Wee Care Smocked Front Gown
5 lb size
1/2" hem allowance included

1/4" seam allowance included for neck edge
Place on fold

Center Back

2" square to check scale. Do not mark or cut.

1/2" hem allowance included

Side/sleeve seam includes a 3/8" allowance
Wee Care Smocked Front Gown
5 lb size
Wee Care Smock-Along—Week 1

Marking & Cutting

- Measure the 2” square on your pattern even if it looks the right size.
- All seam allowances are already included.
- Most of you will probably start with one gown, so you’ll simply place the long dotted line on the fabric fold and cut along the solid outline, **but not the center front**! You may hate me for this complete cut out, but we’ll tackle that later. **Remember, you will also need a 10.5” x 1” bias strip for the neck (not on the pattern).** There is ample length; you can use a wider strip if you wish.

- Here’s the layout for multiple gowns on 60” fabric.
The only thing you really need to mark is the paws. They should be marked only on the right-hand panel of the back (with the back facing you) as shown on the pattern. Here’s the tricky part, though: **The paws need to be marked on the wrong side of the fabric.** After folding the placket, they will end up on the right side with the wrong-side threads hidden.

- **Marking tip:** I like to put double-sticky tape on the pattern over the designs which need transferred. Press the fabric to the tape and you can trace without the fabric slipping around (temporary spray adhesives for quilting work for larger areas—Spray the pattern, not the fabric). The fabric peels off easily. *It’s a good idea to test your fabric release on a scrap before trying it on the garment! For pattern storing, place wax paper over the sticky area.*

**Pleating**—One day while watching my embroidery machine stitch names on lacrosse bags, my mind began to wander (it often does). It was a huge breakthrough when I first realized I didn’t have to hoop something to embroider it, like the lacrosse bags; they’re impossible to hoop, so I just hoop the stabilizer and pin or baste the bag in place. Not hooping opened up a world of possibilities for embroidering oddly shaped or heavy items. **Here’s the tangent:** What if I could pleat without putting the fabric through the pleater (and, no, I wasn’t thinking about picking up pleats by hand. That’s how I started, and I’m not going back). What if you could pleat silk by machine without making any holes? What if you could put just a few pleats in the center of a garment without running the whole piece through the pleater? The short answer is, sometimes you can! The following techniques work well on lightweight, light-colored fabrics. They also work better on small areas rather than large ones, like bishops. Here’s how I pleated just the center of my preemie gown:

**No holes method 1**

- Cut a piece of lightweight, woven, iron-on stabilizer (I used German interfacing). It should be the same width as 9 half-space rows on your pleater (That’s 1.5” for me, but pleaters vary) and about 5.5” long.
For this “no holes” method of pleating, I recommend using all half-space rows to help form nice pleats. Set up your pleater with 7 needles in half-space rows and at least 1 empty half-space on each side.

Thread the needles with Coats Extra Strong Upholstery thread in a dark color. It’s 100% nylon and has a slippery coating (very important later). Threads should be long enough so you can flatten the pleating out, and tie the ends.

Center the stabilizer and run it through the pleater fusible side up.
o Remove the piece from the pleater and pull it flat. Remove threads from the extra pleats pulling them to the non-adhesive side until you have 16 pleats on the adhesive side. Trim the ends of the stabilizer to within ¼” of the threads.

o Center the stabilizer on the wrong side of the gown front, so the top edge meets the center neck edge. Yes, I should have used dark thread, but I was snowed in and had to improvise.

   ![Image of pleats and stabilizer]

o Press in place according to manufacturer’s instructions. **Let cool! Let it cool some more!**

o When the piece is **completely** cool, knot the threads on one side; and gently pull the other ends of the threads to pull up the pleats. If you pull horizontally across the fabric, your stabilizer will stay in place better than if you pull the threads up and away from the fabric. There will be a “pop” as each lightly fused thread is released and begins to pull. Also, pull slowly so you can form the fabric into nicely shaped pleats as you go. This is especially important because the threads don’t actually run through the fabric. If you have a pleat which refuses to comply, hold it in place with a large needle and steam it until it stays.

