

Absolute Beginner's Tip Sheet

for Counted Cross-Stitch

from
FOXBERRY COTTAGE CRAFTS

These tips for the beginner are guidelines intended to complement Foxberry Cottage Crafts kits. Note that directions included with our individual kits always take precedence.

As you become more skilled, you will develop your own habits and short-cuts. Use whatever works best for you, always aiming for quality work.

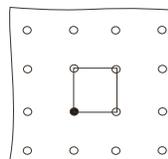
If you have any questions, please write or call us at Foxberry Cottage Crafts. We are always glad to help.

GENERAL NOTES

- These tips are intended for right-handed stitchers.
- For the beginner, we recommend an embroidery hoop to help regulate the tension of your stitches.
- A variety of other tools are available from specialty shops - chart holders, magnifying glasses, stands, floss cards, etc.
- Wash your hands before starting to work.
- Good light is essential, and a chair that supports good posture will make your work more pleasant.
- You can expect to work at a rate of approx. 1 square inch per hour.
- Our charts are copyrighted. It is illegal to reproduce them except for personal use.

FABRIC

Our kits contain 14- or 18-count Aida cloth, meaning it is woven in a pattern with 14 or 18 blocks to the inch. This weave corresponds to the grid drawn on the design chart, block for block.



The black dot indicates the first position of a stitch at the lower left corner of the grid block.

PATTERN

Each symbol in the legend on the instruction sheet corresponds to a floss colour. The cross-stitch is worked by stitching an 'X' for each symbol shown on the chart. Note that the physical size of the paper chart may not correspond to the size of the actual stitched piece.

To make the pattern easier to follow:

- Work from a photocopy enlargement.
- Match coloured pencils to floss and colour in symbol areas.
- Use a straight pin or chart holder to mark where you are - never a pen - one stray mark may be enough to ruin hours of work.

TIPS FOR THE COUNTING IMPAIRED

For both of these methods:

- Do not use floss from the kit. The packaged quantity does not allow for it.
- Use a single strand, or fine thread in a light, neutral shade.
- Remove any visible basting threads from back and front before back-stitching the finishing outline.

1- Baste a 10 x 10 (stitch count) grid right on the cloth. You then have a background that matches the heavier grid lines on the chart. Stitch one 10 x 10 block at a time. In this way you can't go too far before seeing your error.

2 - For maps - or any areas where edges are jagged - try stitching the outline first! (Purists will tell you this goes against the 'rules'.)

You need not backstitch every block as you would when working on the outline, e.g., baste straight lines in a single stitch. If this preliminary outline is off, it's a lot simpler to remove and correct, and it will make counting much easier.

FLOSS

In our kits we provide 36" long 6-strand embroidery floss which you will separate into 1 or 2 strands as explained below. We recommend working in 18 inch lengths. Floss may be bundled to help identify similar colours. Keep bundles separate as you work.

- Before beginning check that colours and quantities provided correspond with legend. This is best done in daylight as artificial light may alter colour perception.
- Colours are named for comparison purposes and may not be true to the colour. E.g., a pinkish brown may be called "rose" to differentiate it from a rusty brown. Identify and separate the basic colours first.
- Tape a clipping of floss next to its symbol on the legend for reference.

CENTERING YOUR WORK

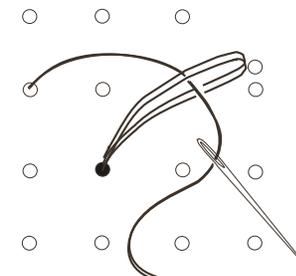
To ensure a uniform border for framing, position work from the centre.

- Mark the point on the pattern where the centre lines cross, indicated by a triangle at each side.
- Measure and pin or baste to mark the centre point of cloth.
- Count out from centres of pattern and cloth to position your first stitch. All subsequent areas must be referenced to cross-stitch already completed.

BEGINNING

Starting a new strand: Method 1:

Bring free ends of a single 36" strand of floss together. Thread them through the needle to form a double strand 18" long with the loop at the long end.



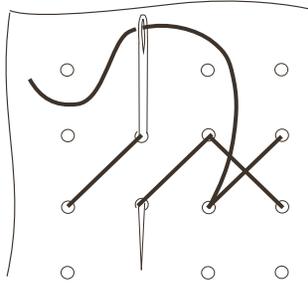
(Reverse Side)

Bring the needle through from back to front, leaving the looped end on reverse side. On right side make a single diagonal stitch. Turn cloth over; pass needle through the loop. Pull the stitch flat against cloth, taut but not tight.

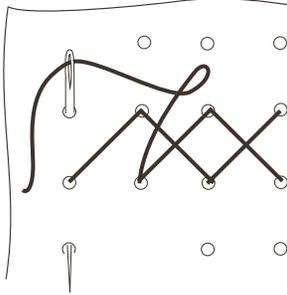
- Starting a new strand without a loop: Method 2: Anchor floss by passing the needle under 4-6 existing stitches on the reverse side.
- If there are no existing stitches, Method 1 is best. Alternately, leave a few inches free and thread them under a few stitches later.
- Never use knots to anchor floss.

CROSS-STITCH

- Unless instructions tell you otherwise, use 2 strands for cross stitches.
- Make rows of diagonal stitches, working from left to right.
- Cross with a row of opposite diagonals, working from right to left.



- Where the left hand stitches are aligned vertically, start a new row bring the needle down to the lower left of the next row.
- Usually this will not be the case, and you will have to thread the floss under stitches on the reverse side.



