



Cross-Stitch Tips & Tricks

Written by Margaret Lee Rigiell-Wolf

Whether you are a beginning cross-stitcher, or have some experience, this booklet will teach you tips and tricks, which will help, improve your cross-stitching.

Learn hints to complete your project from start to finish and make your stitching more enjoyable. Learn hundreds of hints and tips about needles, thread, fabric, scissors, stitching frames, lights, magnification, cross-stitching, fractional and isolated stitches, frequent color changes, backstitching, French, colonial and Palestrina knots, washing and framing your needlework. Learn how to make the back of your work look neater while enhancing the front, how to make counting faster and easier, and how to attach beads.

Stitches Include: Full, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, & $\frac{3}{4}$ Cross-Stitches, Backstitch, Holbein French Knot, Colonial Knot, and Palestrina Knot.

The tips, tricks, and methods provided in this booklet are informational. Your results may vary.

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Cross-stitch is the art of painting with fibers, such as embroidery floss, on fabric. Generally, stitchers follow a chart and stitch X's on a piece of evenweave fabric. Designers create the art, which can be reproduced by the stitcher if they desire.

Most stitchers begin with stamped cross-stitch or kits with Aida Fabric or crewel designs. Many progress to counted thread work using evenweave fabrics and specialty stitches.

USING CHARTS:

Counted Cross-stitch charts are also called graphs, grids and patterns.

Read all instructions and review all diagrams on the chart prior to stitching. The charts, diagrams and instructions should have all the information you need to stitch the design as shown in the model.

Each occupied square on a chart represents one stitch on a square of Aida or one stitch over two threads of linen –unless stated otherwise. Each symbol represents a different floss color. Every chart should have a color key, which indicates what color floss each symbol, or color represents. Sometimes a symbol on the chart can represent a bead, specialty stitch or fiber, or knot.

Black and white charts use a different color for each symbol. A good chart will use large filled symbols for dark colors and small symbols for lighter colors. They will also use appropriate symbols like hearts for reds and dollar signs for green. Charts are easy to read if the squares on the chart are large enough to see without magnification.

Two-color charts may use the same symbol but in different colors.

Multi-color charts, generally include the symbols with a colored background for each square. These are wonderful to use because you can easily see the color of the fiber to use and easily count the squares

The thick lines around the design or for lettering indicate where to make a backstitch or Holbein stitch.

The size of the chart is not necessarily the size that the finished piece will be. The fabric you select determines the size of the finished piece – more on this later...

Most charts have little arrows or marks along the outside edge of the chart to help you determine the center of the chart. If it is not provided, you will need to find the center of the chart and mark it.

As you stitch, mark off the symbols on the chart with a highlighter or pencil to keep track of what you have

completed. You can also use Post-It notes or a metal board with straight magnets.

If the chart is small you can attach it to your stitching frame with a clothespin or safety pin while you are stitching so you can see it better.

NEEDLES:

What type of needle should I use?

For counted thread work on Aida or evenweave fabrics, it is best to use a tapestry needle. Tapestry needles are blunt and have large oval eyes that may bulge outward from the shaft of the needle. The blunt point separates the ground fabric threads as it enters the fabric, without piercing the threads, thus making neater stitches. The large oval eye is easier to thread and holds more fibers. Tapestry needles are available from size 28 to 13, with size 28 small enough to use for attaching seed beads. Generally, the higher the number the thinner and shorter the needle.

Common types of needles available (Smallest to Largest):

Beading Needles (10 - 2" or 1.25")
Between (quilting 12, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, & 1)
Bullion Needles (sharp 5" or 7")
Chenille (26, 24, 22, 20, 18, 16, 14, & 13)
Curved Beading (10)
Curved Tapestry Needles (20, 22, & 24)
Darners (11, 9, 7, 5, 3, 1, 18, 17, 16, 15, & 14)
Darners (Long 9, 7, 5, 1, 17 & 15)
Easy Threading (4, 6, & 8)
Embroidery (10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, & 1)
Gold Plated Tapestry Needles (24, 26, & 28)
Milliners (10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 1, 1/0 & 4/0)
Petite Tapestry (26, 24, & 22)
Platinum-Plated Tapestry Needles (28, 26, & 24)
Sharps (12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 18, 17, 16)
Tapestry (28, 26, 24, 22, 20, 18, 16, 14, & 13)
Tapestry Easy Threading (28, 26, & 24)
Twin Pointed Quick Stitch (28, 26, 24, & 22)

What size needle should I use?

The size of the needle to use is based on the thread count of the ground fabric, the number of strands of fiber (working thread) used, the thickness of the fiber, and most importantly your individual preferences.

As a general rule:

Fabric Count		Needle Size	Strands of Floss
Aida	Evenweave		
11	22	22 or 24	3-6
14	28	24 or 26	2-3
16	32	24 or 26	2
18	36	26 or 28	1-2

If I don't know what size needles I have, how do I know which one to use?

Choose a needle that opens up the hole just enough that the working thread can easily pass through the ground fabric and existing stitches without a lot of wear and tear on the threads.

An overly thick needle will distort the ground fabric and thus the stitches. A needle that is too thin will cause stress to the working thread as it passes through the ground fabric (and existing stitches.) The stress causes the working thread to become dull, fuzzy and weak which affects the quality of the finished piece.

The eye of the needle should be large enough to hold the fibers comfortably. If the working thread is difficult to put through the needle eye, try using a needle threader or a larger eyed needle. If the thread keeps slipping out of the needle find a needle with a smaller eye.

The finish is starting to wear off my needle; will it affect my stitching?

Yes! Once the finish starts wearing off the needle it begins to tarnish and become rough. The tarnish comes off the needle and onto the fabric and your fingers, as you stitch – NOT good! Once a needle begins to tarnish it will rust. This is why we should not park needles anywhere in the ground fabric – especially in an area that will not be covered by a mat if it is framed.

Tarnished needles become rough and do not move through the fabric easily, thus making each stitch take a little longer to make.

If the finish has been worn off a needle, it is best to dispose of it. Needles are much cheaper and easier to get than they were a hundred years ago. To dispose of used needles, put them in a hard-plastic container such as a medicine bottle so no one accidentally gets stabbed. Even tapestry needles can hurt.

The eye of my needle keeps breaking... Why?

The eye of a needle may break due to added stress on its eye or due to manufacturing imperfections.

Of all the needles I use, most often the eye of my size 28-tapestry needle breaks. This is because the eyes are thinner and more delicate than other needles. For example, a sized 28-tapestry needle is the smallest size made, yet it holds lots of fiber for its size.

A size 28-tapestry needle is also often used as a beading needle, which adds pressure and stress at the largest part of the needle – the eye.

The use of metallic threads can sharpen and wear away the eye of the needle.

Should I spend the extra money for a gold plated or platinum needle?

This is up to the preference of the stitcher.

Most needles are nickel-plated. For some people, chemicals in their skin quickly dissolve the finish. Some people may also have an allergic reaction to the metal.

Gold –plated needles will not rust as long as the plating does not wear off.

Platinum is an inert metal, it will not react negatively to your body chemistry or the atmosphere.

Should I have sharp needles in my cross-stitch supplies?

Yes. Sharp pointed needles easily pierce both ground fabric and working threads. They are nice for general sewing needs as well as embroidery and crewel on common weave fabrics. They are also useful for securing the beginning and ending threads in counted thread needlework (pierce the back of existing stitches). Chenille needles are sharp; otherwise they are just like tapestry needles in thickness, length, and size of the oval eye.

Betweenes (also known as quilting needles) are sharp, thin, and have a short length. The short length allows for faster stitching than regular length needles. The thinness of quilting needles is useful for ending threads in needlework without disturbing the existing stitches.

Milliners needles are wonderful for making stitches that are wound around the needle like bullion, French, and colonial knots. These needles are sharp, long, and have a uniform thickness (not tapered). When the eye of the needle passes through the wraps on the needle the knot is not distorted. The size of the needle affects the size of the knot.

Are curved needles useful in counted thread work?

Yes. Curved needles are wonderful for getting into places that are hard to reach. They work nicely for making another stitch in a project that has already been framed or finished, without unframing it. Curved needles can be sharp or blunt. These needles can be found in your local needlework shop.

How should I store my needles?

Needles should not be stored in the ground fabric of your project (they can tarnish and rust) or the arms of couches and chairs (they can hurt unsuspecting visitors).

to your stitching corner). Needles should be stored in a needle case of some type. Magnets work nicely for keeping needles from getting lost.

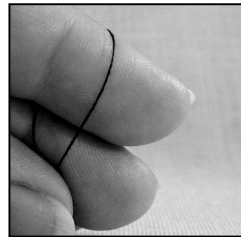
NEEDLE THREADERS:

Will wetting the fibers make it easier to thread the needle?

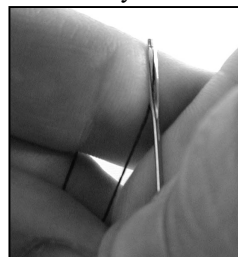
Wetting the fibers usually makes it easier to thread the needle. However, the least appropriate and most used method of threading a needle by novices is to wet the end of the thread with spit prior to inserting it into the eye of the needle. Spit is always handy, but NOT good! Spit is acidic, has lots of germs, and can contain food particles. A little water may be better, but not for all fibers and fabrics.

How can I thread the needle without using a tool?

Lay a strand or two of floss slightly taut over the tip of one of your fingers on your non-stitching hand. The floss should lay parallel to the crease at the knuckle.

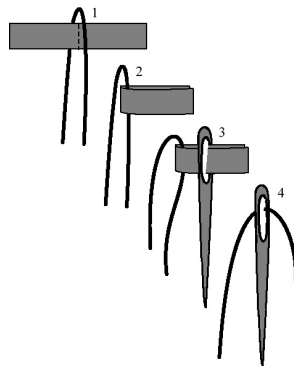


Place the eye of the needle parallel to and over the floss. Press the eye of the needle on the floss and gently pull the needle downward as the tension is released on the floss. A small loop should form and emerge through the eye of the needle. If needed “rock” the needle slightly up and down over the floss to get it through.



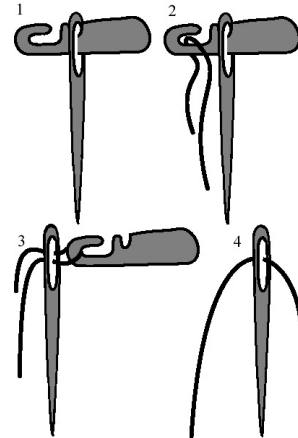
How can I thread my needle with a piece of paper?

Cut a strip of paper as long as needed, but no wider than the length of the eye of the needle. Fold a small piece of paper in half, insert the fiber in the fold of the paper and insert the paper through the eye of the needle.



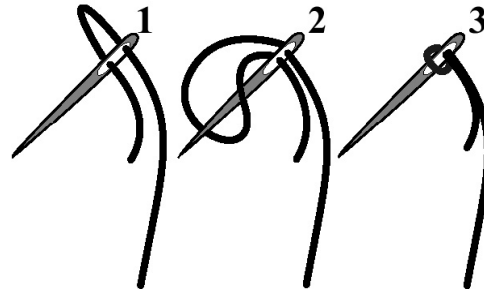
How do needle threaders work?

Put the needle threader through the eye of the needle, put the thread through the larger eye or hook of the needle threader, and pull the threader out of the eye of the needle. This pulls the thread through the eye of the needle.



How do you tie thread onto the needle?

