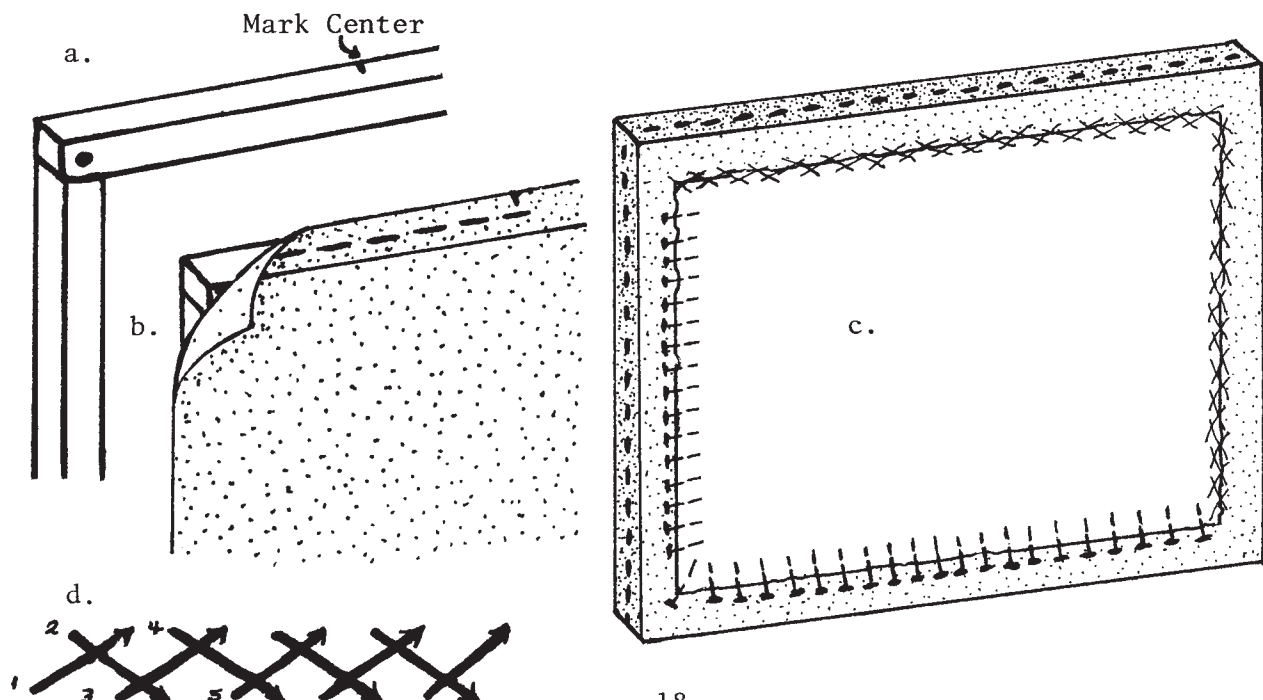
5. Both fabrics must be cut to required size exactly on thread—i.e. grain must be followed. After the fabrics are cut, check by raveling away threads on each edge until the straight of the fabric is obvious.

Procedure Required for Method #1

The key to success in this method of dressing a frame is that the backing fabric must be secured so taut that a coin dropped onto it would bounce. As long as nothing heavy rests on top of it, the backing fabric will remain taut throughout the embroidery process primarily because it was not stapled onto the front edge of the frame but was taken over all edges.

The staple gun required for this method should be lightweight so only one hand is required to operate it, leaving the other hand free to constantly hold the backing fabric in the desired position.

Large, heavy-duty thumb tacks may be used instead of staples to secure the backing fabric to the frame—but it is very difficult to accomplish the tautness that is possible when a staple gun is used.



Procedure for Method #1 (cont.) Refer to p. 17 for Steps #1 thru #5.