**No holes Method 2**

o I have also had success with the “no holes” technique using Floriani Wet N Gone Tacky. It’s a bit trickier because of the sticky, but it washes out when you are finished.

o Cut the same size strip (about 5.5” x 1.5”)

o Thread 7, half-space needles with the Coats Upholstery thread.

o Pleat the strip **paper side up** centered on the 7 needles.
o Flatten and carefully remove the paper backing from the adhesive by first scoring along the pleating threads.

o Finger press the sticky side of the stabilizer to the wrong side of the gown at the top center (as explained in method 1).

o Pull up the pleats as with the iron-on, but DON’T attempt to steam the pleats in place. This stabilizer is water soluble!!

No holes advantages

- No holes! Pleat just what you need.
- No removing and replacing needles to pleat just the center
- Easier to pleat awkwardly shaped or partially constructed items
- Adds weight to sheer fabrics just in the smocking area, so your picture smocking looks better.

No holes disadvantages

- Doesn’t work for all fabrics (make a test swatch)
- If you use iron-on, the stabilizer remains (Personally, I don’t see this as a problem)
- If you use sticky, you need to make sure to catch more than just stabilizer when back smocking and knotting.
- Pleats may not be as crisp as running through a pleater unless you work to form them nicely as you pull.
- Sticky stabilizer may begin to release if you let your work lay around too long (especially in a hot car or humid conditions; it is water soluble after all), so you should back smock right away. I had a piece begin to release after a week or two.
Regular pleating

- If you choose to pleat the regular way, pleat 7 half-space rows about a half-space (3/16”) from the center neck top to form 16 pleats.
- Or, use Knott’s dots to pick up your 16 pleats.

Thread Prep—You’ll want to use some type of thread preparation for picture smocking to keep your threads smooth and separated, so they cover well. Also, you’ll want to have the various colors threaded into the needles and ready to go.

- Cut thread 15”-18” long and separate out each strand.
- Apply the thread prep to each strand separately!

- Thread the long-eyed needles with 4 strands of floss. You may need 5 strands of the darkest brown. For some reason, dark colors don’t always spread and cover like lighter colors; it’s probably the extra dye. Here are some thread prep options; use whichever method you like best and experiment:
  - Wax—I don’t generally use wax for smocking because I feel like it traps dirt in the stitching, but some people stitch beautifully with it.
  - Thread Heaven—Some people swear by it, but I can’t see much of a difference.
  - Soap—The little hotel bars are great to throw in your sewing bag; I often use soap for smocking and it washes right out. It smells nice, too.
• Strip and squeak with liquid starch—To “strip and squeak,” wet a small piece of felt with water or starch, pinch a single strand of floss with the felt, and pull. If you do it right, it makes a squeaky noise. I often use this method, but it is ill-advised on humid days! You get a sticky mess.
• Strip and squeak with water or a diluted water/starch mixture; much better in high humidity.
• Ironing—works well combined with strip and squeak, but your family will think you are crazy ironing thread; at least mine did!

Back smocking—If you are new to smocking, check out the document “How to Read a Smocking Graph.” If you are left-handed, you might like to reference “Back Smocking & Cable Stitch Mechanics for Left-Handed Stitchers.” Both documents are available as separate files.

○ Using a cable stitch and 1 strand of floss to match the fabric, back smock across each row on the wrong side. **Take just a tiny bite of fabric to keep the pleats in place and remember to keep your knots on the wrong side!**

Cable Stitch Mechanics--The cable stitch is really just a series of backstitches.

○ Backstitch through pleat 1 (the first pleat to the left) and pull the thread through.

![Cable Stitch](image1.jpg)

○ Next, backstitch through pleat 2 (the pleat to the right of pleat 1). Pull tightly enough to bring the pleats together gently, but don’t crush them.

![Cable Stitch](image2.jpg)
- If you keep the thread loop below the needle, the stitch will be a **down cable**.

![Image of a down cable stitch]

- If the loop is above the needle, the stitch will be an **up cable**.