Sometimes a fiber just won't stay on the needle, such as blending filaments and rayon thread... So the best thing is to tie it on. You can tie one thread on and still add regular fibers to the same needle.



SCISSORS:

What kind of scissors should I use for my needlework?

Every stitcher MUST have a pair of small sharp pointed embroidery scissors to be used ONLY for cutting soft fibers and threads. Do NOT use them to cut metallic fibers, blending filaments, fabric or paper because doing so will nick and/or dull the blades.

Buy the best you can afford, take care of them, and enjoy using them.



If you work with metallics and blending filaments, you should have less expensive or “junk” scissors to cut with.

To cut fabric you should have a pair of dressmaker shears.



What should I look for when buying quality embroidery scissors?

There are many sizes, styles, and brands of scissors available. It is best to test the scissors before you buy them.

Embroidery scissors should fit your fingers comfortably. The blades should be sharp, have a nice tension, and glide smoothly as the blades meet to cut the fibers. Pointed scissors are nice to cut threads close and to get under worked threads to cut them. Blunt scissors are nice for carrying in your purse or for children.

A seam ripper may also come in handy to cut out mistakes from the back of the fabric.

How should I take care of my scissors?

Keep your scissors in a safe place where they will not fall to the floor. The points and blades can be damaged from a fall.

Keep pins, needles, metallic fibers and plastics away from the cutting edges of the scissors.

To help maintain a smooth feel when using scissors, open the scissors and place a drop or two of sewing machine oil at the intersection of the two blades.

To store scissors for a long period of time, apply a light coating of oil to the edges and blades to prevent rust. You may need to do this more frequently if you live in a coastal or high humidity area.

STITCHING FRAMES:

What if anything, should I use to hold the fabric when stitching?

What is used to hold the fabric while stitching, is really up to the preference of the stitcher. Each method has its own advantages and disadvantages. I use different methods depending on the size of the design and the fabric I'm using.

There are many brands, variations and qualities to choose from. What ever you choose to use, buy a good quality product. It is not pleasant working with warped or splintering wood or plastic that breaks.

Note: If the fabric is attached correctly to the Q-Snaps, stretcher bars or scroll bars, the fabric will not need to be stretched or blocked after it is finished.

Should I work “in hand” or “hoop”?

Working “in-hand” makes the project portable and easier to manage with very small or large projects. It is also easier to use the “sewing method” to cross-stitch.

I like to work small ornament sized projects in hand and some projects too large or awkward for my scroll bars. Working “in-hand” exposes the fabric to more dirt and oils from the stitchers hands and whatever the fabric touches. Thus, extra care needs to be taken to keep the fabric clean.

It is good to use a stitching frame when the design contains beads, larger stitches which may need to be “laid”, pulled threads, and silk ribbon or when it is stitched in over 1 thread of an evenweave fabric.

Hoops & Q-Snaps

Hoops are usually round or oval and can be made of wood or plastic. Plastic hoops can be washed periodically. When purchasing a hoop get the kind with a screw to tighten the larger part of the hoop. When working with the hoop work with the screw at a 10:00 position if you are right handed and a 2:00 position if you are left handed.” To prevent excessive marks made by the hoop, the hoop can be padded and covered with a clean white piece of cotton fabric.



Q-Snaps are rectangular and made of plastic. They can be purchased in many interchangeable lengths. Hoops and Q-Snaps stretch the fabric in four or more directions, but can distort and crush the fabric and stitches if care is not taken when the fabric is attached.

Hoops and Q-Snaps should be large enough to contain the entire design area plus extra fabric that will not be covered by the mat and frame or alternate method of finishing the project. You may also have to deal with the extra fabric that extends beyond and over the edge of the Hoop or Q-Snaps.

If working on a hoop or Q-Snaps smaller than the size of the project, be careful not to crush existing stitches and to remove the hoop after each stitching session. The marks and indentations made may become an unwanted permanent part of the project.

Stretcher Bars

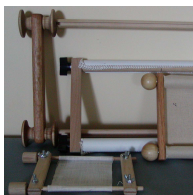
Stretcher Bars are normally made of wood which is acidic. The sidebars can be purchased in many lengths. Fabric or canvas is attached by tacks and stretched in four directions to block it. The stretcher bars should be large enough for the length and width of the design plus a border of fabric. Generally



the fabric should not extend beyond the edge of the stretcher bars.

Scroll Bars

Scroll Bars are normally made of wood. The fabric is attached to two bars, which can be rolled up or down to the area to be worked on. Scroll Bars only stretch the fabric in two directions – much like the loom the fabric was woven on. Once the fabric is attached you do not need to touch the front of the fabric. The front of the fabric is worked in the “ditch” between the bars, and your hands only touch the back of the fabric. Working in the “ditch” makes it easier to end the threads on the back because there is more room to work. Scroll bars can be cradled in the arm to stitch.



Should I use a lap or floor stand to hold my needlework?

This is really a matter of individual preferences. If you use a stand for your hoop, Q-Snaps, stretcher bars or scroll bars you can use both hands for stitching. For “two-handed stitching”, one hand is kept above the fabric and the other below it. Using both hands for stitching is faster and it is easier to use the “stab method” for stitching. The fabric on the bars can be loosened to do the “sewing method” for stitching.

Using a stand can avoid or reduce the effects from repetitive stress injuries, tendinitis, arthritis and cramping so you can stitch for longer periods of time.

There are a wide variety of stands available and they can be very expensive. I recommend you try before you buy. It may be the only stand you ever buy and it should suit your needs and décor.

LIGHT SOURCE:

What Kind of light should I use?

To do cross-stitch it is important to have good lighting with the right intensity and color. You need to be able to see the different colors of thread, the holes and threads of the fabric, your needles and the chart.

Natural lighting is the best kind of light. It is easier to stitch in indirect sunlight.

If you want to stitch on a dark, cloudy day or at night you will need artificial lighting. You can get special bulbs to put in regular light fixtures or you can buy special lights/lamps designed for close work. Many table and floor lights have an adjustable arm so you can direct the light over your work, some also have

magnifiers built right in. Artificial lights produce heat and the bulb can get very hot – so be careful.

Fluorescent lights give the closest to “natural light”. They are made in straight or circular tubes.

Halogen lights with the daylight bulb are very good. I know first hand that these bulbs get hot and are a little expensive.

Incandescent light is very poor, thus NOT recommended.

MAGNIFICATION:

Should I use magnification?

If you can’t easily see your needlework while stitching, then you should seriously consider using magnification.

There is a wide range of magnifiers to choose from. Some are worn like glasses and some attach to or are a part of a needlework stand. Try them out to see which ones work best for you.

WHEN I need to use magnification, I like to wear ones that look like “granny” glasses. I wear them on the end of my nose so I can see through them or above them as needed. And I can carry them anywhere!

For safety reasons do not leave the magnification lens in direct sunlight, it could start a fire.

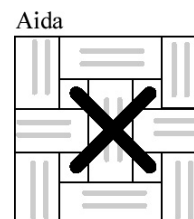
FABRIC:

What fabric should I use?

The choice of fabric is ultimately up to the stitcher. Most stitchers use the fabric recommended in the chart or given in the kit. More adventurous stitchers change the fabric to something they like more.

Fabric comes in a wide variety of colors, textures, and colorfastness. To find quality fabrics visit your local needlework shop. If you don’t see or know quite what fabric you want, ask because if needed they can special order for you.

Aida is woven in a unique basket weave pattern with four vertical and four horizontal threads grouped together to form an easy to see square. Each Square is formed by 4 holes in the fabric. The common sizes are 11-count, 14-count, 16-count and 18 count

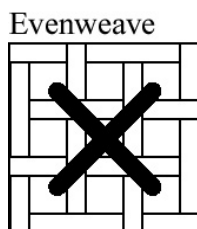


per inch. The count, refers to the number of stitches per inch. A cross-stitch is worked with one X over one square of fabric. For fractional stitches ($\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, & $\frac{3}{4}$

cross-stitches) push through the middle of the little square.

If you love Aida and can not be convinced to try evenweave fabrics yet... Try Salem Cloth from Wichelt Imports, you can get it from your local needlework shop. It is woven just like Aida cloth but is softer and more elegant.

Evenweave fabrics are woven in a simple uniform pattern. Each thread is woven singly, over 1 thread and under the next. There are the same numbers of vertical and horizontal threads per inch. A cross-stitch is usually worked with one X stitched over 2 horizontal and 2 vertical threads, and can be worked over one thread. It is easier to make fractional stitches ($1/4$ and $3/4$ cross-stitches) on evenweave fabrics. Use an evenweave fabric if you want fine detail and an elegant look for an heirloom piece of needlework.



Evenweave fabrics provide a wonderful base for the use of specialty stitches and stitch variations.

Linen is an evenweave fabric. It is made from the fibers of the flax plant *Linum usitatissimum*. Linen increases in strength when wet, unlike other fabrics. The individual threads of linen may not be the same thickness. The thickness of the threads in linen tends to be a bit irregular and contain slubs.

Can I switch the fabric called for in a chart from Aida to an Evenweave?

Yes. It is easy to change the fabric if the pattern calls for Aida and you prefer using an evenweave fabric. However, it may not be so easy to stitch a design made for an evenweave onto Aida fabric, especially if it contains specialty stitches.

How much fabric do I need?

When cutting fabric, a border of blank fabric should be left around the design to finish or frame it. The size of the border will be determined by the size of the design when it is stitched, how you intend to finish it, and the size of your hoop, Q-Snaps, stretcher bars or scroll bars if you do not work "in-hand".

If the needlework is to be framed, the fabric should be at least a little bigger than the outside edges of the mat so it moves smoothly around the foam core. In general, it is best to leave at least 3 inches around the design area.

If the design area is small and you intend to finish it rather than frame it, then you may be able to manage with less than 3 inches around the design area.

How big will the design of my finished piece be?

This depends on how many horizontal and vertical stitches are in the design and the count of the fabric. Fabric count refers to the number of threads per inch. A higher count of fabric will make a smaller stitched design. For example, a design stitched on 11 count Aida will be much smaller when stitched on 18 count Aida.

Most charts and instructions indicate the number of horizontal and vertical stitches in the design as well as the finished size for the recommended fabric. Some charts will also give you the finished size for other counts of fabric.

If this information is not given in the chart, then you need to determine three things; the horizontal stitch count of the design, the vertical stitch count of the design, and the fabric count.

Note: On evenweave fabrics, we generally stitch over 2 horizontal and 2 vertical threads, so divide the fabric count by 2 to get the stitch-able fabric count. For example, a 28-count fabric will have a stitch-able fabric count of 14.

To determine the horizontal (vertical) stitched size, divide the horizontal (vertical) stitch count of the design by the fabric count.

Fabric Count	11	14	16	18	Inches
Stitch Count	55	70	80	90	5
	77	98	112	126	7
	88	112	128	144	8
	110	140	160	180	10

Using the chart above, you can get a general idea of the size of the design. For example, using 14-count fabric a design with a horizontal stitch count of 98 will be 7 inches wide.

How can I determine or check the stitch count of the fabric?

To determine the fabric count on Aida cloth, make a running stitch on the fabric over and under every hole until it is about 2 inches long.

Then use a ruler to measure how many stitches are in an inch. One stitch is the distance from one hole to the next.

