

TOP
4

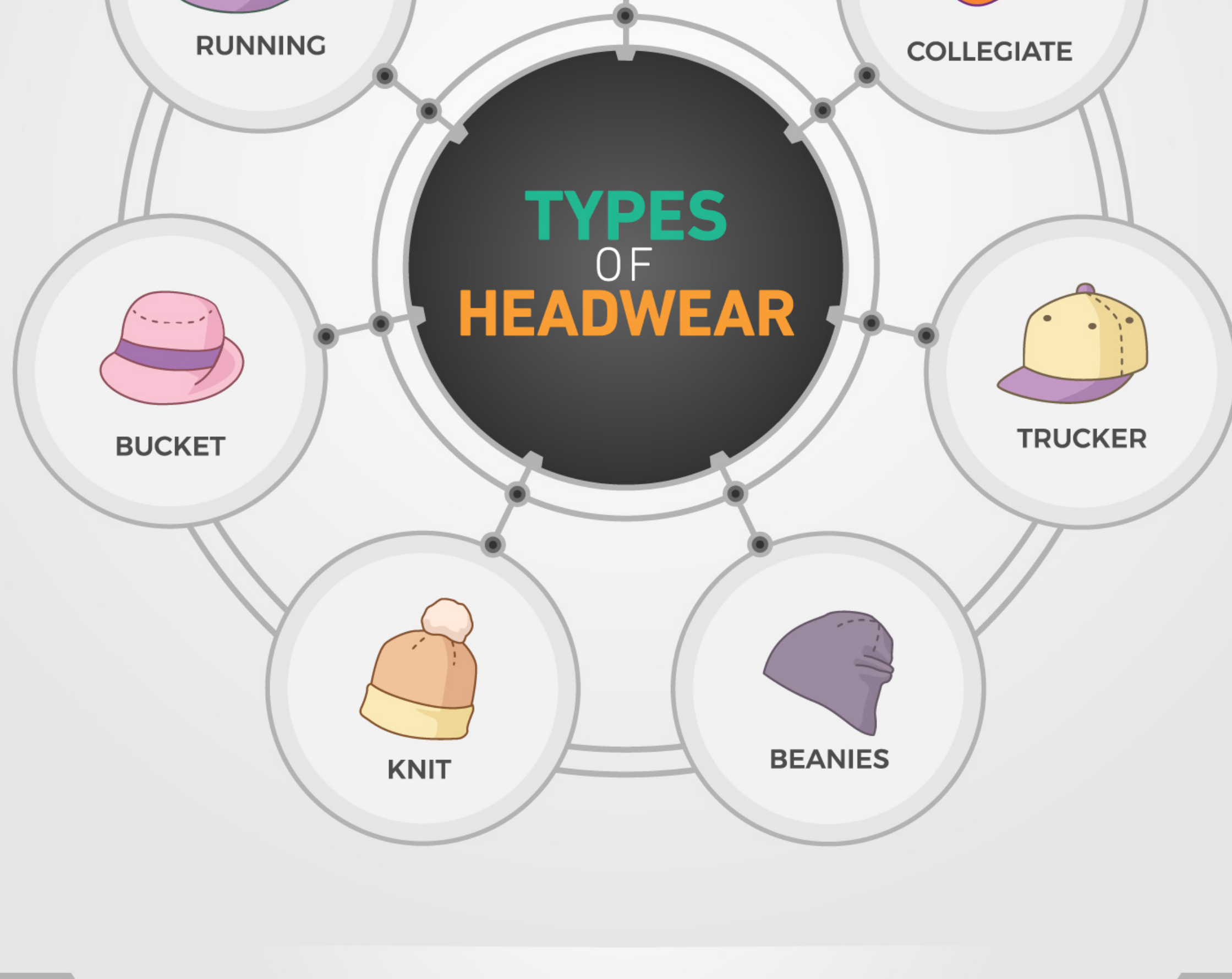
PROBLEMS WITH EMBROIDERY FOR HEADWEAR



Headwear is one the most widely used items for promotional products and spreading marketing messages. You see hats everywhere, branded with company logos, short clever quips and brand names.

There's only one issue. Embroidering headwear, especially ball caps, can be a big hassle. Here are the top problems with getting your artwork embroidered and what you can do to solve them.

