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PRESENTS

LEARN HOW TO CROSS STITCH



Want to learn how to cross stitch. Great! It's easy! In this cross stitch tutorial I will cover all the cross stitch basics.

If this is your first attempt at cross stitching, I suggest you use 14 count or higher count Aida cloth.

The design is counted from a chart, not marked on the fabric in any way.

Each square on the chart corresponds to a "woven square" on the fabric with a hole in each corner. Each thread color is represented by a different symbol on the chart.

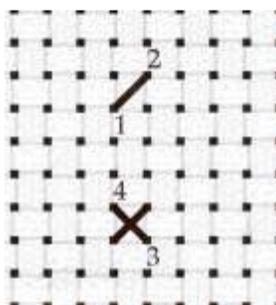
For example black may be a solid black square symbol, whereas red may be an empty heart shape.

Where to start?

To begin the cross stitch, thread your needle and bring it up through the fabric, leaving a short end of cotton at the back, and work over this with your first few

stitches to secure it. When there are enough stitches in place you can start off a new color by first running it through the back of the existing stitches. To finish a color, run your cotton under several stitches at the back to secure it.

Working a Single Cross Stitch

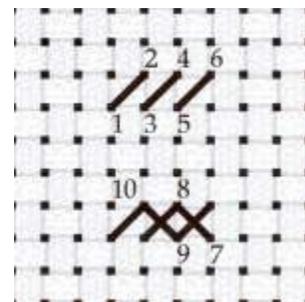


The fabric shown in the diagram on the left is aida, and it is very popular for cross stitch. This is a block weave fabric, with a hole at the corners of each block, which is nice and easy to work. Imagine that each block is represented by one square on the chart.

To make one cross stitch: bring the needle up through hole 1, down through hole 2, then up through hole 3, and finally down through hole 4.

Working a Row of Cross Stitch

To make a row of cross stitches: work across the fabric in the order shown on the top part of the diagram on the right, and then back to complete the crosses as shown on the bottom part. Always cross over in the same direction. It is quicker to work cross stitches in rows wherever possible.



Try not to join up separate areas of the same color with long runs of thread at the back of the work. This is not only untidy and may show through the fabric at the front, but will probably mean you will run out of the thread supplied in the

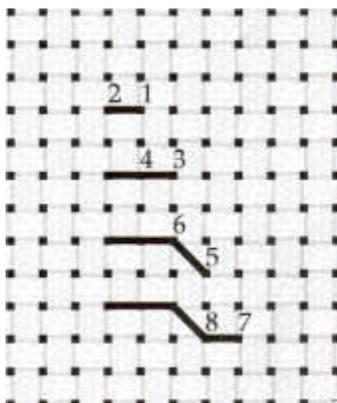
cross stitch kit. It is better to cut and fasten off your thread at the back of the needle work as normal, and start again at the new area of the design.

Half Cross Stitch

Many projects now have areas worked in half cross stitch, for example to give a "soft focus" background.

This stitch is literally half of a cross stitch (up through 1 and down through 2 etc.), as shown on the top half of the illustration above.

Work a Row of Back Stitch



To make a row of back stitches: bring the needle up at 1, down at 2, up at 3, and down at 4, and so on, as shown on the diagram on the left. Notice that 1 and 4 use the same hole.

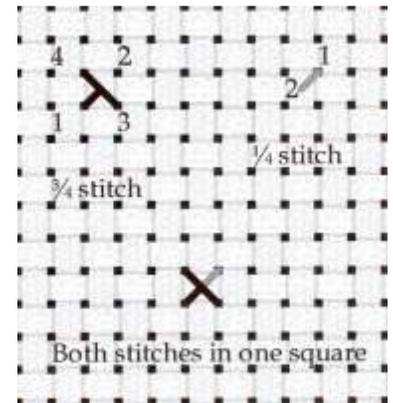
Back stitch is used to great effect on many designs to delineate and bring out areas of stitching, adding drama and sharpness to the needle work.

It is basically a row of stitches, marked on the chart by a row of lines. The back stitch is not normally worked until the cross stitch has been completed.

Back stitch is often worked with just a single strand of thread.

Working Part Stitches

It is sometimes necessary to have more than one color on a single block of fabric. Imagine a cross stitch design with a dark grey sloping roof and a blue sky above it. If the roof slopes from the right up to the left the designer will often make a part stitch of blue in the top right of the fabric block and a grey part stitch in the bottom left of the same block.



Where two colors share one square on the chart, work a 3/4 stitch in the more prominent shade, and complete the block with a 1/4 stitch of the other shade, as shown in the diagram on the right. Make your own hole with the needle in the center of the block.

The combination of 1/4 stitch and 3/4 stitch often looks better than two 3/4 stitches, where you end up with a bulky four strands across the middle of a block of fabric.

Evenweave Fabrics for Cross Stitch

Finer evenweave fabrics made up of "threads" instead of blocks, are often used in cross stitch kits. Normally these are worked "over two threads", so when you are following the chart you would miss one hole and go into the next.

