

*The Art of Embroidery Series*

# From the Beginning A Primer

Section Five — Two Projects

*Dianne Lewandowski*  
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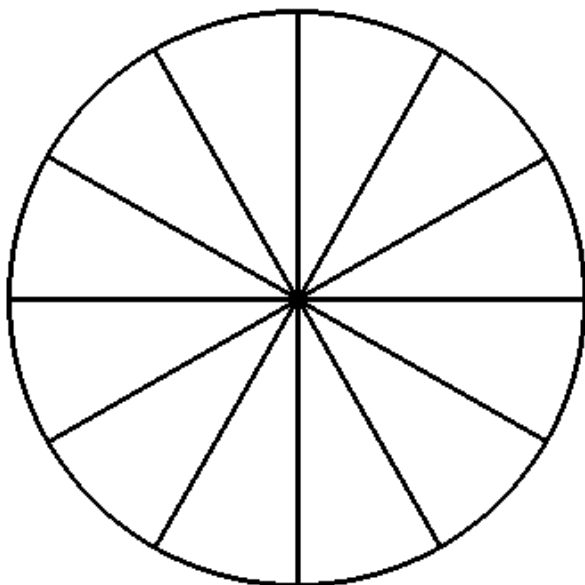
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*Two Projects*  
*The First Venture*  
*A Small Bag*



**A Small Bag**  
for your tools or jewelry



This little bag can be one on which you only practice your sewing stitches, or a small bag on which you can also embroider.

**Colors to use on this project.**

You may use any color you wish, depending upon your background fabric. To help you decide, use the large circle provided on the next page which is divided into twelve sections.

Starting at the top (twelve o'clock), write down the colors which follow, in the order they are given, for each section around: yellow, yellow-green, green, blue-green, blue, blue-violet, violet, red-violet, red, red-orange, orange, yellow-orange. (At 12:00 yellow, at 1:00 yellow-green, etc). Why weren't these color names put in the illustration? Because writing helps you remember.

You should now have 12 sections each with their own color. This will help you to understand the following color schemes.

**Monochrome:** Tone on Tone (white on white, or different tones (dark to light) of the same color.

**Primary:** Red, Blue and Yellow on white or black; or a fabric which matches one of your color choices, such as red fabric, matching red floss, plus blue and yellow floss. (For very pastel, you may use Red, Green & Yellow.)

**Complementary:** – opposite of each other – (One color for fabric, another for floss– **OR** – if using white fabric, both colors in floss): Green/Red, Blue-green/Red-orange, Yellow/Violet, Orange/Blue, etc.

**Analogous:** – Primary plus left or right to it. (One color for fabric, two colors for floss) Red, Violet & Red-Violet; Green, Blue-green & Blue, etc. Or all the colors between red and yellow, as an example.

White or black are neutral (achromatic – the absence of color) colors. You can use any color scheme with them.

Experiment with your colors. Try new things. You will learn about yourself and what you like and don't like. More importantly, you will be stretching your abilities. Perhaps you have a room that is wallpapered. Match colors of floss to the wallpaper using the color schemes outlined here. Or use a print blouse for a color scheme.

### List of Materials

- ✿ Fine linen such as Ulster 1200, 1000, Belfast “Best” linen. May substitute broadcloth, lawn, voile or other closely woven fabric.  
Approximately 1/3 yard.
- ✿ Floss - your color choice - cotton or silk. If you choose to do this with a white ground and white threads, you will be learning to appreciate the simple beauty of white– on– white embroidery.
- ✿ 20– inch piece 10mm (approx ½– inch) ribbon (satin or silk) to match/contrast with ground fabric for finished tie, or decorative rayon cording.
- ✿ Size 8 or 10 crewel and sharp needles
- ✿ Sewing thread to match and contrast with ground fabric
- ✿ Optional: No. 12 pearl cotton or No. 30 cordonnet<sup>1</sup> for buttonhole loops. Sewing thread is also suitable.

**Special Note.** The pattern uses a hemstitched hem. You do not have to make this decorative hem. A plain hem can be substituted. If you decide to hemstitch, linen will be easier, but the other suggested fabrics can be hemstitched as well.

**Preparation.** If you are making the embroidered bag, you must allow for raveling and the use of a hoop for the embroidery, This is usually two inches more than the pattern size.

To maintain the straight grain of the fabric, pull threads the measurement of the pattern **at the cutting lines.**

After the threads have been pulled completely around the cutting lines, you can cut the fabric two inches larger, if you are making the embroidered bag, or cut on the pulled thread lines if you will only hand sew..

If you choose to omit the embroidery, please skip to the section on construction.

**For embroidery.** To get center line, fold fabric in half lengthwise – matching pulled threads – and finger crease the fold. Open out fabric, right side up. Place pattern underneath fabric at one narrow end, center, pin and trace design.

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<sup>1</sup>Cordonnet is a shiny, superior quality, tightly twisted cotton string used extensively for crocheting, knitting, embroidery, and lace making. It currently comes in weights from No. 10 to No. 100.





Utility bag – embroidery detail

## Embroidery Details

Use one strand of floss throughout except center rose: use 3 or 4 strands. If using broder threads (see Section Two), use No. 35 or 40 for flowers and leaves, No. 20 or 25 for center rose.