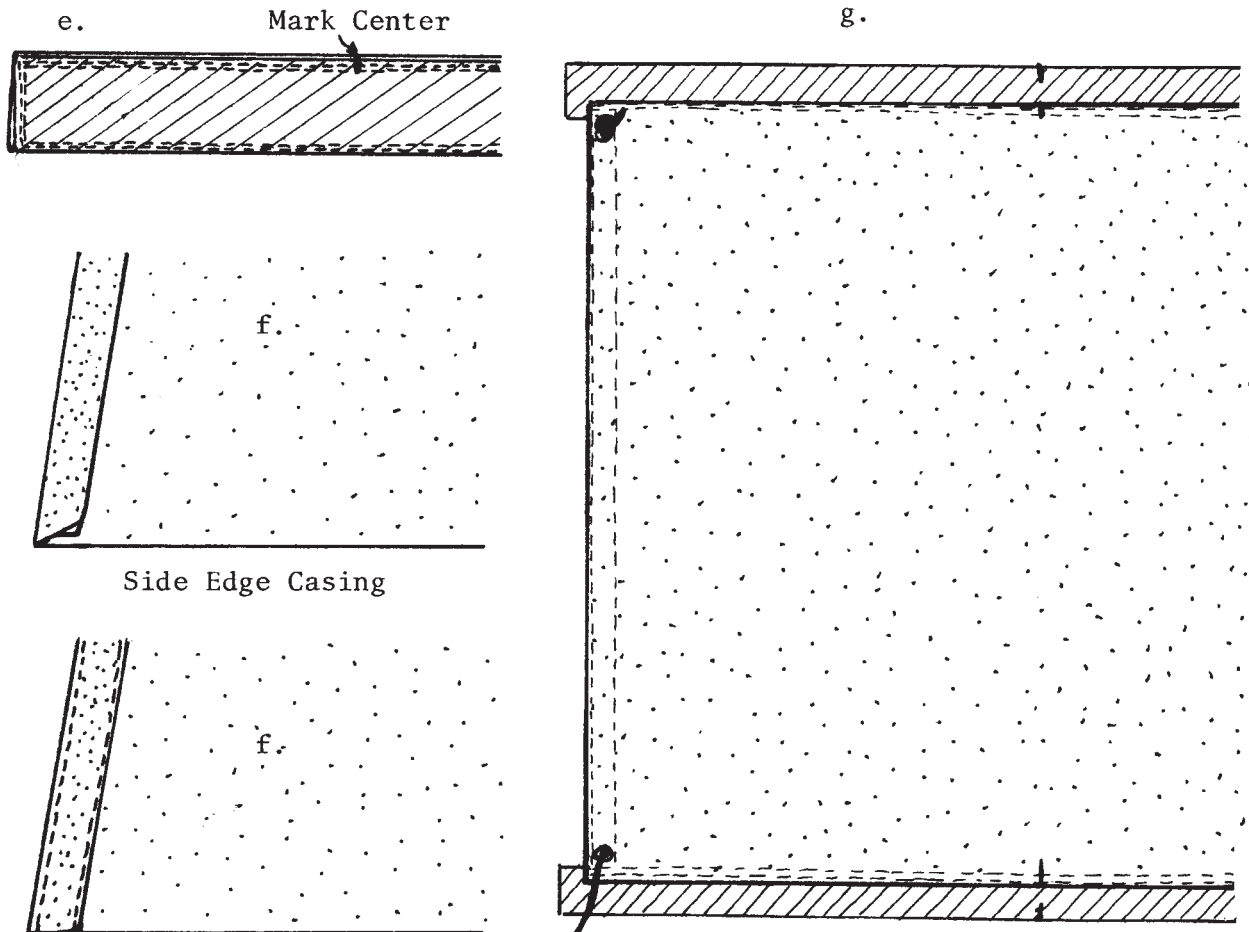
6. Mark the exact center at back edge of each side of frame. (fig.a)
7. Cut the preshrunk backing fabric on thread $1\frac{1}{2}$ "-2" wider and longer than the outside measurements of the frame. Mark the center on the top edge. Follow the center thread down the fabric to the bottom edge, using a straight pin to help guide your eyes, and mark the center on this bottom edge. Repeat for the side edges.
8. Match the center of the top edge of the backing fabric with the center on the top edge of the frame and hold in position with a staple.
9. Pull the backing fabric firmly toward one corner on the top edge, keeping the grain of the fabric lined up with the edge of the frame, and staple fabric at corner. Pull the backing fabric firmly toward the other corner and staple. Continuing to keep the fabric grain straight staple the backing fabric in position on the remainder of this edge, placing the staples only about $1/4$ " apart. (fig.b)
10. Pull the backing fabric firmly toward the bottom edge of the frame taking up all the slack in the fabric and then pull abit more. (Note: The tension necessary to get the backing fabric drum-tight must be evenly distributed so care must be taken not to pull the fabric too taut or leave it too loose in this first direction. This does require practice.)
11. Match up the center of the bottom edge of the backing fabric with the center on the bottom edge of the frame and hold in position with a staple. Repeat #9 for this bottom edge.
12. Match up the center of one side edge of the backing fabric with the center on the side edge of the frame and hold in position with a staple. Repeat step #9 for this side edge.
13. Pull the backing fabric toward the opposite and final side. The fabric must now be pulled so that it is drum-tight and yet the grain of the fabric must continue to be straight, which it will be if the tension has been evenly distributed in both directions.
14. Match up the center of this final edge of the backing fabric with the center on the side edge of the frame, pull the fabric very taut, and hold in position with a staple. Repeat step #9 for this final edge.
15. Cut the wrinkle-free embroidery ground fabric on thread $1/2$ " smaller than the inside measurements of the working frame.
16. Center the ground fabric on top of the backing fabric and then line

