

The Art of Embroidery Series

From the Beginning
A Primer

Section Four — Samplers

Dianne Lewandowski
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Dianne Lewandowski
315 Congress - Oconto, Wisconsin 54153
920 835-4240
www.HeritageShoppe.com
dianne@heritageshoppe.com

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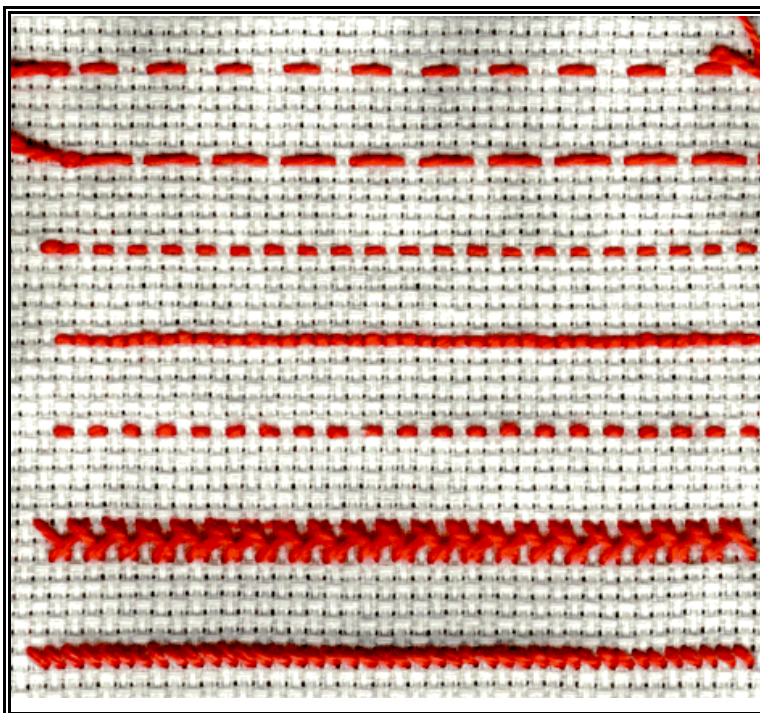
Samplers

The Age-Old Art Of Samplers

A sampler is any piece of cloth on which stitches of any type are executed. Although typically thought of as those cross stitch or open work designs accomplished in past centuries in Western Europe or the U.S., many needleworkers throughout the world have used samplers as a means of study. This was particularly true prior to readily available written text. These samplers were used as a written record which was passed from stitcher to stitcher, one generation to another. They were also used in the embroidery industry to choose fillings for oft-repeated designs.

Although today we generally think of them as neat little squares, perhaps a dozen to a piece of cloth, in truth these were often no more than doodle cloths, with a variety of techniques stitched without connection to one another. You may find an obliquely shaped small piece of cloth with a single work of needlelace, padded satin or other stitches interspersed with no mind to neatness, just as easily as you will see those that have only needlelace stitches accomplished in neat rows. The needleworker referred to them often, especially if she was paid to work certain embroidery stitches.

You will find it beneficial to work your own samplers. Whether you do it in divided squares, adding stitches as you progress, or simply on any scrap of cloth, learn to keep them in some fashion. They can be slipped into plastic sleeves, or paper envelopes on which you note the stitches contained therein. Not only is this good practice, it also affords you a chance to look back at some future time and marvel at the progress you have made with time.



The First Sampler
from top to bottom

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Even basting | 5. Half back stitching |
| 2. Uneven basting | (picking stitch) |
| 3. Running | 6. Catch stitching (herringboning) |
| 4. Stitching (back stitching) | 7. Overhanding (Seaming) |

5 The Art of Embroidery

Use the eight-inch by eight-inch square of 14-count aida included with this book, and a length of perle cotton (18- to 20-inches long) also supplied. Practice the stitches outlined in the following pages. You can refer to this sampler of sewing stitches often as you go on and work the projects. The aida cloth will give you the practice with stitches large enough to actually see how they are accomplished, makes a good reference, and also allows you to get a good command of tension. If you feel incapable after completing this sampler, don't be alarmed. Each project that follows in this series will give you further competence in the required skills.

The sampler illustration shows basic stitches common to most items sewn. Some are used in embroidery as well, such as running stitch, back stitching, catch stitching. In embroidery vocabulary, catch stitching is called herringbone stitch. You will notice this stitch used in all manner of ways, whether for fine tailoring, beautiful embroidery borders or shadow embroidery.

When you have completed the sampler on the aida, practice the stitches on muslin. You can follow the grain of the fabric, or draw lines with pencil.

The mark of an expert sewer or embroiderer is consistency in stitch size, spaces between stitches, and tiny stitches (16 to 20 per inch). If you have never had any experience, you may not be able to do more than 6 to 10 stitches per inch for quite some time. The important thing to remember is to constantly strive to make smaller and smaller stitches. Each time you baste or sew a seam, be conscious of each stitch: for it is the individual stitches, lovingly made, that create the whole work. Just as an artist painstakingly defines each brush stroke, you will be learning to craft each stitch one at a time.

At this point, you might be wondering why you should practice these stitches if you want only to embroider. The following will help to change your mind about them.