**Petaled Flowers** – Stem stitch

**Serrated Leaves:** – Stem stitch

**Smooth Oval Leaves** – Stem stitch and buttonhole stitch (shaded portion of pattern).

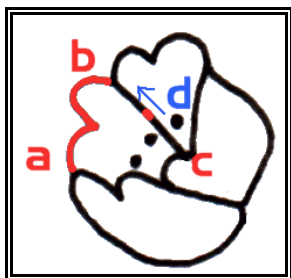
**Stems** – Stem stitch

**Flower centers** (shaded areas) – rows of chain stitch

**Central Rose** – Coral stitch with minimal spacing

When embroidery is complete, wash and press. Cut both pieces to pattern size on previously pulled thread lines.

**What happens as you embroider.** As you are embroidering, the traced color shows through and around your stitching. Your embroidery will simply look awful. If you chose to work this project in white, the threads do not show up well. They look grungy and flat. Even the ground can take on a gray cast. You will wonder why you ever started. Please don't be concerned. As soon as you wash and press your piece, the embroidery will come alive against the background.



**Continuous Stitching on a motif.** Let's say you have stitched from "A" to "B" as in the figure at left (shown in red). Now what? Make a tiny stitch (red) along the straight line and bring your thread back up at "C." Begin stitching again, following the arrow at "D." Your stitches will cover the long thread at the back of the work.

Always study the pattern – before you begin stitching – so that you have continuous stitching for any given shape on a motif.

Another way to have embroidered this flower would be to have continually stitched from "A" to "C." Then, on the back of the work, weave your needle/thread through the backs of the stitches on the long line between "C" and "B," and begin again at the next petal.

Never carry your threads more than a quarter inch, and not at all if it will show through to the front of the work, unless it is absolutely necessary.

## Construction

You will be making a French seam. This type of seam encases raw edges neatly, and the fabric can't ravel. You learned the term overcast (or overhand), a technique also used to prevent raveling. But a French seam is stronger and used whenever a neat finish is required, particularly on sheer fabrics.

- ✿ Place wrong sides together (embroidery will be facing you), pin raw edges, and hand sew the two sides and bottom edge with tiny running stitches. 1/4- inch seams are allowed.

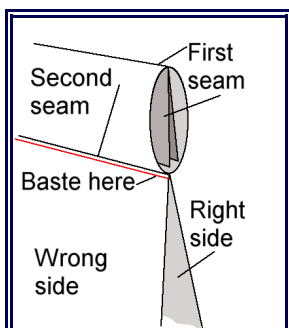
You can begin the stitching by making a knot, or making several tiny back stitches. It is a good idea, when stitching up a seam with running stitches, that you back stitch periodically. Although not mandatory, this holds the seam more firmly.

**How do you keep your hand stitching straight?** You can pull a thread slightly at one long edge at the one- quarter inch mark and finger press a crease on this line, then sew on that crease

– **or** – if your eyes are very good and you are using material with a straight weave, (and you cut your fabric along the straight of grain) you can follow the thread of the material.

– **or** – you can finger press one piece of cloth along the seam line, measuring carefully as you do so, then follow this crease as you sew.

- ✿ Cut off corners close (but not too close) to the stitching. (See page 24). Press seams flat. If you don't have a tailor board, now is a good time to invest in one. You'll be glad you did. A tailor board is a wooden ironing tool that allows you to press flat right up to the corner – and thus making them lay smoother. When you turn the seam (see next two steps), it will have a nice, crisp edge.
- ✿ Trim seam to a scant one- eighth inch. A sixteenth inch if you can muster it and feel very brave.
- ✿ Turn (embroidery will now face the inside) and press again.
- ✿ Use a point tool to gently push out the corners. Be careful (if you don't have a point tool) if you are using scissors, as they can break the corner threads and ruin your project. A small, dull screwdriver is sometimes handy for this task.



- ✿ Make another seam, encasing the first seam. Baste carefully. Stitch the seam with back stitch (stem stitch). Remember to make your stitches very tiny and consistent in size. This is easier on linen, as you can count the ground threads more readily.
- ✿ Turn the work again so that the embroidery is facing you, and press. If you embroidered the motif, remember to press face down on a heavily

padded surface.

**The Hem.** Turn the bag inside out (the inside is again facing you).

- ✎ Pull a thread across one side of the bag where indicated on pattern (3– 1/4– inches from top of bag). Do this by measuring down at the center of the bag, pulling up a thread with a needle, snipping the thread and pulling it out toward the seams. These threads will come free of the seams with a good tug on coarser linen. If making the bag of more closely woven cotton, you may have to snip the thread at the seam edge.
- ✎ Note on the opposite side of the bag where this first thread was pulled. Make sure you align this evenly and pull a thread straight across where it meets the pulled thread on the first side of the bag.
- ✎ Across the top of the bag, fold the edge one– quarter inch toward the inside to hide it.
- ✎ Fold the hem down so that it is at the top of the pulled thread line. Baste (uneven running stitch) with contrasting thread.

For a plain hem, follow the directions in Section 4 on page 21. For a hemstitched hem, use the directions which follow and review Section 4, page 29.