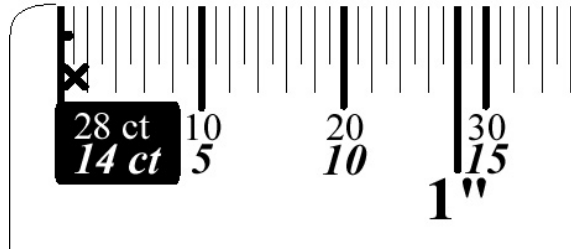
To determine the fabric count on an evenweave fabric, make a running stitch on the fabric over 2 and under 2 threads and about 2 inches long. Then use a ruler to

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measure how many stitches are in an inch. Each stitch seen or unseen equals 2 threads.

Note: there are several rulers made specifically for needlework. These rulers are generally marked at every full inch with divisions for common fabric counts. For example, a ruler measuring 14-count fabric will have 14 divisions in every inch.



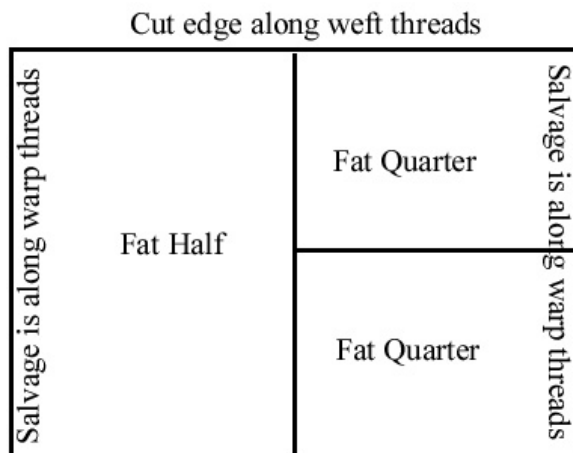
The diagram above is an image of the Clear View Thread/Stitch Counters by Designs From Margaret Lee (yes me...) The “X” represents one stitch worked on 14-count Aida or “over two” threads on a 28-count evenweave fabric. The dot represents one thread on 28-count evenweave fabric.

What are warp and weft threads and do they matter?

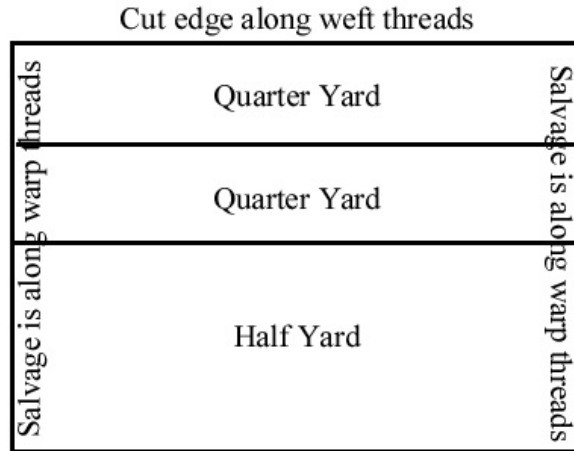
When the fabric is woven the first threads put on the loom are wound around bars to hold it tight, these are the warp threads. Then weft threads are added to make the fabric. The weft threads run side-to-side and produce a salvage edge that runs up and down in the same direction as the warp threads.

What is a fat quarter?

A fat quarter is NOT the same as a quarter yard of fabric. It has the same area but not the same shape.



A quarter yard of fabric is long and skinny, 18” by the width of the fabric. A fat quarter is 18” by half the width of the fabric.



If we are making a bell pull or other item to hang, we want a fat quarter or fat half in order for the warp threads to be vertical when we stitch. We do not want a quarter yard of fabric.

The fabric does not have a salvage, how can I tell which are the warp threads?

With Aida cloth, this would be difficult to tell, and would probably not make a difference.

For evenweave fabrics, remove a vertical and a horizontal thread. The warp thread will be straighter than the weft thread.

If the fabric is square, remove a vertical and a horizontal thread. The shorter thread will be the warp and the longer thread will be the weft. Dampen the thread if needed, to see which is longer.

What can I do to prevent the fabric from fraying?

Some fabrics fray more than others. If working on a scroll frame, the fabric needs to be evenly taut rolled around the rods. Thus the method used to prevent fraying must be “thin” along the vertical edges of the fabric.

- i) If the project is small, fits well in the stitching frame and the weave is tighter– I often don’t do anything to prevent fraying. (Lazy me...).
- ii) Whip stitch the edges by hand. With this method it is easy to adjust the stitch width, length, and thickness.
- iii) Zig zag (~~~~~) the edges with a sewing machine. This method is a little thicker than whip stitching.

If working on a hoop, Q-Snaps or “in-hand” use any of the methods above or...

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- iv) Serge the edge (much bulkier than above).
- v) Turn the fabric edge under ¼ to ½ inch and baste by hand or machine.

Do NOT use masking tape or adhesives of any kind including Fray Check. These chemicals can attract dirt and grime, and leave residue on the fabric, which will deteriorate and harm the fabric over time. If they are used on the fabric, it must be cut off before finishing or framing the project. If you use these chemicals, they can accidentally be “spilled” on your fabric and may not be able to be removed.

If desired the stitching done to prevent fraying along the edges can be removed after the stitching is complete prior to finishing. I generally prefer to leave it on.

Is there a right side to Aida, evenweave and linen fabrics?

Maybe, but it does not matter most of the time.

I have heard that if you pull lightly on the bias that the corners of the fabric will curl towards the front. Well, I have cut yards and yards of material for kits for my needlework classes and tested this method over and over – it does NOT work!

From the bolt the fabric is folded salvage to salvage. When two pieces of fabric from these two layers, the top of one piece should be the right side and the top of the other piece should be the wrong side. Well they both bend in the same direction!

In my humble opinion, I believe you should chose the side you like best. I doubt using the “wrong” side will distort your stitches much if at all! So, if you need something to worry about, worry more about warp threads rather than having the right side of the fabric.

My fabric is wrinkled, how can I make it flat?

First of all, avoid buying fabric with wrinkles, creases or folds and try not to handle or store work in progress in a manner that will create wrinkles.

You definitely do not want a piece with the centerfold of the bolt - the one parallel to the salvage. This crease is nearly impossible to get out. If your project is less than half the width of the fabric on the bolt, you should not have to deal with a center crease – look and/or ask for another piece. If you project is larger, you don’t have much choice.

If your finished fabric is going to be taut when framed, try mounting it on Q-Snaps, stretcher bars or scroll rods. If this looks flat then you can probably avoid removing the wrinkles.

To remove wrinkles from a very clean new piece of fabric, spray the wrinkled sections of the fabric lightly with water and press with a dry iron.

Or wet the wrinkles, put the fabric in a plastic bag, put the bag in the freezer, and then press the fabric with a dry iron.

Should I wash the fabric before stitching?

Washing the fabric and fibers is a personal choice.

Some specialty fabrics and fibers are not colorfast and should not be washed. In this case the entire purpose for spending the extra money to get them would be washed down the drain.

Washing removes the stabilizers and often shrinks the fabric/threads, which can make it more difficult to see the spaces between the threads and thus stitch on.

If the fabric and/or fibers are dirty you should definitely clean them up first. (See the section about washing the project after stitching - page 23).

If there are folds, make sure they will come out.

Floss is generally colorfast, but is not guaranteed to bleed when wet or dry. Some colors are more problematic than others such as red, dark blue and purple. The excess dye can come off the floss and onto the fabric. This becomes a problem if you stitched in an area that is not supposed to be stitched and it needs to be ripped out. The marks that are left are called tracks.

If the fabric and/or fibers are dark colored and will be used in clothing such as bibs, vests, shirts, napkins, towels, etc... then you should test them for colorfastness.

How can I prevent soiling the fabric and fiber?

KEEP IT CLEAN. Many of the new fibers are not guaranteed to retain their color after being washed – like overdyed floss, silks, and ampler threads. So it is important to prevent the need to wash your fabric and fibers before, during, and after stitching if needed.

Always wash hands thoroughly before handling the fabric, fibers, or the project and keep them clean while you work.

Do not use greasy hand lotion prior to stitching.

Do not allow food or drink in your stitching zone. Do not touch your face or hair, then the fabric. They produce oils, which can be transferred to your needlework.

Watch out for ink, pencil, or highlighters, which may accidentally transfer to your fabric.

Store your project in a pillowcase in a safe location when not in progress.

What kind of hand lotion can I use while stitching?

Most importantly the hand lotion should not be greasy. Ask your local needlework shop if they carry a hand lotion to use while stitching that will not hurt your needlework. You can also use Au Ver a Soie Hand Lotion, Acid Mantle Lotion, Creative Hands, or white Udder Cream (Redex Industries).

FIBERS:

What fibers should I use?

The choice of fibers is ultimately up to the stitcher. Most stitchers use the fibers recommended in the chart or given in the kit. More adventurous stitchers change the fibers to brands or types they like better.

I don't like the colors used in the chart...

If you choose to change the color and types of fibers used in the chart be sure to choose them in daylight.

- 1) First decide on the fabric type and color to be used, have it with you when you choose the fibers.
- 2) Next choose any overdyed, silk, variegated or specialty threads you plan to use. These threads can vary in shade and even texture from dye lot to dye lot.
- 3) Lastly, choose the common fibers in colors you like.

How much floss and fibers should I buy?

Buy enough floss or fiber needed to complete the project.

Most charts do not tell you how much you will need. So look at the stitched piece, if there is a lot of one color, buy more than one skein.

Specialty as well as other fibers can vary significantly from dye lot to dye lot, especially if it is hand-dyed or over-dyed.

If using a hand-dyed or over-dyed fiber, choose it first then compare it to the other fiber colors in the project. If the colors do not work well together, you may want to make a few color adjustments.

Many fiber colors are not guaranteed to be colorfast. If these fibers are washed the color will change, can bleed, and may not work well with the rest of the project colors.

Do working fibers have a nap?

Maybe...if you look under a microscope. Nap is a "hairy" surface on the fabric or fiber, which may have a distinct direction to the hairs. Floss manufacturers claim their floss does not have a nap, and thus not "right end".

During the manufacturing process the fibers are twisted together and the hairs aligned with the twist. But is the directional nap distinctive enough to make a difference in the ease and quality of the stitching and is it worth the extra effort?

You can try to determine if a fiber has a directional nap by running the fiber across your upper lip. If you can feel the difference, the fiber should pass through the fabric in the direction that feels smooth.

When working with floss, I can't feel a directional nap but with a magnifier I can see the minute hairs. If you are concerned about the nap and want to use the "right end", some people say to thread the ends from the end that comes out of the skein first or you can try "blossoming" the threads.

How should I test floss for colorfastness?

The worst floss bleeders are reds, dark blues and purple. Test for color fastness by wetting the floss with room temperature distilled water and placing it on a white paper towel to dry. If the fabric or fiber bleeds, then you should wash them before using them.

Soak each color in a separate clean glass container filled with room temperature distilled water (take the wrappers off the skeins first). Some people recommend adding vinegar or salt but the results vary depending on the type of dye and fiber and may even cause damage.

Soak/rinse the fiber in clean distilled water until the water stays clear, then place the wet floss on a white paper towel to dry. If the color bleeds, soak /rinse it again.

How can I set the dye in the floss?

Some people say you can set the dye by soaking the floss in a solution of 3 parts water and 1 part white vinegar.

Other people say to soak it in salt water...

If you choose to use these methods, be sure to rinse them completely out of the floss or it may harm the fibers more than needed.

BEGINNING TO STITCH:

Where should I begin stitching on the fabric?