So for example if you wanted to work a 14 count (14 holes per inch) project on finer fabric, you could work it on 28 count (28 holes per inch) fabric, over two threads. The cross stitches would be exactly the same size, and therefore the complete design would be the same size. This also has the advantage that part

stitches are easier to do, as a hole already exists in the middle of each square.

The same applies in reverse. Say for example you have a design to be worked on 32 count evenweave fabric, but have difficulty seeing the holes on this finer fabric. Many stitchers use 16 count fabric instead, going into every hole instead of across two holes, and in this way the design will be the same size.

As you learn cross stitch and your confidence grows, you will feel more comfortable working with these finer fabrics.

Cross Stitch Needles and Threads

Good quality color-fast stranded cottons such as Anchor or DMC are a great advantage. Most stitchers cut their threads into approximately 18" (1/2 metre) lengths, unless they are already supplied in pre-cut lengths. This is a convenient amount of thread on the needle and avoids tangling and other problems.

Different cross stitch effects can be obtained by using different numbers of strands. However, on many projects you will find 3 or 4 strands used on 11 count fabric, 2 or 3 strands on 14 count, and 2 strands on 16 and 18 count fabrics to give a good coverage.

Tapestry needles are ideal for cross stitch. This is because they have a rounded point which goes easily through the holes without splitting the fabric. Use size 22 for 14 count fabric, size 24 for 16 count fabric, size 26 for 18 count fabric, and size 28 for finer fabrics.

When you have finished, be sure to trim any long loose ends carefully, so that they do not show through the fabric when your picture is framed.

Hoops and Frames

Most people use an embroidery hoop or small tapestry frame to hold their cross stitch fabric. This keeps the fabric taut and makes the project easier to handle while being worked. Also the hoop or frame can be held in a stand, which leaves both your hands free. This will allow you to work with one hand under the fabric and one over, which is generally more efficient, and saves the strain of having to hold the work while stitching it.

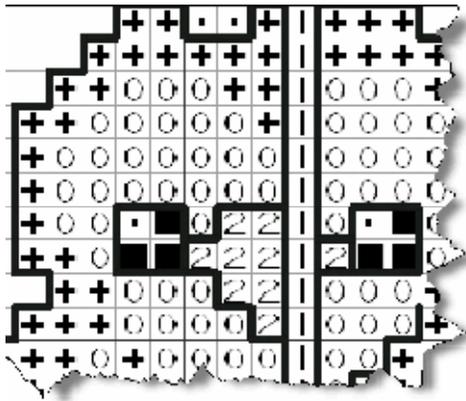
There are several advantages of a frame for cross stitch, as against an embroidery hoop. The top of the needle work is attached to the top bar, and the bottom to the bottom bar. This makes it easy with larger projects, to "roll up" the next section for stitching, rather than having to remove the fabric from the hoop to reposition it. It also avoids the circular marks on the finished cross stitch project, which often result from handling the hoop.

Tip

After working a number of stitches you may find the thread starts getting twisted.

Just let the needle and thread dangle from your work for a moment or two and it will untwist itself.

How to follow a chart



Look at your chart and find the symbol closest to the center. On the sample chart above this will help you learn how to cross stitch the center would be the top left of the owls beak. This has the number 2 as its symbol. We will use yellow, as shown in the key below. The number 444 relates to the DMC color number.

2	444	Yellow
♥	321	Red
0	739	Tan
	760	

Start by working two cross stitches for the top row of his beak.

We then work your way down the design using up the thread color in

our needle, so next we would cross stitch the row of 3 underneath, skip one square and stitch one on the other side of the straight line stitch (which is the stem in this pattern).

The next row needs 2 again and then a single stitch finishes his beak.

Carrying the thread across the back of one to five stitches is fine, but try to void trailing it long distances.

It is often better to fasten off and start again if there is a big gap.

Changing Colors

Once the beak is complete you need to choose another symbol (color) and work a block of that. On this design I would pick the empty circle symbol, or light tan

color, and stitch the area underneath and to the left of our owl's beak. As there are many stitches to work in this color on the other side of the flower stem I would leave them for a separate piece of thread.

Fastening off

As I finish an area of color, or run out of thread, I try to fasten off underneath the same color to avoid it showing through. Simply weave your thread in and out of a couple threads on the back side and trim to fasten off your thread.

Outlining with backstitch

The finishing step in our learn how to cross stitch lesson is to outline it with backstitch.

Not all designs have backstitch but many do. Normally if you have used 2 strands of thread (floss) for the cross stitch, you will use just 1 strand for the backstitch.

This is where I tend to cheat a little, as I don't like leaving all the backstitch until last. Once the stitches are worked on both sides of a line that will be outlined I tend to get that backstitching in place. Little and often. If I still have plenty of thread left in my needle I will "park" it out of the way for the time being while I complete more of the cross stitch, picking it up again when needed.

Happy Stitching!



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Happy Stitching!



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