- ✎ Pull out three or four more threads below the first pulled thread.
- ✎ Still working on the inside of the bag, make knotted hemstitching across the row, catching the hem between each knot. Only pick up a thread or two of the hem's fold.
- ✎ When you get to the seams, overhand the hem to the seam, then continue on with the knotted hemstitching.
- ✎ When the hem is stitched down, turn the bag to the right side and turn the work so that the opposite side of the hemstitched area is now facing upward. Make a knotted chain around the bag. Knotted hemstitch, when done across a row that doesn't include a hem edge, is called a knotted chain. When you are finished, the hem will have a ladder-like appearance, the threads of the ground bundled neatly together. See illustration page 2.

There are more decorative ways to do this hemstitching, and you will learn them as your skills progress.

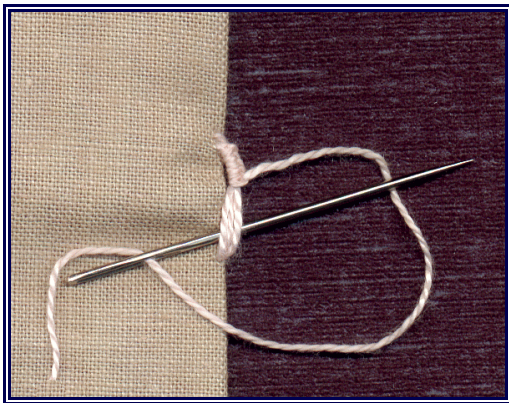
Make certain that you start each row of knotted hemstitching at the seam, and that you have sufficient length of thread that you do not have to knot and rethread from seam to seam.



**Buttonhole loops.** So that a decorative tie of some sort will stay in place, loops must be placed at both side seams. Although you might dread this task, it is one of the features of very fine whitework embroidery (reticello). Learning to make these loops gives you great skill for your future endeavors.

Take a long length of sewing thread. Knot the thread. On the inside, at the seam, put needle through to outside. Make three thread loops as shown in graphic above – going in and out the same holes. Make the thread loops slack (not so tight as to pucker the fabric), but not loose loops. The finished loop will stretch out considerably as you buttonhole over it.

When the thread loops are made, come out again as if to make a fourth pass, but this time make a series of closed blanket stitches over the three thread loops. Pack them tightly together, but they shouldn't overlap one another. Pull needle and thread toward previous buttonhole stitch to keep them together. Adjust with fingers when necessary to stack them neatly.



When the last loop is made, insert needle at the seam line to the inside of the bag. Make certain your buttonhole stitches don't twist at this stage. End off the thread.

When both loops are made, slip the tie of your choice through the loops and tie neatly at center front, making a bow or a square knot. If using ribbon, trim ribbon ends on a slant or inverted "V" to retard raveling.

**Alternate 1:** Tie a small knot about 3/8" from ends.

**Alternate 2:** Roll up bottom of ribbon a scant 1/16", fold again. Hem as invisibly as possible using matching, fine sewing thread. This is the neatest and sturdiest of the finishes. It is tricky and pushes your skill level.

If using purchased cord, tie a knot about two inches from the ends and ravel out (see illustration of the finished bag on page 2).

You should now feel proud of yourself. You have practiced diligently, and you have made your first project. You are ready to venture forth and learn many new embroidery stitches to enhance your work. You have sufficient skill so that you know how to put small objects together without fuss. You can hem. You can make closures with a buttonhole. This leaves the field of embroidery and sewing wide open to you.

As you explore, you will find a vast array of techniques awaits you. You are now grounded in the basics. You may find different approaches, different opinions, and they may all be valid. But you

can know in your heart that whatever information you come across, you have a level of skill, knowledge, and proficiency that will help you succeed and help you sort through the graphics and advice.

There is never an end to your learning experiences. Just when you think you have crossed the last hurdle, another genre will appear and intrigue you. This compilation ends with the sentiment that hopes you have the broadest and most fulfilling experience possible.

### How to Evaluate Your Own Work

- ✿ If you embroidered, your design is centered on the bag.
- ✿ All your stem and back stitches are evenly sized. There was not any space between the stitches, not even one ground thread.
- ✿ The curves are smooth and follow the design.
- ✿ You planned carefully so that you carried the thread no more than 1/4– inch.
- ✿ Your chain stitches are tiny and even in size.
- ✿ Your buttonhole loops are stacked neatly, and the stitches don't twist around the thread loop.
- ✿ Coral knots are equally spaced.
- ✿ Your seams are even and form a nice crease at the edges.
- ✿ Your seams were stitched sufficiently so that you can't easily pull them apart.
- ✿ You picked up the same number of threads each time for the hemstitching , except where you had to compensate at the end.

*The Second Venture*  
*A Pincushion*



Embroidery detail using stem, chain, coral and closed blanket. The color scheme is complimentary: violet and blue green. When you embroider your motif, determine for yourself which stitches to use. This will teach you about texture and how to use it to advantage. The large leaves could just as easily have been accomplished with closed (or open) blanket stitch. Try to incorporate all the stitches on this piece.

At this point, you are ready to learn more about construction. This information will serve you well for any number of small and medium-sized projects that you may encounter in your sewing and embroidery adventures. The basics will be covered so that you can put together a small pillow, ornament, bag or other item that must be attached together with a front and back piece.

You will notice throughout this project that I use all types of equipment to sew. Use your imagination. You needn't purchase expensive tools specific to sewing. Objects you have around the house are quite sufficient.