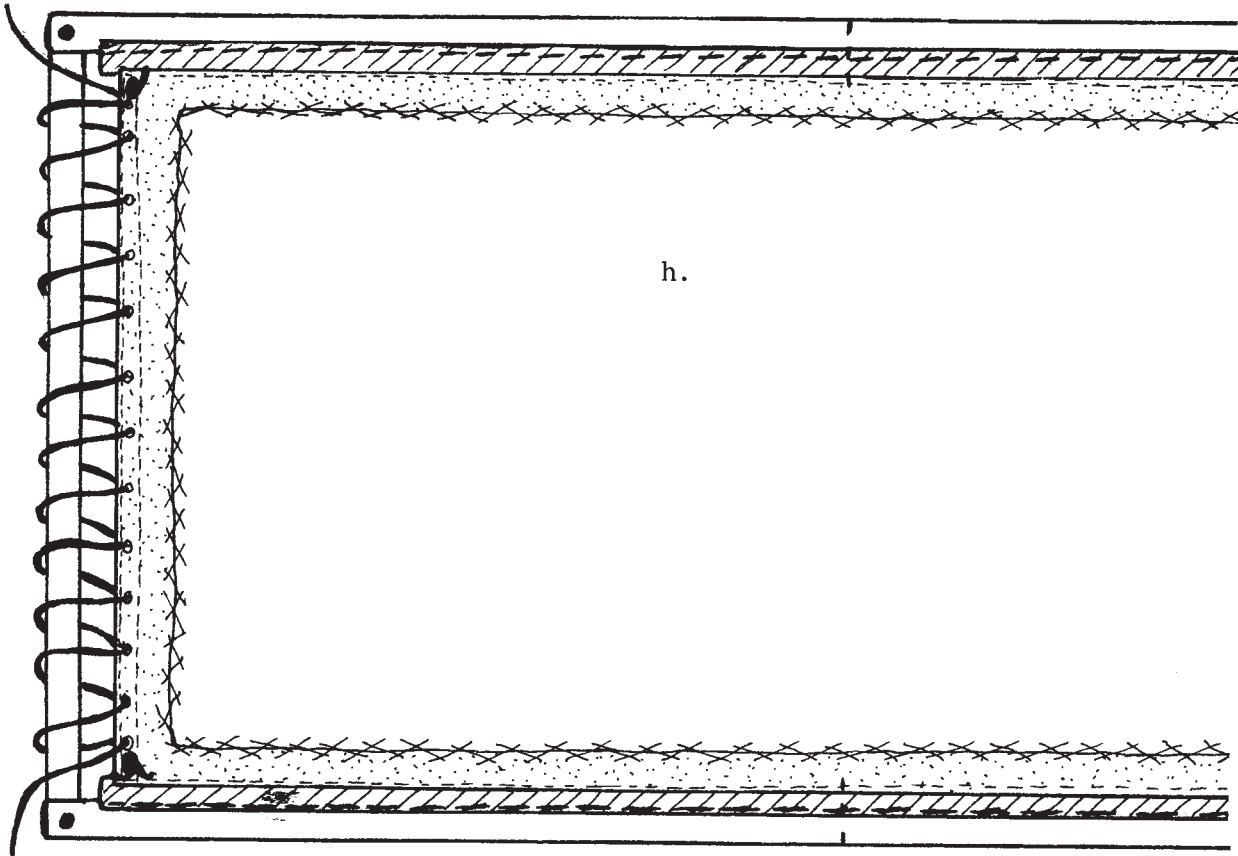
Procedure Required for Method #1 (cont.)