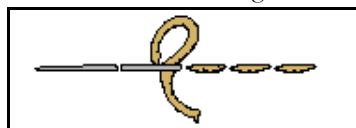
Running stitch is used in darning patterns such as Lithuanian embroidery, as a ground for St. George stitch, cloud filling stitch and a host of other embroidery stitches. Back stitching is used in blackwork, cross stitch, pulled work, fancy hem work and others. Uneven running is the foundation for padded whitework. Also, by practicing them, your stitching becomes more precise, and that is the clue to your achieving skill in embroidery.

Even Basting or running stitch



Over 2 squares, under 2 squares

Uneven basting



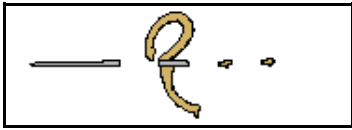
Over 3 squares, under 1 square

Back Stitching



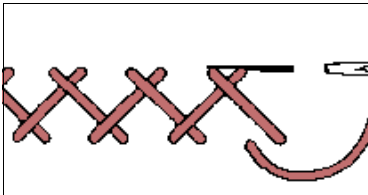
Back 1 square, forward 2 squares

Picking Stitch



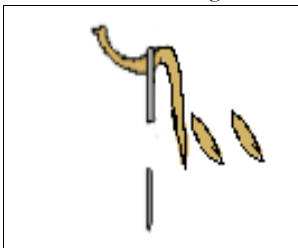
Back 1 square, forward 3 squares. This stitch also called half back stitching.

Herringbone or catch stitching



Down and left over two horizontal and two vertical squares. Come up left one square. Up and right over two horizontal and two vertical squares. Come up left one square.

Overhanding

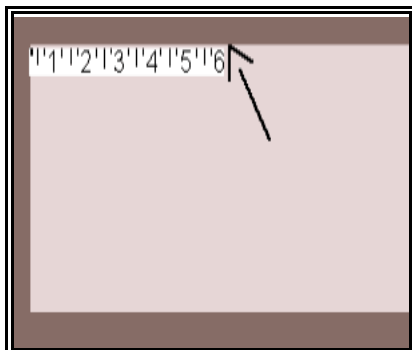


Diagonally: over and up one square and to the left one square. Bring needle up one square below.

A special note about overhanding. The modern term often used is whip stitching. This stitch is used anytime you need to sew down one piece of fabric, trim or string to another. It is an excellent stitch to join two pieces of fabric. This can be for joining selvage edges to increase the size of a tablecloth when fabric is not wide enough, or to attach a sole of a baby bootie to the top portion of the slipper. When worked with larger stitches further apart, it is referred to as overcasting.

The Second Sampler – Muslin

When your sewing sampler on aida is completed, follow the directions below to prepare fabric to repeat this sampler, and then to go on and learn some embroidery stitches on which you can apply to your first embroidery project.

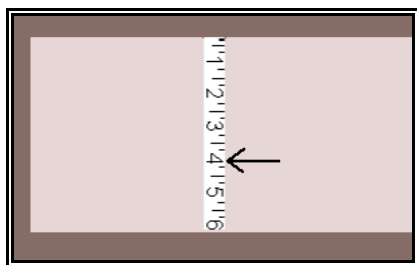


Measure across six inches

Measure across six inches from the left edge of the fabric (the edge that was cut when finding the grain in Part Three).

Lift up a ground thread at the six-inch mark.

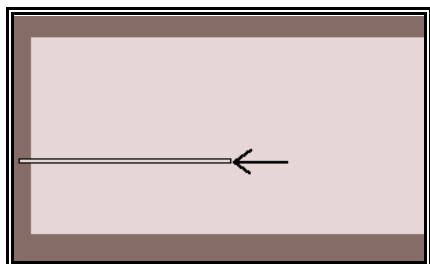
Begin pulling a short distance. Don't go all the way down. Gather (pull) up about two inches. **Stop.** Straighten the fabric.



Mark with needle at 4-inches

From the top edge, measure down four inches. You should be able to see the thread you were pulling as it often stands up.

Place a needle at the four-inch mark and lift the thread. Snip it. Pull out the entire four inches.



Pull a thread to the left edge from the 4-inch mark.

Now, cut along this line. When you get to the four-inch mark, stop. Place a needle and lift the thread so you can pull a thread back six inches to the left edge of the fabric (illustration at left).

You should now have two pulled thread lines. Cut along these lines. The resultant fabric will be perfectly on grain at a measurement of six-inches by four-inches.

Fold it edge to edge to make sure, and steam press and pull it back into shape at opposite corners, if necessary.

Do the above a time or two on muslin to understand the process before proceeding to more expensive fabrics. You can use these small strips for practicing your sewing and embroidery stitches as you are introduced to them.

The question now becomes: “How do I duplicate the stitches on this muslin?” After all, there aren’t any holes to readily see.

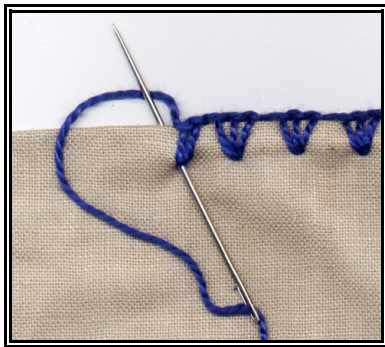
You count the ground threads. That may seem absolutely impossible at first. But before long, your eyes will adjust. You will handle the needle so that, as it picks up a section of fabric, those threads are just as plain as can be.

