



× BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO CROSS STITCHING ×

Not your Grandma's Cross Stitch...

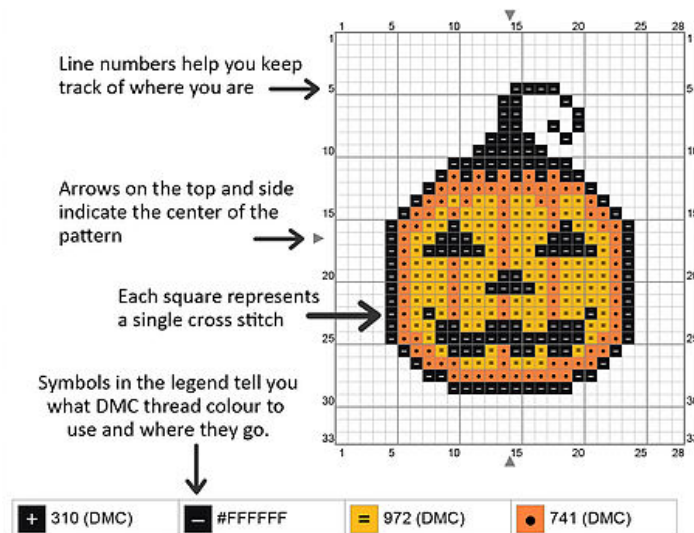
...but still your Grandma's process.

WHAT THE HECK IS CROSS STITCH?

Cross stitch is a form of counted embroidery that has been around for generations, it is one of the easiest forms of hand embroidery to learn. Cross stitch is comprised of X-shaped stitches repeated to make a completed masterpiece. Designs can be classy, trashy, sweet or sassy! There are NO limits to what you can do. Purchase a pattern, make your own...or just WING IT! Cross stitch projects are often sold as kits, but you can also purchase basic supplies and come up with your own project, or purchase a pattern from a multitude of talented designers.

STEP ONE: HOW TO READ A CROSS STITCH PATTERN

A cross stitch pattern tells you everything you need to know about where to stab (your fabric not your enemy), and what colors to use. The grid on a cross stitch chart corresponds to the grid created by the weave of the fabric. A combo of colors and symbols in the squares (or symbols only if the chart is black and white) tell you what color of floss to use. Use the chart legend (like you see at the bottom of the image below) to map the symbols to the floss colors as they relate to the DMC numbers on your fancy thread.



When you begin a new cross stitch project, it is easiest to start stitching in the middle of the design. That way you make sure your design is centered on the fabric. Small arrows at the edges of a cross stitch pattern indicate the center point.

Witchy Stitch patterns have easy to read arrows that mark the center of the width and height of the pattern to help you easily find the middle.

STEP TWO: PREPARE YOUR FABRIC

Cross stitch can be done on a variety of different fabrics, but the most common are Aida and Linen. Both are woven fabrics that have an annoying tendency to fray when cut. So before you start stitching, it is a good idea to bind the edges particularly if you are stitching a large project that will require lots of handling.

To stop the fraying from pushing you into a meltdown, sew the edges with a zig-zag stitch or use a serger if you have one. If you don't want to sew the edges, you can also bind them with masking tape or a liquid sealants like 'Fray Check' that stop the fray!

NOTE: Aida is much easier to stitch on and is perfect for beginners, personally I LOVE stitching on Aida!

STEP THREE: FIND THE CENTER OF YOUR FABRIC

To find the center of your fabric, fold it in half one way and then fold it in half the other way. Pinch and crease the center of your folds to mark it. You can place a pin in the center or make a small stitch to further mark the center point. I usually have my needle threaded and ready and pop it in the center for my first stitch and awaaaay I go!

STEP FOUR: USING A HOOP OR FRAME

There are lots of different styles of embroidery hoops and frames available. Whether you use one or not is up to you. Beginner stitchers may find it easier to put their fabric in an embroidery hoop, this is my favorite way to stitch.

To use a hoop, first loosen the screw and separate the two round thingies. Place the round without the screw on a flat surface. Lay the fabric over the hoop making sure the fabric is centered. Place the other round piece (the one with the screwie thing) over the fabric and press it down. Gently pull the fabric taut as you tighten the screw on the hoop. Don't pull the fabric too tight or it will distort the weave of the fabric!

STEP FIVE: GET YOUR THREAD READY!

Pick the color of floss you are starting with and cut a length about 18 inches long. If you go much longer than this, the thread is more likely to get knotted when you stitch causing stitcher's rage and thrown hoops. I however am a lazy bum and gamble with long strands...I don't like to change my thread often and usually just suck it up and deal with the knots. Learn from me...don't do that.

Most embroidery floss is made up of six strands of thread. Depending on the fabric you are using, you will typically stitch with two strands at a time. With 11 Aida – 3 strands. With 14 Aida – 2 strands, 16 Aida – 2 strands is the general rule. But if you like a fuller stitch by all means throw in an extra strand!

To separate out a strand, hold the floss with one hand and pinch the end of one strand with the other. Gently and slowly pull the strand up and out until it is separated from the remaining strands. I find it really helps to twist the thread as I go to avoid tangles.