First, it is helpful to ask what kind of headwear works for the client. Here is a short list of styles:



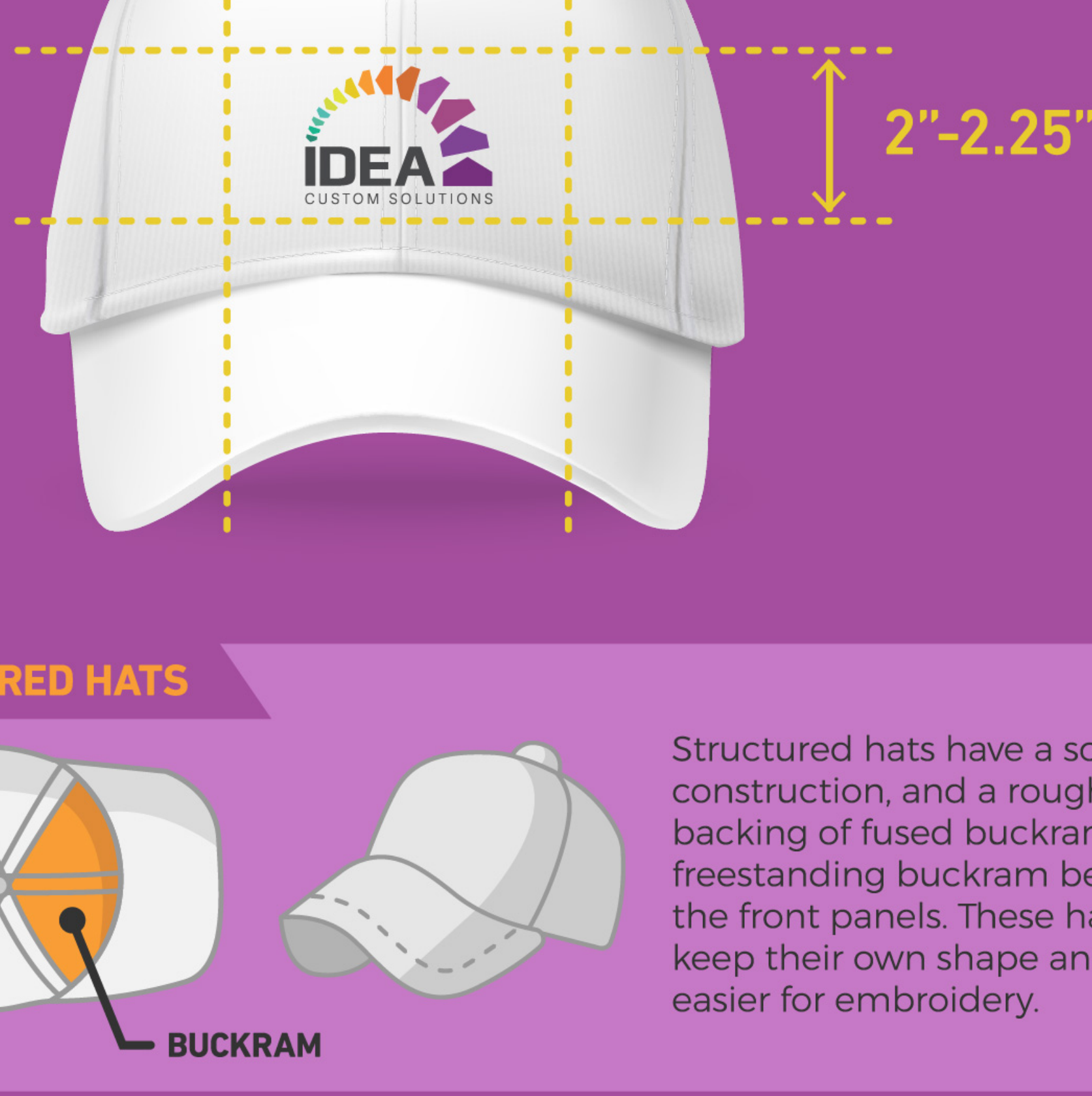
PROBLEMS:

1. Does the size of the requested design fit and can it be done?
2. What is the fabric of the headwear and is it stable for sewing?
3. Will the seam(s) create registration issues, thread or needle breaks, or ripples?
4. Does the art work with the shape of the headwear?

