



A Revolutionary Counted Cross Stitch Product.

Easy-Count Guideline™
R&S Designs, INC.

*Cut Cross Stitching Time
by **ONE-THIRD.***

How To Cross Stitch Lesson

Supplies

Counted cross stitch is easy to learn! Counted cross stitch transfers a design from a printed graph onto Aida or evenweave fabric. The different styles of symbols on the chart represent different colors of floss. Cross stitch is easy to learn and requires only a few supplies.

Graph. This is the pattern or design you chose to stitch. There are thousands to choose from.

Fabric. The fabric for cross stitch is woven in an even manner so that you know exactly where to place your needle. To keep the fabric from raveling, either stitch the edges on a sewing machine or use masking tape to prevent fraying.

Easy-Count Guideline™. Follow the easy-to-understand Easy-Count Guideline™ instructions, accompanying each spool of this product from R & S Designs, Inc. One can then easily see the grids on the fabric and can find where one is in relation to the pattern at any time with ease and comfort. Counting more than once is a thing of the past. Mistakes are also avoided from the very beginning of the project.

Needle. A tapestry needle is used, usually a size 24 or 26 (size 26 is smaller than size 24). This type of needle has a blunt point and a large eye. Use a size 24 for stitching on 14 count fabric; use a size 26 for fabric with a stitch count greater than 14.

Floss. Embroidery floss is a cotton thread used for stitching. Floss has 6 strands, but usually you will use only 2 strands at a time for stitching and 1 strand for backstitching. On Hardanger fabric (22 count) you usually will use only 1 strand; on 11 count Aida use 3 strands to stitch and 2 to backstitch. Most books and graphs suggest either DMC or Anchor brands.

Embroidery Hoop. A plastic embroidery hoop is helpful to hold the fabric while you stitch. Remove the fabric from the hoop when you are not stitching to keep from getting “hoop marks.”



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Scissors. You can start out with any pair of scissors, but pretty soon you will want to get a nice pair of small embroidery scissors. Get a good quality pair with sharp points. A good pair of scissors makes stitching a lot more fun.

Choosing Your Fabric. There are dozens of fabrics to choose from. They will all work, so you just have to decide on what you like. White or ivory Aida 14 is the most common and 14 count is an easy fabric to start on. The number of stitches per inch will determine the finished size of the design. A design that is 28 stitches wide stitched on Aida 14 (14 stitches per inch fabric) will be 2" wide. The same design will be 2-1/2" wide on Aida 11, and 1-1/4" stitched on hardanger (22 stitches per inch). Thankfully, most designs show design sizes for different counts of fabrics. Be sure to allow extra fabric for finishing (at least 4" extra on length and width).

To Begin

Find the center of the graph. For most patterns this is shown with arrows or a bold line. Next, find the center of your fabric. An easy way to do this is to fold the fabric in half vertically and "pinch" with your fingers to make a small crease. Open the fabric, fold in half horizontally and make another "pinch." Open the fabric up. The two creases will mark the center of the fabric. Most stitchers like to start stitching close to the center of the design.

Knots on the back will show through, so do not use any knots to start or end. To begin stitching, bring the threaded needle up from the back of the fabric leaving about a 1" tail of thread behind the fabric. Stitch the next 5 or 6 stitches over the tail. Clip off extra thread. To end off, weave your needle back through the last 5 or 6 stitches and clip the thread short so as not to leave a loose tail.

Stitching

There are two methods. The first method is to work a row of half stitches (////), then work back (\\\\) to complete the X's. Use this method for most stitching. The second method is to complete each X as you go. Use this method for vertical rows of stitches.

It is important that the X's are crossed in the same direction. That is, the top thread of the X should always slant in the same direction (either \ or /). It does not matter which way they slant, but if they are mixed the finished piece will look uneven.



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Relax as you stitch. Your stitches should lay flat on your fabric and not distort the holes or the fabric.

Backstitching

Backstitching is a running stitch (not an X) used to outline an area or to form lettering. Normally you use one less strand of floss for backstitching than you use for cross stitching.

Carrying Your Thread

Sometimes a color will have only a few stitches and then “jump” to another area. Most of the time a stitcher should end off and start again; other times you can carry the thread along the back. Just jumping from area to area is easier than starting and stopping, but sometimes the thread will show through. This can be a problem if you jump a dark thread over an unstitched area.

Finishing

When you are finished with your stitching, pull the Easy-Count Guideline™ from your fabric and wash your project in cool water using a mild liquid detergent. Rinse well. Do not wring, but roll in a clean towel to absorb most of the water. While the fabric is still damp, place it face down on a terry towel. Place another cloth on top of the needlework and press lightly with a warm iron. Let dry. Then frame or finish as desired.

