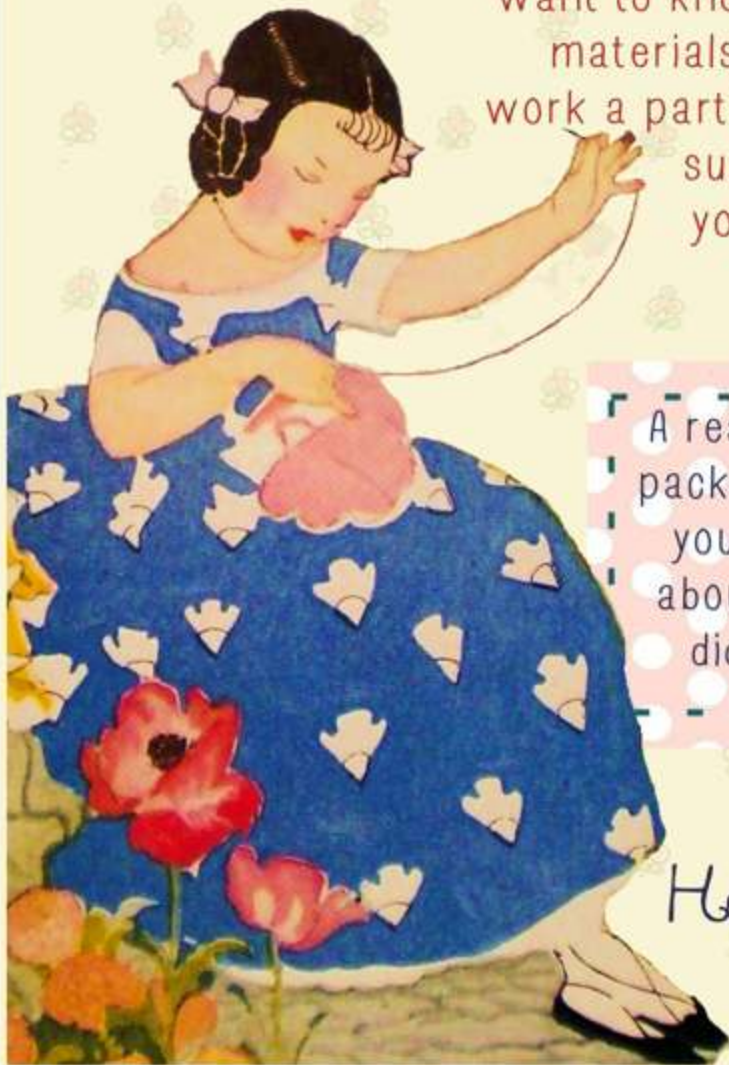


# Simple Stitchery

## A Little Embroidery Primer

Whether you're looking for advice on the best way to transfer your design to fabric, want to know about tools and materials, or simply how to work a particular stitch you're sure to find the help you need inside this little book.



A really useful little book packed with all the things you wished you knew about embroidery - but didn't like to ask ....!

Helen Dickson





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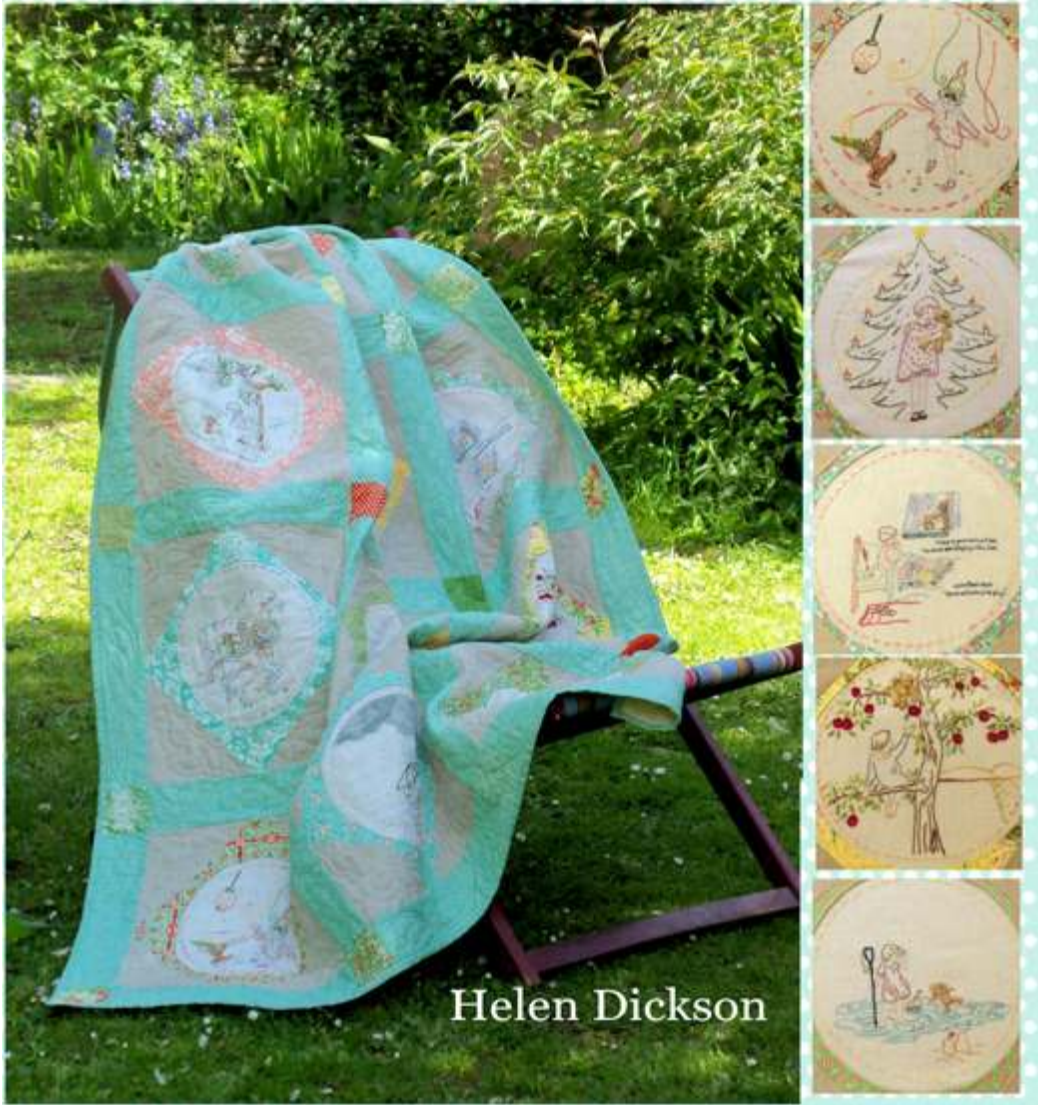
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# ROSIE & BEAR Around the Year Quilt Book

Stitch twelve beautiful embroidered blocks to create your heirloom quilt



Helen Dickson

[Rosie & Bear Around the Year Quilt Book](#) available to download from Bustle & Sew.

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# Introduction

I believe that the pleasure and satisfaction gained from embroidering is not simply having a beautiful piece of work to enhance your home, (and being able to say, "I'm so pleased you like it - I made it myself!") but also the joy of spending your time creating something that is unique and special to you and that doesn't exist anywhere else in the world.

Every stitcher working freehand embroidery will create something unique to themselves, reflecting their own character and personality - a wonderfully satisfying achievement in our age of mass production. The beauty of freestyle embroidery is that it frees you to explore the variety of stitches, colour and fabrics available to you rather than simply counting threads and concentrating on making each stitch absolutely perfect. There are no rules in freehand embroidery - you just thread your needle and start stitching, following a line design that you've transferred to your fabric.

Once you've mastered the basic skills, you'll find embroidery is a wonderfully relaxing, and very portable hobby. You don't need lots of expensive equipment and tools, and your project can easily be put down and then picked up again whenever you have the time and inclination to work on it.

I've included working instructions for 16 of the most commonly used stitches, all of which are simple and easily mastered by anybody who wants to learn embroidery.

One of the joys of freestyle embroidery is that you don't need to learn lots of complicated and difficult techniques to produce a beautiful piece of work. Indeed, you can probably get by with only 2 or 3 stitches if you want - though I guarantee once you've been bitten by the stitching bug you'll want to carry on and learn more!

My aim in this little book is to give you the tools to explore this wonderful world of creativity, including choosing your material and tools, learning some basic stitches and how to begin - and end - your work.



*"Funky Chick" - free pattern for Bustle & Sew Free Newsletter Readers. [CLICK HERE](#) to subscribe.*

# Tools and Materials

Embroiderers are lucky that we don't need lots of expensive or space-consuming equipment to enjoy our hobby, and an added bonus is that fabric, threads, needles and scissors are easy and light to take around with us, making embroidery an ideal hobby for travelling and to take on holidays.

Your embroidery "kit" need only contain a very few tools for successful stitching - you can see my collection in the picture at the bottom of this page. You will need the following basic supplies. Be sure to purchase good quality items - you won't be able to produce good results with cheap and nasty materials - and the frustration and annoyance you'll experience may well put you off stitching altogether.

