

Hints on Counted Cross Stitch

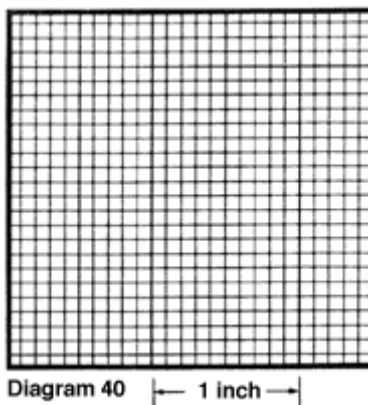
(Excerpted with permission from "How to Embroider" Vol. IV, published by the National Needlework Association/TNNA)

Counted cross stitch is the most popular form of embroidery in the United States today. It's widely accepted because it's easy, and it offers such an exciting array of project design books. Here are some tips if you are just beginning.

Design Charts

Design charts for counted cross projects are drawn on graph paper, usually 10-square-per-inch, because it's easy to read. Each square on the chart represents a square on the fabric, and the stitcher counts the squares to transfer the design to an evenweave fabric.

Diagram 40



The design can be stitched on any size evenweave, but the size of the finished design will vary according to the count of the fabric. Most commercial patterns will tell you the exact size of your finished design. However, if you are designing your own, the following formula will help you to determine how large or small your design will be.

Determining the Width and Height of Your Design Area in Inches.

Divide the number of symbol squares in the width of your design chart (literally count the number of symbol squares across the widest point of the chart, do not count the squares that are outside of the design) by the count of your fabric (the number of threads per inch). This will equal the width of your finished design area in inches.

Then divide the number of symbol squares in the height of your design chart by the count of your fabric. This will equal the height of your finished design in inches.

For example:

If you have a chart that is 28 squares high and 42 squares wide and you are going to embroider the design onto 14 count Aida, the formula would be:

$$28 \text{ squares} \div 14 \text{ count} = 2 \text{ inches high}$$

42 squares ÷ 14 count = 3 inches wide

You will need to use this formula to determine how much fabric to buy if you change the count of the fabric recommended in the pattern instructions, or if there is no fabric count indicated. Just remember to add enough fabric to all sides of your design area for finishing, usually 4 to 6 inches to each edge.

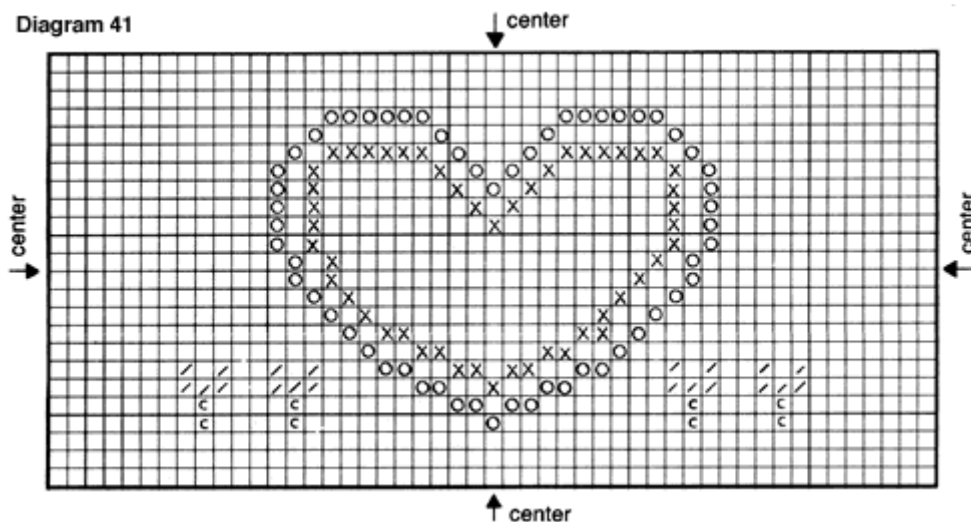
There are a variety of symbols which appear in the squares of the chart. These symbols are keyed to a color chart and tell you what color floss to use. The written instructions tell you what stitch to use. A symbol, usually an arrow, will indicate where the center of the chart is located. It is from this center point that you begin to count out your design. If no such point is indicated, follow the guidelines below.

Finding the Center of a Chart

To determine the center of a chart:

- First, count the number of squares across the design from one edge to the other. Divide in half; this is the vertical center. Now count from top to bottom. Again, divide in half; this is the horizontal center.
- Beginning at the bottom left-hand side of the design, count half the total of horizontal squares, and then count up half the number of vertical squares. This is the center of your chart. **Diagram 41**

To ensure that your counted cross stitch design is centered on your evenweave fabric, you must also find the center of the fabric. It is from this center point that you will begin to count out the design for your project.



STITCH COUNT	CROSS STITCH SYMBOLS
34 across	O red
	X pink
18 down	/ yellow

Finding the Center of Your Fabric

To determine the center of your fabric:

- Fold the fabric in quarters
- Draw a thread of contrasting color through at the fold point. When you open your fabric, the thread will mark the center of the fabric. For some projects, it is helpful to baste (running stitch) along the two fold lines. The point at which your basting lines cross will be the center of your fabric.

