

Cross stitching is really straight forward once you get going, but you will need a few hints and tips to get started with the right techniques. We have put together a simple guide with everything you need.

Cross stitch kit

A kit is a pack that contains all the material you need to make the illustrated design. It usually contains Aida or Evenweave fabric, stranded cotton thread in all the required colours, a needle and a pattern or chart with instructions on how to complete the design.

Chart (or pattern)

A chart is a diagrammatic description of how to complete your design. Codes (such as #, +, <, x etc.) are used to represent the different coloured threads used to create the end result. Each square on the chart represents a square on the fabric. Charts are often sold on their own without cross stitch materials – this allows you to use thread and fabric that you may already have or to purchase these individually. Each chart has a clear list of the stranded cotton required to complete the design.

Aida fabric

The threads in Aida fabric are woven in a precise square-pattern which makes it easy to guide the needle in and out of the fabric, to obtain even stitches and to count squares. You usually stitch over 1 square. 11-count Aida means that there are 11 squares in each inch of fabric and 18-count Aida means that there are 18 squares in each inch. The count of the fabric will therefore determine the finished size of the design. The higher the count, the smaller the cross stitches and it is easier to cross stitch in lower count fabric, that is, 11-count is easier than 18-count.

Evenweave fabric

Evenweave is any cotton, blended cotton/synthetic, linen or synthetic fabric woven so there is a hole for stitching between each single thread. On Aida, we tend to stitch over 1, however, on Evenweave, we usually stitch over 2 threads. Evenweave comes in a variety of threads counts, most common are 24, 28 and 32.

Stranded Cotton

Sometimes called floss, this thread is comprised of 6 easily separable strands so that you can vary your stitching results depending on the number of strands used. It is

Top Tips

- Always work with clean hands.
- Do not carry the thread across spaces where there are no cross stitches as this will show up when the design is complete. You should end off and start again instead.
- Allow the threaded needle to dangle upside down from time to time to remove any twists in the thread.
- Don't use a knot; instead bring the threaded needle through the back of the fabric leaving approximately 2cm to be secured by the next few stitches. To finish, run the needle through about 5 stitches on the back of the fabric.
- Remove the needle from your sewing when you are not working or it will leave a mark. Alternatively, attach it to the extreme outer edge of the fabric.

ideal for cross stitches, long stitches, short stitches and satin stitches. Most cross stitching is done with 2 strands and the pattern always clearly states whether any stitches are to be completed with 1 or more than 2 strands.



This diagram shows a length of stranded cotton and the separation of 2 threads which are usually used for cross stitching.

Threads are colourfast; however, washing should only be undertaken if absolutely necessary. If you need to wash your work, do so gently using lukewarm water and a non-biological detergent. Rinse well and place face downwards on a thick lightly coloured towel and press with a warm iron.

Thread card or organiser

Many cross stitch kits already include a thread card with the stranded cotton pre-sorted onto the card. Where this has not been done, it is necessary for you to place your threads through the holes on the thread card and label them so that they will be easy to access when sewing your design.

Needle

A tapestry needle is used for cross stitching which has a blunt point and a large eye.

Embroidery hoop or frame

Frames can be helpful to hold your fabric while you stitch. Some people prefer to stitch holding their fabric in their hands and if their tension is good, this technique will work well. Others may find that the “holes” are opening up or the fabric is puckering, this is when a frame or hoop should be used – if this technique is used you will be pulling your needle straight up from the back and pushing it straight down toward the back which will require that you move one hand from the front to the back to pull the needle through and vice versa. If you have a stand, you can stitch with one hand on top of the fabric and one underneath so that you don't have to move one hand from front to back over and over.

Starting your design

It is important to read through all the instructions before beginning with your design. It is a good idea to sew over the edges of the fabric by hand or with a zigzag stitch on a sewing machine to prevent fraying although this is not absolutely necessary. Pinking scissors can be used to create a non-fraying zigzag edge.

Iron your fabric if there are creases. Find the centre of the fabric by folding it in half vertically and again horizontally. It is a good idea to start from the centre of the design if this is convenient, although this is not essential.

It's a good idea to highlight your chart (yellow works very well) to mark off stitches or areas of stitching as you complete them. This allows you to clearly see which parts of your chart are complete.

Stitches

Cross stitch

Directions: A whole cross stitch is worked by stitching a line of half crosses first and then going back along the same line adding the top stitches. Bring your needle through at the bottom left corner of the square and insert diagonally at the top right. Another method is to complete each stitch as you go; this is good for working vertical rows of cross stitches. It is very important to always work the lower left to upper right stitch first so that all the top threads have the same direction slant. This ensures an even consistency in your finished design.



This diagram shows (1) the first line of diagonal stitches and then (2) the second line cross stitching back over the first.

Quarter cross stitch

Directions: Quarter stitches take up a quarter of the area of a whole cross stitch. You will have to split the centre threads on your Aida fabric with your needle.

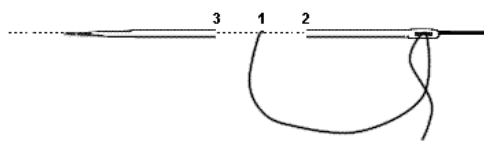
French knots

Directions: Bring needle through where the knot is required; wind the thread round the needle twice. Twist the needle back into the fabric, very close to where you brought it through, but not in exactly the same place, and pull the needle through while keeping the thread taut.

Back stitch

Backstitching is a running stitch used to outline an area of the design to add definition or to create lettering. It should be worked after the design has been completed. 1 strand of thread is usually used for backstitching.

Directions: Bring needle through at (1), insert at (2). Bring needle through at (3) in front for the next stitch. The following stitch will begin at (1) and end in front of (3).



This diagram shows (1) bringing the needle up through the fabric, (2) second placement of needle, (3) in front to end the stitch.