Instructions and tips

Preparations

Before you begin your cross-stitch project, it’s important to wash your hands and make sure your work area is clean. This helps prevent stains on your fabric and keeps your finished piece looking its best.

Reading the chart

The digital pattern files includes charts in different sizes and colours. The grid shows the width and height of the design, and the arrows mark the centre of the pattern. Each symbol on the chart represents one stitch and one colour.

In addition to the chart, you’ll find a colour and symbol key with the DMC floss number (for example, 310 for black), the colour name, and the number of skeins you’ll need. This makes it easier to order the correct amount of thread.

Fabric

The size of your cross-stitch project depends on the fabric you use. Before cutting your fabric, make sure to leave an allowance around the design.

The allowance should be wide enough for you to hold the fabric comfortably while stitching, and to fit the finished piece into a hoop or frame (if you use one).

To prevent fraying, you can use masking tape or stitch around the edges to secure them.

Floss

Most patterns use DMC Mouliné floss and are stitched with two strands. Always check the instructions for your specific pattern.

To avoid tangling and wear, I recommend cutting an arm’s length of floss. Separate the strands by pulling out one thread at a time from the skein. Avoid pulling two or more strands at once, as this increases the risk of twisting and can result in uneven stitches.

Needle

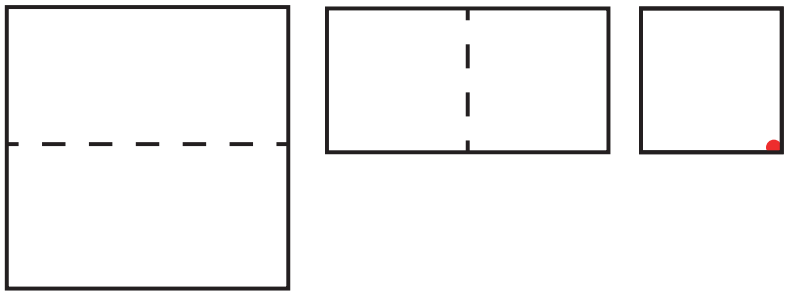
I recommend using a blunt needle to avoid splitting the thread or piercing the fabric fibres while stitching.
The needle size depends on the fabric you're using:

- For 14-count Aida, 28-count linen, or evenweave, a size 24 needle is recommended.
- For 16-count Aida, 32-count linen, or evenweave, a size 26 needle is recommended.

If you use a needle that is too large for your fabric, the eye of the needle can stretch the holes and create visible gaps in the finished piece.

Starting your project

Starting in the centre of your fabric helps ensure you have enough space on all sides for the full design.
To find the centre, fold the fabric in half and then in half again. Mark the centre with a pin, a few stitches, or a removable fabric marker. Always test the marker on a corner of the fabric first to make sure it washes out.
If your pattern is symmetrical, it can also be helpful to mark the top edge of your fabric.
This makes it easier to keep your stitches facing the same direction if you rotate the fabric while stitching.



Finishing your project

Once you've finished stitching, secure any remaining loose ends on the back of your work to prevent them from coming undone.

You can hand-wash your project in lukewarm water using a mild soap or gentle detergent.
Rinse thoroughly, but avoid stretching or twisting the fabric, as this can distort the stitches.

When ironing, place the embroidery face down on a pressing cloth or use a white towel that won't bleed dye onto your fabric when heated.