But in the very beginning, before that becomes apparent, simply try to be “even” in your stitching. When you’re feeling confident, see if you can pick up just one (or two) thread(s) of the ground each time. Then try for three and four. Pretty soon, you’ll be whipping along like a professional.

Embroidery Sampler

Now you know the basics of embroidery and hand sewing. At this point, you should have the right tools to work with, know how to manipulate them, and are developing the habit of samplers as you learn a stitch or technique. You’ve learned the value of starting large and then going down in size.

You can purchase linen in lovely even weaves from very coarse (10-ct) to very fine (60+ct.),



although in the finer ranges, it often isn't truly even weave. As you progress in embroidery, you can practice (sample) stitches on these fabrics, rather than aida. 32 to 50-ct is a good mid-weight.

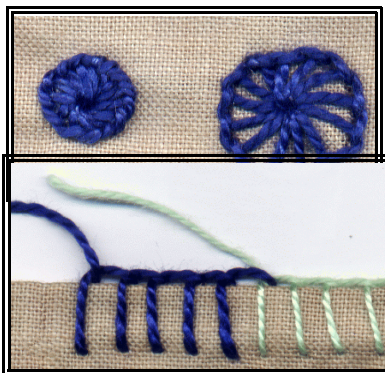
There are just a few embroidery stitches and finishing techniques you should add to your vocabulary before you begin actual projects. Although not immediately apparent, they are used in most embroidery and sometimes in hand sewing. They impart simplicity as well as elegance, depending upon where and how they are used.

The first is **blanket stitch**. Don't look down at the lowly blanket stitch. Learn to do it well. Use this stitch to edge blankets, afghans, raw seams (to prevent raveling), in short, any edge that needs protecting or beautifying in some way. It is the basic staple of cutwork embroidery. It is also the stitch used to make fine laces, where it is called tulle stitch.

To keep the stitches even across the edge, when drawing the needle through, pull the thread in the direction you are stitching – to the left in this example.

You can do this stitch facing you or turned away from you, as in the illustration. You can work it left to right, or right to left (shown).

Blanket stitch worked in groups of three – and often used as an alternative to single stitching, is shown above. This creates a very decorative edge on garment cuffs, plackets, pockets, tray mats, napkins, etc.



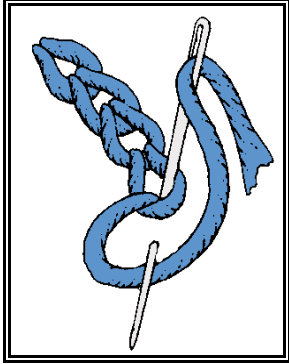
Pull the first stitch to the right, the center stitch straight up and the third stitch toward the left.

Blanket stitch again – this time worked in a circle. The one at left is closed blanket, in that there is no space between the stitches and all stitches come out of a central hole. Use it for simple flowers, belt grommets.

The illustration at right is open blanket stitch. There are spaces between the stitches and it has been long used to represent simple flowers. If you put the loop portion of the stitch at the center, it can be used for punched or cut holes.

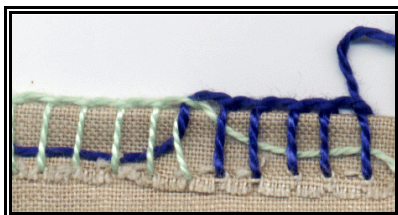
Starting and Ending Threads. Joining threads should be done in such a manner so as to maintain a smooth appearance. Should the need arise, the following should help you.

Stop the first thread (light green) and park the needle/thread above where you are working.



Slide the new thread (blue) under the backs of the first thread and bring it up under the last loop as shown. After making a few stitches with the new thread, slide the first thread (green) underneath the current stitches shown in blue.

Chain Stitch. Used in many periods of embroidery, from the very early works to modern compositions. Its use is prominent in wool (crewel)



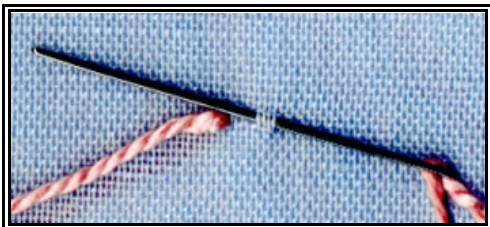
embroidery, pulled work, Elizabethan (raised) embroidery, Schwalm¹, Hedebo² and many others, and can be used as a foundation for padded stitchery as well as needlelace.

Entire embroideries are accomplished with chain stitches. They are called tambour embroidery, worked with a special tool that resembles a fancy crochet hook. It is embroidered in a tambour frame.

A versatile stitch, it can be twisted, zigzagged and whipped. When worked as a single stitch, it is often referred to popularly as lazy daisy stitch. This references the rather poor embroideries worked after the 1920's. Abandoning the more tedious padded stitches, embroiderers opted for the quicker, simpler flowers and leaves with petals formed from the more correct term **detached chain stitch**.

The important technique to remember when producing this stitch is to **always** go back down in the same hole where the needle came up. A common mistake made by beginners is putting the needle back down a small distance away. As always, keep stitches very tiny. Keep your stitches even (always over the same number of ground threads). When working a long row, couch down the last loop with a tiny stitch over the loop to hold it in place.