up the grain of the two fabrics. Beginning at the center of one edge and working towards each corner, temporarily hold the ground fabric in position with straight pins. Repeat for the opposite side and then the other two sides. The ground fabric should be pulled gently across the backing fabric so that it lays flat and smooth—do not pull so taut that the fabric looks strained. (fig. c)

17. Wax any type of sewing thread and attach ground fabric in place with herringbone stitches. The latter are taken over the raw edges of the fabric so that it will not ravel during the embroidery process. The herringbone stitches must be executed in two actions—poke the needle straight up and then straight down through the fabrics. Continually check that the grain of the fabrics line up and that the ground fabric remains smooth. (fig. c and d)

Procedure Required for Method #2





6. Cut 2-4" wide pieces of drill cloth or other heavy tight-weave fabric which are 2" shorter than the inside width of the working frame. Fold each piece in half lengthwise, press, and machine stitch twice around all edges, the first row 1/4" and the second row 1/2" from the outer edges. Mark the lengthwise center of both strips. (fig.e)

7. Measure the inside width and length of working frame. Cut the pre-shrunk backing fabric on thread 1/2" less than the width and 2 1/2" less than the height.

8. Turn under 1/4" on both side edges of the backing fabric and press. Turn under a 1/2" hem on both of these edges, this forming the casing to hold cords which reinforce the hems for the lacing. Machine stitch close to both folded edges on each side hem. (fig.f)

9. Turn under 1/2" on the top and bottom edges of backing fabric and press. Mark the center of both edges and match to the center markings on the drill cloth strips, overlapping the latter about 1/2". Temporarily hold in position with a couple straight pins and then permanently secure the two layers with 2 rows of machine stitching, one 1/4" apart from the

Procedure Required for Method #2 (cont.)

other. Slightly pull on the backing fabric during the first row of stitching on each strip. (fig.g)

10. Through only the top layer of backing fabric, cut a short slit in each corner of the casing formed in step #8.

11. Cut 2 lengths of strong, tightly-twisted string which are about 2" longer than the inside length of the frame. Wrap scotch tape around one end and place a knot in the other end of both lengths. Using the taped end, slide the string through the bottom slit in the casing and then work it up the side edge and out the slit at the top. Pull the string up firmly so it rests against the row of machine stitching on the outer folded edge, knot the taped end, and cut off any excess string. Then repeat for the other side. (fig.g)

12. Mark the center of the top and bottom of the working frame. Match up the center on one drill cloth strip and attach to the top edge of the frame with a staple gun or thumb tacks. Staple or tack from the center out to one corner and then to the other corner, pulling firmly on the drill cloth strip while it is being attached. (fig.h)

13. Pull the other drill cloth strip toward the bottom edge of the frame taking up all the slack in the backing fabric and then pulling abit more. Match up the center of the strip with the center of the bottom edge of the frame and attach as in step #12. (fig.h)

14. Using an awl or knitting needle, punch holes in the side casings, spacing them 1" apart. (fig.h)

15. With the same type of string used in step #11, cut 2 lengths which are at least 5 times the outside length of the working frame. Secure the string onto the corners at the bottom edge of the frame.