![Image of an up cable stitch]

- Alternate up and down cables working from left to right across the row. Each stitch will move over 1 pleat, and the thread will cover 2 pleats.

![Image of alternating up and down cable stitches]

**One last thing**

- Turn your work to the right side.
- If you used the “no-holes” pleating method, you may have trouble seeing the guide threads. If so, lightly mark the rows on the right side using a ruler and your favorite marking tool.

**You’re ready for picture smocking!**
Wee Care Puppy Plate Instructions

If you look closely at the plate, you will see some irregularities to the normal stacked cable arrangement. The variance allows us to eliminate some of the half cable stitches which would normally be required to get all the colors in the right places. Just follow the directions and you’ll be fine. Use 4 strands of floss and the long-eyed needle throughout.

Begin with the chart at guide row 4:

- Using medium brown and 4 strands of prepared floss, make a down cable over the first 2 pleats (indicated by the white asterisk).
- Make an up cable directly above the first down cable using the same 2 pleats. Park the needle out of the way on the right side of the fabric. Keeping loose threads on top of the work eliminates bird nests on the wrong side.
- Using pink and 4 strands of floss, make a down cable and up cable over the next 2 pleats, just as you did for the brown. Park the pink needle.
- Pick up the brown needle and take it to the back of the work. Move 1 pleat past the pink stitches and make a half up cable.
- Stitch 7 full cable stitches starting with a down cable, then a half cable. Park the brown.
• **Using a second needle threaded with pink**, make a down cable with an up cable above like before, and add brown cables at the end to match the ones at the beginning of the row. Your work should look about like this:

![Image of a woven pattern with pink and brown threads](image)

• **Turn your plate upside down; turn your work upside down**

![Diagram showing a grid with cables](image)

• You are now stitching the row just above your last row toward the top of the head. With the medium brown, stitch a half cable, with another half cable directly below it.
• Pick up the pink, take it to the back and emerge to stitch another down cable stacked with an up cable as in the last row.
• Bring the brown up on the other side of the pink, stitch a half down cable, and 9 full cables beginning with an up cable. Add a down half cable and park.
• Pick up the **first** pink and stitch 2 stacked cables as before.
• End this row with 2 stacked half cables like you started. Your work should look about like this:
• Turn your plate right side up; turn your work right side up

• Hang in there! This is the last irregular row. Using Medium brown, make a down full cable followed by an up half cable.

• Stitch the 2 stacked pink cables as before. Make sure to use the closest pink needle. It’s too far to strand across the back to the other ear. Tie off this pink thread.

• With medium brown, stitch a half up cable and a full down cable.

• Add a new Dark brown thread to make the next up cable.

• With medium brown, stitch 3 full cables beginning with a down.

• Add one more up cable with the dark brown thread.

• Stitch a medium brown down cable followed by a half up cable.

• Stitch one last stacked pink combo up and down cable. Tie off this pink thread. You should have 2 working needles at this point, medium brown and dark brown, and your work should be close to row 5.

• Turn your plate upside down; turn your work upside down
• With medium brown, stitch 13 cables beginning with an up cable, as indicated.

• **Turn your plate right side up; turn your work right side up**

• Finish up the top half with medium brown. Stitch 11 cables beginning with a down cable. You can add the 3 extra up cables to the top as you go, or go back and add them after the row is complete. Tie off the medium brown. You should still have one active needle, dark brown, and your work should look like this:

• **Keep your work and your plate right side up to start the bottom half**
• Begin with medium brown and stitch a full up cable to “kiss” the down cable from the row above. Add another down and up cable.
• Add a light brown thread to continue the next 3 cables, down, up, down.
• Use the dark brown thread from the eyes for the 3 nose cables, up, down, up.
• Strand the light brown thread across the back to complete 3 cables beginning with a down.
• Attach a new medium brown and complete the row with 3 full cables and a final half.
• **Turn your plate upside down; turn your work upside down**

• Begin by stacking a half cable on top of the last half cable with the same medium brown needle. Then stitch 3 full cables, up, down, up.
• Using light brown, stitch 4 cables beginning with a down cable.
• Using dark brown, stitch a single down cable and tie off.
• Again, pick up the light brown and stitch 4 cables beginning with an up cable.
• With medium brown, stitch 3 full cables beginning with an up cable. End by filling in the final half stitch on the end of the row and the half stitch we skipped at the beginning of the last row.
• Turn your plate right side up; turn your work right side up for the final row!!