There are other methods of knotting, differences of opinion on how long a thread to use when sewing. What is contained in these pages is only a beginning. It will get you started on the right path, with relative ease, so that you can go forward when reading other articles, books, or taking classes. The terms used are those common during the nineteenth century and includes the more modern terms. At all times, be creative.

## What You Will Need

Scissors - Small thread scissors or dressmaker shears. Tiny embroidery scissors are too small and will dull quickly if used to cut fabric.

Ruler

Straight pins (glass head are easiest to handle)

No. 2 pencil (optional)

Thimble (optional)

In addition, supplies as follows:

### **For Step One:**

Half-yard piece of plain, white muslin

60/2 sewing thread, preferably 100% cotton - white and contrasting color.

No. 8 or 10 sharp needle

### **For the Pillow:**

Tiny amount of fiberfill, old yarn bits, or old nylon stocking

## Making a Trial Pillow

*Read carefully ALL of the directions before you begin.*

You have to allow for a seam - usually one-quarter inch. Beginners might find it helpful to have a seam allowance of one-half inch for their first few attempts. When seamed, you cut off the excess.

This project is three-inches square, you will need TWO pieces of cloth cut square in the following dimensions.

1. 3-1/2 inches for a quarter-inch seam allowance
2. 4 inches for a half-inch seam allowance

Do whichever you feel confident to do. It's only muslin. If your first attempt fails, you've used about fifty cents and some of your time. This time isn't *lost* time - it is extremely important learning time. If it took you an hour to do what follows, that hour only cost you a half dollar for the experience. Remember, you are *never* failing, you are *learning*! When learning, mistakes happen regularly.

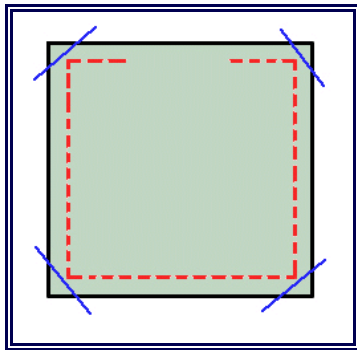
## Cutting the Pillow Pieces

You know how to withdraw threads to keep the fabric straight. Do this so that the fabric equals the dimensions on the previous page. Don't forget: you need two pieces of fabrics the dimension you prefer.

A quicker method is to make a paper template the size of the desired pillow plus seam allowance as indicated on the previous page. Pin the paper securely to a folded piece of muslin and cut two pieces at one time.

To make a paper pattern that is precise, you need graph paper. Preferably 8 to the inch graph paper. If you don't have a source, most word processing software will make graph paper either through grid lines or tables.

If you simply don't have or are unable to make graph paper, measure precisely from the edges of regular 8-1/2 x 11 paper. Start right at corners so that you have perfect rectangles and squares. Make a paper pattern first.



If you make a template, please remember that the finished project may not behave when sewing, may get out of "square" when pressing, may not stuff as well and maintain a square appearance. But on some fabrics, such as satin or velvet, you will not be able to pull a thread. Sometimes, when cutting out printed fabric, you will follow the print, which may be off square. So, this is a good exercise should you ever make something that simply can't be measured any other way.

Once the squares are cut to the desired size, baste all around with the contrasting thread. Do this basting slightly above where you will do the seaming. Once basted, sew around the square as indicated by the dotted, red line. Notice the opening left at the top. Sew this seam using running stitch, stem stitch, or backstitch. If you use running stitch, the seam will not be as serviceable. Make a very tiny backstitch every so often to help keep the fabric from gathering up.

No matter your stitch choice, if you made your stitches too long, the fabric will pull apart at the seam. Make them as tiny as you can muster - like three or four threads of the muslin ground.

When you have completed the sewing, remove the basting thread. If you made a half-inch seam allowance, trim it down to one quarter inch. Cut off the corners as shown by the blue lines in the diagram at left. Don't cut too close to the line of sewing. Leave a few threads of the ground. Corners are delicate and if you cut too close, the seam will unravel. Cut too far away, and the corner will be messy and rounded. Every fabric handles differently. Only experience can teach you how far away (or how close) to cut away the corners.



Again, this is a basic sewing. There are ways to grade seams, grade corners. This is a simple project. What is suggested here will keep the advice simple, to the point and be workable. To ensure excellent results, press the seam open. Be careful at the corners.

Why press? Because this helps to create a knife edge on the right side. Without the pressing, the seam rolls to one side and it is difficult to keep square.

How do you press an enclosed object? If you purchased a tailor's board, use the long straight point and fit your seam so that the corner is over the end. Or, you can find a flat stick to push inside to press upon. Alternatively, simply finger press (easy to do on muslin) by pushing open the seam and smoothing it down with your fingers. The moisture and heat of your hand will help the fabric lay flat.

Turn the little pillow inside out through the opening that you left unsewn. Now, you have to push out the corner a bit. This is the trickiest part.

**Gently** push them out with the point of your scissors (risky); a round, wooden cuticle implement; a screw driver. Any object that has a blunted point and is not thick. There are wooden and plastic point turners available at most fabric stores. If you don't want to invest in one at this time, the previous examples will do for this exercise.