When making a single, detached chain – which must have a tiny couching stitch at the end to anchor the loop – do not pull the loop tightly. Use a slack tension so that you have a nice, rounded effect. Always go back down in the **same** hole from which you came up as shown in illustration.

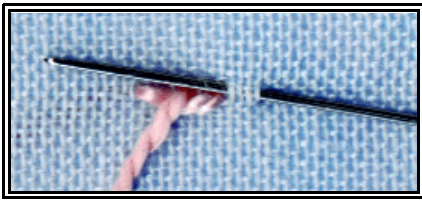


Stem or Outline Stitch. The basic staple of embroidery. It is another stitch that you will find in many types of embroideries, from the simple to the sublime. Along with its cousin, the outline stitch, this stitch was one of the first invented for embellishment.

How to make the first stem/outline stitch on a line of

¹Embroidery peculiar to the Schwalm region of Germany.

²Embroidery from Denmark worked in three distinct time periods and often referred to as old, intermediate, and new Hedebo.



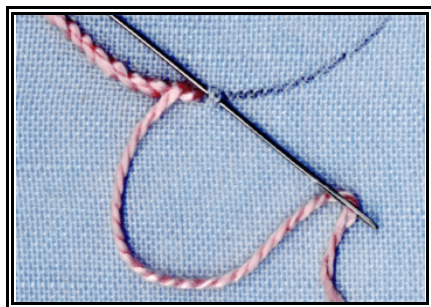
stitching. If every time you do a stem (outline) stitch, you pick up 4 ground threads, then your first stitch must be over 8 threads. Come back halfway, and continue going over four, then back up to the previous hole.

Pull the thread through. Now, pick up the next 4 stitches (2mm), coming up in the same hole where the last stitch was made

as shown.

Keep your stitches very tiny, and the thread always down (left). The number of ground threads picked up will depend upon the density of the ground and the size of the thread and design element.

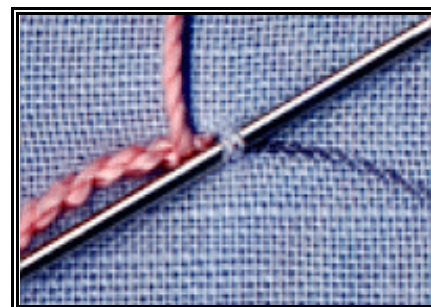
Always come up in the same hole from the previous stitch. To keep nice curved shapes, shorten the stitch length. That may mean going over as few as 2 threads of the ground. As you get to the end of a line of stitching, shorten and/or lengthen slightly your last few stitches to fit the space remaining.



You may see this stitch referenced as South Kensington, a term which originated in the late 1800's as a result of a surge in popularity of the teachings of the Royal School of Needlework in England. The only problem was that Kensington stitch was a term used for at least three different stitches: stem/outline, plumaria, and split stitch. This is a good example of why we shouldn't rename stitches on a whim.

Outline Stitch. Related to the above stitch (and sometimes referred to as Kensington Stitch), the thread is always kept above (or to the right). Again, keep your stitches tiny and come up in the same hole of the last stitch.

A special note about stem and outline stitch that I hope you discover through the process of



stitching. The floss/yarn handles differently between the two. In one, it twists up considerably, and in the other, it untwists as you stitch. This has to do with pushing the thread up or down against the natural twist of the floss. Since thread is wound as a double helix (identical on both ends), it won't matter which way you thread the needle. Use whichever stitch keeps your thread tightly wrapped, rather than flattening out. (Refer to the section on "S" and "Z" twist under threads). You can also watch your thread as you stitch so that you maintain the original twist of the floss. Let the needle hang down freely and allow the thread to get back to normal.

More notes on these stitches. You may see this stitch illustrated wide (slanted) and not going back into the previous hole. These are interpretations of this stitch to create different effects.

You will also find, as you read different books on embroidery techniques (such as Brazilian embroidery), that different authors reverse the terms. That is, stem stitch will be with the thread up, and outline with the thread down. There may not be any firm consensus on this issue, and in the case of Brazilian embroidery, probably has to do with the rayon thread, a Z twist, being used. The above illustrations are the most commonly employed.

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One last, but important, note on this stitch. An alternative is practiced by the Chikan³ embroiderers of India. I sincerely hope you will put it into practice, also. That being, use a stem or outline stitch on the **backside** of the work. This creates an even backstitching on the front.

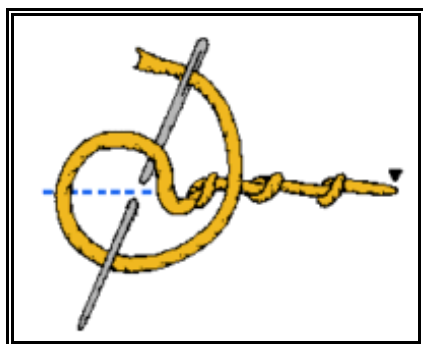
Doing this may require you retracing your lines on the back (wrong) side of the fabric so that you can more easily see them. Some fabrics are sheer enough, and the lines are dark enough, that this may not be necessary. If needed, putting the cloth on a window will make the tracing marks show through.

Also, make your stem (outline) stitches slightly larger and lighten up on the tension, otherwise the tiny stitches will pull into the fabric and not stand out.

On a scrap of muslin, do the backstitching and notice that it creates a stem stitch on the back side. Why not reverse this process and simplify your embroidery?