• Stitch 3 medium brown cables, up, down, up, and add an extra down cable below the center stitch. Tie off.
• With light brown, stack 3 cables beginning with an up cable. Skip the next down cable, and continue with 3 more cables, up, down, up. Tie off.
• Complete the last 4 medium brown stitches, as at the beginning of this row, and tie off.
• In the 2 empty pleats between the light brown cables, add 2 red cables for the tongue. Tie off.

You’re ready for next week’s definition stitches and paws!
Bonus Paw Plate (start on row 4)
Wee Care Puppy--Padded Satin, Fly & Granito

**Fly**—There is only one fly stitch on this piece to add a bit of definition to the snout. If you haven’t tied off your dark brown smocking thread from the nose, use it here. Otherwise, thread your long-eyed needle with 4 strands of dark brown.

- Bring the thread up at A

- Take the needle down at B, but *don’t pull the thread all the way through*!
- Bring the tip of the needle back to the front through C and *over* the thread loop.
- Take the needle to the back right under the nose stitch. I know it looks funny in the drawing, but it looks good on the smocking.

- Tie off. By using fly instead of just straight stitches, the thread doesn’t get lost in the valley of the pleats.
Padded Satin—The padded satin paws on the back placket are really optional, but I think they add a nice design element. **The right side of the padded satin paws will be stitched on the WRONG side of the fabric!** Don’t worry; they will end up on the right side when we’re done. Remember when I said you’d hate me later for having you cut out the gown? Here it is: You’re going to stitch the paws very close to the edge, so no hoop. You’ll have to stitch over your finger, and the thread will keep getting caught on the cut edge. For your next gown, you may want to stitch the paws before the cutting out and smocking. For our purposes here, though, I wanted to start with the pleating and smocking. Your thread and fabric dictate the best needle, but I commonly use a #10 or #11 sharp.

- Though not absolutely necessary, it’s usually a good idea first to outline the padded satin shape unless your shape is very tiny. I like to use split stitch because it creates a smooth, stable outline, but many other stitches such as stem or outline, back stitch, chain stitch, or double running stitch, are commonly used.

- After outlining the shape, padding stitches are added inside the outline stitches. You may add more than one layer of padding depending on the raised effect you desire, but each layer must be perpendicular to the previous layer, and the final top layer of satin stitch must be perpendicular to the last layer of padding. Stitches commonly used for padding are: straight, split, stem, and chain. The type of padding is not terribly important because these stitches are never seen.

- The final layer of satin stitch is best worked with 1 strand of your preferred thread. This will keep the surface nice and smooth. Each straight stitch is parallel to and touching (but not overlapping) the last and covers the entire width of the shape and outline. **None of the padding or outline stitches should be visible when the shape is complete.**
It’s a good idea always to work from the widest area to the narrowest, simply because it’s easier to keep stitches uniform when getting gradually shorter rather than longer. This may require you to start in the center of a shape and work to each end.

**TIP:** If you angle the needle under the outline stitches, your edges will be smoother.

**Granito**—A granito is a tiny, firm dot. We’ll use them to create the toes. For your granitos, use the #10 sharp and 1 strand of floss.

- To form a granito, bring the needle up at A and take it back down at B.
• Bring the needle up through A and down through B again, making sure to use the same holes as before. Guide the thread to the left of the previous stitch; then make another stitch guiding it to the right.

![Diagram of stitching process](image1)

• Continue adding alternating stitches through the same holes until the granito is round and the size you desire, about 6-8 stitches for this project.

![Diagram of completed granito](image2)

![Completed granito](image3)