



Designs From Margaret Lee

<http://www.margaretlee.com>

www.etsy.com/shop/MargaretLeeNeedleArt

Cross-Stitch Tips & Tricks

Written by Margaret Lee Rigiel

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.

Copyright 2001 & 2025 Margaret Lee Rigiel

Cross Stitch Tips & Tricks by Margaret Lee Rigiel

Table of Questions

<u>USING CHARTS</u>	4	What is a fat quarter?	10
<u>NEEDLES</u>	4-6	The fabric does not have a salvage; how can I tell which are the warp threads?	10
What type of needle should I use?	4	What can I do to prevent the fabric from fraying?	10
Common types of needles	4		
What size needle should I use?	4	Is there a right side to Aida, evenweave and linen fabrics?	11
If I don't know what size needles I have, how do I know which one to use?	5	My fabric is wrinkled; how can I make it flat?	11
The finish is starting to wear off my needle; will it affect my stitching?	5	Should I wash the fabric before stitching?	11
They eye of my needle keeps breaking...why?	5	How can I prevent soiling the fabric and fiber?	11
Should I have sharp needles in my cross-stitch supplies?	5	What kind of hand lotion can I use while stitching?	12
Are curved needles useful in counted thread work?	5	<u>FIBERS</u>	12
How should I store my needles?	5	What fibers should I use?	12
<u>NEEDLE THREADERS</u>	6	I don't like the colors used in the chart?	12
Will wetting the fibers make it easier to thread the needle?	6	How much floss and fibers should I buy?	12
How can I thread the needle without using a tool?	6	Do working fibers have a nap?	12
How can I thread my needle with a piece of paper?	6	How should I test for colorfastness?	12
How do needle threaders work?	6	How can I set the dye in the floss?	12
How do you tie thread onto the needle.	6	<u>BEGINNING TO STITCH</u>	13
<u>SCISSORS</u>	6-7	Where should I begin stitching on the fabric?	13
What kind of scissors should I have?	6	How can I find the center of the fabric?	13
What should I look for when buying quality embroider scissors?	7	What is the "lower left of a vertical thread?"	13
How should I take care of my scissors?	7	<u>ACCURATE STITCHING</u>	13-15
<u>STITCHING FRAMES</u>	7-8	What is the frog stitch?	13
What if anything should I use to hold the fabric when stitching?	7	How can I make my stitching more accurate, so I don't need to do the frog stitch?	13
Should I work "in hand" or "hoop"?	7	<u>BASTING GUIDELINES</u>	
Hoops & Q-snaps	7	How do I put basting lines on the fabric, starting from the Center of the Fabric?	13
Stretcher bars	7	I want to start in the top left corner, how can I easily find where to start without using basting lines?	14
Scroll bars	8	What length of floss should I use?	14
Should I use a lap or floor stand to hold my needlework?	8	How should I remove floss from the skein?	14
<u>LIGHT SOURCE</u>	8	How many strands of floss should I use?	14
What kind of light should I use?	8	What is tweeding and a blended needle?	15
<u>MAGNIFICATION</u>	8	How do threads blossom?	15
Should I use magnification?	8	Why should we strip threads?	15
<u>FABRIC</u>	8-12	What is the purpose of dampening the threads?	15
What fabric should I use?	8	<u>STITCHING</u>	15-17
Aida, even weave or linen	8	I am working on a dark fabric and can not easily see the threads...	15
Can I switch the fabric called for in a chart from Aida to an evenweave?	9	How should I secure the working thread to the fabric before making stitches?	15
How much fabric do I need?	9	How should I secure the working thread to the fabric before making stitches?	15
How big will the design of my finished piece be?	9	<u>KNOTS</u>	
How can I determine or check the stitch count of the fabric?	9	Away anchor knot (or not)?	15
What are warp and weft threads and do they matter?	10	Away waste knot	16
		Tuck the tail	16
		Waste knot	16

Cross Stitch Tips & Tricks by Margaret Lee Rigiel

Loop anchor (knot) method	16	Loop method	22
Existing stitches	16	If I don't want to use beads, what are my options?	22
How can I easily count the threads on an evenweave fabric while stitching?	16	<u>KNOTS</u>	22
Dose it matter how you make the cross-stitch?	16	French knot	22
The Danish method	16	Colonial knot	22
The traditional or English method	16	Palestrina knot with vertical center	23
How can I make cross-stitches so vertical lines are Made on the back?	17	I don't like making knots, what can I use instead?	23
<u>A NEATER FRONT</u>	17-18	<u>ISOLATED STITCHES</u>	23
How can I make my stitching neater on the front?	17	How do I work with isolated stitches?	23
Shared holes	17	Tie-off each stitch	23
Tension	17	Loop anchor (knot) method	23
Be consistent	17	Carry over method	23
Carry threads	17	Bead method	23
Lay the working threads	17	<u>NUMEROUS COLOR CHANGE</u>	23
Stab method	17	My project has lots of color changes...	23
How do I stitch using the "stab method"?	17	Sign an date an heirloom to be...	24
How do I stitch using the "sewing method"?	18	<u>CLEANING NEEDLEWORK</u>	24
What is railroading?	18	I'm finished stitching my project, I was very careful to keep it clean, should I wash it?	24
How do I lay threads?	18	I want to test it for colorfastness before I wash it...	24
My working thread gets all twisted when i stitch...	18	I want to wash it – what should I use?	24
Dangling threads	18	How should I wash my needlework?	25
Stripping threads	18	I spilled... on my needlework, what can I use to clean it?	26
Rotating needle	18	<u>MOUNTING AND FRAMING NEEDLEWORK</u>	26
Why is my thread starting to look rough and worn?	18	What should I use to mount and frame needlework	26
I stitched part of the design wrong?	18	I want my needlework to have a soft raised look, what can I use?	26
<u>MAKE A NEAT BACK</u>	19	Should I use glass when I frame my needlework?	26
How can I make my stitching neater on the back?	19	How should I mount my needlework for framing?	26
Knots	19	Lacing method	27
Clipping threads	19	<u>STORING NEEDLEWORK MATERIALS</u>	27
Ending threads	19	Is it safe to store my needlework in plastic?	27
For the stitch I'm using, I can't end my threads nicely in a natural direction...	19	How should I store my needlework projects for the long term?	27
<u>FRACTIONAL STITCHES</u>	20	How should I store my floss?	28
¼, ½, and ¾ cross-stitches	20		
What fractional stitch shall I use?	20		
If a backstitch will be made at a 45-degree angle	20		
If a backstitch will be made at an angle other than a 45 degree ...	21		
<u>STRAIGHT STITCHES</u>	21		
Backstitch	21		
Holbein	21		
Bricking	21		
Interlacing	21		
Piercing	21		
Long straight stitches	21		
<u>BEADS</u>	22		
What is the best way of attaching beads?	22		
Attaching beads	22		
Half stitch	22		
Straight stitch	22		
Cross-stitch	22		

Cross Stitch Tips & Tricks by Margaret Lee Rigiel

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 useful to 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	S
Aida	Evenweave		
11	22	22 or 24	
14	28	24 or 26	
16	32	24 or 26	