16. Wrap scotch tape around the opposite ends of the string. Using the taped end, go down into the first hole from the top of the frame, then under and around the side stretcher bar and repeat until the lacing is completed. Leave the string hanging and repeat for the other side. (fig.h)

17. Beginning at the first hole on one side, pull the string up tightly at each consecutive hole until all the slack is removed. Then secure the string at the top corner of the frame. Repeat this for the other side. The backing fabric should now be drum-tight and, if the tension

Procedure Required for Method #2 (cont.)

is evenly distributed in both directions, the side edges of the backing fabric will be parallel with the side edges of the frame. (fig.h)

18. Measure the size of the backing fabric inside all rows of machine stitching so that the embroidery ground fabric will lay over only a single layer of fabric.

19. Cut the wrinkle-free embroidery ground fabric on thread 1/2" smaller than the above measurement.

20. Center the embroidery ground fabric on top of the backing fabric and line up the grain of the two fabrics. Beginning at the center of one edge and working towards each corner, temporarily hold the ground fabric in position with straight pins. Repeat for the opposite side and then the other two sides. (fig.h) The ground fabric should be pulled gently across the backing fabric so that it lays flat and smooth—do not pull so taut that the fabrics look strained.

21. Wax any type of sewing thread and attach the ground fabric in place with herringbone stitches. The latter are taken over the raw edges of the fabric so that it will not ravel during the embroidery process.

The herringbone stitches must be executed in two actions—poke the needle straight up and then straight down through the fabrics. Continually check that the grain of the fabrics line up and that the ground fabric remains smooth. (fig. d and h)

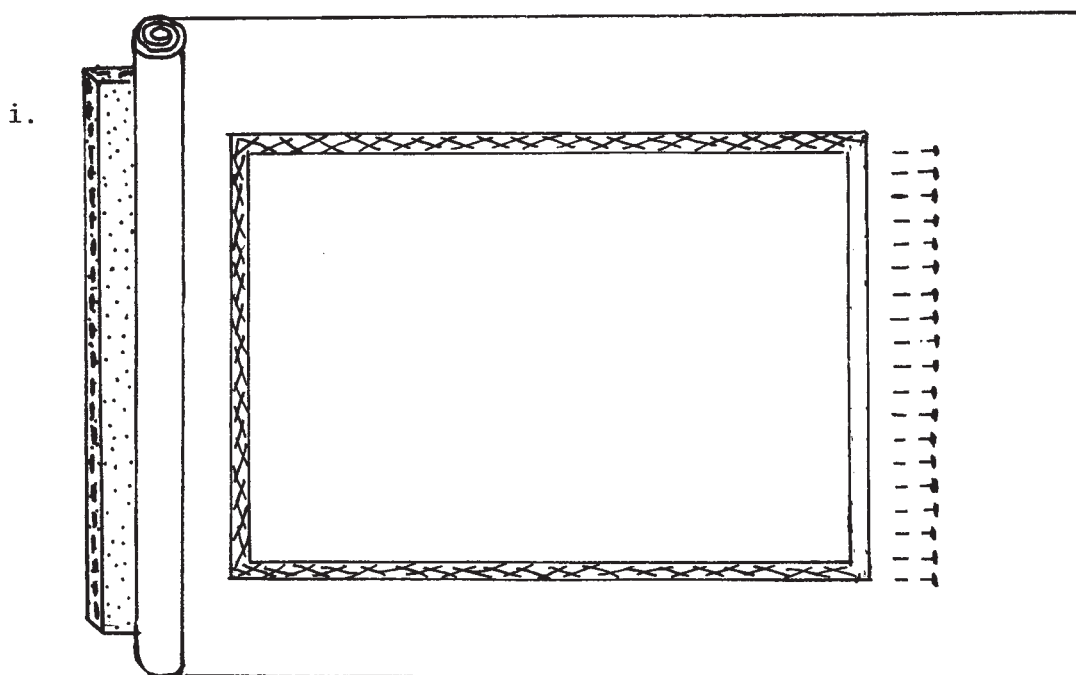
Alternative For Attaching the Embroidery Ground Fabric

