

By Mary Van Horn

Heat Seal and Iron-on Are Not the Same

People are always using the terms “heat seal” and “iron-on” synonymously when purchasing embroidered patches. Unfortunately, the two phrases are absolutely not the same and vendors should be quite careful to differentiate these phrases.

When one thinks of an “iron-on” patch, they assume that the patch will be easily applied using a household hand iron, but they fail to realize that the three variables of temperature, pressure and time will always play a very important role in the success or failure of such an application. Keep in mind that regardless of the name given to the backing, the ultimate objective is to cause a thermoplastic glue to first melt and second cause a patch to adhere to an underlying substrate material.

Using a hand iron creates a situation where any or all of the essential factors will be incorrect and cause a failure of the patch to properly adhere. Use of too high or low a temperature setting will either result in the backing not sufficiently melting if too low or changing its physical properties and ruining the garment and/or the patch if too high. The application of too little pressure will create a less than ideal seal between the patch and the substrate. Use of too little or too much time will unfortunately result in a patch that does not adhere or one that is distorted by the heat.

Considering all of the above, don't believe that a patch is a simple “iron-on” product, but take it to someone such as your local sporting goods store that has the appropriate “heat seal” machines that are designed for professional and successful applications. Sporting goods stores will be only too happy to do the job correctly and the cost will be insignificant. Below are general instructions, but let the pro do the job correctly.

Heat Seal Instructions

Caution: Always test garment to insure that high temperature will not cause damage to the fabric. This is especially true for synthetics such as nylon. High temperatures for a prolonged period of time may distort and damage both the appearance of the emblem and the substrate material.

Due to variation in temperature and pressure, emblems should not be applied with a hand iron.

1. Set machine to approx. 350 degrees (F)
2. Place Emblem on garment for application
3. Cover emblem with wax paper
4. Apply pressure for approx. 15 seconds, foam under garment