You are ready to begin your stitching!! Good luck as you start a new learning experience!!

Technical Corner for Advanced Cross Stitchers

Graphed Designs

- Cross stitch designs are graphed on a gridded background. Each square on the graph represents a single cross stitch.
- Graphs usually have one or two extra grid rows surrounding the design.
- Bold lines occur every ten grid squares.
- Arrows indicate the center of the graph.
- The stitch count for the width of the design is expressed first, then the height.



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- Each symbol, colored square, or combination of these elements on the design represents a single cross stitch in a particular floss color.
- The key to the symbols is adjacent to the graph and indicates which floss color and the number of strands of floss to use for each stitch.

Fabrics

Cross stitch is worked on an evenweave fabric, which means that the same number of threads are woven horizontally (weft) as vertically (warp). This assumes that the same number of cross stitches will be created in each direction of the fabric and that each individual cross stitch is square and the same size as the others. Evenweave fabrics come in a variety of thread counts, weave patterns, colors, and fiber content.

The thread count refers to the number of threads along one horizontal or vertical inch of the fabric for plain-weave fabrics, such as linen. For complex-weave fabrics, such as Aida or Hardanger, the count per inch is determined by squares created in the weave. The thread count in an evenweave fabric determines the size of the design. The higher the number per inch, the smaller the design will be.

The most common evenweave fabrics are cotton Aida, linen, cotton and rayon plain-weave fabrics, plastic canvas, vinyl Aida, and perforated paper. The latter three items are not fabrics but foundation materials upon which cross stitch can be worked.

Aida. This fabric is the most popular cross stitch fabric for beginners. This cotton fabric is woven in a complex weave of groups of four threads, which form distinctive small squares with easily visible corner holes.

An individual cross stitch is formed from corner to corner over each small fabric square. The stitch count of Aida fabrics is based on the number of these squares per inch. Aida fabric is available in 11, 14, 16, and 18 count.

Linen. This is a plain-weave fabric made from flax. Plain-weave means that each fabric thread is woven in the typical over-under method. Normally each cross stitch is formed over an intersection of two of these fabric threads in both directions (horizontally and vertically). There are no obviously visible corner holes, so it takes a little more practice to learn to cross stitch on linen.



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Linen fabric comes in a variety of thread counts and colors. The most common linen thread counts are 25, 28, 32, and 36 threads per inch. Because the cross stitches are formed over two threads of the linen, the stitch count is half the thread count. Therefore, if you are using 28-count fabric, then 14 cross stitches can be formed on one inch of fabric (28 divided by 2 = 14).

Plastic Canvas and Perforated Plastic. Plastic canvas is needlepoint canvas made from plastic and has large square holes. It is available in 8 ½" x 11" sheets, in three mesh sizes (7, 10, and 14) and in several colors. However, stitches normally use only the smallest mesh because floss covers this size of grid well.

Perforated plastic has smaller, punched out, round holes. It is available only in 14-count and in 8 ½" x 11" sheets. Both plastic canvas and perforated plastic does not ravel and is somewhat rigid. They can be used for three-dimensional items such as boxes, baskets, and ornaments.

Vinyl Aida. More flexible than plastic canvas, vinyl Aida resembles cotton Aida in appearance. It is available in 14- and 18-counts and in seven colors. Vinyl Aida is sold in sheets of several sizes and by the yard. Because vinyl Aida will not rip, ravel, or tear easily, it can be cut to follow any design shape. This product is commonly used for flat items, such as place mats, coasters, and holiday ornaments, as well as dimensional items which are more rounded than those of plastic canvas.

Perforated Paper. This material has been used as a stitching surface for over a century and is still used today. It is available in 9" x 12" sheets and in several colors, but presently only in 14-count. Perforated paper is more fragile than the previous two products. This is used for holiday ornaments, bookmarks, and gift tags.

Needles

Cross stitch is done with a tapestry needle, which is characterized by a large eye and a blunt tip. This type of needle will slip between the threads and not pierce them.

The size of the needle to use is determined by the thread count of the fabric and the number of floss strands to be used. For tapestry needles, the higher the number, the smaller the needle is in length and diameter. Stitchers use size 22, 24, 26, and 28 tapestry needles for most of their work. A size 24 or 26 needle is usually used for cross stitching on 14-count fabrics.