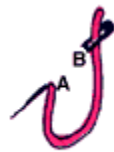


Diagram 49



Diagram 50

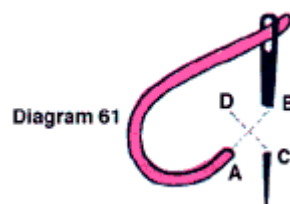


Diagram 51

Cross Stitch

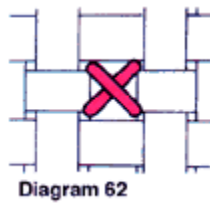
Cross stitches can be scattered singly, in small groups, or may be used as a filling stitch for large areas. There are two secrets to embroidering a good cross stitch. First, keep it absolutely square. (This is why it is such an ideal stitch to use with evenweave fabrics.) Second, keep all of the top stitches of the "crosses" pointing in the same direction. You will understand this point better as we review how to make a cross stitch.

Bring needle up at **A** and insert it down at **B**. Bring the needle up again at **C** and down at **D**. **Diagram 61**.



When working cross stitch on evenweave, the threads are always drawn through the holes between the squares on the fabric. Always work over one square unless otherwise instructed.

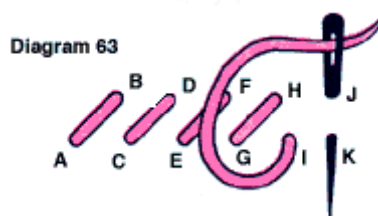
Cross stitch on evenweave fabrics is illustrated in **Diagram 62**.



Horizontal Rows of Cross Stitch

When embroidering horizontal rows of cross stitches on evenweave fabrics, you will embroider over one square of the fabric, unless otherwise instructed, inserting the needle in the holes between the threads, rather than piercing the fabric. You will work half of each cross stitch across a horizontal row and return completing the cross.

Bring the needle up through the fabric at **A** and insert it down at **B**. Bring the needle up again at **C**, down again at **D** and continue across the row in this way. **Diagram 63**.



When the row is completed in one direction, you will return, crossing the stitches as you go. Bring your needle up at **O** and down at **P**, thus completing the stitch. Come up again at **Q**, down at **R** and continue until all stitches have been crossed. **Diagram 64**.

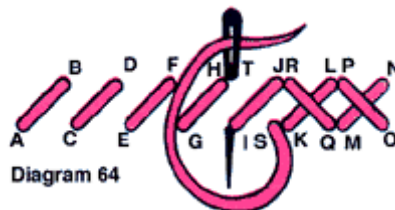
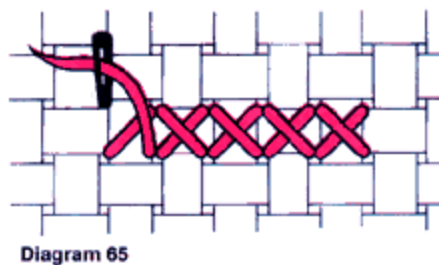
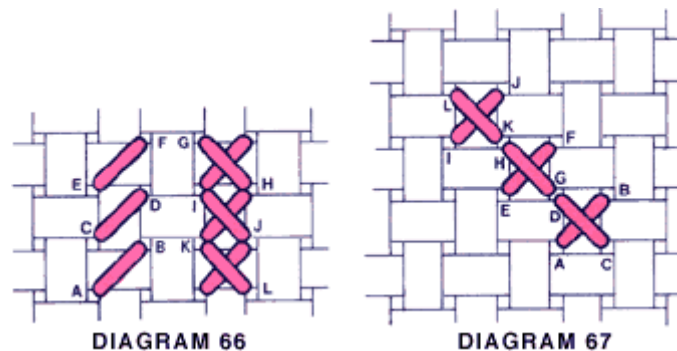


Diagram 65 illustrates cross stitch on evenweave.



Vertical and Scattered Cross Stitches

When there is a vertical line or a random scattering of cross stitches, work each stitch individually. Just remember that all of your top stitches should be going in the same direction in any one piece, unless a variation is planned for effect. **Diagrams 66 & 67.**



Cross stitch is a commonly used stitch on all types of fabric. When not using an evenweave, you still follow the same stitch instructions, but it is more difficult to keep all of your crosses absolutely square.

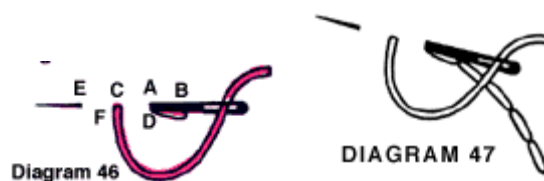
Backstitch

Backstitch creates a distinct outline. It is an easy stitch to control on small curved areas where very small stitches are needed and on loosely woven fabrics.

Bring the needle up through the fabric a short distance from the beginning of the line at **A**. Make a stitch backward, inserting the needle at the beginning of the line at point **B**. Bring the needle up at point **C**, the same distance in front of the first completed stitch, so that the stitch and space on the surface are even in length. **Diagram 45.**

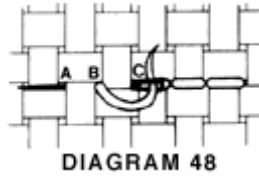


Insert the needle down at **D**, going back into the fabric at the same point where it was brought out for the first stitch (point **A**). Bring the needle up at **E** and down at **F**. Continue in this manner along the line. **Diagrams 46 & 47.**



Stitches on the back of the fabric are twice as long as those on the front so that they overlap.