This the last stitch we will discuss. It is **coral stitch**. This knot stitch is used in hemstitching as well as whitework (most notably Schwalm embroidery), and in modern works to add bold design features.

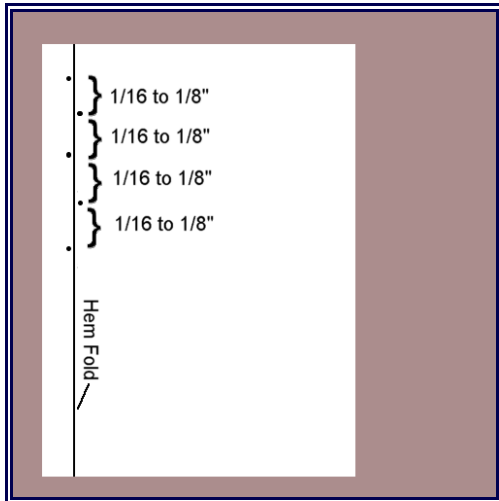
Practice it first on your sampler with embroidery floss or pearl cotton. Since coral stitch is a chunky stitch, use a pearl cotton 5 or broder thread 12. Or, simply use all six strands of cotton floss, without stripping them first.



How far to space the stitches? In fine whitework, they almost touch one another. In bolder designs, they are further apart. Try practicing it on muslin going over 5 threads of the ground. Try it every quarter inch. Do it different ways and get a good feel for how it looks.

When you understand the workings in embroidery, go on to the following exercise.

³Chikan is pronounced chicken, with equal emphasis on both syllables.



Plain & Fancy Hemming

Plain Hemming. In this section, we will learn both types of hemming techniques. Plain hemming is such a valuable tool to learn. I have several old garments, and have seen many others. The fineness of these stitches is something to behold. Hemming was one of the first techniques taught to little girls. Their skills in all areas of sewing distinguished them, and was a requisite for a suitable mate.

Square up a piece of muslin that is three inches by six inches. Fold one long side a scant sixteenth inch. Fold up again one-quarter inch. Baste along this second fold to prepare for the hemming.

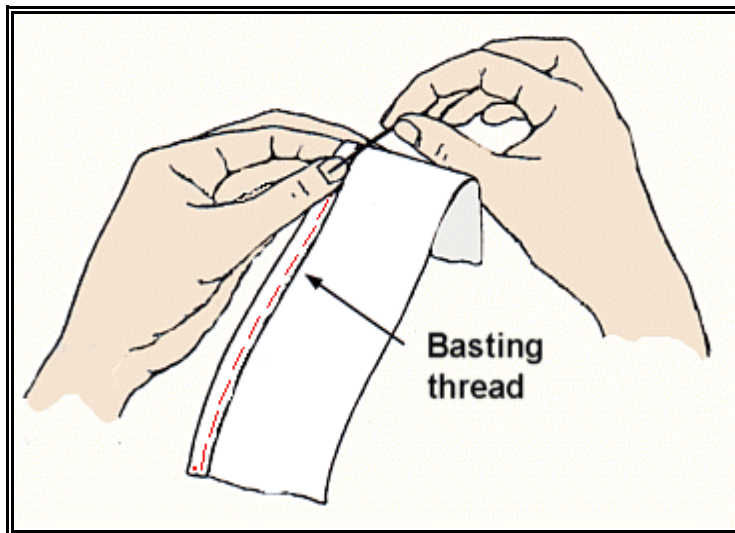


Illustration from Melissa Robert's *Plain Needlework*

Using matching thread and appropriate needle, anchor the thread at the inside of the fold

Fold the fabric, wrong side up, over the second (index) finger of your non-dominant hand as shown in the illustration on previous page.

Pick up just a few ground threads at the edge of the fold on the main fabric, then insert into the hem fold, picking up only one or two threads of the fold. The needle should be angled so that it is pointed toward your left (non-dominant) shoulder.

Continue in this manner, adjusting the fabric over your finger as you go along.

It doesn't matter whether you go diagonally over the ground threads in the body of the fabric, straight up and down (parallel to the hem fold), or perpendicular to the hem fold. The object is to only pick up one or two ground threads so that you can barely see the stitch on the right side. When you pick up stitches at the fold, make certain it is at the **very edge of the fold**, again picking up only a couple of ground threads. Not only do you not want any stitches showing on the right side, but you don't want to see much thread on the wrong side where you are stitching.

It is very important to maintain even distances between the point at the hem fold, the point on the ground, and going back into the hem fold. That is, always making every stitch 1/8-inch. On very

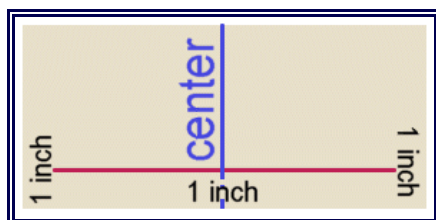
fine fabrics, or for items that will get a lot of use, a shorter distance is better.

The use of a thimble on the third (middle) finger of the dominant hand is helpful for heavier fabrics. If you use a thimble, you will first pick up the threads, then push the needle through with the thimble. The eye end of a tiny needle is sharp. If you do not use a thimble, you will have to build up callouses. That being said, on the fine materials we are using for our final project, there is little resistance and you will probably not suffer any consequences. But, if you are determined to learn to hand sew, you should purchase a thimble and learn to use it on this project.