First thing you should do is look at the design, then decide the best place to start. Your choice of starting places may vary from design to design as well as the way the project will be finished. Generally, the design should be centered on the fabric.

Some people like to work left to right and top to bottom, because as they work their hands do not need to touch areas that have been stitched.

If there is a border around the design, or it is geometrical, I think it is best to work from the center outward, and /or put in basting lines for more accurate stitching.

Some people stitch one color at a time, marking off the chart as they stitch.

A few people baste the chart from the center outward every 10-20 stitches and stitch one square at a time.

How can I find the center of the fabric?

Prior to stitching, find the center of the fabric. Fold the fabric in half lengthwise and then in half crosswise. Insert the needle in the center.

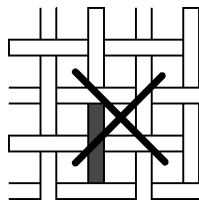
Mark the center with floss or a pin.

If working on an evenweave fabric over 2 threads, look to see if the needle comes up at the lower left of the vertical thread. If not, move the needle one thread in any direction and it will be.

What is “lower left of a vertical thread”?

If you are working on an evenweave fabric, the legs of the cross-stitch should all be located at the lower left of a vertical thread (unless the design says otherwise). If you start the cross-stitch at the lower left of the vertical thread the other legs will step right into line.

Finding and starting at the lower left of the vertical thread gives you a consistent reference point to aid in accuracy throughout the design. I **STRONGLY** recommend using this reference point for all your stitches on evenweave fabric. It also helps you easily figure out if you stitched over 3 threads instead of 2!



Some people believe that we should start at the lower left of a vertical thread because the working thread will slip under the ground fabric thread if we don't. I'm not convinced this is true logically or mathematically! For

cross-stitches, the working thread should always cross the ground fabric thread at a 45-degree angle.

Some people have said that the hole is larger at the lower left of a vertical thread. I can't see the difference.

ACCURATE STITCHING:

What is the Frog Stitch?

The Frog Stitch is the ripping out of mistakes “Rippit...ripp it.”

How can I make my stitching more accurate, so I don't need to do the Frog Stitch?

- 1) Count twice and stitch once.
- 2) Mark the top of the fabric by stitching a “T”. If the project is reversible, you may need to label the front.
- 3) Use special needlework rulers, scaled to the fabric count, like The Clear View Thread/Stitch Counters by Designs From Margaret Lee to help count threads/stitches and to double check how many stitches were made.
- 4) Enlarge the chart if the symbols are too small to see easily.
- 5) Mark off the symbols on the chart with a highlighter or use Post-It notes to check how many stitches were made.
- 6) Another method I strongly recommend is basting. Putting in basting lines takes a little time to do, but may save you hours of Frogging, and thus save you time, aggravation, and money.

BASTING:

How can I put basting lines on the fabric?

There are several methods of putting basting lines in the fabric:

- 1) Baste only the centerlines.
- 2) Baste all or part of the dark grid lines on the chart – usually every 10 stitches.
- 3) Baste along the left edge of the fabric – this works well for stitching a band sampler.
- 4) Baste a small “ruler” outside of the design area, near the edges of the fabric that matches up with the darker grid lines on the cross-stitch chart, something like this:



How do I put basting lines on the fabric?

Basting the guidelines on the ground fabric aids in counting and accuracy. With accurate guidelines, you

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can stitch almost anywhere on the ground fabric whenever you like.

To baste the guidelines, use a thread of contrasting color to the ground fabric, preferably sewing thread in a color not used in the design. Floss will work fine, but do not use a very dark color on a light fabric, it may leave tracks when you remove the basting thread. It is best to use regular sewing thread because it is wound tighter.

Find the center of the fabric. Poke the needle through.

If working on an evenweave fabric, look at the thread to the right of your needle. Is your needle to the lower left section of a vertical thread? If NOT, move your thread one thread in any direction and it will be.

Cross-stitch charts are made on a grid of small squares. Most grids have a heavier dark line every 10 squares. Find the center of the design and how many stitches it is from the nearest intersection of the darker vertical and horizontal lines.

Find this location on the ground fabric and begin basting. If possible use a different color thread than the other basting lines so it will be easier to find the center.

If working on Aida, baste the space of every 2 stitches. If working on an evenweave fabric, baste over 2 (or 4) and under 2 (or 4) threads.

Baste the remaining darker horizontal and vertical lines every 10 stitches so you have a grid on the fabric.

Attach the fabric to a scroll frame, stretcher bars or Q-Snaps to keep the fabric smooth and taut. As you work, remove the basting lines in the immediate area you will be stitching by clipping a section of the threads(s). Leave an adequate amount of basting thread on the ground fabric to help guide your stitching. If you stitch over or on the basting threads you may pierce a thread which would distort the decorative stitches when you pull out the basting threads.

I want to start in the top left corner, how can I easily find where to start without using basting lines?

The easiest way is to see if the directions tell you where to start, most directions don't.

Most charts give the design stitch count. So you can use a regular ruler or special rulers scaled to the fabric count like The Clear View Thread/ Stitch Counters by Designs From Margaret Lee.

Divide the horizontal (vertical) stitch count by 2. This is the number of stitches you will need to count across (up) from the center point of the fabric.

If using a **special scaled needlework ruler**, use the appropriate markings on the ruler for the stitch count of the fabric.

For a design 70 x 98, stitched on 14-count fabric:
 $(70/2) = 35$ stitches from center
 $(98/2) = 49$ stitches from center

You will move left 35 stitches and up 49 stitches.

If using a **regular ruler**, divide the halved horizontal (vertical) by the fabric count.

The formula: $(\text{stitch count}/2)/\text{fabric count}$

For a design 70 x 98, stitched on 14-count fabric:
 $(70/2)/14 = (35)/14 = 2.5$
 $(98/2)/14 = (49)/14 = 3.5$

You will move left 2.5" and up 3.5".

What length of floss should I use?

Generally, the working thread should be 12-18 inches long. Use shorter lengths for smaller stitches and fragile working threads. Longer length can be used for some stitches such as the Satin and Buttonhole, which cover greater areas and quickly use more thread.

Try to have enough thread to complete a stitch or group of related stitches, so you do not run out of thread in the middle.

How should I remove floss from the skein?

Embroidery floss comes in skeins. To get a working length of floss from a skein, leave the wrappers on and look for a loose end of floss where the floss is bent on the ends. If you don't see the loose end, gently sake the skein and it may become visible. If there are two loose ends, slowly pull the longer end while holding the wrapper at the opposite end.

How many strands of floss should I use?

After considering the right needle size for the fabric you should also consider the number of strands of thread needed in relation to the fiber.

For cross-stitch the floss should cover the ground fabric under the stitch, so little if any shows through.

If working on an evenweave fabric, the amount of fiber should be of similar weight to the ground fabric threads. You can take a strand of ground fabric thread from the edge of the fabric and compare it to the working fibers to be used.

For 14-count fabric (or 28-count if stitching on evenweave 2-over-2) generally you should use 2 strands of floss.

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# Strands Floss	Tapestry Needle Size
1	26 or 28
2	26
3 or 4	24
6	22

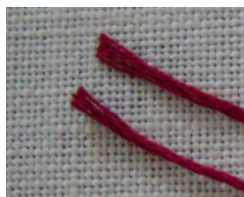
If you are not sure of how many strands to use, try working a small section.

What is “tweeding” and a “blended needle”?

Tweeding and using a blended needle is using two or more different threads in the same needle at the same time. This gives appearance of using more colors than are actually in the chosen palette of colors in the needlework piece.

How do threads blossom?

If the floss is already cut put the two cut ends of the lengths together and gently tap them. The end where the fibers hang more loosely (blossom) is the one to thread through the needle.



Why should we strip threads?

Separating the strands of floss will reduce tangles and help the fibers lay neatly on the fabric.

To separate the strands:

- 1) Hold the end of one length of floss from the blossomed end and pull out each strand one at a time.
- 2) Straighten each strand after it has been pulled out and re-align the ends.
- 3) Lay all the needed strands parallel to each other and thread your needle.

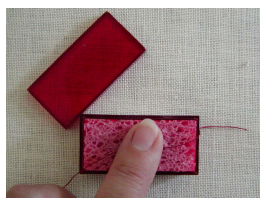
What is the purpose of dampening the threads?

Dampening the thread will help straighten and tame the static of difficult threads and control the nap. It also strips the threads thus reducing tangles.

Dampening will loosen some fibers, such as rayon, and allow them to expand to cover the ground fabric better.

Not all fibers should be dampened, check for colorfastness and fiber content. Over-dyed, hand-dyed, silk and sampler threads are not guaranteed to retain their color after being washed.

To dampen threads, glide the working thread over a damp **soft** sponge. Generally, the threads should be dry before



stitching with them so the color does not transfer to the fabric. However, some stitchers like to work with the thread damp.

STITCHING:

I am working on a dark fabric and can not easily see the threads...

Work in daylight or use a bright light in the evening. You can also try placing a light-colored fabric on your lap to help you see the holes between the threads.

How should I secure the working thread to the fabric before making stitches?

We are told repeatedly NOT to use Knots when doing needlework. This makes sense when I think of a knot as a tangled mess of threads that are difficult to untangle and makes a mess on the back of the fabric. Knots can also make lumps and bumps on the back of the fabric that can be seen after the project is finished by framing and other methods.

In needlework we use several methods to anchor the beginning stitches to the fabric, many of these are called knots but are these really knots? Perhaps it would be better to call these “anchors” rather than knots.

Use an Away Anchor or Knot if you:

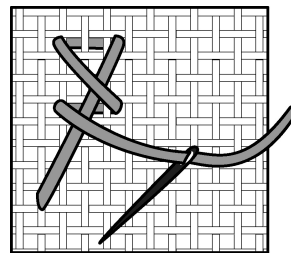
- 1) are NOT working with a dark colorfast fiber (it may leave marks or tracks on the fabric).
- 2) are not sure how the stitches should lie to look nice
- 3) are doing blackwork or pulled work

If using an Away Anchor or Knot make it:

- 1) on the front of the fabric
- 2) 2-3 inches away from where the first stitch will be
- 3) in a location where the thread will not be stitched over
- 4) long enough thread so that when you tuck in the threads later there will be enough to secure them such that they will not work themselves loose.

Away Anchor Knot (or Not?)

This is one of my favorite “knots” for beginning specialty stitches. It works for any number of threads. Hold the end of the thread down on the front of the fabric and tack it into place with at least one straight stitch. After the stitching is complete, undo the tack and tuck the tail into the stitches as desired.

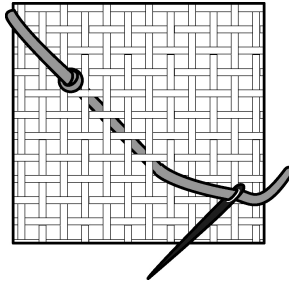


Away Waste Knot

This knot is good for an odd number of threads or a blended needle – but there is the danger of accidentally clipping the fabric when clipping the knot. Make a knot in the end of the thread and insert it into the fabric.

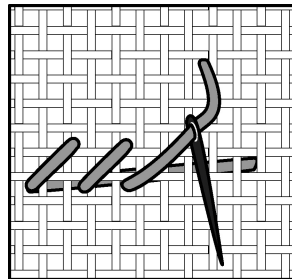
After the stitching is complete cut off the knot and tuck the tail into the stitches as desired.

If you know how the beginning stitches should lie to look nice then you can “Tuck the Tails” or use a Waste Knot.