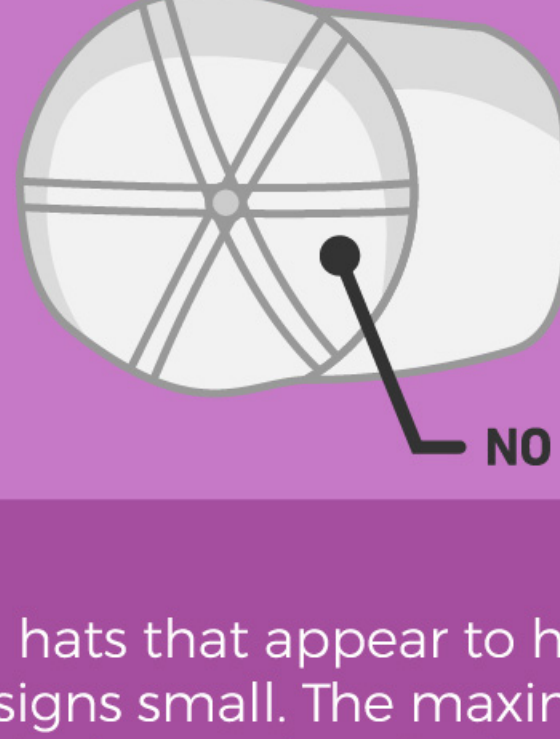
1

NOT ENOUGH SPACE

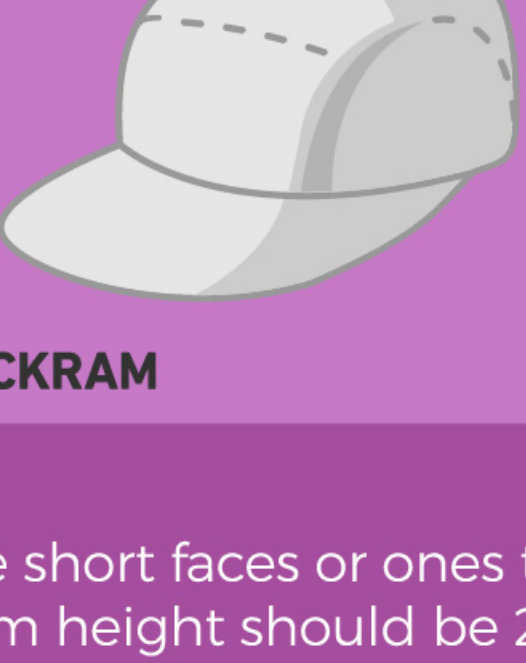
Your client may have the most fabulous logo the world has ever seen, but if it can't be shrunk down to stay within the constraints of the particular hat, then no one will ever be able to appreciate it. **Headwear has a limited amount of embroidery space** — generally only about 2.25" high, but that number changes based on the type of hat and how it's constructed.



STRUCTURED HATS

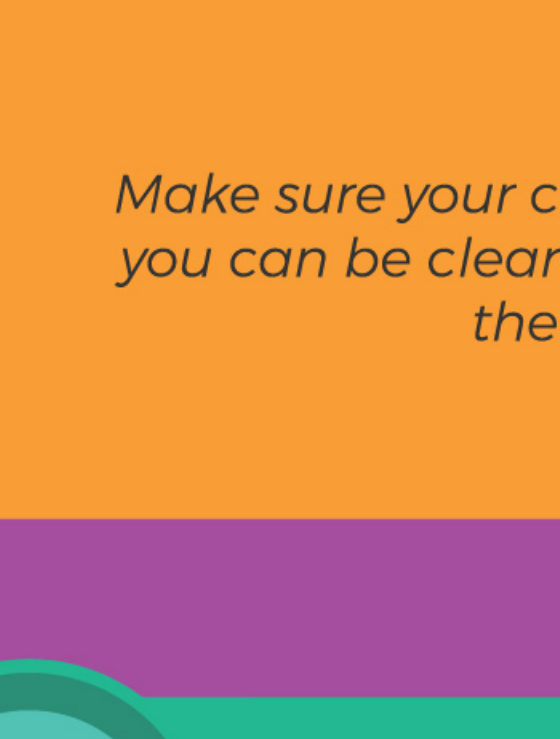


BUCKRAM

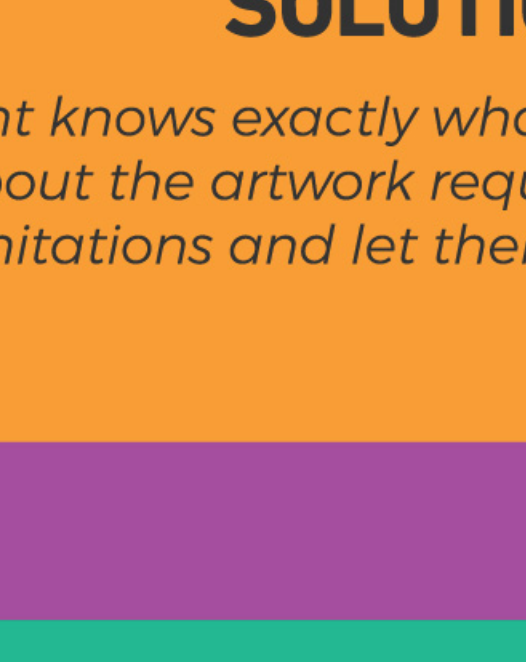


Structured hats have a solid construction, and a rough backing of fused buckram or freestanding buckram behind the front panels. These hats will keep their own shape and are easier for embroidery.