When working backstitch on an evenweave such as Aida, the threads are drawn through the holes between the squares on the fabric. Always work over one square unless otherwise instructed. **Diagram 48.**

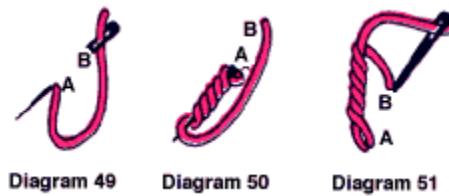


Bullion Stitch

Bullion stitches are created by wrapping thread around the needle and securing it on the fabric. They can be arranged for bud effects or to make little leaves or petals.

Bring the needle up at A and down at B. Do not pull the thread through. Bring the needle halfway up again at A, but do not pull the needle through the fabric. **Diagram 49.**

Holding the needle from below, wind the thread around the needle. The number of twists will be determined by the length of the stitch and the thickness of the thread. As a rule, five or six twists are used. **Diagram 50.**



With your left finger and thumb holding the twist just made, ease the needle up through the twist with your right hand. Do not release your hold until the needle goes through. Slowly pull the remainder of the thread up through the twist. Reinsert your needle at B and gently secure the twist against the fabric. **Diagram 51.**

READING STITCH CHARTS

Types of Grids - Color Placement Charts vs Stitch Guide Charts

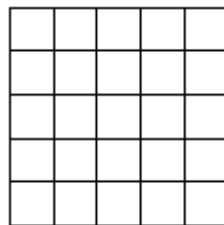


Figure A

Figure A shows the most common type of grid seen in magazines and instruction leaflets. It can be used in two ways:

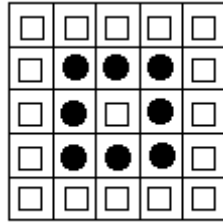


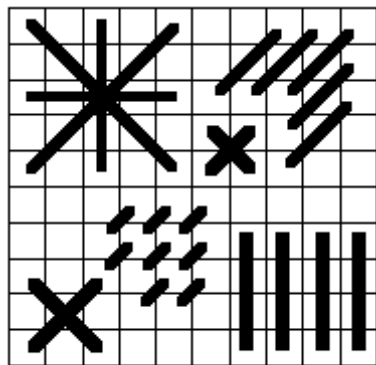
Figure B

1. In Figure B each square represents one stitch. A symbol within the square indicates the color of the stitch and/or the type of the stitch.

The stitches can be cross stitches over two threads, cross stitches over one thread, needlepoint stitches or other types of stitches.

The advantage of this type of grid is that a very large design can be charted in a fairly small space.

The disadvantage is that decorative stitches are more difficult to depict.



One line = one fabric thread

Figure C

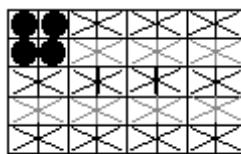
2. In Figure C each line on the grid represents one thread of the canvas or fabric. The squares are the holes in the canvas or fabric.

Instead of using symbols for stitches, the stitches are diagrammed as they actually are constructed.

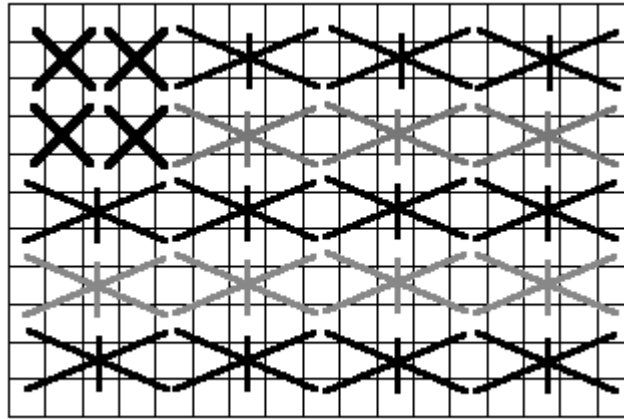
The advantage of this grid is that different sizes and types of stitches can be depicted easily on the same chart.

The disadvantage is that this type of chart usually requires more space.

The following examples show the same design charted in both ways.

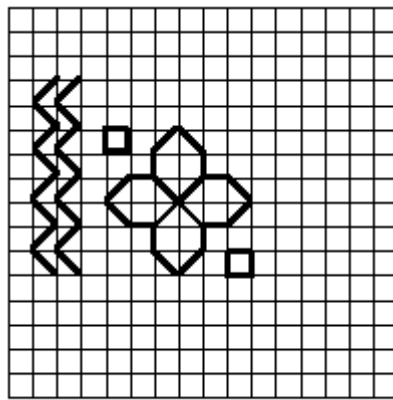


One sq = one stitch

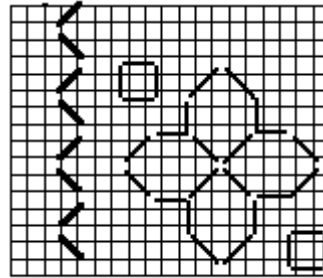


One line = one fabric thread

The same blackwork pattern depicted two ways.