## Needles

The starting point for a successful project is a good needle that is the right size for the project, and is nice and sharp. It should also be shiny so it will slide effortlessly through your fabric - the plating does wear off needles in time, so if your needle looks a little tarnish and/or feels slightly sticky, then it's time to change to a new one.

The eye of your needle should be large enough to take your thread without difficulty and the doubled thread should pass through your fabric easily.

If not, then try a larger needle size. Needle sizes are marked by numbers - the lower the number, the larger the needle. My preference is to use a size 6 needle with 2 strands of cotton floss.

There are four types of needle that are used for embroidery: crewel, tapestry, chenille and betweens.

I would recommend that newbies start with a crewel (embroidery) needle that comes in sizes 1 to 10. Crewel needles have sharp points to pierce the fabric more easily and long eyes to take on or more threads of stranded floss or wool. Apart from the long eye they are the same in length and point as ordinary sewing (sharps) needles.



*"Tools of the trade" - all you need to begin stitching.*

## Hoop

You'll almost certainly find that a round embroidery hoop is an extremely useful addition to your tool kit. I know some people prefer to stitch with their work held in their hand, but I find using a hoop gives me much better finished results.

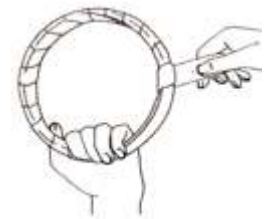
An embroidery hoop is a simple and cheap tool, consisting of two wooden hoops fitting one inside the other. You stretch the fabric over the smaller hoop and then fit the larger one over the top. The screw on the larger hoop is used to adjust the tension in the hoop and when tightened correctly will hold your fabric securely in place. Your hoop will help you to keep your fabric smooth and stitches flat, especially when you're working longer stitches, such as satin stitch.

If your project isn't too large, then choose a hoop into which your whole design will fit. On larger projects you can move your hoop around. You should always remove your hoop from your work when you've finished as it can stretch and mark the fabric if you leave it on betweenwhiles.

Your hoop will hold your fabric much more securely if you bind the smaller hoop with strips of cloth, as shown in the photo on the left. Just wrap strips

of thin cotton sheeting or bias binding all around the bottom hoop and finish off with a few stitches (or cheat as I did and use a hot glue gun!) to hold it securely in place. This provides a rougher surface to the bottom hoop which means your fabric won't slip around between the two hoops.

You can also purchase hoops that can be fixed to a table, or with a stand that leave both hands free to work, and if you decide you're going to continue with embroidery as a hobby, then you might like to try out these options.



## Scissors

You'll need a small sharp pair of scissors to cut your thread and snip off any leftover floss at the end. You may also need them to unpick any mistakes which is why they should be small and sharp! But that's one of the nice things about embroidery, I think - sometimes mistakes are actually better than the original design, but if they're not, then it's so easy to snip them out and start again without leaving any trace on the finished piece of work.



## Floss

I guess it would be possible to embroider with almost any sort of thread - but the most usual is either stranded cotton embroidery floss or perle thread.

Floss is sold in skeins and is available in all the colours of the rainbow - and then some! Every colour is identified by a unique number which is printed on the band that holds the skein together. Patterns will almost always use this number to identify the colour you need to use in a particular design.

Every floss manufacturer has its own unique numbering system and although it's possible to use near-equivalents, conversion tables are readily available on-line, you won't get an exact match in a different brand. So always make sure you have sufficient floss to complete your project before you start stitching.

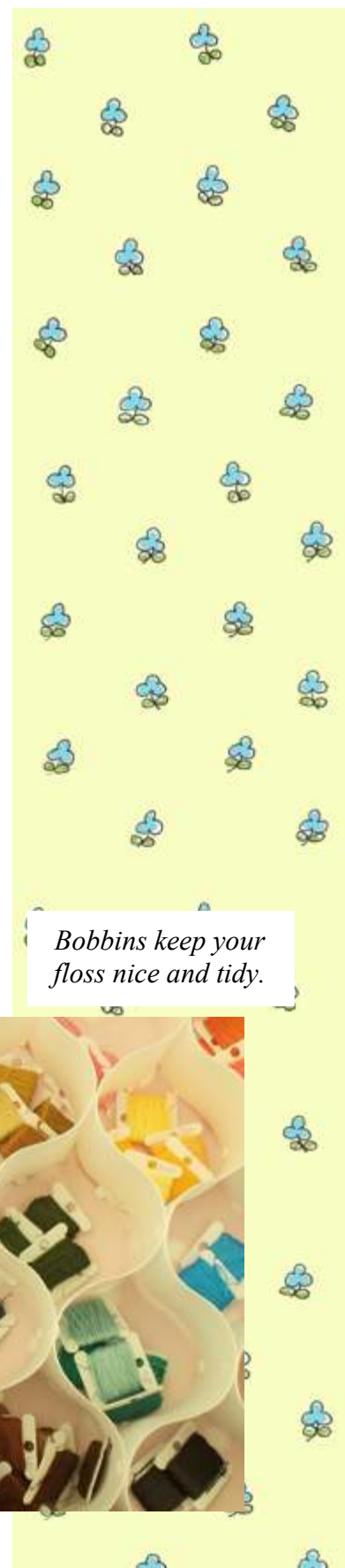
A length of stranded floss is made up of six strands all twisted together. You can use them all if you have a large needle and want a thick line, or divide them and use any number of the strands for a thinner, finer line.

Perle thread is non-divisible and comes in different thicknesses. Again it's available in lots of different colours and is great fun to try.

It's a great idea to wind your skeins of floss onto thread bobbins. These are very practical, for however carefully you pull the thread from your skein, it can easily become a nasty tangled mess. Winding the thread onto a plastic or cardboard bobbin will save you a lot of time, energy and frustration (believe me, I know!). Be sure to write the colour number onto the bobbin for future reference.

Stitches can look quite different when worked in different threads. It's fun to try out a variety of thicknesses of thread in one stitch to see the different effects. Some stitches are much easier in finer threads, but you can create dramatic impact by choosing thicker threads.

You can even try using fibres such as wool, raffia or string - experimenting is part of the fun of freehand embroidery!



## Fabrics

There are lots of great fabrics widely available that are suitable for freehand embroidery. Unlike counted work, you do not need to use an even weave fabric as you will not be depending upon the weave to determine the size and position of your stitches.

Your choice of fabric will be dependent upon the size and design of your chosen pattern, the type of thread you want to use and the purpose of the finished item. These factors will influence the looseness of the weave, the amount of texture in the fabric, and also its durability and washability. As a general rule heavy threads are unsuitable for fine fabrics, and fine yarns may be lost on a heavy or textured fabric. Indeed, I remember my mum telling me that the weight of thread used in embroidery should never be less than that of the weave of the fabric.

It is possible, with the use of stabilizers, to embroider onto stretchy fabric, but I would recommend that you keep to non-stretchy fabrics as much as possible as it is much easier to obtain good results. I like to use natural fibres, linen, cotton or a blend of the two and am particularly fond of vintage linens which you can often find on eBay.

You should always pre-wash your fabric before you start stitching. It's so disappointing to discover, after all your hard work, that your fabric has shrunk in the wash whilst your thread hasn't! This advice isn't true for pre-printed designs though as you'll wash the lines away!

If you think your project will take a while to finish so you'll be handling it a lot, then it's a good idea to do something that will stop the raw edges from fraying.

You can zig-zag over the edges or use an overlock stitch on your sewing machine - whip them by hand or, if you think your fabric won't fray too much, then possibly trimming with pinking shears will be sufficient.

It's a good idea too, to work your design on fabric that's bigger than the final piece of work will be. You'll have extra if you change your mind about the outcome - or if it does become frayed or dirty then you can just trim it away. Extra fabric around the edges is also great if you're using a hoop as it gives you more leeway to move your hoop around your work without getting too close to the edge.

[Bustle & Sew pattern featuring Rosie & Bear](#)

# Transferring your Pattern

There are three commonly used methods of transferring your design from the printed page to your fabric - it's best to experiment until you find the one that suits you best.

## Method one: Tracing

This is the simplest and often most successful method to use on lighter-weight fabrics. You trace your pattern directly onto your fabric using a water-soluble pen or a very fine pencil. (Don't use a light-fade pen or your lines may start to disappear before you've completed your stitching!) The problem with using pencil is that the lead may make your thread dirty, though this should normally wash out apart from very pale colours - be sure to test before using a pencil.

Simply tape the paper with your design on it to a light source - a window is great for this - or you can even use your computer screen - whether to tape the paper to or trace directly from an image on your screen.

Then tape the fabric on the top and trace the pattern onto it.

## Method two: Dressmaker's Carbon Paper

Dressmaker's carbon paper is nothing like the carbon paper those of us of a certain age remember loading into our typewriters! It comes in packs of three different colours, so choose the colour that will be most visible on your fabric. The downside to this method is that your lines may brush off before your work is finished. Pressing stops this happening - but then the lines will be permanent - this is a choice you have to make!