UNSTRUCTURED HATS



NO BUCKRAM



Unstructured hats conform to fit the wearer's head. They still require stiff backing and proper hooping. They tend to shift during sewing, so careful hooping is essential.

On hats that appear to have short faces or ones that slant away from the bills, keep designs small. The maximum height should be 2 inches. The width may vary, between 3.5 inches and 4.5 inches. Average hats can take 2.25 inches in height and 4 inches in width, with some larger ones accepting up to 4.5 inches width and 2.5 inches in height.

SOLUTION:

Make sure your client knows exactly what type of headwear they want, so you can be clear about the artwork requirements. Better yet, learn about the limitations and let them know in advance.

2

NO STABILITY

Caps are a mushy mess when it comes to stability. The bills are generally pretty firm, but from those points up, there are not really any features to keep fabric from moving around while it's being embroidered. That means designs may end up bunching the fabric or moving out of place.

FABRICS FOR HEADWEAR:



COTTON



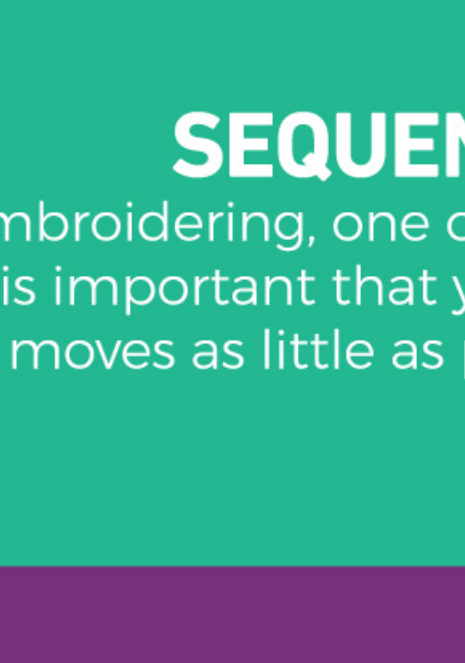
BAMBOO



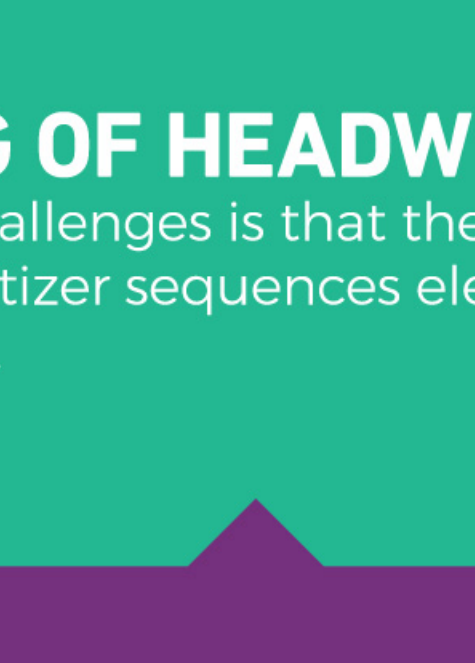
FLEECE



TERRY



WOOL



MICROFIBER



KNIT

SEQUENCING OF HEADWEAR DESIGNS

When embroidering, one of the challenges is that the fabric tends to move and flag. That is why it is important that your digitizer sequences elements in the right order so the material moves as little as possible.

SOLUTION:

*Work from the bottom up. **Make sure the embroiderer starts from the most stable parts of the hats (typically, the bills) and extends from the centers outward.** This pushes the fabric, instead of pulling it, causing it to stay taut and lessening the consequences of instability.*