The corners of the fabric are cut off to remove excess material which would prevent the corner from becoming the point it needs to be. In so doing, you have weakened the corner. Take this slow. Don't let frustration take over your emotions. Take a deep breath.

**Stuffing the Pillow:** With fiberfill, bits of yarn, or old nylon stockings cut into one-inch strips, stuff the pillow. Push the stuffing into the corners without a lot of force. If you push too hard, you will get distortion. You want just enough so that the corners are rounded but not feel like cement. You should be able to squeeze the pillow and touch the back side.

Experiment. This is only muslin. Each time you make one of these, you increase your skills in **all** areas. You are learning how to handle fabric, thread, stitches.

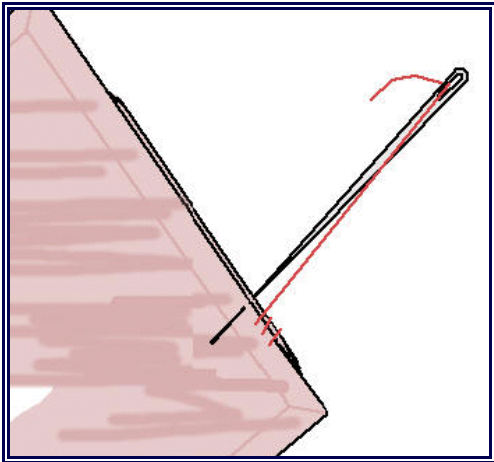
**Sew Up the Opening.** There are at least three methods to sew up the opening, outlined below.

First, fold in the seam allowances, creasing with your fingers. You can pin this opening closed by squeezing the two edges together (stuffing and all) and pinning. If not stuffed too hard, you can sometimes push that stuffing out of the way. Use the point of your scissors, a nail file, even your needle to coax it away from the edge of the seam.

If you don't pin, you may find that, when you get to the other end of your stitching, an ornery bulge emerges. One side has shifted and is longer than the other. This problem can't be fixed without starting over. You don't need a lot of pins. For this size piece, two or three is enough.

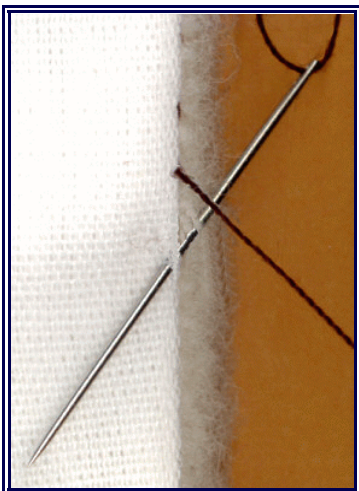
Don't overlap one edge over the other. When sewing, remove the pins a little before you get to them, otherwise they will be in your way.

### The Stitches You Will Use



**Overhanding (whip stitching)** is quick and easy. You learned to do that on your sampler. The disadvantage is that it creates a ridge when used to close an opening. This is fine if you are making a pillow form. That is, a pillow which fits inside another pillow. But you may not want to use this stitch for a *finished* look.

To work this stitch to close the opening, overhand over the folds, picking up just the very edge of the folds on each side.



**Hemming (Slip Stitching).** Modern sewers use a sloppy form of slip stitching and also blind hemming, a hybrid form of slip stitching. What follows is what you learned previously . . . one of the oldest methods, the most fine, and also the sturdiest of any method. We'll review it again.

You work left to right (top to bottom). Left-handed stitchers will reverse this. Always pick up fabric at the edge of the fold.

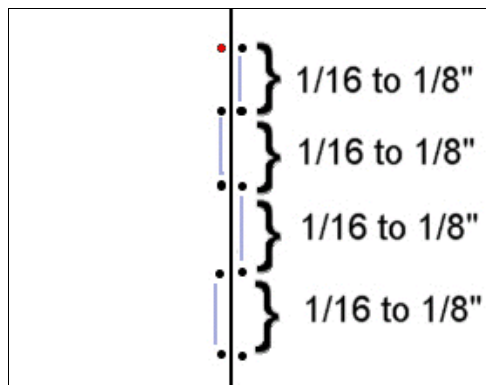
Anchor the thread within the seam allowance.

Bring the needle up at the seam crease where the sewing (seam) ended.

Pick up just a thread or two of the ground at the fold. Without pulling the needle and thread up,

at the same time,

Pick up just a thread or two of the ground at the fold. Pull the needle/thread through. Proceed in the same manner.



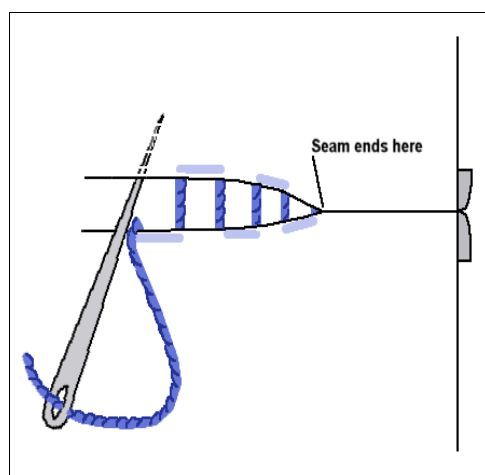
Look at the photograph on the previous page. Notice the needle picks up the fabric on the right, and while still there, picks up the fold at the left. The photograph shows a felled seam, but the movement and results are the same. For those unaware, a felled seam is laying a seam on top of a fabric not necessarily part of the seam. That's one definition.