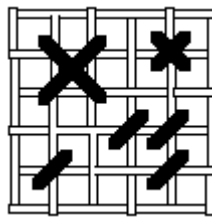


One sq = four stitches (2x2)



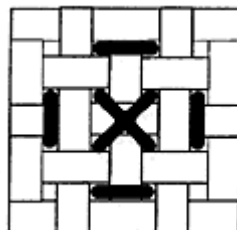
One line = one fabric thread

Other Types of Grids



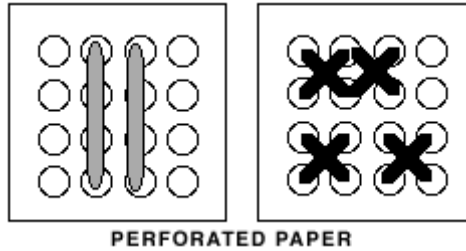
This type of grid more closely duplicates the weave of the fabric or canvas.

It is more suitable for stitch diagrams than for symbols.



This grid duplicates the appearance of Aida cloth.

Actual stitches are diagrammed on this type of grid.



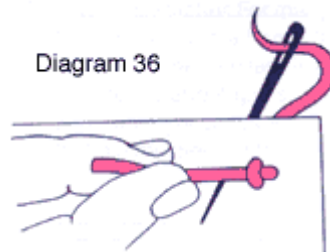
RULES OF THE TRADE FOR EMBROIDERY

(The following instructions are excerpted, with permission, from the leaflet, How to Embroider, published by The National Needlework Association. The 33-page booklet is full of helpful information and stitch guides. It is widely available through local retailers.)

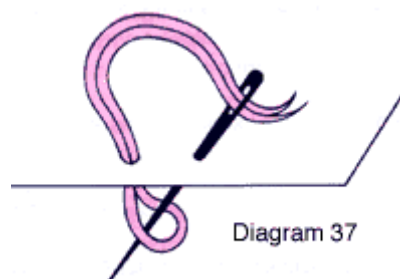
Here are some general instructions for embroidery. Take a few minutes to read through them and familiarize yourself with these basic techniques, then refer back as needed while you work.

How do I start a thread?

When you start a thread, you must secure the end. There are several ways to do this, but usually tying a knot is **never** recommended. Knots cause bumps on the surface of your project. One method is to pull the threaded needle up through the fabric, leaving approximately a 1" tail on the wrong side. Hold the "tail" with your fingers, and work over it at the same time you are working the first few stitches on your project.



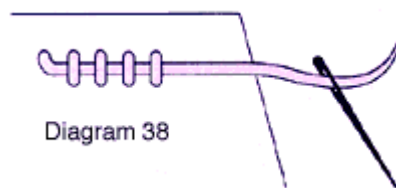
To begin a new thread in an area that has been partially worked, run your needle through the backs of a few of the stitches that are nearby. Draw the thread through until the end of the tail just disappears under the stitch backs. Then proceed with your stitching. (This should be done in a similar color, so the new thread will not show through). **Diagram 36.**



Another method, the Loop Method, can be used when your project calls for an even number of strands. Separate half of the number of strands needed, i.e., if your project calls for two strands of floss separate out one strand of floss. Cut the strand(s) twice as long as desired for stitching, approximately 24"-30". Fold the strand(s) in half, and insert the cut ends in the eye of your needle. The folded end is at the opposite end of the strand(s). Come up through the fabric, leaving the loop on the underside. Make your first stitch. Bring the needle down through the loop in the folded end of the strand(s), and pull until loop lies flat against the fabric. **Diagram 37.**

How do I end a thread?

Run the needle through the backs of a few stitches. You do not want to create bumps or knots in back of work. **Diagram 38**



Where should I start stitching first?

Where you begin to stitch will depend on the type of embroidery you are doing and the design you are executing. In counted cross-stitch, for example, it's usually recommended that you begin at the center of the fabric and design

I have finished stitching one area, and there is another one nearby that I want to stitch in the same color. There is still some thread left in my needle. What should I do?

Do not carry thread far on the back if you are going from one area of the design to another. Even the slightest pull will cause a pucker. To get from one area to another that is nearby, you can run your thread under stitches on the back for short distances, as long as the two yarn colors involved are similar. Otherwise, end off your thread and restart it at the new area. Never carry a very dark color when you are working on a light color fabric.

As I work, I notice that my thread becomes twisted tighter and tighter. What should I do?

If your yarn becomes twisted or "kinked" as you work, just drop the needle and allow it to hang until the yarn untwists.

I made a mistake in my stitching! What should I do?

If you make a mistake that involves only your last few stitches, remove your needle from the thread and, using the end with the eye, slide the needle under the last stitch and pull up, taking out the thread. Continue to take the stitches out one at a time until the error has been removed. If the mistake is over a large area, you must carefully slide

sharp embroidery scissors under the stitches and snip, being careful not to cut the fabric.
Diagram 39.

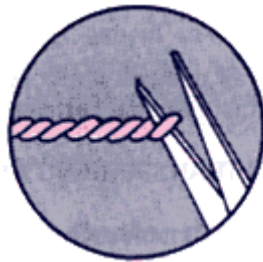


Diagram 39

TECHNIQUE TRICKS:

Cross stitching with variegated threads.