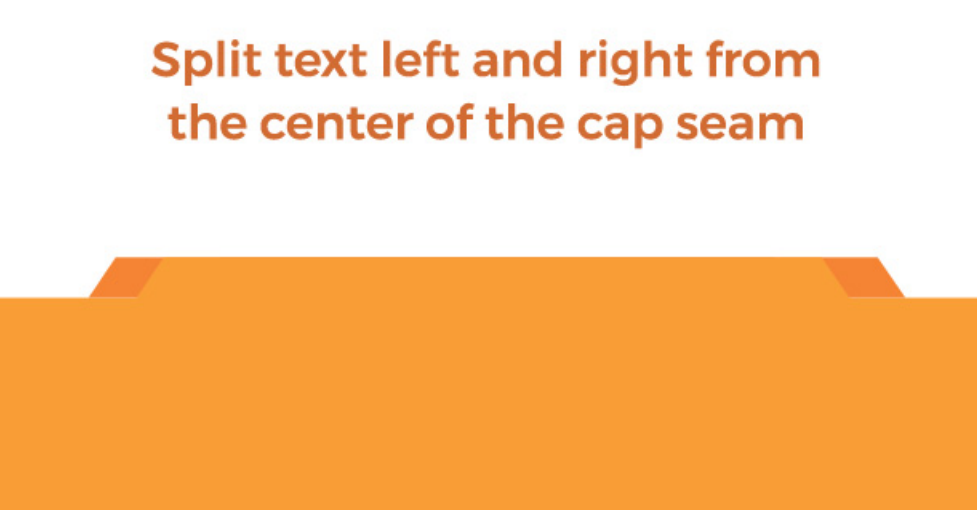
3

THAT ANNOYING SEAM

Six-panel caps, the most common type, are a headache all on their own because of the seams that run right down the middle of the front embroidery space. The difference in fabric thickness throughout that seam (high on either side and low in the middle) can cause massive distortions of your client's design.

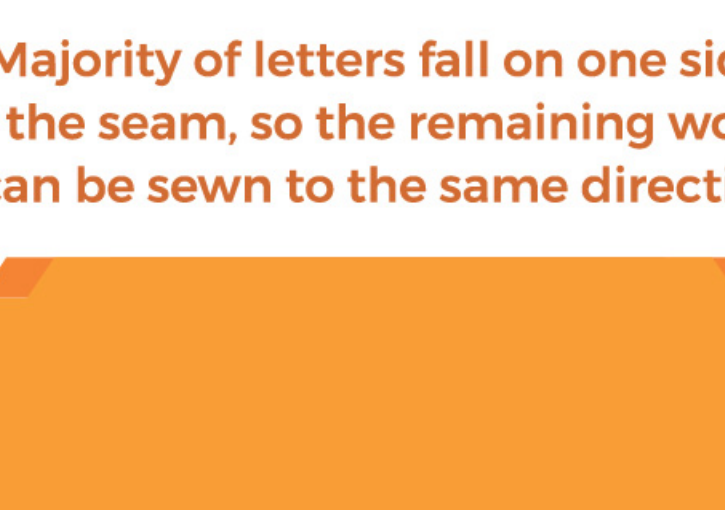
Your designer will digitize the design by using center-to-out technique (i.e., bottom-to-up, center-to-left and center-to-right). He or she can split text to the left and right of the centers of the cap seams or slightly off-center. It is best to start on letters that are directly to the right or left of seams. If the majority of words fall to one side of the seams, then sewing should be from right to left or left to right.

EXAMPLE 1



Split text left and right from the center of the cap seam

EXAMPLE 2



Majority of letters fall on one side of the seam, so the remaining words can be sewn to the same direction

SOLUTION:

*It can be as simple as enlarging the logo or reducing the detail, especially if there's small text. **That way the letters or intricate logo aspects won't look weird when they interact with the seam.** Try to see the hats in advance as well, so you can pick ones that have minimal height differences between the panels and the seams.*

4

ARTWORK DISTORTION

Headwear presents particular challenges when working with art, because the designs aren't the same as garments or products that would lay flat while embroidered. **What ends up happening are final images that are distorted.** This is especially true with circular logos that can end up looking oval or egg-shaped.

Registration is difficult with circular logos. In other words, borders don't align with fill stitching areas — they pull away. That is the biggest issue.

Fill stitching is always placed first and borders last. Because a circular design is being sewn to a curved service area, the borders often don't lay down where they should. Gapping occurs.



SOLUTION:

Embroidery digitizing. You'll want to make sure this is done for every logo you intend to put on headwear. A good digitizer, like the ones at Idea Custom Solutions, will be able to modify the designs to make sure they show exactly how your clients want them on the finished products.

We hope you find these tips helpful. For more insight on embroidery digitizing and other graphic design topics, [read our blog](#) and see [the resources we create with helpful tips](#) (click on the tab for Resources), such as [Fabric and Embroidery Digitizing](#) and the [True Cost of Vector Artwork](#).



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