Problems arise when too many threads are picked up by the needle. One or two are sufficient. Another problem is not picking up just at the fold. Don't take a bite into the area beyond the fold of the seam. The photo is slightly exaggerated for

demonstration. Notice how the first stitch (the reddish-brown fleck above the needle) is barely discernible.

Follow the pattern shown in the graphic. Notice that your stitches will be on a diagonal. It helps to hold the pillow to have the seam on a slight angle: / , and angle your needle so that it is facing your non-dominant shoulder.

When you get to the other sewn seam, anchor the thread with several back stitches or a bullion knot. Get creative here. Hide that thread.



Notice that in the photograph above, the stitch looks long. In reality, this stitch hides quite well, especially since you make the distances quite tiny.

**Ladder or Mattress Stitch:** The graphic below shows how to work the stitch, the second graphic is another view during actual stitching. In actuality, it is invisible when done properly. I like to work this stitch without much pinning – if any. This can be difficult for beginners, in that the seam shifts a bit if you don't watch carefully. So, pin at least in the center.

Mattress stitch is a serviceable stitch which works well for toy makers and is an often used method for sewing seams in knitted garments.

Bring needle and thread up at the fold (red dot in top illustration). This is the point where the original seam ended and the opening (which needs to be closed) begins.

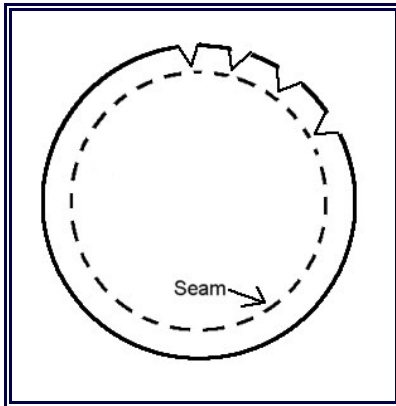
Put needle through at the dot (fold) directly opposite (to the right).

You won't go through the fold to the backside, but will slide the needle under the fabric (inside the fold) and come up again at the dot directly below. This is shown as a blue line. No stitch or thread will show through on either the front or the back of the work.

Put the needle down at the dot directly to the left. Pull tight to close the opening.

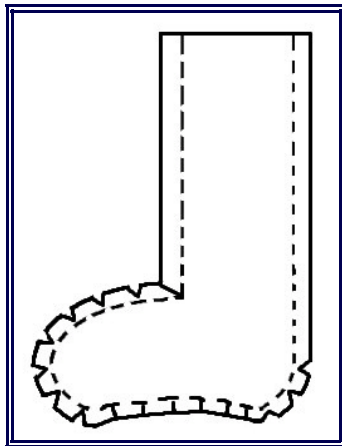
Continue in this manner until you reach the end of the opening. Fasten the thread as previously instructed.

### More on Construction



Whether you sew by hand or machine, construction techniques are the same. As you already learned, for a square object, the corners have to be cut off to decrease bulk and make a good turn. If you make a round object, or anything with curves on it, you have to accommodate excess fabric for a smooth seam.

In the graphic at left (a circle) you must cut **V** sections. Although the drawing shows only four cut out, you must do these small V's all the way around at fairly equal distances. Remember, do not cut to the seam line, but leave several threads between the cut and the seam.



In the sock graphic, notice there are two types of cuts. A simple straight cut is made where the toe meets the top portion, and again along the bottom of the sock. A straight cut is made anytime you have an extreme design change, or when sewing a concave area (bottom of sock). This allows the fabric to move or bend and relieves stress at the seam. V-cuts are made on the convex areas of the sock (toe and heel portions). To caution once again, do not cut right up to the sewing line. Leave a few ground threads. If, when turning, the seam doesn't lie flat – has pointy areas – or bend easily at the point where the toe meets the top portion – you may have to snip a bit more and/or snip closer to the seam. It is always

better to err on the side of caution. Experience will teach you when and how close, as it depends upon fabric as well as shape.

Cuts weaken the object, but if made correctly, that is of minor concern. They are necessary as mentioned above as well as to have the object lie flat and have the seam neat once turned right-side out.

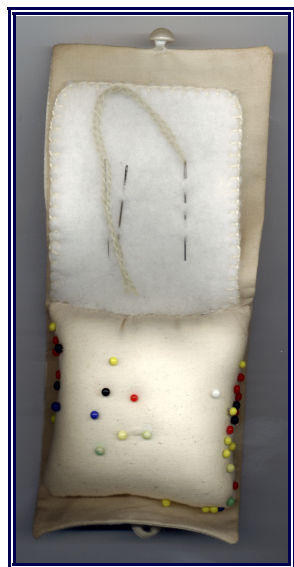
Press as best you can before turning. A tailor's board makes this task much simpler, but if you don't do much sewing, any flat wooden object you have can be used in its place. Finger pressing also helps on some fabrics. And in some situations, pressing open seams can be almost impossible. You will find, in your sewing adventures, that you might spend more time at the ironing board than you do sewing. Most mediocre (or poor) results are due to a lack of pressing know-how, or simply not pressing at all.