When the hem is sewn down, remove the basting stitches.

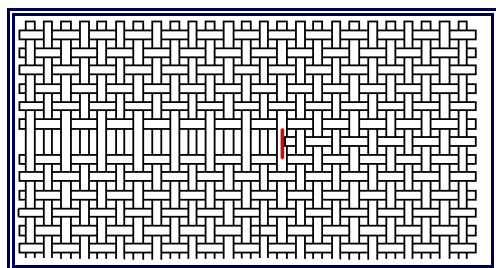
Hemstitching is basic to many projects. Used in place of plain hemming, it is a decorative feature that will set your work apart from most others. Whether it is on a napkin, a pocket, placket, or a skirt, hemstitching is not only pretty, but it is stable. It also teaches you a lot about controlling fabric and threads. Once the threads are withdrawn, the most tedious part of the process, the work goes quickly. You will gain skill in counting threads, and will learn to see them much better.

Preparing for hem stitching. Use a scrap of muslin that is approximately 4 inches by 6 inches. You will do the following on the **wrong** side of the cloth. Since it is unlikely you can tell the difference, one side will always be designated as the side which will maintain a proper finish, and the other side of the cloth will always be thought of as the back side. The side you use for the following thread withdrawal will, from now on, always be considered the back (or wrong) side of the work.



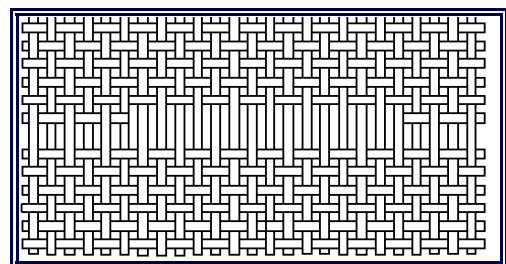
Fold the cloth in two and crease to find the center. At this center, measure up one inch from the bottom. With a needle, lift the thread at the mark, rock back and forth until it is free of the ground, then snip with sharp scissors. See red mark in illustration. All threads will be removed leaving a one-inch bottom margin. In other words, withdraw threads from the side where five inches of space remains, not on the side with the one-inch bottom margin.

This is your hem. We are withdrawing threads above the hem.



This next step is the hardest, so allow yourself plenty of time without any stress. No matter how many years you do this, the first thread is always the meanest to handle. There are problem-solving solutions at the end of these instructions.

Grab one cut end of the snipped thread and remove it all the way across the material. Go back to the center, grab the other cut end, and repeat across the other side of the material.



Back at the center, above the first one you snipped, snip a second thread. Gently remove this thread until it is within one inch of one side. Leave the excess thread dangling free. Be careful in the removal process. You do not want it to break. If yours breaks, don't despair. At the end of the following instructions you will find a remedy.

Notice carefully in the illustrations above and on the following page, where in the weave this thread was stopped – directly in front of a thread going in the opposite direction.

Remove the other half to within one inch of the opposite edge. Don't cut the threads at this time. Leave

them dangling.

Back at the center, snip a third thread and remove this thread exactly as you did the first thread – all the way across the material.

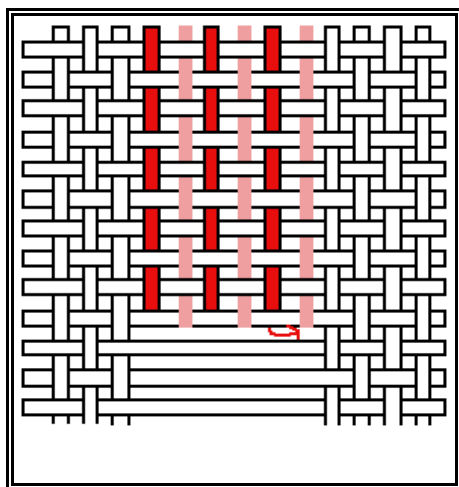
Remove the fourth, being careful not to break it, to within an inch of the end, like the second thread.

Remove the fifth thread like the first: all the way across.

Remove the sixth thread as the second, within an inch of the fabric edge.

Remember the threads you left dangling? There should now be three loose threads on either side – shown in red in the illustration.

At one side, thread the second drawn thread (shown in red) into a tapestry needle. Weave it into the space left by the first drawn thread. Repeat at opposite side. This weaving is the pink portion of the graphic.

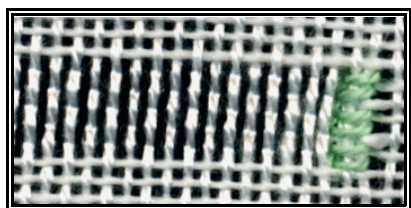


Repeat this weaving process on the remaining threads. Be careful to go under and over to maintain the weave. See illustration.

Fixes for Less Than Perfect Withdrawn Threads

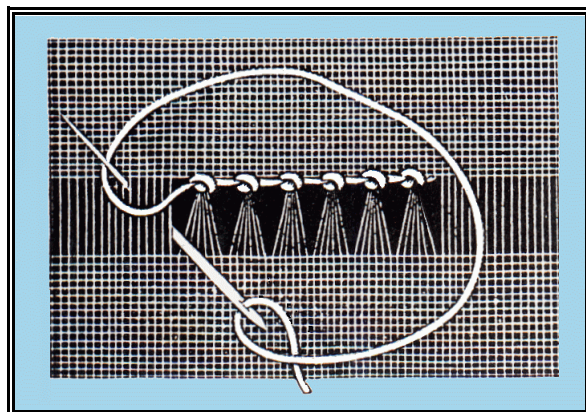
What happens when those second, fourth and/or sixth threads breaks? Pull them out all the way across.

