

Five essential hand embroidery stitches for beginners

Embroidery guide with step-by-step photo instructions



Welcome!

Hand embroidery is not just a craft—it's a world of endless possibilities. With just a needle, thread, and fabric, you can transform simple textiles into stunning works of art, decorate your household, or embellish your clothing. The versatility of hand embroidery makes it so exciting—you can create anything from intricate floral designs to bold geometric patterns, all with your unique touch. Learning these five basic hand embroidery stitches will lay great foundations for further embroidery projects and more complex stitches. Remember that hand embroidery is a very practical skill, so the best way to learn stitches is by making them. Start with basic shapes or lines to make learning as simple as possible.

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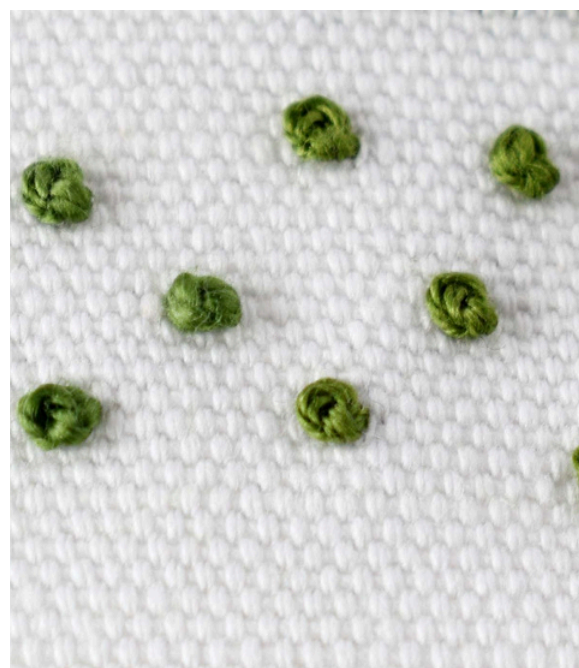


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Tools and materials

If you are just starting your embroidery adventures, you will only need basic supplies:

- Embroidery hoop. Choose a wooden embroidery hoop with a robust screw. A 6-8 inches (15-20 cm) hoop is an excellent size for the beginner.
- Piece of fabric (the size to fit the hoop). Natural, light-colored fabrics with a high thread count are great for most projects.
- Embroidery needles. Get a needle discovery pack of various sizes.
- Embroidery thread or floss. Even one skein of high-quality embroidery floss will be sufficient to start learning. If you are a beginner, avoid black threads, which are the worst for your sight.
- Tracing tool: A water-soluble pen, Friction pen, or even a simple pencil will work for tracing the lines on the sampler.



Preparation



First, wash and iron your fabric - it has to be clean and crisp to get the best results. Then, stretch your fabric in the hoop:

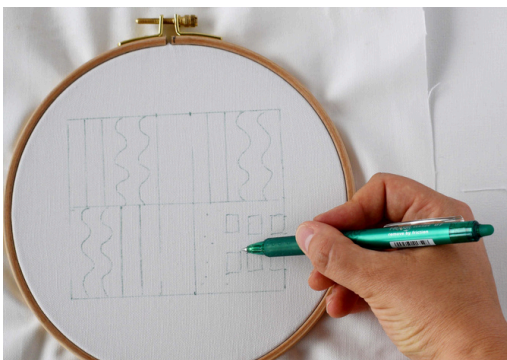
- Loosen the screw and separate the pieces of the hoop.
- Place the fabric over the inner part of the hoop and place the outer part with a screw on top.
- Push the outer hoop to match the inner hoop and start tightening the screw.
- At the same time, pull the edges of the fabric in all directions to increase the fabric tension.
- When you finish, the fabric has to stay taught in the hoop, and you should be able to make drum sounds with it.



Now, draw some straight and curved lines for the Running stitch, Backstitch, and Chain stitch.

Then, add some simple shapes to fill with a Satin stitch. Finally, sprinkle some dots for French knots in the spaces left.

Thread the needle and make a knot.

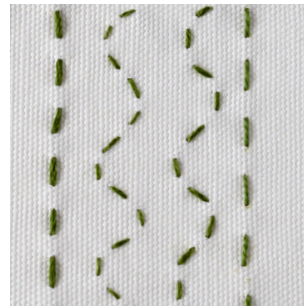


Running Stitch

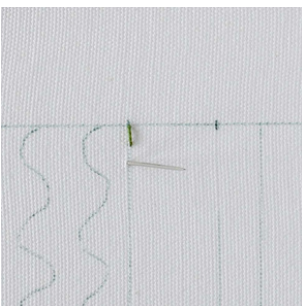
The Running Stitch is the basic stitch of hand embroidery, on which all other forms of sewing are based. The stitch is worked by passing the needle in and out of the fabric. The needle is continuously pushed through the cloth, starting on one side and ending on the other.