As practice, sew up 2 circles (draw around a cup) and turn it out without cutting the seam allowance in any fashion. See how poorly it behaves. Sew another (good practice) and make only straight slits. You will note how there is too much fabric bunching up at the seam. These experiments help you to understand why there are some rules with which you cannot dispense.

Notice on the circle graphic that there is no opening through which to turn the fabric! I wonder how many noticed that! If you did . . . you are well on your way to noted skill.

On the following pages is a project to put all your skills to work. Don't let the words make your mind numb with fear. Do one step at a time, one paragraph at a time. Read it all over first to get a feel for it, so that you remember a little where things are mentioned and what is being talked about. Then attack it slowly. There is nothing in this project that you haven't already learned to do in this lesson. You will be expanding your expertise.

### **The Pincushion**



Now that you have made a trial square, know how to stitch and how to construct, we will make a pincushion with a needle holder that uses all the skills you learned.

If you plan to embroider this cushion cover, do it before you construct it. Use the included pattern.

Remember, for an embroidered cover, you will have to baste (or mark) on a larger fabric piece. You work on a larger piece so that if raveling occurs, it won't affect the finished piece. Always allow two inches beyond the cutting lines.

With a sharply contrasting thread, baste the cutting lines and the seam allowance lines. Center your pattern within these basted lines.

#### **List of Materials**

6" x 10" piece of fabric for cover, any of the following: satin, upholstery or drapery fabric, ordinary household linen, jacquards, damasks, pretty cotton print or pillow ticking.. In short, whatever you want for the main cover. Pinwale or brushed corduroy is lovely, as would be a velvet material.

6" x 10" piece of fabric for lining. Can be the same fabric as the cover, a contrasting cover (for instance, a navy blue cover and a red lining), or choose a pretty print to contrast with a plain color cover. The lining should be the same weight or lighter than the cover weight. It should be opaque so that you don't see the seams.

If you are still unsure of yourself at this juncture, stay away from satins and opt for nice cottons or linens. Satins, damasks, jacquards, velvets can ravel terribly or require special pressing techniques (velvet) and are not for the insecure. But if you want to challenge yourself, by all means use it. Cotton velveteen is much easier than rayon or silk velvet.

5" x 8" piece of muslin for the cushion.

7" x 3" piece of wool felt for the needle "leaf". You can substitute with craft felt or polar fleece. However, wool helps to keep needles from rusting and oxidizing.

6-inch piece of 7mm (1/4") ribbon to match main fabric.

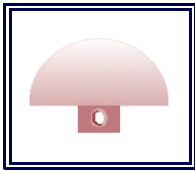
Pearl cotton No. 5 or 8 to stitch the felt.

Size 24 or 26 chenille needle for pearl cotton

Sewing thread to match and contrast with your main fabric and the muslin.

Size 8 or 10 sharp needle

Size 7 or 9 between for whipping the final steps.



1 round shank button size 3/8" or 1/2". A shank means a button has a protruding bottom through which you sew. Don't purchase a flat shank button. The ribbon will

loop around the button.

### How you get from A to Z

For the cover:

The rectangle is 8-1/4 x 3-1/2. This includes 1/4" seam allowances all the way around.

The needle "leaf" is 6-1/2" x 2-3/4" - no seam allowance needed.

3-1/2 x 3-1/2 square for the cushion - 1/4" seam allowance all the way around.

Withdraw threads to the measurements given for the cushion and cover. Otherwise, place the pattern pieces on your fabric and pin in place.

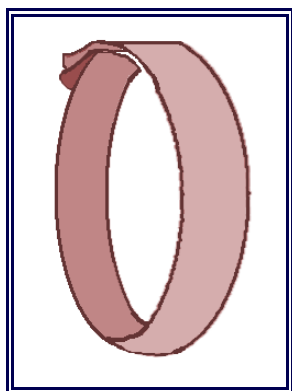
If you plan to embroider the cover, remember to allow extra inches beyond the cutting lines. Mark the pattern edge (the cutting edge) with an ordinary pencil (or baste) all the way around. Don't cut. Embroider the fabric at this time. When through, then cut along the pencil (basting) lines. Scarey, isn't it? One goof in cutting or sewing, and all your embroidery is down the drain. You are now joining the

ranks of courageous needleworkers! You can do this!

For the 8-1/2 x 3-1/2 rectangle: Cut one of main fabric, one of lining

For the 6-1/2 x 2-3/4 rectangle, cut one of felt

For the 3-1/2 x 3-1/2 square cut two of muslin or lining fabric. Fold the fabric in half, pin the pattern to both layers and cut as one.



**1. Sew up the pin cushion first**, because you've already had practice with your trial project. Do this square the same way. When stuffing, stuff as firmly as you can. Watch the corners so that there's not too much in them. This pillow will be quite fat. It is amazing how much stuffing you can get into a three-inch square.

Stitch to close the opening, using the method you choose. Don't forget to push that stuffing back in so that no little fibers are peeking out of the seam.

Set the cushion aside.