Unravel a ground thread from the edge of the muslin. Thread it into a needle. Starting at the outside edge, weave it into the open area, (red portion of illustration on previous page) maintaining the correct woven pattern, turn and fill the space left by the other pulled thread (shown in pink). **NOTE:** If the muslin thread is fuzzy and difficult, remove a thread in the opposite direction. For instance, if you unraveled a weft thread – which is more likely to be unruly, now unravel a warp thread.



If you just can't grasp this but you want to do a drawn thread hem, remove five or six threads to within an inch of each end. Snip them clean to the cloth. With matching sewing thread, on the RIGHT side, buttonhole over the edge of the opening made by the pulled threads. This is shown in the illustration using contrasting thread.

The thread you use for this buttonholing should be about the same weight as the ground thread of the fabric. On muslin, ordinary sewing thread, about 60/2 weight should be just fine. The fabric in the illustration is an 18-count even weave. Pearl cotton size 8 closely matched this ground.



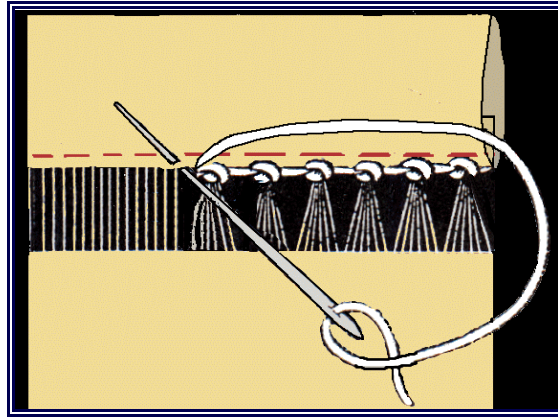
Now for the fun part: Knotted Hem Stitch. You don't need a hoop for this, which is why we started with a narrow, rectangular sampler size. Having withdrawn the threads and neatened the edges, we're ready to begin.

You will need a fine tapestry needle, and thread about the size of the threads in the ground or very slightly larger. You don't want chunky thread for this. The object is to hide it but show off the patterning that results from the hemming.

- ✿ On the wrong side, make a bullion or glover's knot with your chosen thread. Do this right at the corner of the open border.
- ✿ Pick up 5 (or 6) threads of the ground. Make a coral stitch as shown in the illustration above.
- ✿ Pull the thread up and to the left so that the knot faces left. The knot shouldn't face right sometimes, or straight up part of the time, but always face left.
- ✿ Pick up the next 5 (or 6) ground threads and make another coral stitch. Continue in this manner

until you get to the end of the opened border. Knot as before.

- You may have to adjust the number of threads you “knot” when approaching the end (compensate). Even them out as best you can so that, on your last stitch, you aren’t knotting over just two or three threads of the ground. Compensation is a term used often in embroidery. It means to add or subtract stitches or threads to make something look precise and mimic the surrounding areas. If, in hemstitching, you always pick up 5 threads of the ground, when you get toward the end of the hem, there may be 19 threads left. You will pick up 3 groups of 5 and one group of 4. If there were 22 threads left, you would pick up 2 groups of 5, and 2 groups of 6. You would never want to pick up just 2 or 3 threads, but rather spread the excess number evenly over several groups.
- When the top side is complete, turn the work and do knotted hemstitching on the threads opposite the side you just finished. Your work will look like a ladder when all stitching is



complete.

This stitch can be a tad frustrating to get the rhythm. Go slow. Your non-dominant thumb will soon learn how to manipulate the thread in between stitches and put it in the proper position for the next stitch. Remember to keep the knots even across the row and all facing left.

The advantage of this stitch over antique or other hem stitching, is that no stitches show on the right side of the fabric. When complete, launder if needed, then press. Place this little sampler along with your other samplers.

If you wish, you can make another sampler. To prepare the fabric, follow the directions as outlined above. When the edges have been neatened, on the wrong side, fold the edge of the one-inch section a scant eighth inch. Fold again so that the first fold meets at the drawn thread line. Baste in place.



Anchor your thread inside the fold and work knotted hemstitching. This time, after you make the knot, you will pick up a thread (or two) at the fold. Don't go through to the front of the material, but only pick up at the fold. When finished with the hem, you can leave the threads unknotted at the opposite edge, or finish them as in the first sample. Either method is correct.

Fine whitework towel showing knotted hemstitching at lower border

Hand Made Buttonholes

Our final discussion of techniques will be the hand worked buttonhole. The second most frequently asked question I receive is how to make them. In these modern times, there are few resources readily available that discuss them. Your muslin sampler is a good spot for your first experience. There are several sound opinions on making hand buttonholes. I am including ones which have worked quite well for me.

In addition, there are several types of buttonholes: bar tacked ends (demonstrated here as they are the easiest); rounded ends; round one end, square other end; keyhole.

