

Using Waste Canvas

Waste canvas is a wonderful invention that allows you to work neat, even and regular cross stitch onto ANY kind of fabric you desire - yes really!



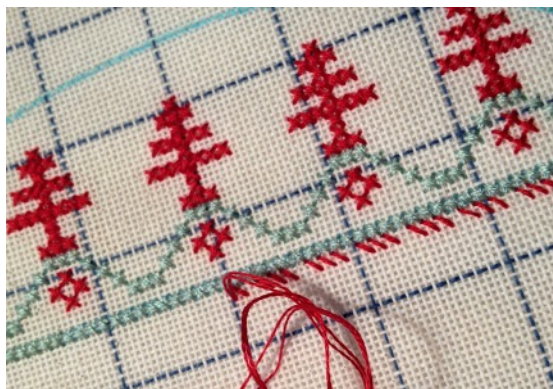
Inspired by some of the lovely traditional cross stitch designs on pages 21 - 23, I thought it might be fun to take a look at working with waste canvas for those who love the look of cross stitch but who don't necessarily want to stitch on even weave fabric. Using waste canvas is really easy, although the stiffness does take a little getting used to and it probably isn't the best stuff to choose for your first-ever cross stitch project. Waste canvas is relatively inexpensive to buy so be sure to purchase more than you'll need as this will help you when you're removing the threads - hence the name - waste canvas.

When you're using waste canvas you'll notice that it's much stiffer and less flexible than normal counted thread fabric used for cross stitch - this is because it's starched - indeed the starch is what holds it together.

If the item you're stitching is going to be washed, then it's a very good idea to launder it before working your design as some items do shrink the first time they're washed. Hopefully this will also stop dark colours from running when your stitching is finished.

Always make sure that the waste canvas is larger than your actual design as this will make it much easier to remove the threads. Place the waste canvas on your background fabric in the position you want the finished design to be. If you're stitching on anything which is even slightly stretchy- like a t-shirt - you **MUST** use interfacing - a non-stretchy fabric that is used to stabilise any stretchy fabric before stitching on it. If you have an embroidered T-shirt, then turn it inside out and check the back of the embroidery. You'll notice that there's white fabric beneath the stitching - that's the interfacing - almost any stretchy or delicate fabric which has been embroidered, whether by machine or by hand, will have used interfacing. Your stitches will be very distorted and unattractive if you don't use interfacing to back your stitches when working on a stretchy fabric.

You can purchase sew-in interfacing at any fabric store and it's really inexpensive - I find a medium-weight works well for me. You may well see several different types of interfacing including some which you can iron on - you don't need to spend extra on the iron-on kind because your stitching will hold it in place quite nicely all by itself!



You'll also need a sharp embroidery needle. Normally of course, when working cross stitch you use a blunt tapestry needle so you don't split the threads, and of course the holes on even-weave canvas already exist. When you're stitching through a base fabric that doesn't have pre-made holes you'll need a sharp needle. Use a needle that passes through the smallest holes in your waste canvas without stretching them out of shape too much as this will help keep your stitches neat and tidy.

You should also use an embroidery hoop that's large enough to contain your whole design. If you hoop over the top of finished stitches you risk warping the waste canvas and misaligning your subsequent stitches.

If you're using interfacing then make a kind of sandwich before hooping up - waste canvas, then fabric, then interfacing. Tack the layers together so they won't shift around inside the hoop. Use small firm tacking stitches so your waste canvas won't shift around whilst you're stitching.

Be sure to use a good quality, colourfast thread such as Anchor or DMC as you may wish to wash your finished article and you don't want the colour to run. Keep the strand of your working floss relatively short - the more a length of floss is passed through fabric the more it can dull and fray. In even-weave fabric like Aida, the hole is already made and so the floss can pass through with less friction, but when you're stitching on solid fabric there is more stress on the floss as you pull it through - if keep your floss to a manageable length your stitches will look nicer.

Once you've completed your stitching then the final step is to remove the waste canvas. Dampen your canvas first - then leave it for a few minutes to allow the water to penetrate the

strands. If there's a lot of empty waste canvas around your design you can (carefully!) trim it closer to you stitching - but not too close - you don't want to risk accidentally cutting a stitch - and you'll also need a little waste canvas to grab hold of with your tweezers to pull the strands free. If you've stitched more than one motif it can be a good idea to cut the waste canvas between the motifs (if possible) so you'll be removing shorter threads instead of great long ones.



You must pull each individual strand of the waste canvas out from underneath your stitches as carefully as possible. The best way to do this is to pull out from the side, try not to pull up. I always start with the shorter strands first as once they're out of the way it's much easier to pull out the longer strands.

Yes, you do actually have to pull each strand out individually - it sounds tedious but it's actually quite satisfying! You can use tweezers if you find it helps you grasp each strand. If you come across any stubborn strands try wetting your canvas again and waiting a few moments - or try pulling it free from the other side.

Once you've removed all the strands and your work is dry, simply turn it over and press lightly on the reverse, trimming away any excess interfacing if you've used it. And that's all there is to it! Happy Stitching!!



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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 Devon 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



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