STEP SIX: THREAD YOUR NEEDLE

Thread your needle just as you would a needle for hand sewing. Don't make a knot in the tail end. You will stitch over the tail as you work to secure it without needing a knot. You want to avoid using knots when cross stitching because they can leave lumps in the final piece or show through your fabric. For another great way to start your stitching YouTube 'Loop Start.' I use this method often as well!

STEP SEVEN: START STITCHING! STITCHING IN ROWS

Cross stitch is usually worked in rows going from left to right or right to left, whichever you prefer.

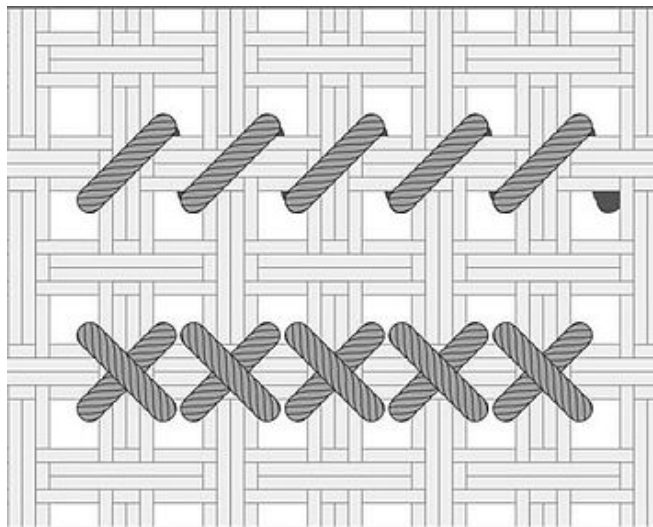
Starting from the back side of the fabric, bring your needle up through a hole toward the front, leaving about an inch of thread at the back. You will cover the tail with your stitches as you work to secure it.

Next pass your needle through a hole diagonally across from where you started to make a slanted half cross stitch (/) (see image below). Be sure to hold on to the tail at the back of the fabric so it doesn't slip through.

Start your second half cross stitch by bringing the needle back up through the hole that is directly below the one you last used. Before you pull this stitch tight, flip your fabric over to the back and make sure the thread tail will be trapped by the stitch.

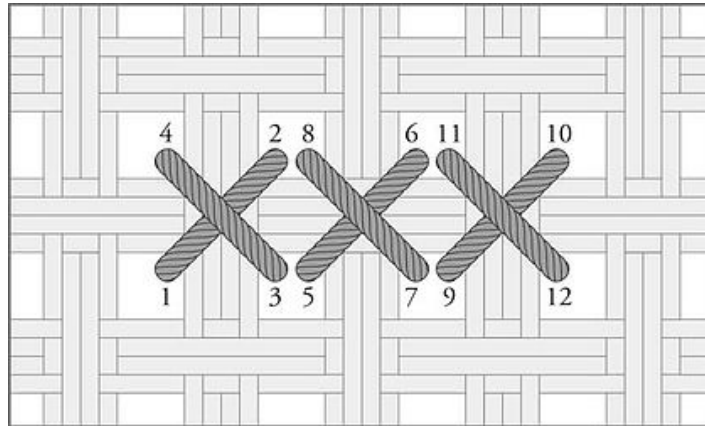
Continuing stitching along the row to make a series of half cross stitches (////) for as long as the row in your pattern requires.

Next return across the row making a series of half cross stitches in the other direction (\\\\) to make fancy little x's!



STEP EIGHT: MAKING INDIVIDUAL CROSS STITCHES

In some places on your pattern it may be easier to make a complete cross stitch before moving on to the next stitch versus working in rows. Follow the diagram below to make individual cross stitches.



STEP NINE: ENDING YOUR THREAD

Keep stitching until you reach the end of the thread or until you run out of stitches in your pattern. On the back side of the fabric, pass the needle under at least three completed stitches to secure the thread. Trim the remaining thread, being careful not to cut it too close. It may not seem like it will hold but trust me, it will!

STEP TEN: SHOW OFF YOUR STUFF!

Seriously. Cross stitch takes time and patience. You did it! You made that stitch your b*tch! Show the world how amazing you are. If you just finished one of my patterns tag me on Instagram @thewitchstitcher or use the hashtag #thewitchstitcher 😊



TIPS TO KEEP YOU SANE:

You will quickly get comfortable making basic cross stitches. Here are a few additional tips to keep you sane and make your finished pieces look FAB! And to keep you from losing your marbles...

- As you stitch, the thread will get twisted. Occasionally, let your needle and thread hang freely to let it sort it's life out.
- Aim for a nice easy tension on your stitches. Don't pull them so tight that they warp the fabric or leave them so loose that they hang out on the finished side of your stitching. The stitches should lie flat against the fabric without pulling against it.
- If you make a mistake and miscount your stitches you have three options.
 - FROG (remove your boo-boo stitches)
 - Toss your stitch across the room
 - OR run with it, some stitchers (like me) leave their mistakes if they aren't earth shattering. It makes it unique and your own and could end up with surprising results! Some of my mistakes have turned out to be beautiful whoopsies that made my stitch even better!
- Cross stitch is a fun, relaxing and rewarding creative outlet. Don't stress too much about the details and enjoy the process! You end up with a badass piece to display proudly or a perfect gift for a special someone. Stitching can be a great relief of anxiety, depression, and so much more...don't let it stress you.

Welcome to the Stitch Witch Club!