Print the design you want to stitch. Then place your fabric on a clean flat surface and tape it securely in place. Place the carbon paper on top, and the pattern on top of that, taping all the layers in place - you really don't want any slipping! Use a ballpoint pen or sharp pencil to trace carefully around the pattern - but don't press too hard or you may cause the paper to rip or make blobs on your fabric. Don't lean on the carbon with your hand if you can help it as this might make smudges on the fabric.

Before you completely un-tape your layers carefully and peek under one corner to check that the design has transferred successfully to the fabric



[Selection of easy-stitch designs from Bustle & Sew](#)



## Method three: Making your own transfer

You can purchase special transfer pencils to transfer your patterns, but these come with the warning that they don't work well on many fabrics. You will probably find that man-made fabrics, or those with a finish work best - but there is a way to overcome this problem - at least in part. All you need to do is to give other kinds of fabrics a thorough coating of spray starch just before you attempt to transfer your pattern.

Do be sure to test your transfer pencil first on a small piece of fabric first before you use it. And remember - it won't wash out, so you should only use it when you are planning for your embroidery to fully cover the lines.

Many pattern designers, including [Bustle & Sew](#), give patterns in reverse for people who like to use this technique. If you don't have a reversed pattern then all is not lost - simply trace the design onto a sheet of thin tracing paper.

Then turn your tracing over and draw over the lines on the reverse using your transfer pencil. If you do have a reversed pattern, simply draw over the printed lines with your transfer pencil.

Press the fabric you want to embroider on, spraying it well with starch if necessary, then pin or tape the transfer to it, transfer-pencil side down and press with a hot, dry iron. Don't move the iron from side to side as this may cause the paper to move or the lines to smudge, but lift it up and then reposition it if necessary.

As before, carefully peek under one corner to make sure the design has successfully transferred to your fabric before you remove the paper.



# While you work

Somehow the most obvious question seem to be those that you rarely see answered - how, and where, do you start your work? How do you finish it? And what happens in between?

## Threading your Needle

This isn't always straightforward to do - and I was always taught to hold the needle in my right hand (I am right-handed) and with my left hand loop the thread over the point of my needle and hold it tightly. Then, with this loop held firmly between my thumb and first finger, I turn my needle around, place the eye over the loop and push it down so that the thread passes through it.

## Starting Work

It's always a good idea to work your project in a continuous flow rather than stitching in lots of different places and finding they don't connect very well. If the stitches are tightly packed in your design, then it's easier to start in the centre with the main part of the design and then work outwards.

## Starting your Thread

A good length for your thread is the distance between your wrist and elbow - though a little longer is fine. But don't cut your thread too long as it may twist, knot and/or fray. I usually start my work with a few small stitches, leaving the end of the thread at the front, within the space on the fabric I'm going to be covering with stitches. After the thread is covered, then I snip off the length at the front. That's just for the first thread, after that I simply run the thread under a few stitches at the back of my work before I start to stitch.

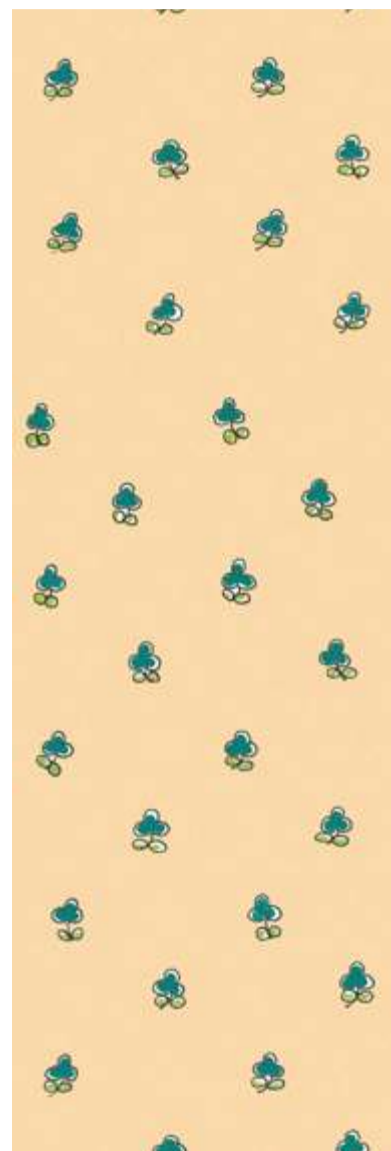
## Finishing your Thread

Simply run your thread under a few stitches at the back and snip.

It's important to snip the end once you've secured it, loose threads left hanging will tangle and interfere with your stitching - and may well show through to the front of your work.



*Detail from [Rosie & Bear Alphabet Sampler](#) pattern from [Bustle & Sew](#).*



# Caring for your Work

You will have spent time and effort creating a beautiful piece of work that is unique to you and you shouldn't be afraid to use and enjoy it. If you've secured all the ends well, and chosen the right fabric then there shouldn't be any reason for it to be damaged through normal everyday use.

Dust and strong sunlight are the main enemies that may attack your work. These days good quality threads such as DMC or Anchor are colourfast, and may be machine washed at high temperatures, but nevertheless strong sunlight will eventually bleach out some of the colour whilst dust will rot the threads. It's really important therefore that you keep your embroidered work clean.

Don't tumble dry your work though as the crinkles may never come out - just smooth it out and hang it up to dry. Press your work while it's still just damp, placing it face down on a folded towel to prevent the stitches from flattening. You may find that the embroidery threads don't dry as quickly as the fabric, so lay it flat after pressing and leave until completely dry.

The best way to store embroidered items that aren't being used is to lay it flat in a drawer, wrapped in acid-free tissue paper. Don't use plastic bags as they attract dust and the textiles won't be able to "breathe."



*Rosie & Bear [Washing Day Peg Bag Pattern](#) from [Bustle & Sew](#)*



# Stitch Directory



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Please note: All instructions are for right-handed stitchers.

# Back Stitch

Back stitch is an outline stitch and is the best stitch to choose for making long straight lines, but can also be used for curves, though it's not as smooth as stem stitch when curving.



Back stitch is worked from right to left. Bring your needle out a short distance from the beginning of the line you want to stitch (see the arrow in the diagram above). Then insert it back through the fabric at the beginning of your line - effectively taking a step "back" - and bring it forward again an equal distance forward from where you first started. You are actually taking along stitch forward beneath your fabric, then a short backward stitch on the right side - joining with the previous stitch.

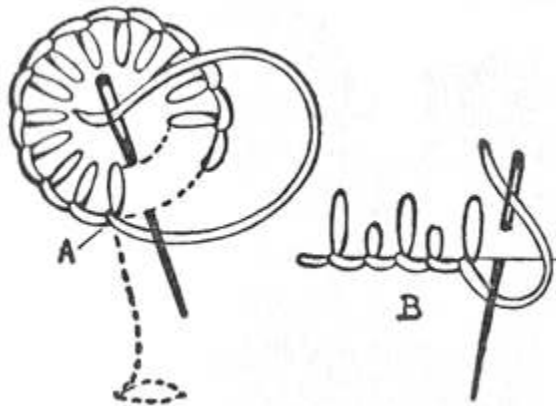


Threaded back stitch is a very pretty variation - you could use three different floss colours to achieve the effect above. First work a line of ordinary back stitch, then thread it up and down alternately as shown by needle A. Needle B shows the second threading process, worked in exactly the same way as before, except that this time you're filling in the gaps you left before.

This is a very useful stitch to outline floral or leaf shapes, or to use as a border.

# Blanket Stitch

Blanket stitch is often used as an edging to cover a turned-over raw edge - just as in an old-fashioned blanket - hence the name!



Working from left to right, bring your needle out on the bottom line [A], insert it above on the top line a little to the right and bring it out immediately below, drawing your needle through over the working thread. Then re-insert your needle again on the top line a little further along and bring it out again immediately below on the bottom line, over the working thread.

You can see how this is worked in the flower shape in the left-hand diagram.

The diagram on the right shows how you can use blanket stitch to edge a piece of fabric - using a contrasting thread to your fabric makes for a decorative and hard-wearing finish for items such as table and bed linen. In this diagram, the stitch has been varied by making the upright stitches alternately long and short.

There are a number of ways in which you can make blanket stitch more decorative. Try grouping your stitches in pyramid form, in groups of two long and two short, or any other variation that you choose.





# Bullion Stitch

Cross stitch is also known as Caterpillar or worm stitch and as well as making very effective bugs(!) it's also great for creating lovely coiled roses, seen so often in vintage work.



Whilst not complicated in itself, bullion stitch is perhaps one of the trickiest stitches in this book to work successfully. I would highly recommend practising on some scrap fabric first - but it is such an attractive stitch it's well worth spending a little time to get it right.

Bring your needle through your fabric at the point indicated by the arrow on the diagram above. Insert your needle back through your fabric at the required length of the stitch and bring it out exactly at the arrow again.

Don't pull your needle right through, but leave it lying in the material as in the diagram and twist your thread around it close up to the emerging point. Six or seven twists are an average number, but this can be varied according to the length of stitch you want to make.