- Similarly, to carry floss to a new area, turn to reverse side and tack floss, in vertical and horizontal directions, under existing stitches to bring it to the new starting position.
- Anyone looking at the back of your work should not see any diagonal threads.

- Break up long rows by working them in 'boxes' of more comfortable lengths.
- Start each section with the largest solid area of a single colour.
- Some people find it convenient to thread several needles, one for each colour in the immediate work area. They can then work in uninterrupted rows by changing needles as required. (But be careful not to tack the loose floss into your stitching.)

As you finish each piece of floss, anchor the end as per Method 2 above. Clip off excess threads close to cloth.

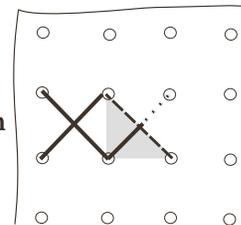
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PARTIAL STITCHES

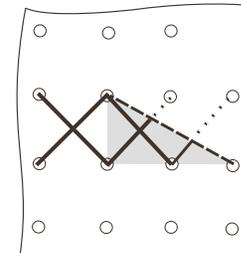
- You may avoid partial stitches by working the 1/2 and 3/4 stitches as full stitches, and omitting 1/4 stitches. The resulting outline will have a less refined appearance.
- The direction of short stitches is always toward the opposite corner, as indicated by the dotted extension of the line.
- Create a guide for partial stitches by back-stitching the outline in a single strand of same colour floss, or in a light neutral colour.

1/2 STITCH (shaded):

- Make the short stitch from the corner to the centre of the block.



3/4 and 1/4 STITCHES (shaded):



3/4 STITCH:

- Make the short stitch similar to the 1/2 stitch above. But unlike the 1/2 stitch, you will always work the full diagonal.

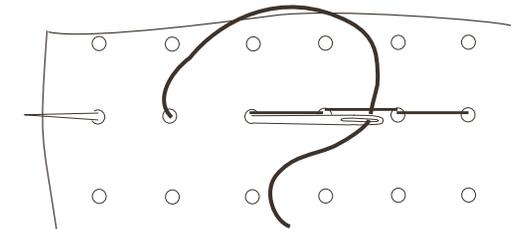
1/4 STITCH:

- Make the short stitch approx. 1/3 the diagonal length to the opposite corner.
- Do not make a crossing stitch.

In our kits, the 3/4 and 1/4 stitches are usually worked on two adjacent blocks so as to define an object more clearly.

For all partial stitches you may omit the long finishing stitch (dash line) if the final outline will cover it. Where there are adjacent partial stitches, the colour used for the long finishing stitch should be that of the foreground or most prominent object.

OUTLINING



- Finish all cross-stitching before outlining.
- Work outlines in a back-stitch as shown.
- Work detail outlines and outlines of most prominent objects last.

WORKMANSHIP

As you progress from beginner to experienced crafter, strive for quality workmanship - evident in a neat finished product, on the back...

- no knots (except French knots where specified)
- no long loose ends
- no zig-zagging floss from one area to another, especially not over unworked fabric!
- all loose floss neatly tacked under stitches in vertical and horizontal directions only.

...as well as on the front:

- uniform tension
- all top stitches crossed in the same direction
- uniform appearance of stitches
- even outline stitches overlaying the cross-stitching.

FINISHING

- Wash or dry clean to remove hidden dirt and natural body oils from materials.
- If you are framing the piece yourself, dampen the fabric and gently stretch into shape. Use a straight edge to align blocks on each side.
- Consult a professional framer for mounting and framing techniques.

ERRORS:

- Be patient with yourself and remember: even experts make mistakes.

TO MINIMIZE ERRORS:

- Count carefully
- RECOUNT and COUNT AGAIN!
- Make it a habit to check and RECHECK your position often using finished work as checkpoints, especially:
 - after you make the first diagonal in a new area
 - at the end of a row of diagonals before starting the crossing row
 - and any time at all.
- If possible, work areas adjacent to those already finished using existing rows as a reference point.

- No matter how careful you are, sooner or later you're going to have to remove stitches.

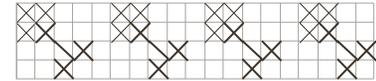
- Carefully pull out ends of floss one stitch at a time, top stitches first, in opposite order to which they were made.

- The removal process is slow and tedious and sometimes difficult, and often cannot be done without removing an entire strand.

- Some errors can be salvaged without removing stitches. You will have to trust your own judgement as to how the error will affect the overall design.

- Small errors of a few misplaced stitches may not seriously affect the appearance on a free-form object (e.g., tree, flower) and may be incorporated into the pattern simply by ignoring them. In this case you will make an adjustment in the count of adjacent colours. E.g, if you have added 2 stitches of 1 colour, then you must subtract 2 stitches of the adjacent colour in that same row. Where an outline is involved, stitch the outline around the colour even though the shape may differ from the chart.

- Not for the perfectionist, but... some small errors, if in a light colour, may be corrected by stitching the correct colour over the error. (You haven't heard this from me!!)



Foxberry Cottage Crafts is a manufacturer of counted cross-stitch needlework kits. Our original designs feature the beauty, culture and history of Atlantic Canada.

If you cannot find our kits in a store near you, please write for our current catalogue sheets and mail order price list, or visit us on-line.

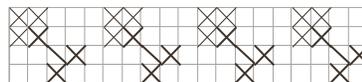
We welcome your comments and suggestions.
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Happy Stitching!



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