Contrary to what you might have read or heard, completing one cross stitch at a time while stitching with variegated threads may not always give you the effect you want. In fact working cross stitch in the traditional manner and working one cross stitch at a time will give you two very different effects with multi-colored (variegated) threads. Neither way is right or wrong. It just depends on the effect you wish to achieve.

Take a look at the following examples to see what happens when you change your stitching technique:



"HEARTS"

(Traditional Stitching)

This was stitched in the traditional manner. Notice the subtle difference in color along each stitch row.



"BASKET"

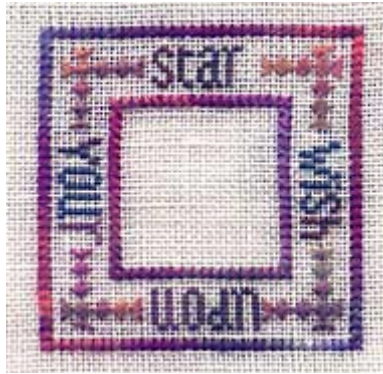
(Stitched One Cross
Stitch at a Time)

In this example one cross stitch at a time was stitched. Observe the stripy effect in contrast to the more subtle and smooth transitions in color in the "HEARTS"

example above.

"WISH"

(Inner Square Stitched in Traditional Manner. Outer Square Stitched One Cross Stitch at a Time)



Here both techniques were used. The outer square has a more distinct and delineated coloration than the traditionally stitched inner square.

By using to your advantage the two distinctly different effects the techniques have to offer you can create exactly the look you want.

Reading Needlework Charts

So, you have decided to learn counted cross stitch. It is great fun and the final results often look like a painting from afar. This page is to help you if you are unfamiliar with how a needlework chart works and what all those little symbols mean and to explain some of the common abbreviations designers use in their directions.

ABBREVIATIONS:

ct - count (fabric count or stitch count)
st - stitch

Rainbow Gallery and Kreinik have a wide range of specialty threads. I've listed a few that are used often.

KREINIK:

BF - Blending Filament

#4 VF Braid - used for #4 Very Fine Braid by Kreinik

#8 F Braid - used for #8 Fine Braid by Kreinik

HL - used after color # and stands for High Lustre for Kreinik threads

RAINBOW GALLERY:

Wisper - A specialty thread made by Rainbow Gallery

S800 - S stands for Splendor - a silk thread from Rainbow Gallery

Gold Rush #12, #14, #18 - various metallics from Rainbow Gallery

Gold Rush XS - fine metallic from Rainbow Gallery

Hi-Lights - a thread pre-blended with metallic from Rainbow Gallery

TB - Treasure Braid #4, #8, #16 - metallic braids from Rainbow Gallery

TB Petite - Treasure

One Symbol with 2 bracketed color numbers - stands for blended needle (or tweeding)

Blended Needle or Tweeding - When the designer wants you to thread your needle with a blend of 2 or more colors of floss and then stitch the cross stitches for that symbol. Usually the combinations are 1 strand each of 2 different color #'s or sometimes 2 strands of 1 color # and 1 strand of the other color #. The exact # of strands to use for each color will be indicated in your color key. Think Teresa Wentzler!

x1 or x2 , etc. - usually used to indicate the # of strands to use for that particular color or stitch.

2 over 2 - indicates to stitch the design 2 over 2 threads on linen/evenweave

1 over 1 - indicates to stitch the design 1 over 1 thread on linen/evenweave

Types of Fabric

Aida - fabric that is divided into distinct squares used for counted cross stitch. Aida is always stitched 1 cross stitch for each 'square' on the fabric.

Evenweave - similar to linen, but the threads are more uniform and the fabric may be thicker than linen. When trying to switch from Aida to linen, it is often easiest to first stitch 2 over 2 on evenweave fabric before attempting 2 over 2 on linen.

Linen - similar to evenweave, but usually a finer weave with thinner threads. Can have thick and thin spots in the threads. These are referred to as 'slubs.' They don't usually interfere with the stitching and it all evens out as you stitch.

Many stitchers learn on Aida and progress to either evenweave or linen as time goes by. They are all beautiful fabrics, but there is something special about stitching on evenweaves and linen (IMHO).

Chart Basics:

Needlework charts consist of a grid with a bold line every between every 10th grid square. So, when you look at a needlework chart, you can easily count your stitches by knowing that between every bold line there are 10 stitches/grid squares.

WHERE TO BEGIN:

The center of your needlework chart will be indicated by an arrow pointing down from the top and in from the side of the chart. If you take your fingers and follow the center top arrow and the center side arrow, they will meet in the exact center of the chart. Many stitchers choose to begin stitching in the exact center. If you choose to begin here, then mark this spot with a tiny cross stitch or a pin or needle, so you know where to begin stitching.

Beginning at Top, Side, or Bottom: You will need to know how much extra fabric you have allowed around the design. The following directions use the standard 3 inch margin that is usually recommended for needlework.

To begin at the top left: measure in 3 inches from the left side of the fabric and 3 inches down from the top left of the fabric (or the amount of extra fabric you've allowed around the edges of the design). If the chart has symbols all the way in the upper left corner, then you may begin stitching in the top left corner.