Place your left thumb upon the twists and pull your needle and thread through your fabric and also the twists as carefully as possible. Now pull your needle and thread away in the opposite direction. This movement will force your little coil of thread to lie flat in the right place. Tighten it up by pulling your working thread, then reinsert your needle at A. This should also be the end of your bullion knot if you've chosen the correct number of twists to fill the space.

You may find it easiest to use quite a heavy needle with a small eye so that it will pass easily through your twisted thread and practise with a thicker thread before trying to use a finer one.

The diagrams at B and C show bullion knots used to form petals and rosebuds - a very pretty effect!

# Chain Stitch

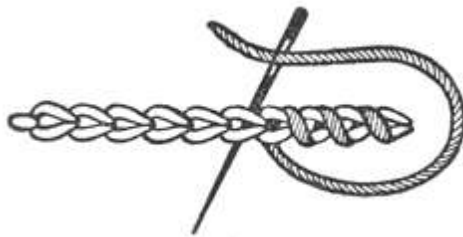
Chain stitch is a very simple, but very effective stitch. It can be used both as an outline stitch and also as a filling stitch.



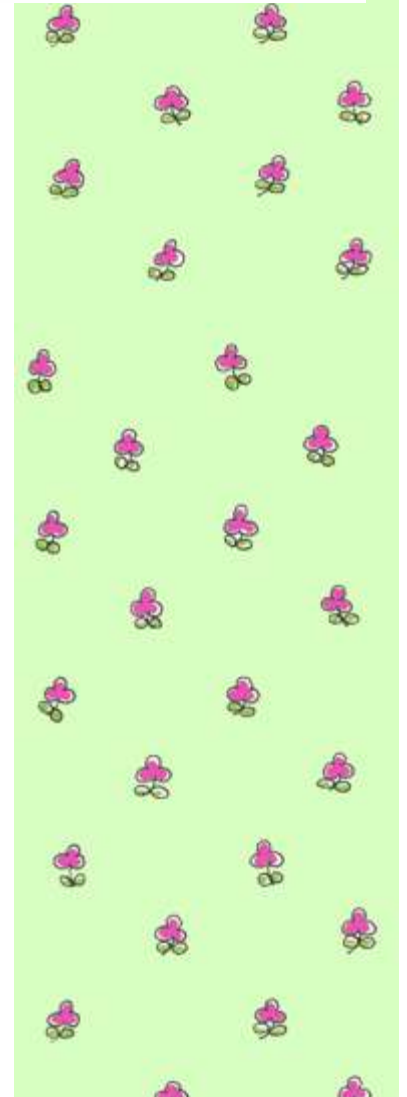
Bring your thread up through your fabric at the top of the line you want to cover. Hold it down on your material with your left thumb and then insert your needle back down through the fabric through the exact spot where it first emerged.

Bring the point out again a short distance away along the line, looping your thread underneath your needle as shown in the diagram above. Pull your thread through and continue working your chain in the same way.

Chain stitch produces a line of back-stitching on the reverse of your work and is used as a line border stitch, or as a filling stitch (worked in close rows or concentric shapes) and as a padding when you want to produce raised effects.

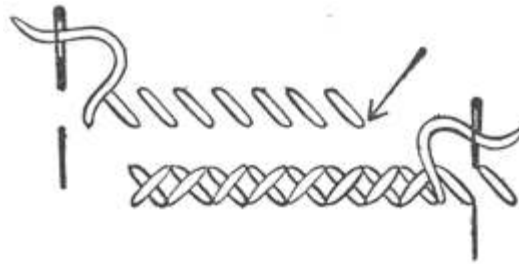


A fun and easy way to vary your chain stitch is to whip it with either a matching or contrasting thread - see the diagram above. The whipping thread doesn't enter your fabric at all, except at the beginning and end of the line of stitching.



# Cross Stitch

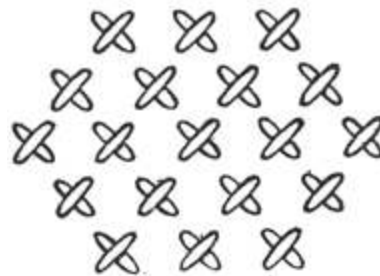
Cross stitch is also known as “sampler stitch” probably because of its almost universal use in samplers, both new and old. It’s also used in most counted work embroidery in which the crosses are all the same size. But cross stitch can also be stitched freehand, placed in all sorts of different ways, and not necessarily joined together.



When you work cross stitch it’s essential that all the top stitches slant in the same direction as if they’re stitched at different angles your work will look messy and uneven.

It’s probably easiest, and most economical with thread, to work cross stitch in two parts. Start at the arrow on the diagram and make equal sized slanting stitches along the row you want to work. This forms the first part of each cross. Then return along the row, making similar slanting stitches, but this time in the other direction, to complete the cross shape.

It is more correct for the top stitch of the cross to travel from bottom left to top right-corner, so it’s best to start on the right then work over to the left and back again to the right as shown in the diagram. If you work cross stitch this way you’ll find the back is very neat, consisting of evenly-spaced upright stitches.

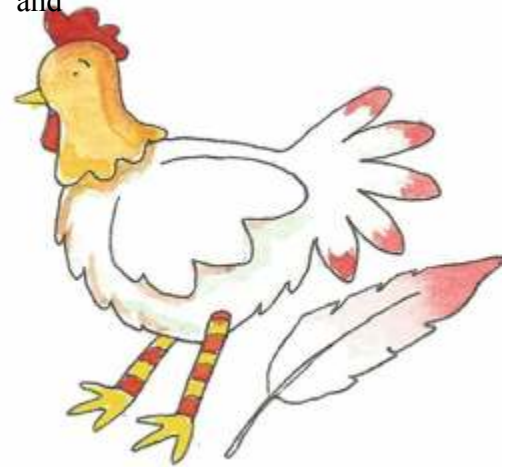


You can use cross stitch as a filling stitch by working it at regularly-spaced intervals over the shape you want to fill. You can place the crosses much closer than in the diagram above, so that they touch each other, if you want a more solid effect.



# Feather Stitch

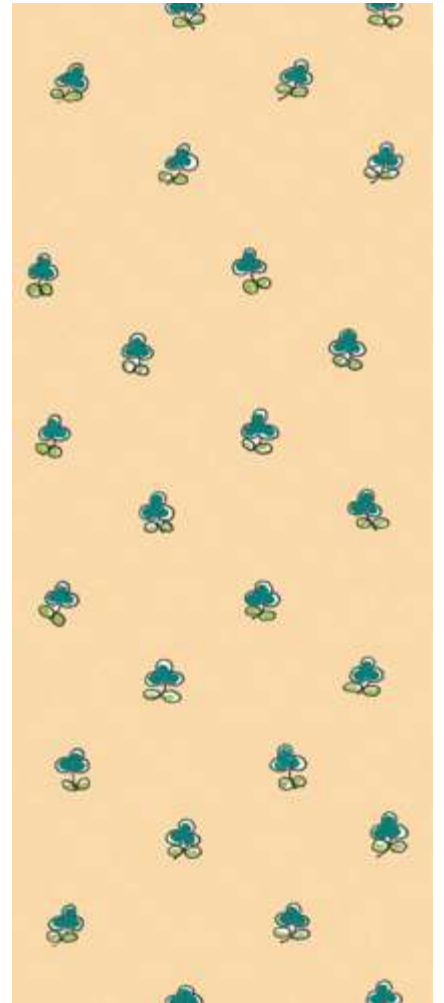
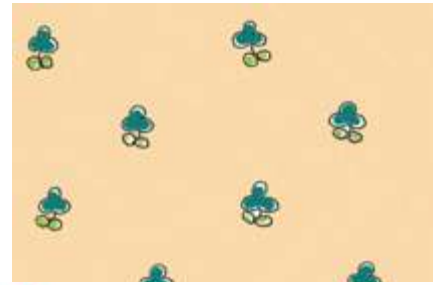
Feather stitch is a lovely decorative stitch that's quick to sew and has lots of variations. Some old needlework books refer to it as plumage stitch as it was often used for working feathers in elaborate ecclesiastical and secular embroideries.



Bring your needle to the front of your fabric at the top of the line to be covered. Holding the thread down with your left thumb, insert your needle back into the fabric a little lower down to the right of the line and at an angle as shown in the diagram above. You then make a similar stitch on the left hand side of the line and continue working in this way.



Above is, I think, a delightfully pretty variation on ordinary feather stitch. Instead of making single stitches alternately to left and right, you work two or three consecutive stitches on one side, and then a similar number on the other side to create a pretty zigzag line. This makes for a light feathery effect in your embroidery - and why not experiment with making it quite irregular - say two stitches to one side, four to the next, three to the next and so on.



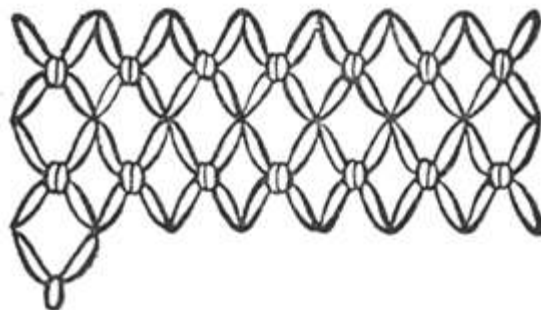
# Fly Stitch

Fly stitch is actually a kind of open detached chain stitch, though the effect it produces is quite different. It can be used singly, in rows or in vertical lines, placed close together or spaced widely apart.