Tuck the Tail

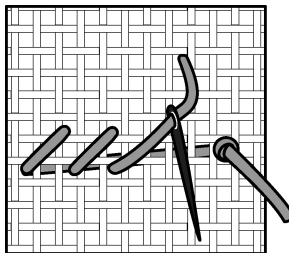
To “Tuck the Tail”, hold the tail on the back of the fabric behind where the new stitches will lie. Be sure to cover the tail with stitches as you work to secure it.



Waste Knot

Make a small knot at the end of the thread. Place it on the right side of the fabric in the path of where the stitches will be made. The knot should be about 2 inches away from the first stitch.

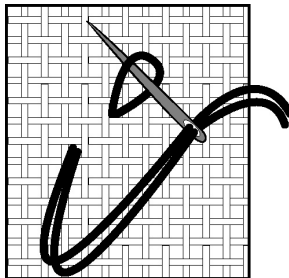
Make stitches up to the knot, then cut off the knot and continue stitching.



Loop Anchor (Knot) Method

The loop method is a wonderful way to secure an even number of threads, when the grain/nap of the fiber does not matter. It is especially nice for isolated stitches or when there is little else to secure a wider stitch (like the Satin stitch).

Cut a length of thread twice the needed length and no more than 36 inches long. Fold the thread in half. Thread the cut ends of the thread through the eye of the needle. From the front of the fabric insert the threaded at one end of the first stitch leaving a small loop. Bring the needle up at the next correct hole. Insert the needle through the loop, and



then go right back in the hole you just came up from. Pull the needle and thread through to the back of the fabric and gently pull on the thread until the loop end pops to the back.

Existing Stitches

You can also secure the beginning thread within the back of existing stitches of the same or like colors.

How can I easily count the threads on an evenweave fabric while stitching?

From the back of the fabric use the tip of the needle and press it along the horizontal or vertical threads. As you count you can feel the threads.

Does it matter how you make the cross-stitch?

Yes! Most importantly, all the top stitches of a cross-stitch should lay in the same direction for every stitch in the project “\” or “/”. Some exemptions include special design elements and effects. The cross-stitch should adequately cover the ground fabric.

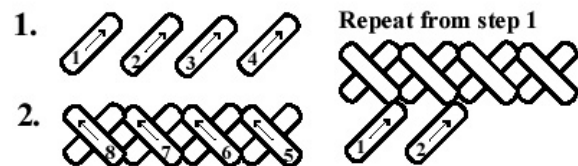
The Danish Method

With this method of cross-stitch, the lower leg is stitched on the first journey across a row and is completed on the return journey. This method creates vertical lines on the back of the fabric. This method is usually faster and less confusing for most people to keep track of the stitches.

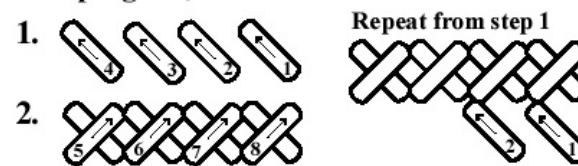
Danish Method

Cross-stitches are made in two journeys.

- top leg “\”, with vertical back.



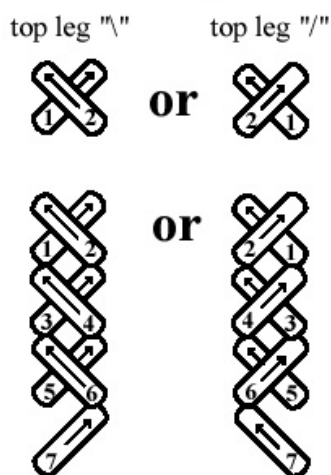
- top leg “/”, with vertical back.



The Traditional or English Method

With this method of cross-stitch, one full cross stitch is completed before the next one is started. Cross-stitches made in this method have survived on many antique samples despite the deterioration of the fabric. Working this method in columns creates vertical lines on the back of the fabric.

Traditional or English Method



How can I make cross-stitches so vertical lines are made on the back?

Work rows using the Danish method and columns using the English Method of cross-stitch.

A NEATER FRONT

How can I make my stitching neater on the front?

Shared Holes:

Try to come up in the least shared hole and down in the most shared hole. This takes the fuzz and fluff to the back of the fabric and helps to prevent the splitting of working and ground fabric threads.

If there are shared holes at the end of each stitch, come up in the hole of the same color you are using and down into the hole of the contrasting color.

Tension

Stitches should be worked with an even tension. Only “pulled thread” stitches should be pulled tightly NOT most other stitches!

Be Consistent

Be consistent with the order of moves in a stitch (right to left, up and down, clockwise, or counter clockwise, single stitches or groups of stitches, etc...) on the project.

The stitches should look “natural” and blend together smoothly. The first and last stitches done with a thread length should look like the middle stitches.

Be able to complete a full stitch before ending the thread.

If working a large area of color in cross-stitch, work it all in the same method, Danish or English or you may see a line appear which separates the different methods.

Carrying Threads

Do not carry thread over long distances. If you must, from the back of the fabric run the thread under previously worked stitches of the same color (if at all possible) to anchor them while carrying the thread to the nearest appropriate corner of the next stitch.

Never carry thread more than the space of one or two stitches because the thread may be visible through the fabric when completed. When stitching letters, numbers or isolated stitches always end the thread after each is completed.

Avoid passing thread across un-worked areas. If the stitches will cross over more than the length of two cross-stitches, consider ending the thread and restarting in the next area. If the weave of the ground fabric is loose, do not carry the threads, end them and restart in the next section.

Lay the Working Threads

This is the process of making threads lay parallel while stitching to help the working threads lay flatter, cover the fabric better and make needlework appear much nicer on the front.

Laying threads takes extra time but can make a big improvement in the quality of the project and judges can tell the difference.

If you don't have the time or patience to lay both the top and bottom of the stitch, then do at least the upper portion of the stitch. The lower portion of a stitch may or may not be worth the extra effort depending on the type of stitch, fabric, floss, and individual stitching styles. So, test and decide for yourself if it is worth the extra effort.

Methods used to lay threads include Railroad and using a laying tool.

Use the Stab Method

Use the “Stab Method” rather than the “Sewing Method” to make cross-stitches.

How do I stitch using the Stab Method?

Hold the fabric taut. From the top of the fabric, insert the needle perpendicular through the fabric to the back. Return the needle to the front of the fabric in the same manner. This method helps make a neater stitch because it takes the fuzz and looseness of previous stitches to the back of the fabric.

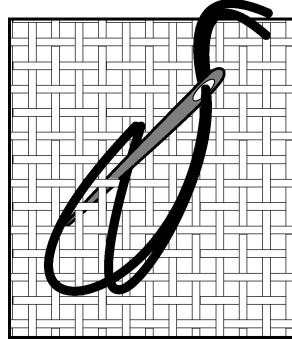
How do I stitch using the Sewing Method?

Hold the fabric just loose enough that the needle can be inserted from the front of the fabric to the back AND to the front again for a stitch. This method is faster than

the stab method and takes time to perfect. This method works nicely when working “in-hand” but can be done on a frame if the fabric is loose.

What is Railroading?

Railroading is a method used to force threads to lay nicely side by side (to be parallel), thus improving the appearance of the stitch and covering the ground fabric better. It works well when stitching with two threads.

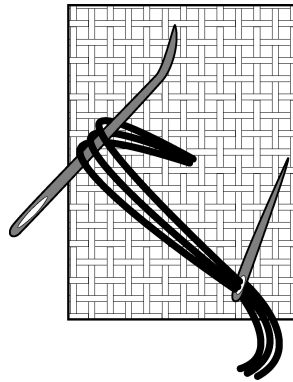


From the front of the fabric insert the needle between the two working threads then go straight down through the fabric.

Railroading takes the ‘twist’ out of the thread at the stitch and transports it along the remaining thread. Therefore, it is necessary to periodically “untwist” the threads by dangling, or stripping the thread or rotating the needle.

How do I Lay Threads?

Stitches using 2 or more threads can be laid using a laying tool such as a Bent Weaver’s Needle, Tekobari, Trolley Needle, Bodkin, or Collar Stay. It is easier to lay threads if the fabric is taut and a lap or floor stand is used to hold the fabric so the stitcher can use both hands.



Work from the front of the fabric. Bring the needle up through the fabric and then down for a stitch – leave a little “loop”. Put the laying tool between the fabric and the “loop” of the floss. Stroke the loop smooth (to help separate the strands) as you pull the floss to the back of the fabric and adjust the tension of the stitch.

My working thread gets all twisted when I stitch...

To help threads lay nicely and improve your stitching, the threads should be periodically untangled, untwisted, and re-paralleled by dangling and/or threads.

Dangling Threads

This can be done on the front or back of the fabric. Simply allow the needle (still attached to the thread) to dangle loosely away from the fabric to unwind.

Stripping Threads

Remove the needle from the working thread. Separate the threads by putting one between each of your fingers and gently pulling along the entire length of the threads. Then re-thread the needle.

Removing the needle from the working thread reduces stress and wear and tear on the working thread.

If you are NOT working with a delicate or difficult fiber and are not terribly worried about the stress on the working thread, do what I usually do...

Move the needle along the floss until it is next to the fabric. Separate the threads by putting one between each of your fingers and gently pulling along the entire length of the threads. Then return the needle to the regular place along the floss to continue stitching.

Rotating Needle

If you notice the working thread is consistently twisting in the same direction, try rotating your needle in the opposite direction every few stitches or ¼ turn for every stitch. If you look at your thread as you dangle it, you can figure out which way it is twisting.

Why is my thread starting to look rough and worn?

Even if the thickness of the needle and size of its eye are just right, there will be stress on the working thread every time it passes through the fabric. After a short while the thread becomes rough and worn. Start a new length before the stitches appear tired and dull (floss is cheap and we know where to get lots more!).

The thread also wears harder where it bends at the eye of the needle, so leave only a 2-3 inch tail from the eye, so the worn part of the thread does not become a part of the stitches.

I stitched part of the design wrong...

If the mistake is little and has happened with the current working thread, unthread the needle and use the blunt end to undo the mistake. If it is a delicate fiber, undo the stitch from the front when the tail hangs from the back and undo the back when the tail hangs from the front.

If the mistake is little and from a previous working thread, you may be able to ignore it or adjust the design a little to accommodate the mistake depending on the original design. If possible, I work around the mistake and have a unique piece of needlework.

Some people can't stand to have even one stitch in the wrong place...

If a mistake is big and happened at any time during the stitching process and you must remove the section - snip the working thread near the fabric and undo all the wrong stitches, by using the blunt end to undo the mistake and snipping the thread as needed. Do not reuse the thread. It becomes rough and worn from the stress of traveling through the fabric so much.

MAKE A NEAT BACK:

Taking a little extra time to make a neat and tidy back for the needlework project helps to improve the appearance of the front.

How can I make my stitching neater on the back?

Knots

Do not use bulky knots when doing needlework. These knots may show through as a bulge later when the project is framed or finished.

Clipping Threads

Secure and carefully clip all loose threads close to the fabric with a pair of good embroidery scissors. Do not leave loose threads hanging on the back of the fabric. The threads could wander and show or emerge through later.

Ending Threads

Work your ending threads in the natural direction of the stitch previously made. To prevent distorting existing stitches, use a thin, sharp needle, such as a chenille needle if needed.

