

Cross Stitch Tutorial

Thank you for taking the time to read this cross stitch guide. I have put it together with the beginner in mind. These tips will help with completing the cross stitch patterns I have designed. I believe that the process of cross stitch and embroidery should be enjoyed which means that absolute rules should be kept to a minimum. I want to share some of the tips that I have acquired over the years but as you develop in confidence, you will find a personalised method that works for you.



Firstly, you will need to have the right tools for the job. Aida is usually the easiest fabric to start cross stitching on. Aida is available in a variety of “counts” which relates to the number of stitches per inch. So for example, 14 count Aida means that there will be 14 individual cross stitches per inch. You can use a different count Aida to the one recommended but it will affect the overall size of the project you are working on – a lower count will make it larger and a higher count smaller.

(Evenweave linen can also be used for cross stitch, but I would recommend using this when you have some experience. If using evenweave, the stitches are worked over two threads.

So, if you have a project that require 14 count Aida, you will need to use 28 count evenweave.)

The ideal cross stitch needle has a large eye and a slightly rounded point. The smaller tapestry needles are ideal. You may find [this](#) link useful. Personally, I find it helpful to have a selection of needles and give a few a try. The type of needle you'll want to use will vary depending on the project.

Note: the needle I used in these photos was selected to ensure that it could be clearly seen. This means that it is a bit thicker than I would normally use.

When you are working on your cross stitch it is really important that you keep your fabric taut. This stops your work puckering. There are a number of different frames that can help you with this. The cheapest and most widely available is probably an embroidery hoop. However, you may want to experiment with scroll or snap frames and find out which suits you best. Again, I think that the type of frame you use often depends on the kind of project you are working on.

I have recommended DMC embroidery floss for my patterns. This is simply because it is the most widely available. There are many other brands that you may prefer to use. To avoid knots and confusion, I find it useful to wind floss onto bobbin cards with the colour reference clearly marked. When stitching, avoid using excessively long strands of floss – it'll reduce the chances of tangles. Embroidery floss is generally wound with six strands. You will need to separate them out and use the number of strands required by the pattern – usually two or three.

It is beneficial to have a small pair of scissors for snipping floss.

When it comes to starting a project, many new to cross stitching are unsure of where to start. The instructions for many kits will state that you ought to begin in the middle. In my opinion this all depends on the project. For my monogram projects, I would actually recommend starting at the bottom and working up (or vice versa). The important thing is to be sure that you have sufficient fabric to complete the project. If you are working a fairly small kit, then simply counting the squares to ensure you'll be able to finish.

It isn't necessary to work all of the same colour in the project all at once. I would recommend building on what you have already stitched so you avoid the possibility of miscounting and the heartache of unpicking!



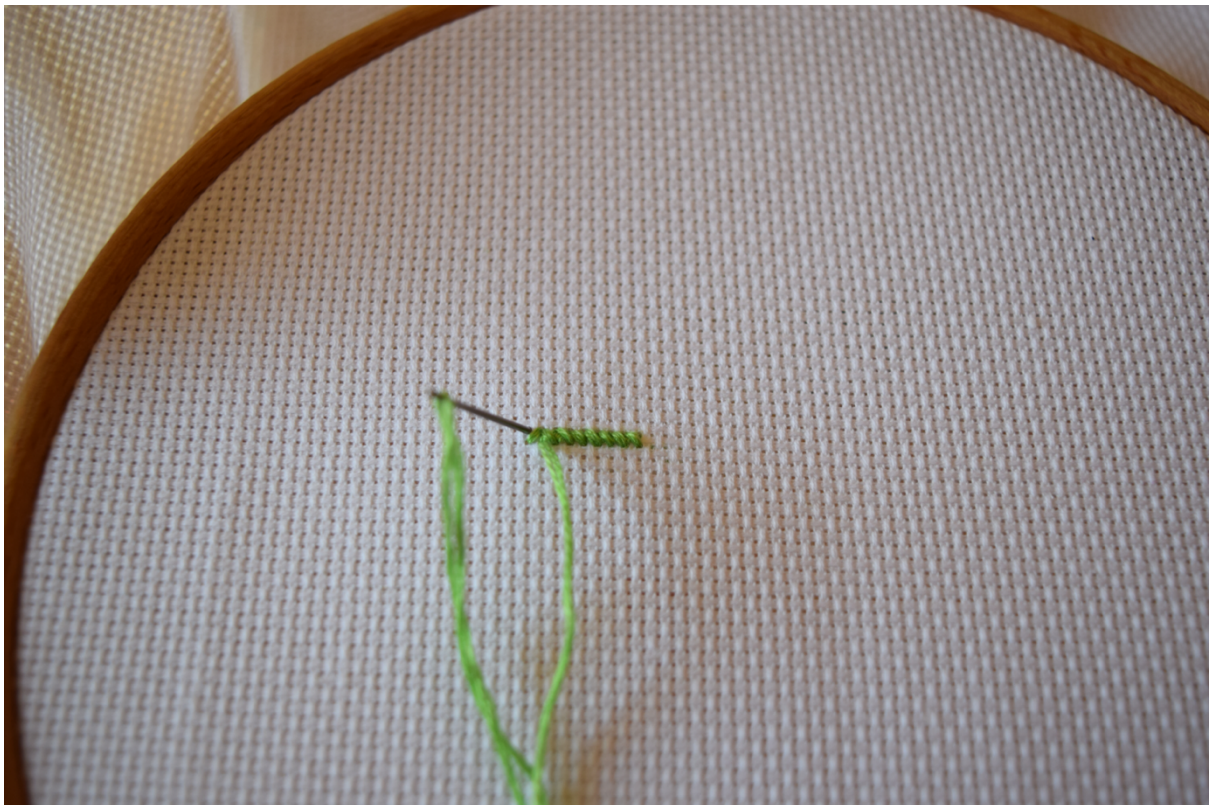
Once you have all of your supplies and tools gathered together you are ready to start stitching. When using a new length of floss try to avoid tying a knot at the end as it can affect the evenness of your stitches. Instead, pull the floss through until there are just a couple of centimetres left at the back (as in the picture).



Work the first stitch at the front and bring the needle and floss again to the back. Push the needle into the back to start your next stitch. As you bring the needle through you will be able to anchor the end of the floss down. If you are careful to repeat this process for the next couple of stitches the end will secure and tidy.



How you work cross stitch is very much a matter of personal preference. Some will work the whole cross stitch in one go. Personally, I prefer to work a row of the first part of the cross and then work back stitching the top part..



Whilst I prefer to work in rows, sometimes the pattern means that you have work the stitches slightly differently.



I favour the first stitch going from left to right and the top stitch from right to left. Plenty of cross stitchers do it the other way round – it is entirely up to you! What is important is to keep in mind the direction of the stitches must all be the same. I always start a cross stitch on the bottom left hand corner to the top right with the top stitch being worked from the bottom right hand corner to the top left. That way, if I ever have to work isolated stitches or change direction then I ensure all the stitches stay uniform.



It is best to avoid trailing the floss too far across the back – as illustrated in this picture.. If the colour is needed about four or five stitches away, that should be fine but any more than that and you probably should finish off and start again. If you are working one of my Fair Isle monograms, I would suggest that it is best not to stretch any floss across the area where the actual letter is being stitched – this is because it is worked in white and coloured floss may show through at the front.



To finish securely, you can bring your needle and floss to the back of your work by working your last stitch. Carefully push your needle through a couple of the nearby stitches. Be careful to check that this has not pulled or puckered your work at the front.