To achieve a nicely-shaped fly stitch it's easiest to imagine that you're working a kind of V-shape. Bring your thread out at the top of the left arm of your V and then re-insert it back down through your fabric just opposite at the top of the right arm. Then bring it out again at the base of the V and pull it through over the working thread as shown in the diagram above. You will have formed a loop which you tie down with a small stitch taken into the material just below.

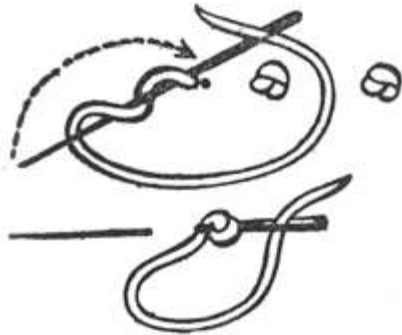
It's fun to vary the lengths of your final "tying" stitch as doing this will produce different effects. A very short tying stitch is shown on the detached fly stitches to the right in the diagram above, and longer ones in the group of stitches on the left.



You can also create a very attractive trellis effect filling with fly stitch - and this is very easy to work. Just stitch a row of fly stitches as described above. The second row is upside-down fly stitches placed so that their little tying-down stitches are directly adjacent to those of the first row and so link up the two in the form of an elongated cross. Then simply repeat these two rows until you have covered the entire area you want to fill.

# French Knot

Many stitchers are a bit wary of French knots, but it's worth taking the time to practise them - once you've mastered the technique they're really quick and easy to work and lend themselves to a variety of uses.



Bring your thread through to the front of your fabric at the place you want to place your knot. Hold it down firmly with your left thumb and first finger and twist your needle two or three times around the held thread as shown by the upper needle in the diagram above.

Then, with your twists pulled fairly tightly around your needle and the thread still held firmly in your left hand, turn your needle around and push it back through your fabric very close to where it first emerged, still keeping your thread tight with your left thumb.

Pull your thread through firmly and the knot will be left on top. If you're having problems check that you're twisting the thread around the needle in the same direction as the diagram above and keeping your thread nice and taut.

The secret of successful French knots is in the correct twist of the needle and the tautness of your thread.

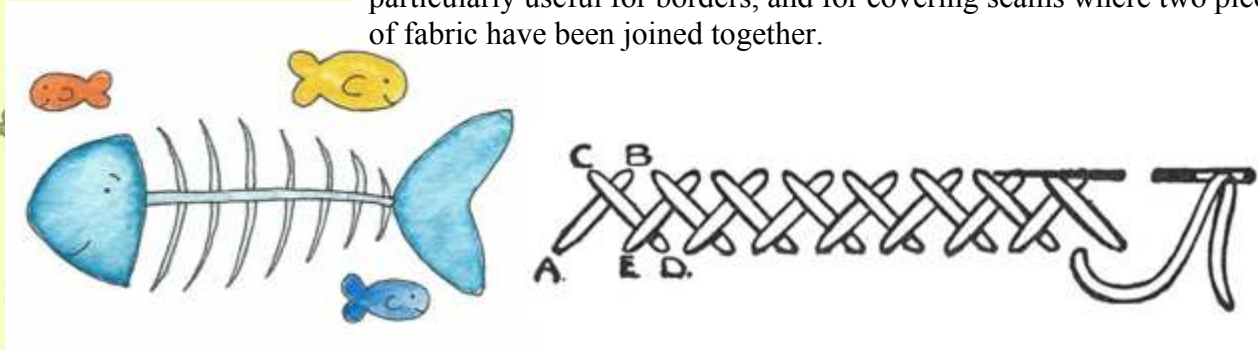
French knots can be used to provide focus and texture to the centre of embroidered flowers, especially when used as an accent colour. They make little dots that accentuate other shapes, and when scattered over the top of other stitches can soften their lines. They're also great stitched closely together, touching one another to create a solid effect, or spaced out to fill your fabric with mini polka-dots.





# Herringbone Stitch

This stitch looks just like its name suggests! It's worked in lines and is particularly useful for borders, and for covering seams where two pieces of fabric have been joined together.



You can closely work this stitch to provide coverage or it can be more widely spaced and it achieves very quick results. Working from right to left along an imaginary double line, bring your thread out at A. Insert your needle a little to the right on the upper line at B and then bring it to the front again at C. Now return to the lower line and insert your needle at D, bringing it to the front again at E. Then simply repeat these steps. It's really important to keep this stitch evenly spaced as otherwise it will look very messy.

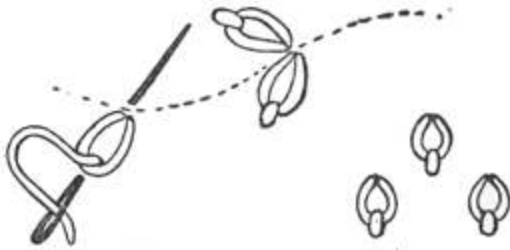


Threaded herringbone stitch creates a very pretty border, especially if you choose a different coloured thread.

First stitch a row of ordinary herringbone stitch, then lace a second length of thread as shown in the diagram above. Your needle doesn't enter the fabric for this threading process, but is laced upwards and downwards through the foundation stitches. Your thread should cover the foundation stitches at the point where they cross.

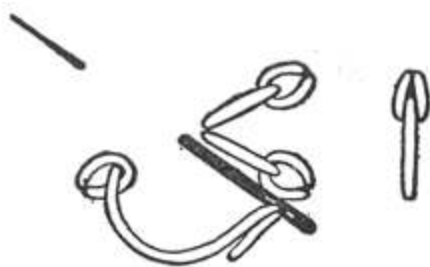
# Lazy Daisy Stitch

Lazy daisy stitch is actually a detached chain stitch and you'll sometimes see it referred to by this name. It's one of the first stitches that newbie embroiderers learn and is a very pretty stitch - great for leaves and petals.

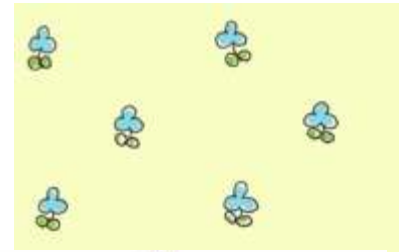


Bring your thread to the front of your fabric and hold it down a little to the left with your left thumb. Then reinsert your needle back down into the fabric at the exact point you brought it out before and then bring it out again a little further below - the length you want your stitch to be. Then draw it through over the working thread. The loop you've made is secured by taking your needle through to the back over the end of the loop and just outside it. The needle in the diagram above is making this tying down stitch and, in the same movement is returning to the stitching line, ready to work another lazy daisy stitch on the other side of the stem to represent leaves.

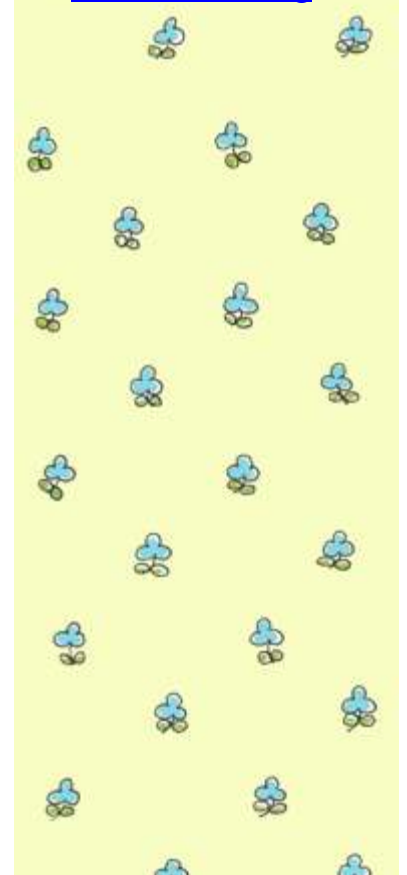
Lazy daisy stitch may also be used as a filling, spacing your stitches evenly as shown on the right.



You can also vary lazy daisy stitch - working it in exactly the same way as before, but making the looped part of the stitch quite small and the tying down stitch into a long tail. This variant can also be arranged singly or in groups.