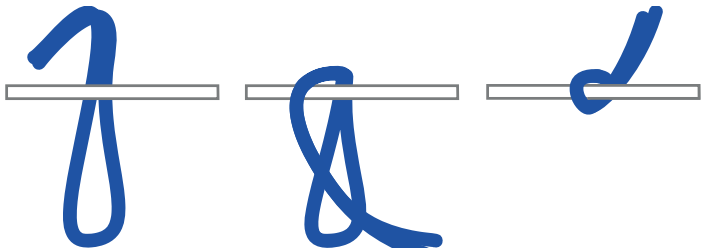
Stitches

Securing your thread

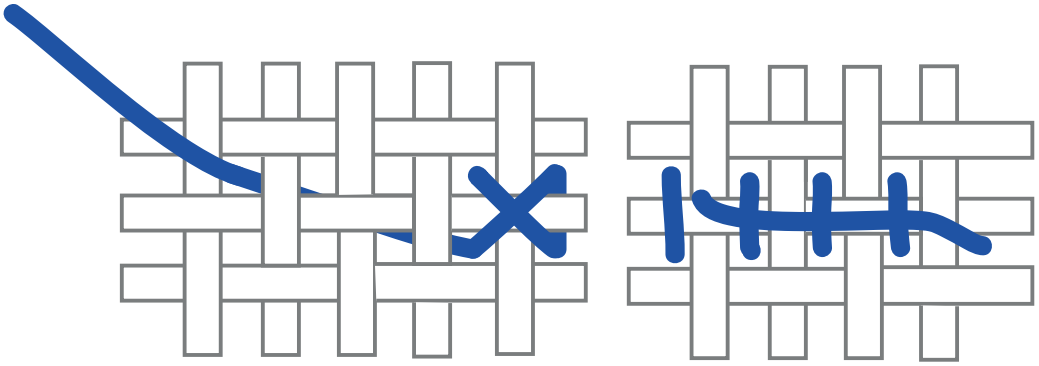
You need to secure your thread when you start and finish stitching to prevent the stitches from coming undone. Avoid using knots, as they can make the back of your work bulky and may show through the fabric, especially on finer fabrics.

Starting with the loop method: If the pattern tells you to stitch with two strands of the same colour, take one strand and fold it in half.

Start on the back of the fabric and bring the needle up through the first hole. Make your first stitch.
On the back, pass the needle through the loop created by folding the thread.
Bring the needle up through the next hole and complete the stitch.



With the away knot method, you start on the front of the fabric. Decide where you want to place your first stitch, then bring the needle down through a hole several squares away. Leave a few centimetres of thread on the front.
You can either tie a small knot at the end of the thread, or hold the tail in place while you make your first stitches. Be careful not to pull too tightly.
Once you have stitched a few stitches, snip off the knot (if you used one). Turn the fabric over and secure the loose thread tail under the stitches on the back. Trim away any excess thread.

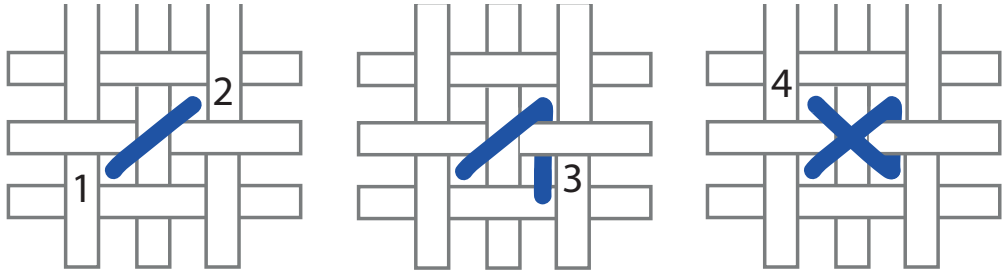


Don’t stitch through the floss or catch the fabric fibres when you slide the needle under your stitches to secure the thread. If you accidentally stitch through the floss, it can be much harder to unpick your stitches if you need to redo part of your work.

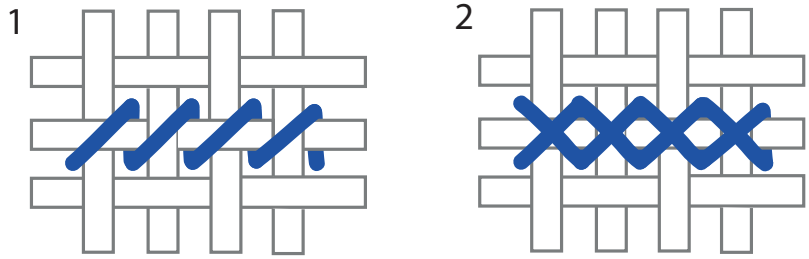
Cross stitch

Cross stitches are worked diagonally over one square of the fabric to form an “X”. When stitching on Aida, you can start by bringing the needle up in either the lower left or lower right corner.
The most important thing is to keep all stitches facing the same direction, otherwise they may look uneven.

