

When you insert the inner ring, apply the hoop to the fabric at the top or bottom of the hoop, whichever is more comfortable for you. Complete the motion moving continuously toward the other edge of the hoop. You may gently pull the fabric downward while hooping, if you believe it is necessary. This is helpful when hooping knits, but be careful you don't pull too hard, which could result in stretching and distortion of the knit. This can create puckering when the fabric is released from the hoop because the yarn's memory causes it to try to revert to its previous state. The embroidery needle can even burst fibers in the knit if it has been stretched too much in the hooping process, even if it is a ball point needle. While hooping, keep an eye on your marking, making sure that your reference line stays straight with a reference on your hoop (fig. 4-5). Most hoops have notches or other reference points that bisect the hoop. If yours does not, use nail polish or paint to mark the exact center of each of the four sides.

After the fabric is in the hoop, inspect the surface of the fabric. Do you see ripples? If you see a few slight surface ripples, press the inner ring down slightly to remove them. The inner ring will now be slightly lower than the outer ring. Some hoops have a lip that does not allow this. If that is the case with your hoop, you should hoop again and loosen the hoop screw slightly. Frequently, severe rippling is the result of a hoop that is adjusted too tightly (fig. 4-6), forcing the fabric toward the center of the hoop. Do not tug on the fabric to remove severe ripples while the fabric is in the hoop. We all sometimes give a little pull, but try not to get into the habit of routinely pulling out ripples rather than avoiding them through proper hooping.

If your hooped item looks good, try this test. Try to lift the fabric from the stabilizer with your thumb and forefinger. If you can easily lift the fabric, hoop the item again. If it is difficult to separate the two layers, you can move on to the next test. Run your forefinger across the fabric surface. Does fabric bunch up around your finger? This is called snow plowing. If you see the fabric snow plow as you slide your finger, rehoop the fabric.

Next, turn the hooped piece over to inspect the stabilizer. It should be flat and smooth, extending from all edges of the hoop (fig. 4-7). Don't be lax on this point, or you will be disappointed in your embroidery result. In fact, your stabilizer should be hooped so well that you could embroider on it even if the fabric weren't present.



*Fig. 4-5. After marking the fabric, hoop it so the line is straight in the hoop. This will assure that the embroidery will be straight.*



*Fig. 4-6. Tightening the hoop too much causes ripples in the hooped fabric.*



*Fig. 4-7. Don't skimp on the size of your stabilizer. It should extend from all hoop edges.*