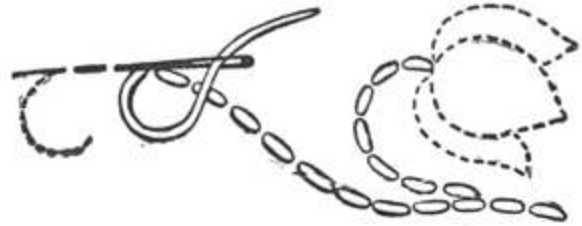
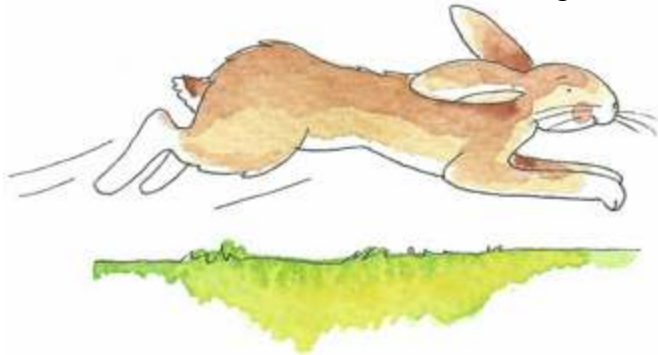
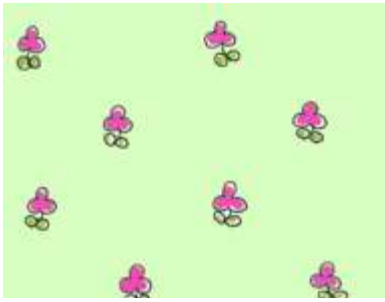


*Note: If you're a bit puzzled by this image - Daisy is my Newfoundland dog and you can keep up-to-date with all her mischief over on the [Bustle & Sew Blog!](#)*

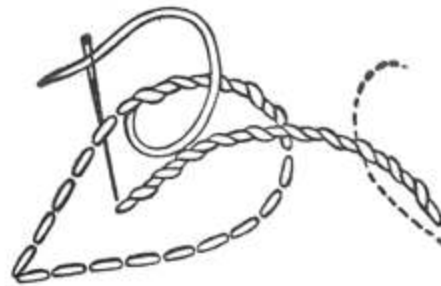


# Running Stitch

Running stitch is one of the most basic of all stitches for any kind of sewing. You can use running stitch to decorate your work as it gives a lightness to small curves where using solid lines may be too heavy.



Running stitch is aptly named as your needle simply “runs” in and out of your fabric along the line you want to stitch. It’s important that your stitches - and the spaces between them - are all the same length if you want to achieve a neat finish.



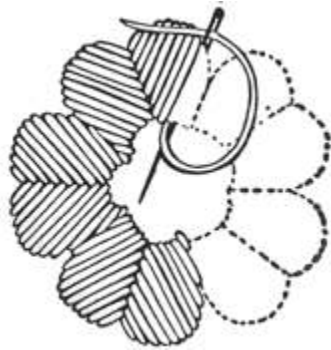
Whipped running stitch gives a nice smooth, more solid line than running stitch. Simply outline your shape with running stitch, keeping your stitches even and regular. Then thread the stitches (as shown above) whipping over each stitch in a direction from top to bottom without entering your fabric at all.

Using a small, blunt-ended tapestry needle, or passing your needle through the stitches eye-first is a good way to avoid splitting the thread or piercing your fabric.



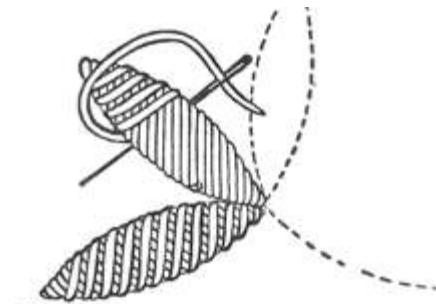
# Satin Stitch

Satin stitch might look like one of the easiest embroidery stitches there is - but be warned - it is actually one of the most difficult to work correctly and neatly. It covers the area to be stitched with long smooth stitches placed close together, giving the effect of continuous, solid, smooth colour

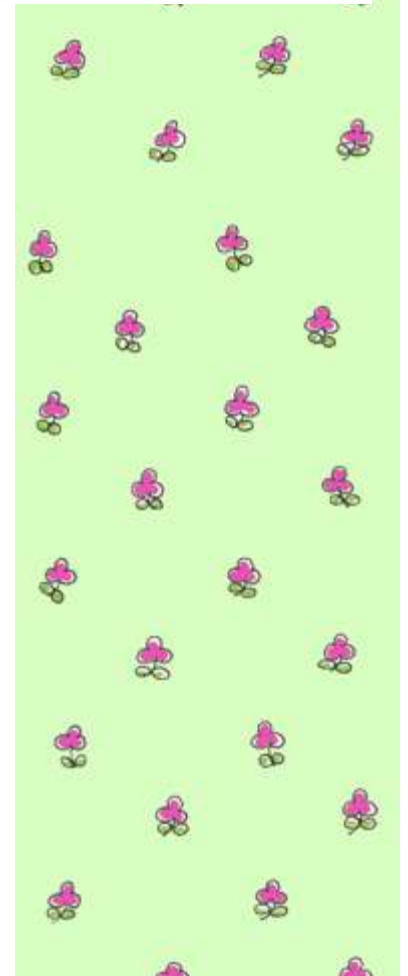


When working this stitch you carry your thread across the space you want to fill and then return underneath your fabric to the starting point again. The skill is in making your stitches lie evenly and closely together and in creating a neat firm edge to the shape being filled.

You can work your satin stitches in any direction, and they can be of any length, but the longer they become, the more unwieldy and untidy they may appear. For this reason any large shape you want to fill with satin stitch should be split up as much as possible. This change in the direction of your stitches has the added bonus of giving light, shade and depth to your shape which is most effective.

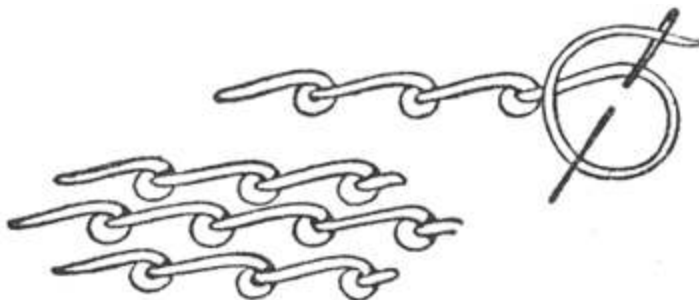


You can work running stitch beneath your satin stitch, or work two layers in different directions to give a raised, padded effect. It's also nice to whip your satin stitch as shown in the diagram above to give a raised and corded effect. If you are doing this, then your satin stitch should be slanted and your whipping stitches placed almost at right angles and slightly apart.



# Scroll Stitch

Scroll stitch is another lovely stitch to use for borders or outlining as it makes an attractive knobby line, great for leaves and stems.



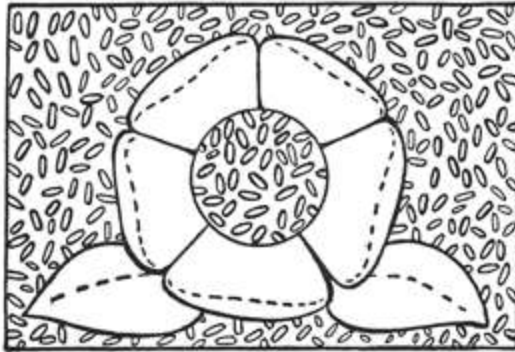
Scroll stitch is worked from left to right. Bring your thread out at the line you want to stitch. Then carry your thread over to the right and back to the left again to form a loop on the surface of the material. You can see how this will work in the diagram above.

Inside the loop, pick up a small portion of your fabric in a slanting direction, then pull the loop under the point of your needle tightly. Then pull your needle and thread right through the fabric and loop - that's your first stitch and you're now ready for the second one.

It's not commonly used in modern patterns, but is well worth trying as an alternative to stem stitch - which is possibly rather over-used today. Try it for leaves, stems, stalks and even waves!

# Seed Stitch

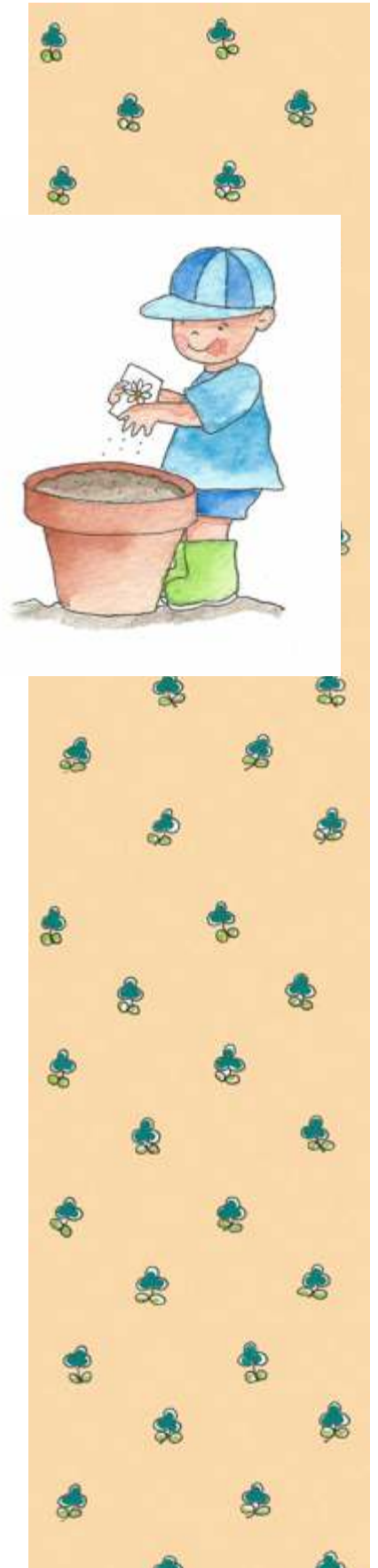
Seed stitch - or specking stitch - an old-fashioned name, but very descriptive! - is a simple filling stitch made up of small, separated back stitches of equal length.