**2. Now make up the cover.** Place right sides together. If you're unsure which side to use, review Part Three.

- ✂ Pin or baste (with the wrong side facing you) and sew all around. Don't forget to leave an opening on one side. It doesn't matter which of the four sides. Leave about two inches for turning right side out.
- ✂ Finger press. Turn right side out. Press again.
- ✂ Take the ribbon and cut to three inches in length. Fold under each end one-quarter inch.
- ✂ Place the ends together so that one half overlaps the other, with the small seam allowance behind one end as shown. The ribbon will lie flat.
- ✂ Whip stitch (overhand) one and one-quarter inches from the edge of the cover, at the center point, on the non-embroidered side. See pattern for location. Leave the looped portion free so that it can go around the button.

If you want, you can make a self-fabric loop that will match the cover (or the lining). It is bulkier, but can be quite smart looking.

Cut a piece of main fabric 3 inches by 3/4 inches. Fold in half lengthwise and seam from end to end. Don't leave a turning opening. Trim the seam to one-sixteenth inch. Take a fat needle (tapestry will do) and using thread that is doubled, whip over the seam of one end several times. Insert the back end of the needle down into the tube and push it through until you can grab it at the other end. Keep

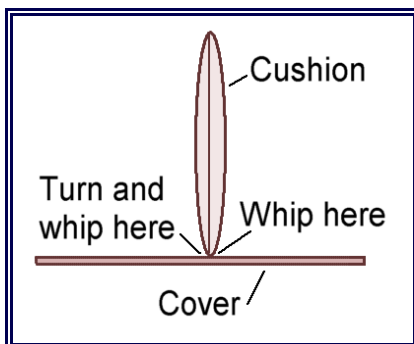


pulling and the tube should start pulling through. When you have turned it all the way, press so that the seam is directly down the center on the back side. Turning out tubes can be tricky and there are a few tools to help you do it. But on this short length, you should not have too many problems. Finish as indicated for the ribbon.

- ✿ Sew the shank button at the center on the opposite edge of the cushion cover. See pattern marking “X”. The button will be sewn on the very edge of the lining seam. To sew on the button, you can knot the thread, or make several tiny back stitches prior to placing the button on the fabric. Sew the button so that the hole in the shank follows the seam - you don't want it facing the lining or main cover. Pick up the very edge of the lining, going through the shank opening, and continuing this about 10 times until it is firmly anchored. Knot the thread with a tiny bullion knot. Go back and forth at the fabric edge again several times. That is, put the needle and thread through the lining (not through the button), then through to the front and repeat. It doesn't have to be through the same holes. Snip off the thread. By making a knot and then having a few more stitches, it prevents the knot from coming loose so easily through repeated use. It's an extra anchor.

**3. We're ready for the needle holder.** Fold the rectangle so that it is almost a square. It will be slightly narrower than the cushion cover.

- ✿ With the pearl cotton, make neat blanket stitches around the three open sides. You need not start with a knot. Slide the needle and thread a ways up the inside of the fold, just skimming the felt surface, and bring your needle up on the outside edge. This is a good “eyeing” drill. Try to keep your stitches the same depth and the same distance apart. The more stitches, the prettier the outline. Don't, however, make them closed. Keep the distance about an eighth inch apart. That's more traditional for this type of work, and will help you build your skills for eyeing distances when you can't count the ground.



- ✿ Place three stitches in a fan shape at the two upper corners.

- ✿ End as you started: inside the fold.

**4. Putting Everything Together:** All the individual pieces are now complete and you need to do the final step.

- ✿ Lay the cover so that the wrong (inside) side is facing you. Fold in half on the center line and crease to get the center point.

Place the cushion so that one end is exactly on the center crease of the cover. Center it carefully. Whip stitch or slip stitch in place. Don't allow the needle and thread to go through to the front of the cover. Keep all stitches within the lining. Skim your needle between the two.

This is not a flat surface and the bulk gets in your way. Stitch as close to the seam of the cushion



as you can. When one side is done, whip the other side down.

- Take the needle holder and place the folded end next to the cushion at the center. Whip it down as neatly as possible. By this time, everything is in the way. You probably won't get very tiny stitches. That's fine. Just make them as neat as possible. Don't take big bites into the cushion or the cover.



You have finished the pin cushion. Rejoice! Aren't you proud of yourself? It's the perfect gift to give to yourself. It will give you years of service.

**Christening robe, fine whitework circa 1900**

## Books in Your Library

Everyone new to embroidery or hand sewing is excited about purchasing books and patterns. The following are basic to any needleworkers library and you will find them invaluable resources as you progress in skill. There are many other books on the market. Some of them merely pretty pictures with less than accurate information. Some of the embroidered works that are included in their pages leave a lot to be desired. Others with details and instructions that will amaze you and greatly enhance your skills. How will you know which to buy? By studying the authorities as indicated in the list below, by talking with knowledgeable embroiderers, and by joining guilds such as the Embroiderer's Guild of America.

de Dillmont, Thérèse. ***Encyclopedia of Needlework***. Philadelphia: Running Press, 1978.

Roberts, Melissa. ***Plain Needlework***. Sautee, Georgia: Hollis & Bell, 2000.

\*Thomas, Mary. ***Mary Thomas's Dictionary of Embroidery Stitches***. New York: Grammercy Press, 1934 edition which is still available. It has been reprinted, but this edition is still the standard.

Sarah Howard Stone. ***French Hand Sewing***. Self-published: 1981.

For an inexpensive, accurate booklet showing a multitude of stitches: Coats & Clark. ***100 Embroidery Stitches***