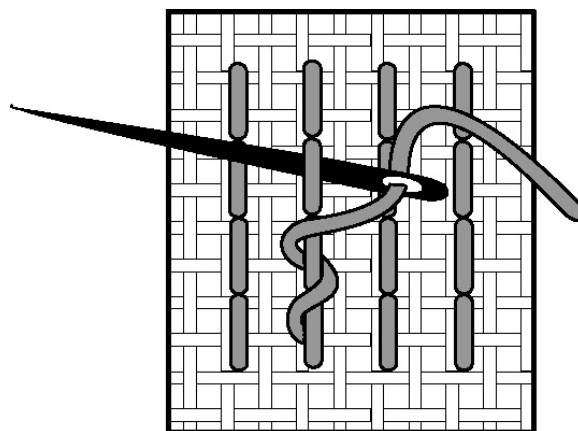
End threads on the back by weaving them under working threads on the back of the ground fabric.

Try to end threads within threads of the same color, if at all possible. If it is not possible choose a similar color. Never end a dark thread into a light color or visa versa, it may be visible from the front.

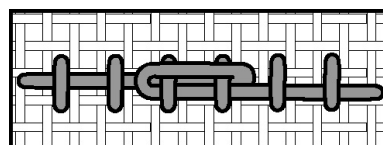
If the stitches made on the front of the fabric are small, the thread can be run straight under the existing stitches 1-2".

If the stitches are not so small or seem loose, you may want to secure them more.

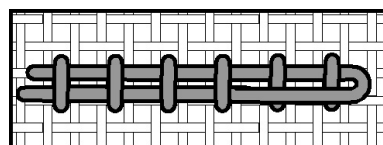
If the stitches on the back are vertical, you can whip stitch them to keep a neater back. Be careful this method can add a little bulk as you stitch.



Avoid using a Bargello Knot. Bargello knots add bulk to the back of the fabric and can distort stitches - especially eyelets and other small stitches.



A Bargello tuck is less bulky and more appropriate if you want to be sure the ending thread is held securely.



If there are only a few threads on the back to weave into and there will be excellent coverage on the front, then you can bring the threads to the front and work new stitches over them.

For the stitch I'm using, I can't end my threads nicely in a natural direction using the methods discussed - my new thread should go ahead of the threads I already made... In this case...

- 1) leave enough thread on your old needle to complete a few more stitches
- 2) Park your needle on the front of the fabric to use it again shortly
- 3) Thread a new needle with a new thread
- 4) Anchor the new thread as desired
- 5) Stitch with the new thread for several stitches
- 6) End the old thread in the new stitches

FRACTIONAL CROSS-STITCHES:

½ Cross-Stitch

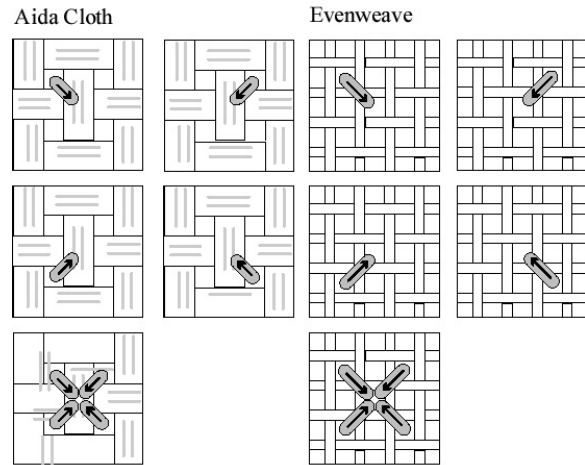
A ½ Cross-Stitch is basically a single leg of a cross-stitch. It is also known as a ½ stitch or Tent stitch.

The stitch emerges in one corner of a “square”, extends diagonally across and enters the fabric at the other corner of a “square”, extends diagonally across and enters the fabric at the other corner of the “square”.

It is often used for shading in backgrounds with one or two strands for trees and clouds; the design usually makes the direction obvious. If the ½ stitch is the same as the “top” half cross-stitch, it tends to blend into the background.

¼ Cross-Stitch

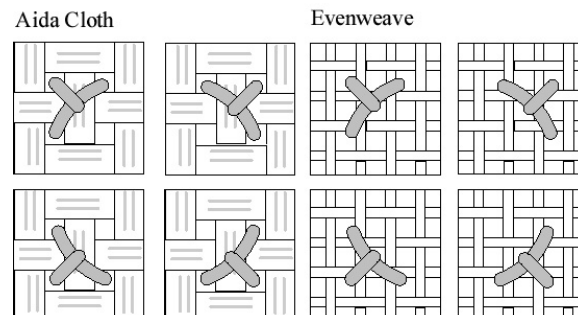
A ¼ Cross-Stitch emerges at a designated corner of a “square”, extends diagonally halfway across and enters the fabric at the center of the “square”. Also, known as a ¼ stitch.



It is used to smooth out edges in cross-stitch and for small details. It can be used in groups of 2-4. When making a ¼ stitch on Aida – it may be helpful to prepare the center hole for the tapestry needle by first piercing the fabric with a sharp needle or pin.

¾ Cross-Stitch

A ¾ Cross-Stitch is made up of a ¼ stitch and a ½ stitch. The ½ stitch may lie over or under the ¼ stitch – as desired. It may or may not be covered with a backstitch of the same or a different color fiber.



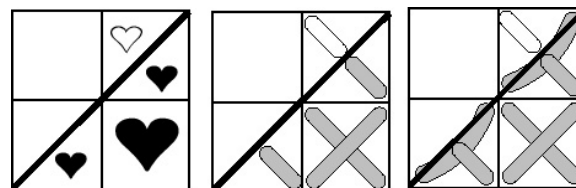
What fractional stitch shall I use?

Read the directions carefully for specific directions from the designer. If there are NO specific directions, use your “artistic” judgement.

Here are a few examples:

If a backstitch will be made at a 45-degree angle and a different symbol is on each side, it is usually neater to do two ¼ cross stitches rather than a ¼ and a ¾ stitch. The backstitch tends to get lost in the fibers of the longer stitch of the ¾ stitch.

If a ¾ stitch needs to be made to cover the fabric better, determine which side is in the foreground of the picture and make that side the ¾ stitch.



If the backstitch or dividing line will be made at an angle other than a 45-degree then...

Assume symbols are given in sections c, e, & f.

b - No stitch needed because the backstitch crosses less than the area of a $\frac{1}{4}$ stitch.

c - The backstitch cuts through the square such that a $\frac{3}{4}$ stitch is needed.

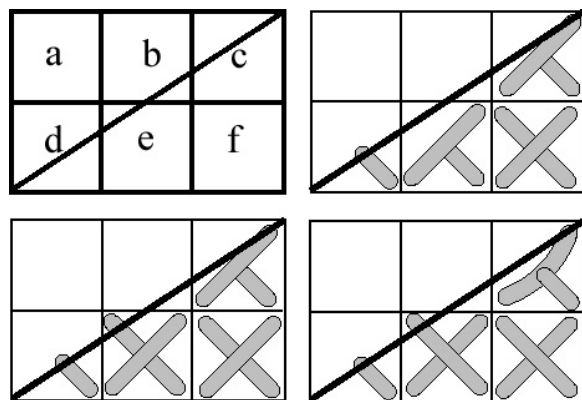
If the top stitch lays in the same direction as the backstitch, make the $\frac{1}{2}$ stitch over the $\frac{1}{4}$ stitch.

If the top stitch lays in different direction from the backstitch, make the $\frac{1}{4}$ stitch over the $\frac{1}{2}$ stitch.

d - If the design is only on one side of the backstitch, and no symbol is given, consider using a $\frac{1}{4}$ stitch.

e - If the top stitch lays in the same direction as the backstitch, make the $\frac{1}{2}$ stitch over the $\frac{1}{4}$ stitch or make a full cross-stitch.

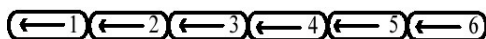
If the top stitch lays in different direction from the backstitch, make a full cross-stitch.



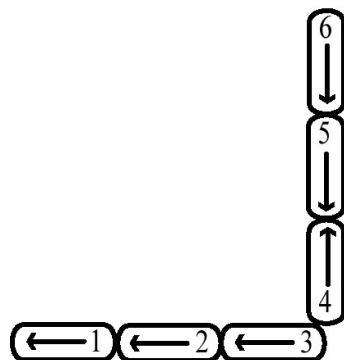
STRAIGHT STITCHES:

Backstitch

Backstitches add definition and dimension to a design element. Backstitch after all stitching in an area has been completed. It is typically done with one strand of floss. If needed, use a sharp or chenille needle to help pierce thicker areas of existing stitches.



To make a neat backstitched corner...



Holbein Stitch

Also, known as the Double Running Stitch. This stitch makes a nice smooth line and is completed in two journeys. It looks wonderful for wording and vines. It does not work well within a solidly stitched area in place of backstitching.

First journey - the running stitch.



Second Journey – the return journey shares holes with the first journey. There are several methods to make the second journey

- ♦ **Bricking** – the return journey stitches are made above the thread of the first journey.



- ♦ **Interlacing** – the return journey is made by coming up above the thread of the first journey



and down below it.

After adjusting the tension...



- ♦ **Piercing** - the thread of first journey is pierced by the thread of the second journey.



If you are right handed, consider stitching the first journey from right to left, then turning the fabric upside down for the return journey.

If the design has offshoot stitches, work them on the first journey.

Long Straight Stitches

Only use a long straight stitch if needed for a design element that would look poor if stitched with Backstitch or Holbein, such as the whiskers of a cat or other animal or ropes for ship riggings.

BEADS:

Beads can be used to embellish a design or in place of knots and regular stitches.

What is the best way of attaching beads?

Beading should be done after all the cross-stitches and backstitches are done in an area.

Choose beads that are suitable for the fabric count – seed beads work nicely on 14 count fabric.

If working on a hoop or Q-Snaps, be careful not to crush the beads with the frame if the design is larger than the frame.

If working on scroll bars, you may want to finish the entire design before adding the beads because it affects the tension of the fabric. If you choose to put the beads on try using quilt batting to pad the fabric as it rolls around the bars.

Use a beading needle, size 28-tapestry needle, or size 10 crewel embroidery needle for seed beads.

Use a thread of your choosing. The thread can be floss that matches the ground fabric or floss matching the color of the bead or another color in the design. You can also attach the beads with beading thread, blending filament, pearl cotton or sewing thread.

For transparent beads, a light-colored thread will lighten the bead and a dark color thread will darken the bead. Beware of the bead looking like it has insect legs coming from it.

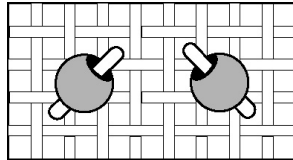
Attaching Beads

Beads can be attached with a half, straight, cross-stitch or loop.

Half Stitch

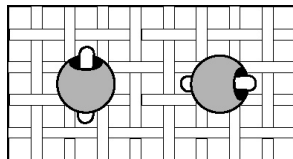
With this method the beads lie on the diagonal.

This method is used quite often but tends to appear loose and insecure.



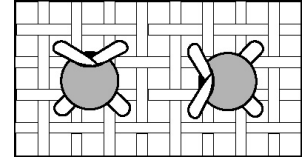
Straight Stitch

With this method the beads lie vertical or horizontal. This method tends to appear loose and insecure.



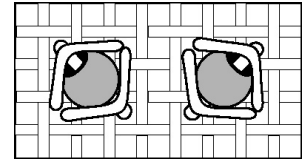
Cross-Stitch

My favorite way to attach beads is with a cross-stitch. Each leg of the stitch goes through the bead. This method holds the beads securely and perpendicular to the design. All the holes should align in the same direction.