Just like scattered seeds, you should place your stitches at random over the area you want to cover. Your stitches should be tiny and you should place them at all angles and in any direction, but do make them of more or less (don't get too hung up on this!) equal length. Place them very irregularly and put any thoughts of making a pattern completely out of your mind - unless....

You want to stitch them in informal patterns, in lines, or following the outline of a shape. Using seed stitch like this is pretty and effective and gives a more gentle feel than French knots which are often used in a similar way to add texture to a design.

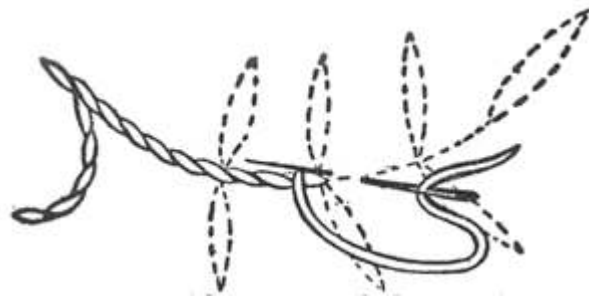
It's also a good stitch to cover an area beneath satin stitch if you are seeking to achieve a raised effect.





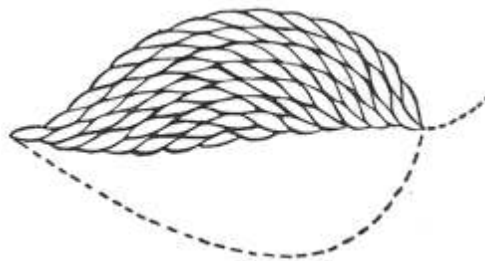
# Stem Stitch

Stem stitch can be used not only for plant stems(!) but also for outlines when you want to create an unbroken, smooth line. The individual stitches overlap one another and stitching at slightly different angles will give you a wider or narrower line.



This stitch is worked from left to right. Bring your needle to the front of your fabric at the beginning of the line you want to cover. Take it back through the fabric a little further to the right, then bring it out again a short distance to the left.

You can see from the diagram above that stem stitch is actually a long step forwards and a short step back each time. In the diagram you'll see that the needle is making the stitch at a slight angle to the line being covered. This will create a broad twisted stem, but if you want a narrower line then your needle must enter and emerge on the line itself. When you're working stem stitch your thread should always be kept below or to the right of your needle.



Stem stitch can also be used as a filling stitch - making a very solid, almost woven appearance to the shape being filled. When using it as a filling stitch, your stitching lines should follow the outline of the shape and your stem stitches should be very even and regular. At the beginning of each row make your first stem stitch a little longer or shorter than the first stitch of the previous row to give an effect of diagonal lines across your shape.



## Bustle and Sew

Before we come to the final part of this little book, I thought that, if you haven't heard of [Bustle & Sew](#) before, you might like to hear a bit about us.

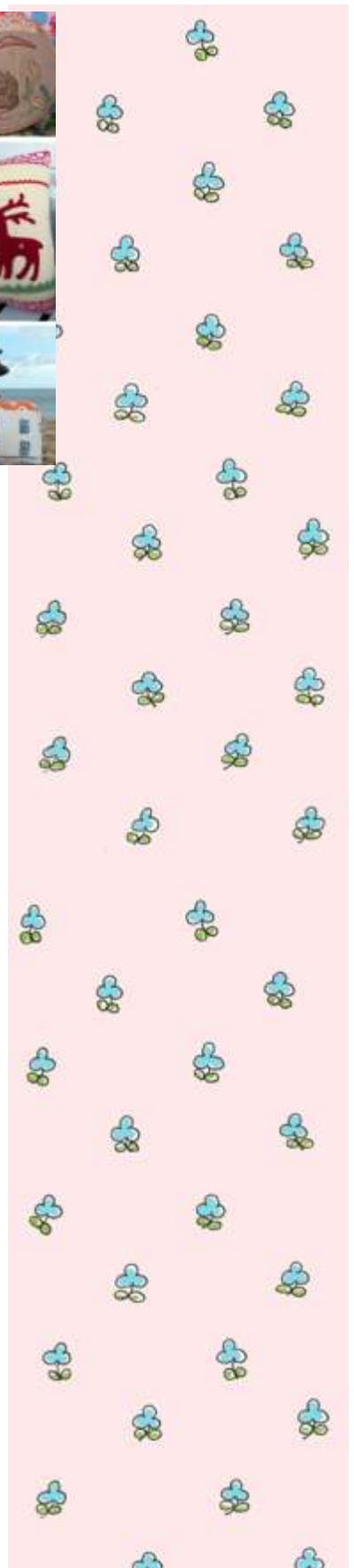
I'm Helen Dickson, and I started my online pattern business, Bustle & Sew, in 2009. I was taught to stitch by my Mum and Grandma at a very early age and as I learned from them, I would look at my work, and then at theirs and think that I would never ever be able to stitch as well as them. My own hand embroidery was always a bit messy and my stitches uneven. But my Mum and Grandma never made me feel bad about it - they just helped me with loving advice and encouragement, showing me the right way to make my stitches look neat and even. Over time, I gained in skill and confidence, and now I create and sell my own designs to others through my [Bustle & Sew online store](#).

I am passionate about stitching and I try to create patterns that are lively, interesting and fresh, and that will encourage you to pick up fabric and thread to produce your own unique piece of work, with all the sense of achievement and satisfaction that will bring to you.

You can see some of my designs in the picture above. [Bustle & Sew](#) isn't just about embroidery, you'll discover patterns for softies, home accessories, bags and scarves as well!

You can keep up-to-date with all goings-on at Bustle & Sew on my [blog](#) or why not consider joining my free newsletter and be first to receive all my news, special offers and free patterns too?

Just visit my website to subscribe - oh and I will *never* share your email address with anyone else - promise!



# Hints and Tips

And finally ... I thought you might enjoy some contributions from [Bustle & Sew blog](#) readers across the globe who have generously shared their favourite hints and tips. They range from wise and wonderful to weird and frankly wacky! But one thing they all have in common is that they are effective!

So here you are .. a list of tried and tested hints and tips that really do work!

## Getting Organised



The best storage that I have found for all my regularly used sewing bits (needles, presser feet, safety pins, marker pens etc) is a fishing tackle box. They are inexpensive, come in all sizes and configurations, the little compartments separate all the fiddly bits, they are easily portable and the deep section at the top can hold bigger items.

*Katherine Walsh*

I glued some stiff foam into the top of a hinged eyeglass case for my pins and needles; then added small scissors, a bobbin of thread, thimble and other small sewing items. It is really handy. I get the eyeglass case from my optician when I get new glasses.

*Nancy*

At the dollar store you can buy small bands for pony tails, these are excellent to put around the bobbins you're storing for future use.

*Barbara*

The plastic holders that you receive toys in from the gum ball machine make great thread holders for pearl cotton. Heat the tip of a nut pick to make a hole at the top of the clear section for the thread to slide through. Snack size zippy bags are perfect for holding floss. Keep a small pair of scissors with each project - saves time looking. Small pizza boxes (new) are perfect for storing projects. Compact and you can label them on the outside edge. No more rummaging through bags and totes.

*Angela Prince-Bex,*

## Needle and Thread

To keep thread, floss & yarn from tangling and knotting when sewing, every so often hold the tail of the medium 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.

*Elzabet*

When working on a large embroidery design which uses the same colour repeatedly yet in very different areas, try threading a few needles with the same colour and work the different areas separately. It's especially helpful if completing a background (sky or trees for example) and eliminates long jump threads or repeated stops and starts.

*Linda Bickford*

My stitching went from rather messy to quite neat when I learned that when using stranded threads one should always remove each length one at a time and then bundle them together to stitch, ie to embroider using 4 threads cut off about 18" and then pull out four strands, one at a time.

*Bonnie Kane*

If you are having trouble threading your needle, flip it over and try again. Needles are now stamped out making a "right" and a "wrong" side to your needle. If you look at it carefully, you can see which is the right side."

*Chrissy*

Always have your thread no longer than the length between you elbow and the tip of your finger. This avoids thread knotting up.

*Ann Brown*

My tip is an old one I have used for quite a while. I thread several needles at one time so I don't have to stop and try to thread a needle when I am wanting to sew.