If the stitching doesn't come right up to the top left corner, then you need to count how many blank grid squares there are to the first stitch and make a note of that number. Then, from the 3 inch mark, count the same number of Aida squares or twice the number of linen threads (because you are stitching 2 over 2 threads on linen) to reach the place on the fabric that will correspond with the first stitch on the chart.

This same process may be used to begin from the upper right, lower right, or lower left of the design.

If you wish to begin in the top, bottom, or side centers: You will measure in 3 inches (or the amount of extra fabric you've allowed around the edges of the design) from the center line at your desired location. Then, note on the chart if you need to count blank grid squares to reach the first stitch in this area. If so, you will then count this

number of Aida squares or twice the number of linen threads to reach the spot to place your first stitch.

SYMBOLS

When you look at a needlework chart, it is a combination of a grid with various symbols in each grid square and maybe dark lines following the edge of the stitches. Each grid square stands for one cross stitch. Each symbol on the chart stands for the color floss (or bead, or specialty thread) that you need to stitch the cross stitch with. If the symbol is for a bead, then follow the directions for attaching beads.

COLOR KEY AND HOW TO READ IT

Your chart will come with a Color Key. Usually at the top of the Color Key will be a note as to how the design is stitched, i.e., Design stitched with 2 strands 2 over 2 threads on linen. This will mean that your cross stitches are stitched over 2 threads up and 2 threads down. Each cross stitch will be stitched over an area of linen that looks this: # Notice that there are two threads running horizontally and two threads running vertically.

The Color Key will usually be separated by:

Brand name of threads
beads
charms/treasures/buttons
Cross Stitches
backstitching
specialty stitches (if used)

Each of these sections will tell you how many strands (may be indicated by (x1) or (x2) note), the color number, sometimes the color name, and sometimes a note that 2 or more skeins/packages are needed.

If the color key isn't separated by brands and types of stitches, then there will be a note next to each symbol and color number to indicate the stitch used and the type of thread (bead/charm/button) used for that symbol.

NUMBER OF SKEINS, CARDS, SPOOLS, PACKAGES TO PURCHASE

Most charts will indicate whether you need 1, 2, or more skeins, spools, or cards of thread or packages of beads. Additional supplies may be indicated by an asterisk beside the color number in the Color Key. The chart may say something like this:

** indicates 2 skeins, cards, spools of thread or 2 packages of beads.

*** indicates 3 skeins, cards, spools of thread or 3 packages of beads.

or the chart may indicate additional skeins with a number within parenthesis next to the floss color. For example:

(2) indicates 2 skeins, cards, spools of thread or 2 packages of beads.

(3) indicates 3 skeins, cards, spools of thread or 3 packages of beads.

Each symbol stands for a color of thread, bead, or specialty thread used and sometimes stands for a specialty stitch to be used with the thread listed. Find this thread, bead, or specialty thread and thread your needle with the indicated number of strands. Stitch one cross stitch (or follow directions for specialty stitches) for each symbol on the chart.

Each time there is a different symbol, you need to check your Color Key for the thread, bead, specialty thread, or specialty stitch to use for this symbol and if there are any special instructions for that color.

BACKSTITCHING

The dark solid lines outlining certain areas of cross stitches indicate backstitching in this area. Follow the lines and backstitch in the color and number of strands indicated in your color key. The color key will list the color # and what portions of the design to backstitch in that color. For example:

DMC #898 - outline of dress, hair, tree
DMC Ecru - designs on dress
DMC #501 - grass

Backstitching may also be indicated by patterned lines, such as dotted lines, dashed lines, etc. These are usually used when several colors of backstitching are used. It will help you to know where to stitch each color of backstitching.

SIZE OF DESIGN

All charts will indicate the size of the design in inches and in stitch count. This may be indicated on the cover page, Color Key (back page), or with the instructions included inside the leaflet/chartpak. And, the type of fabric used to stitch the model is usually listed along with the sizes.

Look for something like this (ct stands for count):

Model stitched on 32 ct linen - Blue Silk from Wichelt Imports #65-143

Design Count: 256 wide x 309 height

Design Size: 16" wide x 19-1/4" height

With this information, you can easily figure the size of the design on any count fabric you choose to stitch with. Here's how:

Assuming the design is stitched 2 over 2 threads (which will also be indicated on the Color Key), then the count you are stitching is 1/2 the count of the linen/evenweave/fabric:

40 ct fabric = 20 ct stitching
36 ct fabric = 18 ct stitching
32 ct fabric = 16 ct stitching
30 ct fabric = 15 ct stitching
28 ct fabric = 14 ct stitching
25 ct fabric = approx. 12 ct stitching (12.5)
27 ct fabric = approx. 13 ct stitching (13.5)
26 ct fabric = 13 ct stitching
22 ct fabric = 11 ct stitching
20 ct fabric = 10 ct stitching
19 ct fabric = approx. 9 ct stitching (9.5)
18 ct fabric = 9 ct stitching
16 ct fabric = 8 ct stitching
14 ct fabric = 7 ct stitching

7 ct, 8 ct, and 10 ct fabrics are usually stitched over 1 so the stitching count is the same as the fabric count.

To figure out the size of your finished design on a different count fabric than the pattern calls for, you need to divide the Design Count both for width and height by 1/2 the number of the fabric count.