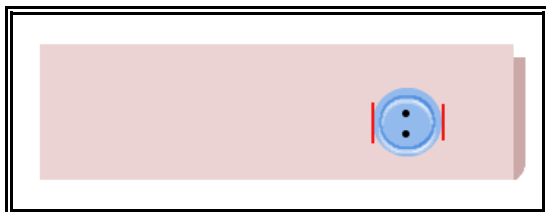
Use a single thread of ordinary 40/2 or 60/2 sewing thread, cordonnet (finer weights), tatting cotton, silk twist, lace thread. The type you choose is determined by the ground fabric (how sheer or heavy), the type of item (baby dress, man's shirt, suit jacket, slacks).

The buttonhole stitch is a knotted stitch and should not be confused with blanket stitch, which is a looped stitch. You use the buttonhole stitch because it is sturdier, withstanding the abrasion of the buttons, and better protects the fabric from raveling. Made properly (close, even stitches) a hand-made buttonhole is not only very attractive, but it will outlast machine-made ones. They do take a few tries before you become somewhat competent. Don't expect your first two or three to be in the excellent category. It might take a dozen or so.

You may also find it easier to practice making the slit across the weft threads rather than the warp thread. The fabric is a bit tamer in this direction.

☛ Use any button you have around the house. A half- to three- quarter- inch button is best for practice.

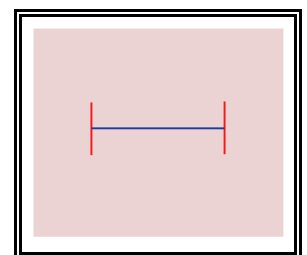
☛ Use a scrap of muslin about 4 inches by 6 inches. Fold this in half lengthwise so that the resultant strip is 2 inches by 6 inches.



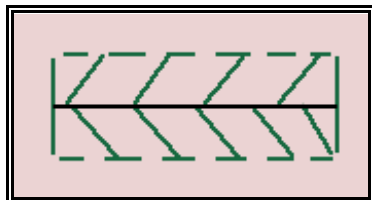
☛ Place your button anywhere on this folded cloth. Leave some room so you can make more than one.

☛ With a pen or pencil, place a mark at one edge of the button and then at the opposite edge (shown in red).

☛ Carefully cut along the grain line as shown in blue.



- Before proceeding, put the button through the opening to ensure it is sufficient in length. Snip a few more threads, if necessary, so that the button slips through fairly easily. You don't want the opening too large.



- Using 1 strand of thread that matches the color of your ground fabric (refer to the section on sewing threads), thread the appropriate needle (you might find a between handles better, but try a sharp, also). Knot, and come up from the backside. Make a running stitch 3 or 4 threads away on either side of the cut line (shown in green). Make one long stitch at the ends.



- When you get back to the point where you began, you can also whip around, as shown above, to prevent raveling on fabrics that need this treatment. It is especially helpful for beginners.
- Without rethreading, bring the needle up at the outside edge. (A different method is shown at the end).
- Take a stitch starting just below (touching) the running stitch outline, bring needle back to center opening but don't pull through.

- Pick up the thread from the eye of the needle and wind it around the needle as shown. Pull needle through and make the knot by continuing to pull the thread with your thumb and index finger. Pull firmly to set the knot.

- Continue in this manner across until you get to the end. Throw two or three threads (make two or three long stitches the length of the first long stitch). This is called a buttonhole bar and stops the button from pulling on the fabric.

- Continue around the other side. Throw two or three threads on the opposite side to create the bar. With needle and thread at back of work, finish off by sliding under the stitches. Snip close.

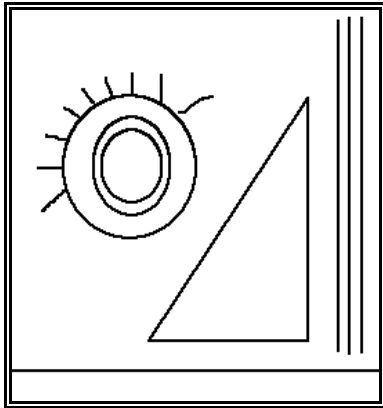


The buttonhole above is made left to right. When working in this direction, the thread from the eye end is wrapped counter clockwise round the needle. Remember, this method is worked from the outside edge to the center slit.

The buttonhole at left, a more traditional method, is made right to left; the

thread from the eye end wrapped clockwise. The needle goes from the center slit to the outside edge.

In addition on this coarser material, after the running stitch was worked, a whip stitch was made all around to prevent raveling.



In Conclusion

Now that you have practiced all the stitches in embroidery, make up a final sampler that incorporates a design of some sort. A design can be just straight lines, one stitch next to the other, some vertical, some horizontal.

Two examples are on the next page. However, don't stop here. Fill the motifs or simply outline them. Use variegated threads. Use different size threads with different textures, such as combining perle with floss, rayon with cotton. Try your hand at crewel and tapestry threads in combination with cottons or silks.

Use quarters, dimes, spools of thread to create templates for circles. A triangle can be any dimension, equal or uneven. Good design leaves plenty of white (empty) space around the motifs and usually contains an odd number of elements. A ruler helps make straight lines. Maybe you can make a circle look just like a flower? However, the point of this exercise is to use all the stitches you've learned to this point and combine them in such a way that you can use it in the future to teach someone else, or jog your own memory.

"Among all the branches of needlework, there is none more important than plain sewing. It is the basis of all other needlework." — T. de Dillmont