



Tips for Stitchers Vol.1



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.

Now, for the first time, I’ve collected twenty of these tips into a single volume that I hope you’ll enjoy - and please do feel free to share as much as you like with anyone else you think might find them useful.

Happy stitching!

Helen xx





Tips for

If, like me, you have trouble keeping your satin stitch straight and perfectly aligned (mine tends to creep outwards into more of a fan

effect), then try working some perfectly parallel straight stitches across the shape to be filled and then stitch between them. This





Tips for Stitchers

To avoid your thread twisting and tangling as you stitch, turn your needle slightly (a quarter to half turn is enough) with each stitch. If your thread does become twisted as you work, then drop your threaded needle and let it hang loosely while it unwinds itself.





Tips for Stitchers

Bamboo skewers make absolutely wonderful stuffing sticks! Simply break off the pointy tip And fray the remaining end. I use an old pair of scissors for this. Fray it down around 1/2?. Then I use this end to “grab” and push stuffing into narrow limbs and hard to reach places when I’m making softies like Ratty from my Wind in the Willows collection





› Tips for Stitchers ‹

It's always worth taking the time to neaten the edge of your fabric before beginning your embroidery. If you don't do this then the edges may fray and the threads become caught up in the back of your work or even roll inwards so you end up accidentally stitching through two layers of fabric and have to unpick your work.



Tips for Stitchers

Does your project call for a twin needle in your sewing machine? Before popping out to the shop check your manual as some machines, particularly older models, can actually take two normal needles in the needle clamp, so no need to buy an expensive twin needle!





› Tips for Stitchers ‹

When you are trying to match thread and fabric, unroll a length from the spool and lay it on your fabric rather than placing the whole spool on top. This will give you a much better match. And remember that it's really worth investing in a good quality sewing thread as a cheap one will only break as you stitch, potentially spoiling your work and definitely frustrating you!



Tips for Stitchers

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.





Tips for Stitchers

When you're working on a freestyle machine applique project there's no need to finish off each individual piece. Simply raise your presser foot and skip between pieces, then snip away the threads at the end - after all the stitching will never be put under any strain so won't come undone - and any snipped ends remaining just add to the handmade feel of the piece.





Tips for Stitchers

When you're working a series of stitches close to one another, it's best to begin each stitch by bringing your needle up in an empty space - that is to say one where there isn't an existing stitch. If you do this then you're much less likely to split any existing stitches. It's easier to push your needle back down through your fabric (from front to back) when there are existing stitches (eg if you're stitching radiating straight stitches for a flower) without any problems.





Tips for Stitchers

When cutting out applique shapes, think carefully about the order in which you'll be applying them and allow a little extra at the edges where the shapes at the back will be overlapped by ones you place later, so avoiding any ugly gaps in your finished picture.





Tips for Stitchers

Fabrics that will be laundered should be washed before you begin stitching to ensure the fabric will not shrink afterwards. Carefully iron out any creases before you begin. This will make it easier to stitch evenly and will ensure you won't end up with wrinkles that you can't remove afterwards.





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 you return home with your lovely stitchy shopping, be sure to unwrap all your floss and wind it onto cardboard or plastic bobbins each carefully labelled with the shade number. If you keep your floss well-organised you'll be able to find the perfect shade right away – and order more if you run out! It's no fun rooting through a messy basket of floss.





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

When stitching be sure to keep the back of your work neat and tidy. Stray threads can tangle, get caught in your needle and carried through to the front of the work. They may be a sign of loose stitches, and may also show through to the front when your design is finished, spoiling all your hard work. Avoid using knots to begin a thread as they may wobble and your stitch may not sit nicely. They may even come undone making your work vulnerable to damage.





› Tips for Stitchers ‹

When choosing your materials you must bear in mind what your finished work will be used for. If you want to wash it you must choose washable, colourfast fabrics. If, on the other hand, you want to make a wall hanging or picture, the possibilities are limitless and you can achieve all kinds of exciting effects using different materials.





Tips for Stitchers

Don't economise when choosing a new hoop. A good hoop is essential to hold your fabric tightly for stitching, and to maintain that tightness as you work. Always take your fabric out of the hoop when you've finished stitching. Doing this will reduce the chance of permanent hoop marks or dirt rings appearing. Plastic hoops with a lip are more likely to mark your fabric than good wooden hoops are as the lip has a tendency to trap dust and dirt.





Tips for Stitchers

Tie a piece of bright ribbon or fabric to the handle of fabric scissors, then all the family will know they are FOR FABRIC ONLY! Even my grandchildren know not to use fabric scissors on paper!

- Sent in by Margaret Jenkins





Tips for Stitchers

Pinch or fold a quick crease into a piece of fabric to mark centre points, seam lines, end points of stitching and so on...easy, quick and simple to remove if you change your mind!



Want to make your own little mouse? Pop over to our website and get yourself one of our softie kits!

www.bustleandsew.com/store/kits/



Tips for Stitchers

Cross stitch is probably one of the easiest stitches of all. It may be worked separately, as an open “scattering” or close together to fill an area. It is a geometric stitch and looks best (and neatest) if all the stitches are placed evenly on the background fabric which is why it’s most often worked on even weave fabric. Some of the oldest embroideries in the world have been discovered in the Greek Islands. These are very frequently worked in cross stitch.

Cross stitch should be worked so that the second stitch, which forms the X shape is always slanted in the same direction. This makes the stitch very smooth and even.



[Leaping Rabbit pattern available instore](#)



BUSTLE & SEW
LOVE TO SEW AND SEW WITH LOVE

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**.



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. Your family and friends will soon be queuing up to take delivery of your new Bustle & Sew creations. To learn more please visit the **Bustle & Sew website**.

Helen xx



You are welcome to share this collection of tips as much as you wish provided you leave all references to Bustle & Sew and my links in place.

Thank you.

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