So, the above design when stitched on 28 count would be:

256 divided by 14 = 18-1/4" width

309 divided by 14 = 22" height

From these width and height calculations, you can now figure out what size fabric you need to stitch the design by adding the recommended 3" extra fabric to the width and height, you would purchase 28 ct fabric in this size below.

18-1/4" plus 3" = 21-1/4" width

22" plus 3" = 25" height

Note: the amount of extra fabric needed can vary depending on your method of finishing the design. If you are planning on using mats with the frame, ask your shopowner or framer how much extra fabric they will need to finish the design this way.

If you are finishing as a pillow, bell-pull, tote bag, ornament, etc., you will need to figure out how much extra fabric you need if you want to use the extra Linen/Aida for finishing. Sometimes the design will come with instructions and you can check these for how much extra Linen/Aida you will need. Or, you can ask your shopowner's advice on the amount of extra needed.

What Is Embroidery, Canvas-Work, and Cross Stitch?

Embroidery is an ancient form of decorative needlework in which designs and pictures are created by stitching strands of some material on to a layer of another material. Most embroidery uses thread or wool stitched onto a woven fabric. Stitches could also be worked in wire or leather strands, and embroidery can be worked onto many materials. Non-woven traditional materials include leather and felt, but modern textile artists embroider on many non-traditional materials such as plastic sheeting.

Hand embroidery is embroidery done with a needle and thread and worked by hand without the help of a sewing machine or similar electric tool machine embroidery has become a vast subject on its own. It is both used for creative work on individual pieces and for mass-produced clothing products.

Embroidery has traditionally been used to decorate clothing and household furnishings including table linens, tray cloths, towels and bedding, but you can literally embroider anything as long as it is made out of an evenly woven fabric and can be held firmly in the hand or in a special embroidery hoop or tapestry frame. The art of hand embroidery is a painstaking and laborious process, but today garments are often decorated with machine embroidery instead.

Embroidery has also been used as a form of art and for decoration, through the creation of embroidered or cross-stitch samplers, tapestries, wall-hangings and other works of textile art. Some types of patchwork also incorporate embroidery as a form of extra decoration.

Canvas Work is a type of embroidery in which yarn is stitched through a canvas or other foundation fabric. Canvas work is a form of counted-thread embroidery. Common types of canvas work include needlepoint, petit point, and bargello.

Materials

Several types of embroidery canvas are available: single thread and double thread embroidery canvas are open even-weave meshes, with large spaces or holes to allow heavy threads to pass through without fraying. Aida cloth or Hardanger fabric can also be used for canvas work, and plastic canvas is used in craft projects. Canvas is measured by the number of squares per inch or centimeter. In canvas work the stitches may completely cover the canvas. Newer methods will use the canvas as part of the pattern.

Yarns vary from knitting yarns and tapestry wools to pure silk, synthetic, or metallic threads. Fine ribbons, plastic thread, raffia and string can also be used in canvas work.

History

Early canvas work or needlepoint used tent, continental or basket weave

stitches, with each stitch covering one canvas intersection.

Bargello, first developed in Europe, uses colors and stitches across multiple canvas intersections to create motion and patterns. Modern methods have incorporated crewel and other embroidery stitches to add depth and differences not only by shading but by texture.

Cross-Stitch is a popular form of counted-thread embroidery in which X-shaped stitches are used to form a picture. Other stitches are also commonly used in cross-stitch, among them, 1/4, 1/2 and 3/4 stitches and backstitches. Cross-stitch is usually executed on easily countable even-weave fabric, or more rarely on non-countable fabric, on which a countable fabric is applied that is removed later, by drawing out every thread of it under the embroidery. This fabric is called waste canvas. The stitcher counts the threads in each direction so that the stitches are of uniform size and appearance.

This form of cross-stitch is also called "counted cross-stitch" in order to distinguish it from other forms of cross-stitch. Sometimes cross-stitch is also done on designs printed on the canvas, showing every single cross (stamped cross-stitch).

Technique

Cross-stitch embroiderers frequently use an even-weave fabric of linen or cotton and work from charts on graph paper. Cross-stitching can also be worked on purpose made cotton Aida cloth which is available in 11, 14, 16, 18, and 22 count sizes and many different colors. The sizes of Aida and Evenweave types denote the approximate number of threads woven per inch. Special vinyl weaves and perforated paper products are also available as well as waste canvas which is used to transfer the embroidery to other fabrics e.g. to decorate clothing. The size of a piece of embroidery can be changed by using a fabric with another count size.

Today cotton embroidery floss is the most usual thread. It is a thread made of mercerized cotton, made of six strands that are only loosely twisted together and easily separable. Other materials used are pearl cotton, Danish flower thread, silk and Rayon. Danish flower thread is especially popular for nature motifs which originally came from Denmark. Sometimes different wool threads, metallic threads or other specialty threads are used, sometimes for the whole work, sometimes for accents and embellishments.

Thread size is usually chosen so that the stitches cover the fabric completely, creating a tapestry-like effect. But especially in monochrome work the thread can also be chosen a bit thinner, so that the individual crosses can be recognized as such and let the fabric show through a bit. The latter possibility can look nice in monochrome patterns and in combination with Blackwork.