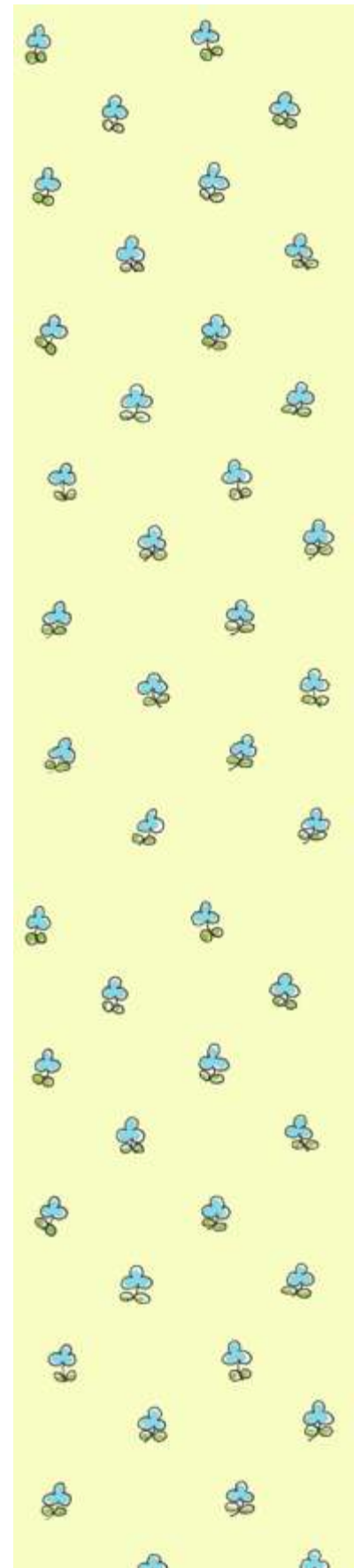
*Patty*

Try and keep your thread about 18" long so it does not fray.

*Linne Middleton*

When working with metallic thread, place in the fridge for a few hours. Works wonders.

*Chris*







I find it is very important to choose the right needle for the job right from the get-go. It can mean all the difference between success and failure. A needle that is too small for your thread will be difficult to pull through and will be hard to thread. One that is too large will leave holes in the fabric. I love John James embroidery needles! I usually keep a few packages of the assorted 5 to 10 with 16 to a pack on hand and these will do me for all my embroidery tasks!

*Sandra Rocca*

For hand sewing or hand quilting, I find that beeswax is a must for keeping your thread from developing a tangled knot. Simply run your thread along the edge of a piece of beeswax (in a sewing notions store you can purchase a handy little container) and your thread will glide through your fabric so easily.

*Katherine Hawkes*

If using stranded floss to do your work, separate each strand from the whole and then put them back together to get more “fluff” from the threads and better coverage. Try to be sure to put them back together in the original orientation (ie which end was cut.) If threads are too fluffy to put through the eye of your needle, fold them over the needle and pinch between your fingers to fit through the eye.

Learn about needle technology and learn to use the right kind of needle and the right size for your job/thread.

Learn how to estimate how much of your hand working time a task will take so you can evaluate whether to do the job by hand or machine – reserve your hand stitching for tasks that are worthy of the effort.

*Linda Schiffer*



*Detail from [Bustle & Sew](#) pattern.*

## Weird, wonderful and Wise

I keep the back of my embroidery work neat by not allowing thread to “travel” more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch. Instead I flip my work over, and “weave” the thread over to the new starting point and begin again from there. This also keeps thread from showing through to the front of an embroidery (important when working lightweight, pale fabrics). I realize that there are greatly differing opinions on how neat the back of one’s embroidery should be, but if embroidering on bed linens which will be taken on/off beds or pillows, it’s imperative that there not be big “loops” of thread on which someone’s finger nail, finger or jewelry could become snagged. That could ruin hours of effort.

*Lauren (aka Giddy)*

My favourite hint is to put a little super glue on the wires where they connect to the metal tag on your needle threaders. I have only broken one needle threader since I heard this hint.

*Karol*

If you can’t make very regular embroidery stitches, try starching the fabric.

*Aaltje Alting*

When you need to press your finished embroidery, place a towel, then you piece of work with the right side next to the towel then press with iron. This should prevent your work becoming flat.

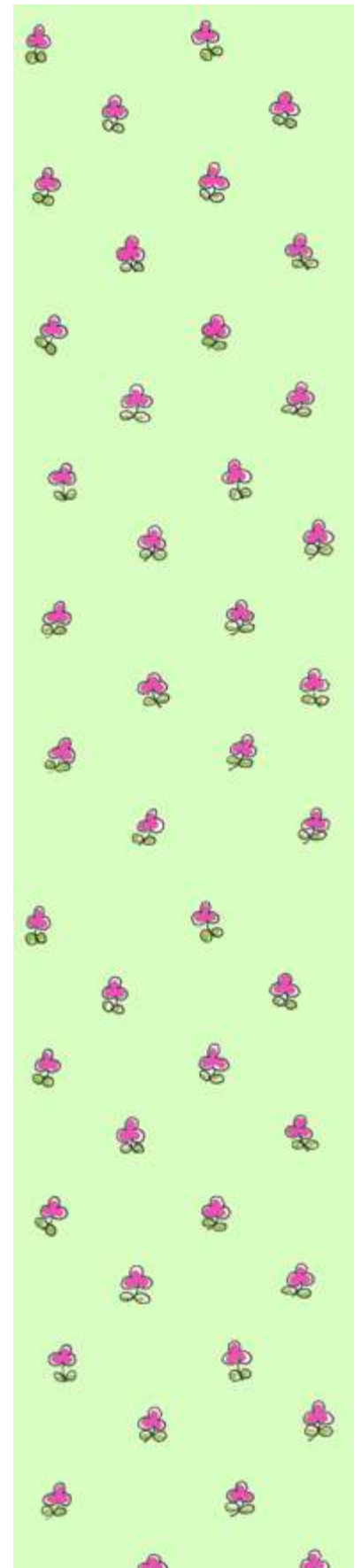
*Jenny Southey*

To keep an older wooden embroidery hoop from getting too loose to use, try wrapping a thin strip of muslin around the top hoop and secure with a few threads. I tried it - it works!

*Deborah Robertson*

I know this is very basic, but I like to press the fabric smooth before placing it in a hoop. I have better luck with smoother stitches. I don’t use starch or sizing on it, just a good pressing to smooth out any wrinkles in the fabric.”

*Linda*



## Bustle and Sew Magazine

This is the end of my little book and I do hope you've found it both useful and enjoyable. But before I go, I just wanted to tell you a little bit about my [Bustle & Sew Magazine](#) - positively the nicest and best way to build your collection of Bustle & Sew patterns.



Try the Bustle & Sew Magazine for just \$1 and receive the Stitcher's Companion absolutely free!

The Bustle & Sew magazine is a monthly e-magazine delivered direct to your email in-box on the last Thursday of each month ready to read in 2 formats ... firstly on Issuu.com – which lets you read the magazine on your computer screen and also as a normal pdf file – which is quick and easy to download and print.

So if you're like me and have a stash of irresistible fabrics, just waiting for you to find the perfect project to show them off in all their glory, I'm sure you'll enjoy my magazine.

You can try it for an initial payment of just \$1 - and receive my full-length e-book "The Stitcher's Companion" absolutely free. And what's more - this is a genuine no-risk offer. If for any reason, or no reason at all, you decide not to continue with your subscription, then all you need to do is drop me an email to cancel. That's it - no penalties and no tie-in period.

And it's great value too - every month you'll discover five or six original Bustle & Sew designs, for all levels of stitchers, not all of which will be made available later for individual purchase.

Techniques include...

- Hand and freestyle machine embroidery
- Quilting
- Applique
- Softies
- Bags

And many other projects for your home and family.

The magazine also offers vintage patterns, projects from guest designers, features and articles about all the topics as well as extra information to help you with your own projects.

You can learn more about the magazine and subscribe on the [Bustle & Sew website](#). But I believe that there's no substitute to seeing something for yourself, so you below there's a link to a selection of pages from my February 2013 issue. .



Just [click here](#) to download

And if you like it, then please do

[visit my site to learn more and subscribe](#)







Blossom Time  
Simple Stitchery



Follow Your Dreams  
simple stitchery

Check out Bustle & Sew's range of Simple Stitcheries - easy designs for newbie stitchers that will give you great results your family and friends are sure to admire!

You'll also discover more complex designs that will challenge your newly-discovered skills as you become more experienced .... Just visit the [Bustle & Sew](#) store to discover a whole world of stitching!



Daisies in a Teacup



All the Nice Girls .....



The illustrations inside this book are all by my amazingly talented friend - and professional illustrator - Jacqui Bignell. I think she's illustrated each stitch wonderfully - and hope you like them too.

You can learn more about Jacqui and her online business Flapdoodle Designs over on her Facebook page - just [CLICK HERE](#) to visit and say "hello!"

Jacqui has also designed some beautifully simple embroidery patterns - great for newbie stitchers - for Bustle & Sew.

Just [click here](#) to see the full range of her designs.



## PLEASE SHARE THE LOVE:

I am happy for you to circulate this little book as widely as you wish - please feel free to share it with all your stitching friends - post on blogs, forums, whatever and wherever you like – with just two conditions:

**Firstly you must leave all my links in place.**

**And secondly, it is not a commercial publication and must not be reproduced for resale in any form.**

Best wishes - and happy stitching!

Helen xx



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