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Because the eye of the needle is made by the needle being struck by a die, one side is more concave than the other. This concave side is easier to thread because the thread is channeled into the hole. If you are having difficulty threading a needle, turn it around and try again. If the difficulty still persists, then change to a larger needle or try a needle threader, which is available in several styles. Use a small emery bag, traditionally shaped like a strawberry, to clean needles. Push the needle into the bag several times. However, if the needle is bent, discolored, or rough, throw it away, for damaged needles are difficult to stitch with and may discolor the fabric.

Embroidery Flosses and Threads

Cotton Floss. This is the most commonly used floss for cross stitch because of its vast color range, low cost, sheen, availability, and divisible nature. It is available in skeins of six-ply thread, which can be grouped into different numbers of plies as needed. There are several brands available. DMC brand floss colors will be indicated in each graph key.

Silk Floss. This floss is similar to cotton floss, except that it is made of 100% spun silk and is commonly available in either six- or seven-ply skeins. Silk floss has a luxurious sheen, is also divisible, and can be used similarly to cotton floss. However, it is slightly thicker in diameter than cotton floss.

Flower Thread. This thread is made from cotton, has a fine twist, and comes in a matte finish. Flower thread was originally designed to be used as a single thread on 14-count fabrics. It is slightly thicker in diameter than a single strand of cotton floss. Flower thread is not divisible like cotton floss, so you will use it as it comes from the skein. One strand of flower thread equals two strands of cotton floss.

Rayon Thread. This thread is 100% rayon (viscose), available in four- or six-ply skeins, and extremely shiny. This thread is tricky to control, but by slightly moistening it with a barely damp, clean sponge you can straighten out any kinks and better control it.

Overdyed Cotton or Silk Floss. These flosses, regardless of fiber content, are irregularly dyed with several colors or several hues of the same color family. Manufacturers of these overdyed flosses create many different color combinations. The changeable color patterns create a dramatic effect without



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the stitcher having to constantly change floss color in the needle. In order to avoid creating a tweedy effect, stitch each cross-stitch individually before proceeding to the next.

Metallics. Metal “threads” may be added to needlework for additional elegance and glitz. The earliest real metal threads were difficult to work with because of their stiff and fragile nature. Now softer, more pliable, synthetic metallic threads are available in many weights and textures. Because they are made from acetate or a similar product, they are easier to work with and require less care, yet they add the same texture, dimension, and luster as the earlier real metal threads did.

The most popular of today’s metallics are marketed as metallic embroidery threads and flosses, blending filaments, braids, ribbons, cords, and cables. Blending filament is a one-ply metallic thread, which can be used alone or in combination with other threads to add sparkle to water, snow, stars, feathers and flowers. Braids and ribbons of various sizes may be used alone for a more textured metallic look. Cord is a one-ply, tightly twisted metallic thread, which can be used for outlining. Cable is a three-ply, heavy, metallic thread used for special effects.

Scissors

Embroidery Scissors. A pair of small, sharp-pointed scissors is a “must-have” accessory. They are used not only for cutting lengths of floss, but also come in handy for cutting out misplaced stitches and for trimming the floss ends on the back of the stitched fabric.

Fabric Scissors. A pair of 8”-long shears is necessary for cutting the evenweave fabric.

Craft Scissors. Use a pair of craft scissors when cutting plastic or paper canvas.

Measuring Tools

Tape Measure. A flexible tape measure is useful for measuring dimensions longer than 18” and around curved items.

Ruler. Straight edged rulers of several lengths are a necessity. Plastic see-through rules of 1” x 6” and 2” x 18” lengths are generally the most useful for



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cross stitch projects. For measurements longer than 18" use a tape measure or a yardstick.

Easy-Count Guideline™. This tool allows the user to weave a grid on the fabric to match the grid on the pattern. An X and Y axis is marked with the Guideline and at each 10 space intervals. The guideline can remain in the fabric until the project is completed. It is easily removed by pulling the guideline from the fabric.

Miscellaneous Tools

Tweezers. Needlework tweezers are available in several sizes and shapes. They are used to help pick out unwanted stitches, to remove tiny fibers left behind on the fabric where stitches once resided, and to remove pet hair from stitched pieces.

Fabric-Stretching Devices. Although cross stitch can be worked with the fabric held only in the hands, many stitchers find that fabric-stretching devices are ideal for keeping the stitch size and tension consistent, and the design fabric clean. Remember to add an extra inch or two to the total fabric size for this stapling or tacking process.



Best wishes! Many happy stitching hours ahead.

Just relax and enjoy!

Sue Hardwig, R & S Designs, Inc.