



# Tips for Stitchers Vol.2



A little collection of really useful tips  
for stitchers  
from Bustle & Sew

# Welcome



Every month we begin the **Bustle & Sew Magazine** with “Tips for Stitchers,” a series of hints, covering all kinds of techniques, that we hope will be helpful. Some are my own, whilst others were very kindly contributed by readers.

Last year we published the first collection of our tips, and now here’s the second volume - I do hope you’ll find them useful.

Happy stitching!

Helen xx





## Tips for Stitchers

When choosing a fabric for your embroidery don't limit yourself to plain linens and cottons - sometimes it's fun to embroider on a coloured fabric. Do be careful though and make sure that the design of the fabric doesn't overpower your stitching.

Whatever fabric you choose be sure to keep your work neat on the reverse. My Grandma always said I should aim for the back looking the same as the front. This was never going to happen, but I do try to keep everything neat as sloppy habits (her words not mine!) Such as failing to trim your ends and carrying the floss across the back of the design between different areas will show through to the front, especially if your fabric is lightweight or light coloured.

Also be sure to fasten off your ends securely so that they won't unravel particularly if your embroidery is going to be put to a practical purpose rather than simply for display.



## Tips for Stitchers

When choosing the right needle for your work, an easy rule of thumb is that the thickness of your needle should match the thickness of your thread.

If you're using stranded embroidery floss, then this can be split. The number of strands of floss you use will depend upon the fineness and detail of the stitching in your project. When you're deciding how many strands of floss you need (if your pattern doesn't tell you) then a simple rule is never to use a thread which is thinner than the thread of the material – it will look insignificant and puny against the background. My mum taught me this simple rule of thumb and it works in 99% of cases – the exception being if you're working very fine detail in a small area of your work.



## Tips for Stitchers

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My mum taught me this simple rule of thumb and it works in 99% of cases – the exception being if you're working very fine detail in a small area of your work. The Party Panda hoop above required lots of fine stitching and I got round the problem of choosing fabric with the right weave by choosing to work the design on a felt background - no warp and weft at all!!



## Tips for Stitchers

Some people love it - others hate it - I am in the first camp and find Sulky Sticky Fabri Solvy has revolutionised my stitching.

If you do decide to try it out, do be careful not to get it wet whilst stitching as it will simply dissolve away. And when you're ready to soak it off, do allow plenty of time to allow all the stickiness to disappear.

I soak my work for at least an hour, and often overnight, face down in cold water. This allows any ink particles time to fall to the bottom of the water completely away from my design. If they aren't completely removed then the ink can bleed into the background fabric, ruining the



## Tips for Stitchers

We're all guilty of impulse purchases, buying new bits and pieces for possibly non-existent sewing projects. But you can easily reduce your sewing costs simply by checking your stash before going shopping as, if you're anything like me, you're quite likely to have something suitable already. A neat and tidy work room will help stop you buying unnecessarily as it will be easy to see everything you already have. You should also be strict with yourself - if fabric's overflowing from storage then you've probably already got too much of a good thing!

If you're trying to be a thrifty stitcher, then remember the three magic words - repurpose, reuse and recycle. Little Flora the elephant in the image above is made from fabric cut from a 1930's vintage curtain - result!



## Tips for Stitchers

To keep thread, floss & yarn from tangling and knotting when sewing, every so often hold the tail of the thread with the needle dangling and let it unwind.

Another trick to keep thread, floss & yarn from tangling and knotting when sewing is to thread it through a bit of beeswax before starting, or thread it through thick unscented and non-tinted lip balm.”





## Tips for Stitchers

When I'm working on applique, I like to trace my shapes onto Bondaweb (a double sided fusible interfacing) which I then fuse to the reverse of my fabric before cutting out my shapes.

It's not always easy to remove the paper backing when I've cut my shape, but it's really important to resist the temptation to keep picking at the edge of your shape if the backing doesn't peel away easily. Instead try scratching the paper with the point of a pin. You should then be able to peel the backing away starting from this "scratch".

Even better - I try to remember to make a cut into my traced shape before I fuse the Bondaweb to the reverse of the fabric. This gives me a nice clean edge to begin peeling the backing away with no chance of distorting or damaging the edge of my shape.



## Tips for Stitchers

Don't try to hurry when you're stitching text. It's worth taking your time to make your text as smooth and flowing as it can be - and as letters are such precise shapes it really shows if your stitching isn't too neat and tidy. If you're at all unsure whether to make one large or two smaller stitches then I would always make the two smaller ones. It can be tempting to try to get away with larger and larger stitches if you're rushing to start your next design - but if you want your work to look beautiful then you need to take your time over it.

And finally, if it isn't looking great - then you may need to take the plunge and unpick it. It's a horrid thing to have to do I know, but otherwise that work will always be spoiled for you when you look at it. Other people may not notice, but you most certainly will!



## Tips for Stitchers

Here's a tip to help you keep your machine stitches neat and tidy when you're turning a corner.

When you reach the corner be sure that your needle remains in the fabric when you stop stitching (you may need to adjust this manually). Lift the presser foot, rotate your fabric and then continue sewing.

Keeping your needle in the fabric ensures that your stitching line will be continuous.



## Tips for Stitchers

Feeling less than creative?

Allow yourself time and space to sit and dream, let your imagination run free and give your ideas your full attention. Daydreaming isn't a waste of time, it's food for the creative soul.



## Tips for Stitchers

Having a bit of a butterfly mind I often have several stitching projects underway at the same time. I keep them in separate tins with thread supplies, needles and scissors in each tin. That way I can be certain which colours I'm using for each project, and everything's ready if I want a project to go! If you don't have tins, then small plastic snap shut containers or even resealable plastic bags will do the job just as well!





## Tip for Stitchers

When you're working on a hand embroidery project and you need to move from one area of your design to another do not trail the thread across the back of your fabric as it may show on the front or, if your project is to be used for practical purposes, a long thread may catch and pull spoiling your work.

If the distance between the areas you're working is relatively small weave the needle through the back of your worked stitching until you reach the new area. For longer distances it's best to finish off and re-start in the new place.

Why do we love to stitch? After all you can purchase mass-produced textile items at many high streets stores for very little cost. These days handmade means something special - a unique item created with love, a gift from the heart, not one that can be bought. Hand stitching is also a great way to personalise an item, or perhaps to breathe new life into an old favourite that has seen better days.

**Bustle & Sew** offers my own unique patterns, designed to appeal to all skill levels and bring out all your natural creativity. And you can keep up to date with all the latest news from Somerset where I live as well as the newest patterns and much more over on the **Bustle & Sew Blog**.



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**PS** If you love stitching, then you're sure to enjoy my Bustle & Sew Magazine. It's delivered by email to your in-box each month and is crammed full of ideas, projects, features, articles, patterns and more to inspire you. To learn more please visit the **Bustle & Sew website**.

*Helen xx*



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