1. Bring the needle up in the lower left corner.
2. Go across and down in the upper right corner.
3. Bring the needle up in the lower right corner.
4. Go across and down in the upper left corner.

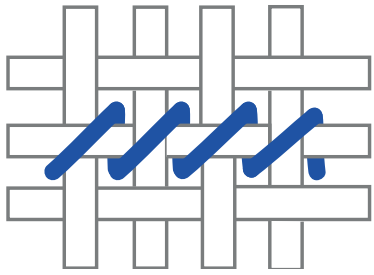


If you’re stitching a row in the same colour on Aida, you can work all the bottom stitches first, then go back and complete the row with the top stitches.



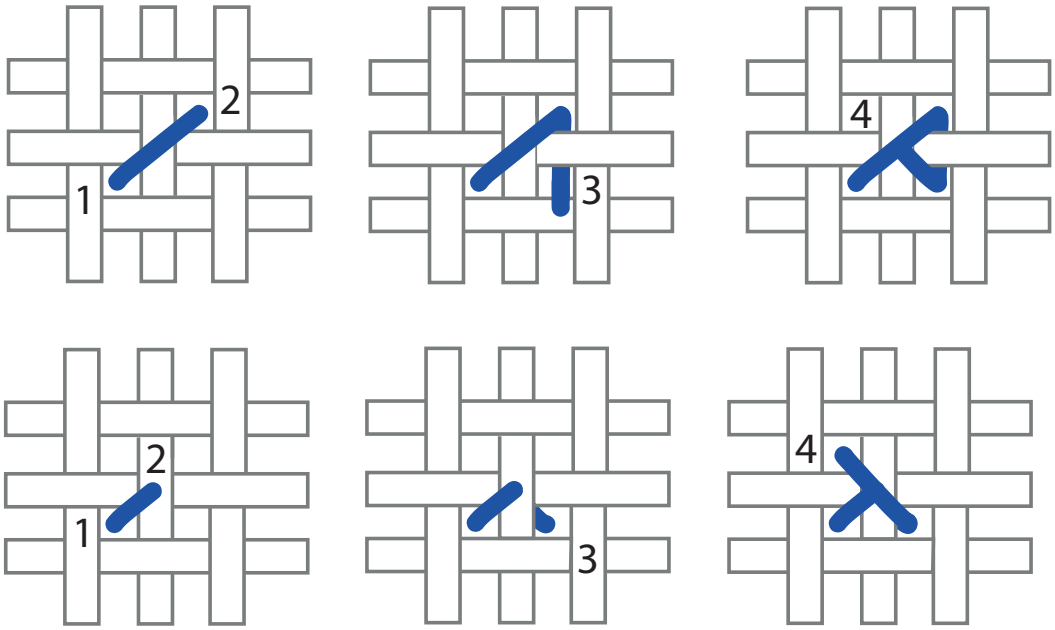
Half cross stitch

If the pattern includes half cross stitches, stitch only the first diagonal (the bottom stitch). Follow the direction shown in the chart carefully.



Quarter stitch and ¾ quarter stitch

Quarter stitches (¼) end in the center of the cross, between the threads of the fabric.
A ¾ quarter stitch is more common.They are worked using one short stitch and one full-length stitch, as shown below:



Backstitch

Backstitch is used for outlining and adding details to the design. It's best to stitch the backstitch last, so it doesn't get covered by other stitches.

1. Bring the needle up through the hole where you want to start.
2. Go down in the next hole in the direction you're stitching.
3. On the back, move the thread forward by one or more holes depending on the design, then bring the needle up to the front again.
4. Go back down in the previous hole to anchor the stitch, and continue.