Loop Method

Use two threads. Make a ½ stitch which goes through the hole of the bead. Then come up as if to make a second ½ stitch, but instead of going through the bead, loop over it so one thread lays on each side of the bead.



KNOTS:

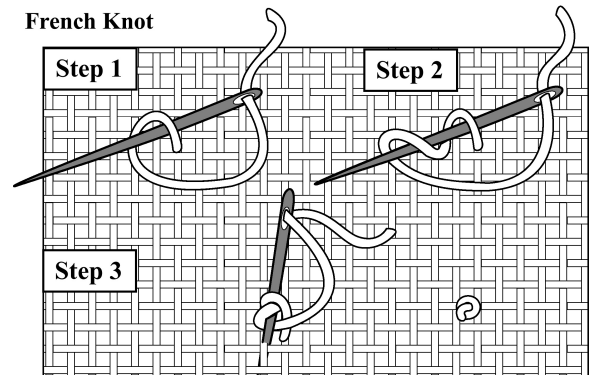
If I don't want to use beads, what are my options?

In place of a bead you can make a French, Colonial, or Palestrina Knot.

How can I make a perfect Knot?

To make a wonderful knot, use a straight needle like a milliners (or a needle with a small eye and even thickness), use both hands and pierce the ground fabric thread as you are coming up through the round fabric and going back down. For step 3 in the charts below, adjust the tension of the thread near the surface of the fabric before taking the needle to the back of the fabric.

French Knot

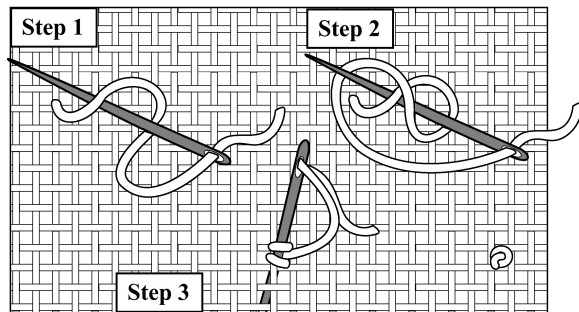


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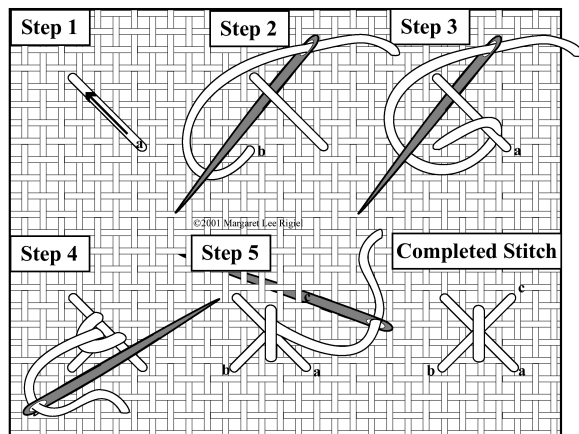
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Many people have trouble making a French knot, and do much better making a Colonial knot.

Colonial Knot



Palestrina Knot with Vertical Center



I don't like making Knots, what can I use instead?

If you just can't stand making knots, use a seed bead instead.

ISOLATED STITCHES:

How do I work with Isolated Stitches?

Sometimes we have a project with a little stitch all by itself, out in the middle of nowhere. There are a few ways to handle this little problem... which like it or knot, breaks a few of our "rules".

Tie-OFF Each Stitch

If the chart calls for 2 strands of floss, thread the needle with only one. Leave a long tail (3-4 inches) out of the way so you will not stitch over it. Stitch each leg twice. Meaning stitch the bottom leg twice, then stitch the top leg twice.

On the back of the fabric, take the two loose ends of thread and yes – tie a knot!

The knot should be as small and tight as possible without distorting the stitch or the ground fabric. Clip the ends 1/8" to 1/4" from the knot and if possible tuck them under the back of the stitch.

Loop Anchor (Knot) Method

If the chart calls for 2 strands of floss, and you are not concerned about the "grain" of the floss, thread the needle as you would for the Loop Anchor (Knot) Method.

Stitch each leg of the cross-stitch once. Then on the back of the fabric, take one of the threads out of the needle, take the remaining thread under the stitch to the other side. Now take the two loose ends of thread and yes – tie a knot!

The knot should be as small and tight as possible without distorting the stitch or the ground fabric. Clip the ends 1/8" to 1/4" from the knot and if possible tuck them under the back of the stitch.

Carry Over Method

Carry the thread from isolated stitch to isolated stitch. This often works well on Aida and some evenweave fabrics, but generally not on linens because the weave tends to be open.

If the thread used is dark and shows through to the front use a mat or fabric that matches the thread behind the ground fabric when you finish the project.

Bead Method

You can also use a seed bead in place of an isolated stitch. Then you can use the Carry Over Method with a thread to match the fabric or mat that you will be using.

If you use the Tie-Off or Loop Anchor (Knot) Method to attach a single bead or small group of beads, add them after all stitching is completed, and after washing the project (if you choose to wash it).

NUMEROUS COLOR CHANGES:

My project has lots of color changes...

There are several problems with a project that has lots of color changes or uses a blended needle.

- 1) Keeping track of what color you have done and need to do.
 - a) Enlarge the chart so you can see the symbols better.
 - b) Mark off the symbols on the chart as you go.
 - c) Put basting lines on the fabric.
 - d) Thread several needles, each with a different color you will need for an area. Be sure to

keep track of what color is on each needle by making an organizer card of some type.

- e) As you need a color use it, but do not end it, leave the last stitch ½ done. Park the needle on the front of the fabric in the outside border of the design. Later you can figure out what color the thread is by comparing its location on the chart. When you need to use the thread in a nearby area, just unpark it and use it again.

2) Bulk is added on the back of the fabric by using 2 strands of floss and by the beginning and ending of threads.

So if the chart calls for 2 strands of floss, thread the needle with only one. Anchor the thread 3-4 inches away from the area to be stitched so you will not stitch over it. Stitch each leg twice. Meaning stitch the bottom leg twice, then stitch the top leg twice for each stitch. Leave the last stitch ½ done, and then park the thread out in the border of the design until you need the color later.

After you are done stitching the area, end the threads in the back of the fabric, if possible do not knot the threads.

Sign and date an heirloom to be...

The project you finish today may be a treasured heirloom of tomorrow. Precious remembrances of you work by friends, family, and you. Signing can also make a stitched piece more valuable over the years.

I encourage all stitchers to sign and date your finished needlework in a visible location with a similar shade thread as the ground fabric – maybe a shade or two lighter or darker.

You can incorporate it into the design or “hide it” somewhere.

Try to use your full name, month and year, maybe 1-over1. At the very least or if space is limited, put your initials and the full year.

CLEANING NEEDLEWORK:

I’m finished stitching my project, I was very careful to keep it clean, should I wash it?

This is up to the preference of the stitcher.

Some fibers and fabrics are not colorfast thus should NOT be washed. Washing would cause the colors to bleed and thus change the color of the needlework. Prior to stitching, check the fiber content and colorfastness so you can take special care while

stitching. Then there will be no need to wash the needlework and perhaps ruin it.

Even slightly dampening the needlework with water to iron it can cause non-colorfast fibers used in the stitches to run. As the fabric dries, the moisture from the damp stitches is pulled outward into the fabric.

Some stitchers believe needlework should always be washed, even if it does not look dirty. This is because dirt and oils are deposited on the fabric even if we can’t see it. The dirt and oil may cause stains and damage later on.

Ironing a piece of needlework prior to washing it can make the dirt and oil permanent.

Do NOT wash or wet block your needlework that contains silk fibers. The dyes used to color silk are acid dyes that are soluble in warm or hot water. If it must be cleaned, it should be DRY cleaned by a professional who is knowledgeable about dry cleaning silk needlework. If your dry cleaner does not have experience cleaning silk, call Kreinik’s Consumer Line 1-800-537-2166 for other resources.

I’m finished stitching my project, I want to test it for colorfastness before I wash it...

This method to test for colorfastness can be used on a completed project prior to washing or tea dying it if care is taken.

Place the needlework facedown on a clean dry surface. Place a clean, slightly damp white tissue on the back of the fabric. Gently press the back of the fabric with your fingertips. Pressing with a hot iron may make any bleeding of the dyes a permanent stain.

I’m finished stitching my project, I was very careful to keep it clean, I want to wash it – what should I use?

To wash the fabric, use something that is pH balanced and has NO whitening, brightening, or bleaching agents. Use a gentle soap like ivory, baby shampoo, or Orvus (I prefer Orvus).

Do not use Woolite, it has bleaching agents that can affect the color. So not use chlorine bleach, it can disintegrate some fibers. Avoid dish and laundry detergents especially the strong ones – unless you need their grease/oil cutting effects.

Orvus (sodium lauryl sulfate) is equine (horse) soap made by Proctor and Gamble. It is non-abrasive and free of harsh chemicals. It is also used on quilts and museum textile conservators. If you don’t have a tack shop nearby or a friend with horses, ask at your

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local needlework shop. They can recommend products that are safe and probably repackaged 100% Orvus - such as FabriCare (100% Orvus from Yarn Tree). A little bit of Orvus will make lots of suds! Try using one teaspoon per gallon of water.

A Few products that may be “repackaged Orvus” are Treasure Wash (Cottage Mills), Ensure Quilt Wash (Stearns Textiles), and Quilt Soap (Quilter’s Rule).

You could also try one of these recipes:

1 Tablespoon Ivory Flakes
2 Tablespoons Snowy Bleach
Dissolve in 1 gallon of water.

OR

1 quart room temperature water
1 Tablespoon powdered Clorox II bleach
1 Tablespoon Dove dishwashing liquid

Dissolve the recipe ingredients in water; if you use hot water let it cool to room temperature before putting your needlework in.

How should I wash my needlework?

To wash the fabric, use a clean bowl and fill it with cool to lukewarm (NOT HOT) water. If it is a delicate piece use distilled water.

Add Orvus (or your chosen product or recipe discussed previously) and stir until the water is sudsy. (I prefer Orvus).

Dip and soak the needlework for 5-10 minutes, longer (even overnight or more if you check it periodically) if there are obvious marks still on the fabric. Be sure the fabric is completely under the water.

Never, ever twist or wring the needlework! Wringing will leave wrinkles on the fabric that will be almost impossible to get out.

When the fabric appears clean, rinse the needlework in a clean bowl of cool water by dipping it – repeat until the water is so clean you can drink from it. If any of the colors begin to bleed, continue rinsing until the water is clear. Do NOT let the project dry if it is bleeding.

When the needlework is completely rinsed, lay the wet pieces flat on a white towel and gently roll it up to soak up the excess water. Do not let the stitchery touch upon itself while wet – just in case it may still bleed.

Try freezing the needlework...

Then place the needlework face down on a thin clean white terry cloth towel or piece of cotton. Using

cotton checked gingham or plaid fabric will help align the fabric. Terry cloth helps keep the stitches from being flattened while pressing it. You should use a pressing cloth over the back of the needlework, especially if the needlework has metallics and other “unknown” content fibers in it.

If the dyes in the fabric or fibers bleed, ironing will make the bleeding permanent.

Use a dry iron. Try NOT to slide the iron back and forth on the fabric (it can distort the fabric and stitches) press the fabric. Press the fabric until dry to prevent puckering of the cloth and threads AND additional possible bleeding.

