Tips for Designing Your Own Patches with Patch Superstore (+ How to Get a Free One)

This month, we are all about patches, as we are giving away incredible Arsenal patches to our current Arsenal subscribers and anyone who subscribes to the Arsenal membership in May ’18.

If you don’t know about the Arsenal Membership, it’s a beautiful thing – this subscription gives you access to Go Media’s world-renowned design resources (every single one of our mockups, royalty-free vectors, textures, tutorials, fonts and more), plus every product we have yet to release, in addition to our exclusive community – for only $15/mth. No strings attached, cancel anytime.

Go ahead and join now – so that you can grab your patch and wear it proudly. After all, our Arsenal crew is pretty tight and proud to be part of this revolution.

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We owe our friends at Patch Superstore a huge thank you for partnering with us on this month’s member goodies. We had a moment to talk with Bill Stevens of Patch Superstore to gain some insight about designing these popular accessories.

Bill, can you tell us a little about yourself?

All my life I have loved being near the ocean, you could call me a classic Thalassophile. Growing up I was always drawn to bright, eye-catching art. This lead me to creating my own art and eventually majoring in Graphic Design at University Of Florida. I began working with Adobe Products and Photoshop 3, eventually mastering them. I loved the program so much that I

ended up getting my MFA in 2004.

I began working with PatchSuperstore in 2003 and during that time I've designed tons of patches and pins. During the past 15+ years I've worked my way up in the company, starting from entry level designer, moving to digitizer, then to art director. After that, I began working in sales and I'm now the master of all our products.

Working in design has afforded me such incredible opportunities – I get to live my dream doing exactly what I love to do, and that is to create art every day. Not only do I get to pursue my own creative endeavors but I get to help bring beautiful art into the world, by assisting customers with their own designs. Design is such a rewarding field for any creative to be in – if I could do it again, I would not change a thing.

Can you give designers some quick tips on setting up their design files specifically for patches?

Awesome looking patches start with excellent artwork and very experienced digitizers. The digitizer converts your design by retracing it in a file that tells the embroidery machine how and where to lay the stitches.

At Patch Superstore we have multiple digitizers on staff with a minimum of 7 years' experience and the master digitizer has over 25 years. Designing patches, you have to think about it like drawing a design at actual size with crayons. You can get lots of detail at 12″ but at 2-3″ that same design in a crayon drawing would look really bad. Embroidery can't produce really fine details like regular printing can. This is because the thread thickness and needle size are a set diameter, so we can't go smaller than what it is. This is also because the fabric is less stable and precise.

Things to avoid are:
Thin lines with light color threads

Lots of thin lines like cross hatching
Small text under 0.08″ tall
Too much detail for the size (think drawing with a crayon)
Narrow Spacing
Over 12 thread colors
And gradients.
Thin lines will produce what we call a running stitch (as seen below)

It is a single stitch that will look dotted with light color threads as it shows the shadow of each pin hole. To avoid this we recommend removing them or making them dark like a Black or Navy. It is a cool effect though if your looking to give that appearance on something.

What file size and type do you prefer?

Ones that are editable are always best. File sizes matter when emailing. If it’s over 10mg put it in Dropbox. Here is a basic guideline for the best file types we like, but we also take hand-drawn images on napkins that are send from a phone:

RASTER DESIGNS

Photoshop, PNG, JPEG and PDF files
Artwork must be the exact size you wish to embroider or larger
300 DPI or higher resolution
0.13″ or larger text (10 pt.)
No fine detail

VECTOR DESIGNS

AI, and EPS files
Linked images must be embedded or provided as a separate file
Fonts may be outlined or provided as a separate font file
No fine detail
0.13″ of larger text (10 pt.)

What mistakes do you see designers make when designing for patches or submitting files to you?

Forgetting to convert fonts to outlines, missing linked images, adding way too much text or details to small designs, using over 12 colors.

What should designers keep in mind when designing for patches vs a sticker or button?

Gradients can be achieved but unlike print we have to run the colors into each other to give it a blended effect. We recommend the gradient area is 1″ or larger and no more than 2-3 colors per inch. Text outlines in like colors like white around black text and 3″. It will have a dotted effect going around the text and not look solid.

Patches are a really popular item among the design and creative community right now. What kind of patches are most popular on your store? What patches do you recommend designers create if they want to hit a home run for swag bags or to sell to other designers, at trade shows, etc.?

We do a lot of add-ons like putting the patches on backing cards, making them retail ready, patch key-chains, die cut aka “hot cut” borders. Iron on patches are the way to go. No one wants to have to sew these on, plus it gives the patches a stiffer feel, so the patches aren’t limp. No one likes limp patches.

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