When the design is quite large, it is preferred to work one section at a time, remove the work from the frame, and then re-dress the frame for another section—than to work on an oversize frame in which it would be virtually impossible to reach the center area.

This alternative can be used with either Method #1 or #2. Actually, it may be used with any size design, if preferred to step #21 above and step #17 on p.20. This alternative is particularly useful when you have a small design but need an oversize piece of embroidery ground fabric for mounting the work after the completion of the embroidery—but you do not wish to work on any larger frame than is necessary for the design itself.

1. After the frame is fully dressed with the backing fabric, cut the wrinkle-free ground fabric on thread to the desired size.

2. Place the embroidery ground fabric on top of the backing fabric, making sure the grain of the ground fabric is straight. If larger than the frame, allow the fabric to temporarily hang over the edges of the frame.
3. Working inside the rows of machine stitching (if Method #2 used), temporarily hold the embroidery ground fabric in position with rather closely-spaced straight pins, beginning at the center of each edge and working toward each corner. The ground fabric should lay flat and smooth but do not pull so taut that the fabric looks strained.
4. Cut 3" wide strips of tissue paper. Fold each strip twice to make 3/4" tape. Place the tape inside the row of straight pins and, using basting thread, attach with herringbone stitches placed directly over the top of the tape. (fig d and i) The use of the tissue tape prevents the basting thread and herringbone stitches from leaving a permanent imprint on the embroidery ground fabric, which is particularly important if the area of the fabric will be exposed when the embroidery is mounted.
5. Lay some tissue paper over any excess ground fabric hanging off the edges of the frame and roll the fabric up, securing it carefully with straight pins at the corners of the frame. This will prevent the excess fabric from being soiled or damaged.



Transferring the Design

Transfer the design to the embroidery ground fabric only after the frame has been completely dressed.

With Dressmaker's Carbon Paper:

1. Draw the design on plain white paper. The design must be exactly as desired because it is impossible to remove any of the carbon lines from the embroidery ground fabric—except when white carbon is used.
2. Place a book of the same thickness as the working frame and of a size which fits within the inside area of the frame under the fabrics. The book is necessary to support the fabrics, for considerable pressure is usually needed to accomplish the transfer of the design—the fabrics could easily stretch from this hard pressing down if they were not supported.
3. Select a color of carbon which is a good contrast to the embroidery ground fabric. Test the color in a corner of the ground fabric to make sure the design lines will be easily seen. Using a couple pieces of scotch tape, attach the top edge of the carbon to the ground fabric. Since some tapes can leave a mark on the fabric, make sure the tape is placed in an area which will not show when the finished work is mounted.
4. Center the design sheet and attach its top edge to the embroidery ground fabric, using a couple pieces of scotch tape taking care that this tape also is not in an area which will show when the work is mounted.
5. Using a hard lead pencil or a ballpoint pen which has run out of ink, trace the design pressing down hard. After a small area is traced, carefully lift the papers to make sure that the design is transferring. When the tracing is completed, lift the papers again to check that all lines of the design have been traced.

With Basting Stitches:

With this method the design can be altered by simply removing the basting stitches.

1. Draw the design on heavy tracing paper. Center the design and attach all edges to the embroidery ground fabric using pins or scotch tape.

2. Using silk sewing thread in a color compatible with the metals to be used, stitch through the tracing paper and fabrics with small running stitches. When the transfer is completed, carefully tear away the tracing paper. Unless the design is altered, these stitches become permanent being covered by the embroidery.