



GETTING STARTED WITH FREEHAND

Thread Painting

Embroidery is one of the most ancient art forms, and has continued to be a popular past time for people of every social and economic class around the world. Thread painting is a modern craft which breaks from traditional formal embroidery methods. Instead of focusing on perfect, uniform stitching, we are going to use thread to blend colors in a way that's more like layering colored pencil or guache than following a set of rules.

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SUPPLIES & RESOURCES

Must have

- Embroidery needles
- Hoop
- Fabric of your choice
- Assortment of floss
- Scissors

Optional

- Chalk pencil
- Threader tool
- Work lamp
- Tote or Kavvu-type bag
- Transfer paper

Image resources

- Unsplash.com
- Pixabay.com
- Pexels
- Original art or photos

STEP 1: PLAN AND SKETCH

Choose a design. There are kits and patterns that will teach you the basics of blending colors. If you use a pattern, you'll need to get transfer paper or use a light table. OR you can use my method: sketch out a rough idea and then wing it. I use a loose basting stitch to sketch and then go back over it with stronger stitches.



STEP 2: MAKE YOUR THREAD PALETTE

Gather the colors you'll need.

Embroidery floss is available at any craft store. DNC is the most common brand -- it's great quality, affordable skeins of thread that comes in a huge array of colors. Start out with the basic colors you plan to use, as well as several shades lighter and darker.

Prepare the thread.

Most embroidery floss consists of 6 strands twisted together. Cut a piece about 20" long, and then gently pull the strands apart. If you want to achieve fine detail, use just one or two strands at a time. If you've in a hurry to cover a large area, use three or four together. Set aside the other strands, and use the strands you pulled out together to thread your needle.

STEP 3: SET UP YOUR HOOP

Choose a fabric. I like to use either 100% cotton quilting fabric or lightweight canvas or felt -- these won't pucker, and come in all different colors. This also works great on denim, but you may want a heavier needle.

Cut your fabric so that when it's in the hoop, there's about 2 inches of fabric around the edges.

Stretch the fabric inside your hoop. Stretch it tight like a drum, and tighten the hoop as much as possible. If the screw slips, Loc-tite will help.

STEP 4: START PAINTING!

Lay down color.

This first layer can be rough - it's like an underpainting. Pay attention to direction of your "brush strokes" and try to blend colors in different areas.



Add more detail.

This is the fun part! Work on different sections that need attention. Just like with a traditional painting or drawing, take your time, use smaller strands, and think about contrast.