If the fabric dries before the stitches, the dye can be drawn from the stitches out into the fabric. Let the needlework continue to cool and dry for a couple hours before moving it.

After the first washing, the needlework should be color fast and able to be washed as above as often as necessary.

Note: Instead of ironing the needlework, I saw a conservator on a TV program place the needlework face up on a clean piece of glass and allowed it to dry. I have not tried this.

I spilled ... on my needlework, what can I use to clean it?

If you spilled something on your needlework, you should clean it right away! A stain may become permanent if you don’t.

There are so many different fabrics, fibers and dyes it is nearly impossible to know what will clean a particular problem. Therefore I **STRONGLY** recommend you **TEST** the method on a scrap piece of fabric and or fiber. These are only suggestions, using any of these methods are at your own risk – so take special care.

Try the least harmful method first, if it does NOT work. Try something else. *Avoid things in italic if possible.*

For **ALL** methods below, when you are finished removing the spot completely, wash the fabric with a mild soap (as discussed earlier) and rinse it in water.

Air-Disappearing Markers and pH Testing pens.

The color from the marker may disappear from the fabric, but not the chemicals so be sure to wash your project after finishing it.

Bleeding Floss. If fibers are washable, or if the fibers are not washable but it bled so bad you can’t bare to live with it... If the project is wet follow the

steps under “How should I wash my needlework?” If the project is dry soak it in ice water. Replace the water and ice as needed.

Blood. If it is your own blood, try using your own saliva. If it is someone else’s blood, try dabbing it with *hydrogen peroxide*. Then soak in cold water, wash and rinse.

Chocolate. Soak in cold water for 30 minutes. If needed apply a paste of *cornstarch* and cold water. Rub gently, let dry, brush off, then wash and rinse.

Coffee/Tea. Soak in cold water for 30 minutes.

Ink Marks. *Rubbing alcohol or hair spray.* Hair spray re-liquefies and dilutes the ink. So it can spread if you are not careful. Put a padding of white paper towels under the spot. The paper towel should draw the ink out of the fabric as it dries. Spray the hairspray directly on the spot. Spray the hair spray directly on the spot. Blot the ink spot with a clean white paper towel until the spot is gone. Be sure to keep the paper towel under the spot clean too. Do not rub newspaper, computer toner or typewriter ink.

Juice. Soak and wash first. Then *try white vinegar*. For red or blue fruit juice stains, sponge with *lemon juice*.

Pencil Marks. Art gum eraser, Orvus, or 3 parts *rubbing alcohol*, 1 part water, and ½ teaspoon *dish detergent*.

Red Wine. Use a towel to soak up the excess whine, then add lots of *salt* to the stain, rub it in, then wash as soon as possible.

Rust. *Chlorine bleach* can darken the stain.

* ½ cup *lemon juice*, 1 Tablespoon *salt*, then place in sunlight.

* Dab a mixture of 1 teaspoon of *oxalic acid* (it can be found at most pharmacies) in 1 cup of hot water on the rust stain.

* Mix *Zud* (a commercial scouring-powder-type product) with water to make a paste. Spread it over the rust and let it set 15 minutes. Rinse and repeat if needed.

* *Wink*, you can buy it at the grocery store. Follow the directions on the package, which basically says to wet the area to be treated, put *Wink* on the rust stain and rise well as soon as the chemical reaction takes place.

Scorch Marks. * *White vinegar or lemon juice.*

* 1 teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda in ½ cup of cold water.

* For white fabrics – 3% solution of *peroxide*.

MOUNTING AND FRAMING NEEDLEWORK:

What should I use to mount and frame my needlework?

Conservation materials and techniques should be used.

NEVER do anything that cannot be undone several years later.

Do not use adhesive (sticky) boards or tapes when framing needlework. Over time these materials deteriorate, the chemicals can harm the fabric and some bugs like it as food.

Even if the adhesives and adhesive boards are acid free and guaranteed safe for needlework, the stitches and fabric are both “pasted” to the board. The stitches tend to bulge out making the needlework surface look uneven.

Do not use normal cardboard or paper, they are usually acidic.

Do mount the fabric on 3/8” or ¼” acid-free foam core or acid-free white mat board. If you can see the surface of the foam core (it is usually shiny) through the fabric – use mat board under the fabric or cover the foam core with fabric using the lacing method (below). Cut the foam core 1/8”-1/4” smaller than the frame you will be using.

Do not expose the fabric to metal or wood. If the fabric must be exposed to metal or wood, be sure the wood or metal is sealed to prevent bare metal, bare wood, paint or stains from touching the fabric.

If you choose to use a mat, make sure the one that touches the fabric is acid-free rag mat board. If you decide to have more than one mat, consider using acid-free rag mat board for them too. The regular mat board yellows faster and it releases fumes. Some mat boards have acid-free materials on the outside and an acidic core on the inside. If this mat is cut, the core will yellow and release fumes.

I want my needlework to have a soft raised look. What can I use?

Use quilt batting between the ground fabric and the acid free foam core.

Keep in mind this may affect your choice of a mat and frame as well as the use of glass to protect your needlework.

Should I use glass when I frame my needlework?

Using glass can protect your needlework from dust, pollen, pollution, and minute particles of oil that are projected into the air while cooking. However it can

trap moisture and cause mildew. It can also make your needlework look more like a printed reproduction rather than a beautiful hand stitched work of art. If you use glass, use a mat or spaces so it does not touch the needlework fabric, fibers, or embellishments.

Regular glass is good but reflects the light making it difficult to see the needlework. Standard non-glare glass lets more ultraviolet light and may release chemicals- not good!
Conservation glass or UV glass is very good, but expensive.

How should I mount my needlework for framing?

I prefer using the Lacing Method to mount the ground fabric to the foam core because it does not hurt the ground fabric (if done correctly) and it is easy to adjust as I'm mounting the fabric and after. I tried using the framer's tape and had a hard time centering it on the foam core – and I don't like the adhesives on my fabric.

Lacing Method

First, cut away any edges that have a salvage and if you chose to use them – adhesives, tape, fray check etc...

Zigzag or whip stitch the edges of the fabric. If the fabric is too small, stitch washed unbleached muslin to each edge.

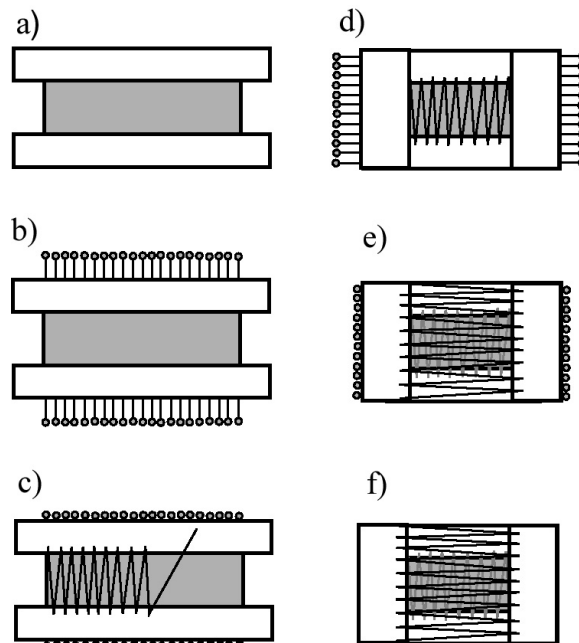
- a) Center the design on foam core which is 1/8" – 1/4" smaller than the frame. Fold down the lengthwise edge of the fabric over the foam core to the back.
- b) Use straight pins pushed into the edges of the foam core to temporarily hold and center the fabric. The fabric should be taut but not stretched.
- c) Use a strong thread such as quilting thread or size 12 pearl cotton to lace the edges together on the back so it looks zigzagged. The stitches should be about a 1/2" apart.

If possible use one length of thread to lace up the entire side.

To do this, keep the thread on the spool-do not cut it. Hold the spool so it unwinds perpendicular to the hole in the spool – this reduces tangles as it unwinds. As you need more pull more thread off the spool and work it through the zigzag. When you reach the end of the foam core, secure the thread to the fabric and remove the needle. Tighten up the lacing, cut the thread at the near the spool, thread the needle and secure the thread to the fabric so it is evenly taut

across the board. Remove the pins because even non-rust pins may rust.

- d) Fold down the width wise edge of the fabric over the foam core. Do NOT miter the corner – fold it flat. Use straight pins pushed into the edges of the foam core to temporarily hold and center the fabric.
- e) Continue with the lacing as done in step c.
- f) The back of the foam core mounted needlework should look something like this.



STORING NEEDLEWORK MATERIALS:

Is it safe to store my needlework in plastic?

As plastics age, they decompose and give off fumes. Some types of plastics also become brittle. Soft plastics decompose faster than hard plastics.

For projects in progress (PIP) and unfinished projects (UFO), it is safe to store it in a plastic bag for the short term, not years! It will help keep it clean until it can be finished.

Do not store any projects in plastic for the long term unless they are prepared first.

How should I store my needlework projects for the long term?

- a) The project should be as clean as possible prior to being stored.

Cross Stitch Tips & Tricks by Margaret Lee

www.margaretlee.com

- b) Wrap the project in clean white cotton cloth, muslin or acid free tissue. The project should NOT have direct contact with wood, tissue, paper towels, wrapping paper, regular cardboard, or plastic.
- c) The project should be stored flat or rolled on a tube, do not fold it. Folds put added pressure on the fibers may be difficult to remove, and may cause splits in the cloth. If the project must be folded, pad the points of folds with strips of washed unbleached muslin or old sheets.
- d) If you store the project on a tube, the tube must be longer than the rolled edge of the project and also be wrapped as described in step b.
- e) The project can then be stored in an acid-free box, hard plastic box or wrapped loosely in unsealed plastic wrapping.
- f) Do not seal the box or plastic wrapping. There needs to be some movement of air around the fabric to prevent damage from moisture, condensation, and mildew.
- g) Store the project in a clean, cool, dry, dark area that is as free as possible from changes in temperature and humidity. Do not store in the basement or attic.
- h) Regularly open and check the stored boxes and projects.

The bobbins of floss for projects in progress can be put through the holes in the cards onto metal rings or in a smaller plastic box for easy access.

*Storage organizers using cards with holes in them. The holes are labeled with the color number. The floss is removed from the skein, cut to useable lengths, and attached to the holes for future use.

For storage of large amounts of floss together, the threads can become tangled and exposed to added stress as you remove thread for other projects and try to straighten the remaining threads.

For storage of floss for projects in progress, this works nicely. Only the floss colors you need are attached to the holes. You can write the color and symbol used for the chart on the card next to the appropriate hole. You can make your own cards as needed rather than buying them

How should I store my floss?

There are lots of ways to store floss, each with their own advantages and disadvantages.

* Leave the floss on the skein. This is fine if you have new unused skeins. As the skein is used there is less floss, the labels can slide off and the floss can become tangles.

* Put the floss in small plastic bags. The bags can be labeled with the floss number. The bags can keep the loose skeins from tangling if you are careful. The plastic bags can be stored in boxes or on a metal ring. Even if you chose not to use this method for your floss, it is a good idea to use it for metallics, silks and other specialty fibers.

* Wind the floss on flat bobbins. Bobbins are available in plastic or cardboard. The thread does get kinks in it, and may need to be dampened and dried prior to use.

The bobbins can be stored in plastic box with divided compartments. This is nice because you can easily organize and see all the colors.