History and Social

Cross-stitch is one of the oldest forms of embroidery and can be found all over the world. Many folk museums show examples of clothing decorated with cross-stitch, especially from continental Europe and Asia. Today cross-stitch is the most popular form of embroidery as a hobby in the western world. It lends itself well to recreational use because it's easy to learn and very versatile. There are patterns available for almost every taste, and even beginners can create beautiful stitchery with some patience.

Traditionally cross-stitch was used to embellish things like dish-wear, household linen, doilies and similar, half useful, half ornamental items. This use is still popular, especially in Europe. But often cross-stitch is used to make pieces that are meant to be framed and hung as pictures. On items for daily use, usually only small areas are embroidered. The pictures can either have an unembroidered background or be completely covered with stitches.

There are cross-stitching "guilds" in various cities of the USA and other countries that propagate knowledge about cross-stitch and give stitchers the opportunity to meet people with the same interest. Often they also offer lessons. Sometimes these guilds do collaborative works that would be too big for one stitcher.

Cross-stitch is often combined with other popular forms of embroidery, such as Hardanger embroidery or blackwork embroidery.

A fairly recent development is the use of other stitches in cross-stitch work, in this context called "special stitches", in order to create new visual effects and satisfy the wishes of keen stitchers who may find pure cross-stitch boring after a while. These may be stitches from surface embroidery, canvaswork or even drawn thread work and other more unusual branches of embroidery. Also beadwork and other embellishments like paillettes, charms, small buttons and specialty threads of various kinds are becoming more popular. This development, new as it may seem is in fact a reinvention. In earliest times, cross-stitch was often used as one of many different stitches.

Cross-stitch design has become possible for many hobby embroiderers with the advent of cross-stitch design computer software. Thus it can be a form of creative expression rather than just copying the patterns of someone else.

Aida:

Aida is a widely used fabric for needlework. It is most often made of 100% cotton and is very durable.

Aida is woven so that each square is marked with distinct holes (openings) so that one cross stitch is worked over each square of fabric.

Aida is often used when learning counted cross stitch. The beginning stitcher doesn't have the added task of counting threads while learning to stitch. 14 count Aida is one of the most commonly used.

Aida comes in a large variety of colors and counts. You may purchase Aida anywhere from 6 count (6 stitches to the inch) to 20 (20 stitches to the inch) count. If you desire an even higher count, you can work with 22 count Hardanger.

If you are new to using Aida, remember that the smaller the count of fabric, the larger your stitches will be.

100% Cotton Aida is hand-washable with mild soap when preparing for framing. When attached to clothing, 100% Cotton Aida may be machine washed in cold water on gentle cycle and machine dried on low.

I have attached many counted cross stitch designs to my children's clothing that were stitched on Aida. It appears to be indestructable in my experience. Much of this clothing has passed through several children and still holds up great!

Two other types of Aida are:

Yorkshire Aida: 96% cotton/4% polyester

Damask Aida: 52% cotton/48% rayon

Fiddlers Cloth: similar to Aida and is 50% cotton/42%polyester/8% linen.

Hearthstone is also similar to Aida and is 60% cotton/50% linen.

For Fiddlers Cloth, Hearthstone & these two types of Aida, check packaging or ask your LNS owner for washing instructions.

Hardanger:

Hardanger is a 100% cotton fabric commonly used for a special type of counted thread work that goes by the same name. Hardanger may or may not involve 'cutwork.' This is when certain threads in the fabric are cut and removed leaving an open, lacy look.

Hardanger may also be used to stitch counted cross stitch designs if a smaller count is desired.

Evenweaves

Evenweave fabric is often the easiest for Aida stitchers to work with as a step to working with linen. Evenweave fabric threads are of the same width in both directions and is generally a bit thicker than most linens. It can be easier to work with when switching

from Aida, as there won't be thick ('slubs') and thin threads as can occur in linen. Evenweaves are generally worked 2 over 2 threads.

Two of the most common evenweave fabrics are Jobelan and Lugana.

Jobelan is usually 51% cotton/49% polyester. It comes in a wide variety of colors and can be purchased in 16, 20, 25, 28, 32 counts. They also offer 26 count metallic Jobelan in Gold Lurex and Silver Lurex, which is 90% polyacrylic/10% metallic.

Lugana is usually 52% cotton/48% rayon. It also comes in a wide variety of colors and can be purchased in 20, 25, 28, and 32 count. Lugana offers a 20 count metallic in Gold/Cream and Silver/White which is 52% cotton/48% rayon. A 25 count metallic Lugana, 51% cotton/44% rayon/5% metallic, is offered in Cream/Gold, Mushroom/Gold, Sand/Gold, and White/Silver.

Linen

Linen comes in many brand names, counts, and colors. Linen can be the thickness of evenweave or be much thinner. Linen can be found in 8 count up to 40 count. Linen is usually worked 2 over 2 threads which would make your stitches at 1/2 the count of the fabric. So, when working on 28 count linen stitched 2 over 2 threads, you have a design that is stitched at 14 count.

Linen/Silk

Linen/Silk is similar to linen except that it is usually a mixture of 80% linen/20% silk and is most commonly offered in 28 and 32 count. Linen/Silks tend to come in more 'earthy' colors like shades of cream, tan, brown, and gray or gray/blues.