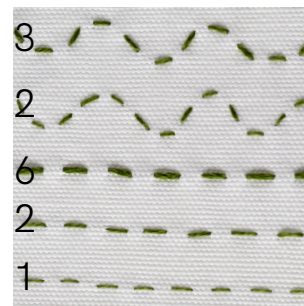
Take the needle to the surface and make a small stitch.



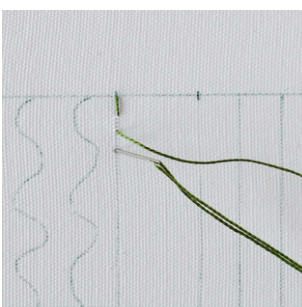
Repeat adding stitches to embroider the entire line.



Pull the thread to the back side of the fabric and take the needle to the surface, one stitch down on the mark.



To practice, embroider Running stitches of different lengths and with various numbers of strands of floss.



Make one more small stitch.

Backstitch

The Backstitch is one of the first stitches to learn when you begin to embroider. It has a vital role in hand embroidery. As the name suggests, the back stitch is made backward to the general direction of sewing.



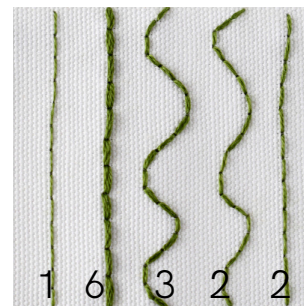
Take the needle to the surface one stitch away from the starting point.



Make one more Backstitch.



Make the stitch in the opposite way from the embroidery direction.



To practice, embroider Backstitches of different lengths and with various numbers of strands of floss. Also, practice how the stitches work on the curved lines.



Pull the thread to the back and take the needle to the surface, one stitch under the last one.

Chain Stitch

A Chain stitch is an embroidery stitch in which a series of looped stitches form a chain-like pattern. This simple hand embroidery stitch is great for outlining, filling, lettering, and border designs and as a part of other composite stitches, like Tulip or Wheatear stitch. In addition, this stitch is very handy when embroidering flowing, curvy lines.



Take the needle to the surface at the starting point. Pull the thread to the surface.



Gently pull the thread until the loop closes and no loose thread is left on the back of the fabric.



Push the needle down to the same hole, leave the loop of the working thread on the surface.

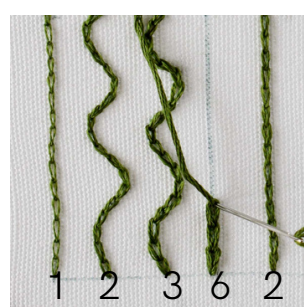
Push the needle down at the same point inside the first chain and leave the loop open to make the second chain.



Take the needle to the surface, one stitch up on the line, inside the loop, and pull the thread to close the loop.



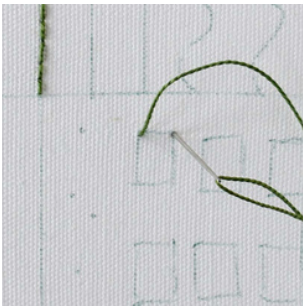
Take the needle to the surface, one stitch up on the line, inside the loop.



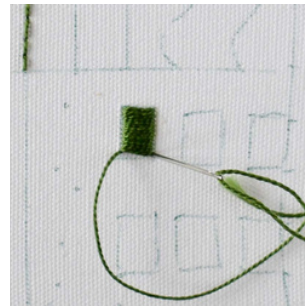
Practice with different numbers of strands. Also, try to embroider the Chain stitch on wavy lines.

Satin Stitch

Satin stitch, or Damask stitch, is a hand embroidery technique for dense filling. The stitch is worked by carrying the thread across the shape to be filled and returning underneath the material next to the made stitch.



Take the needle to the surface on one side of the figure and push the needle down on the other.



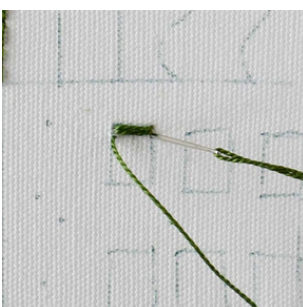
The stitches may be performed in any direction (vertically, horizontally, or diagonally).



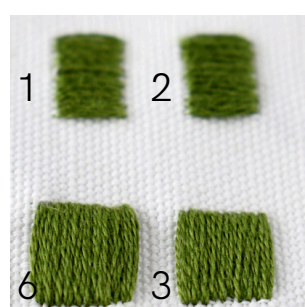
Take the needle up close to the starting point of the first stitch and make a parallel stitch to the other side of the shape.



When filling an irregular shape, start at the center, fill one side, and then move to the second half.



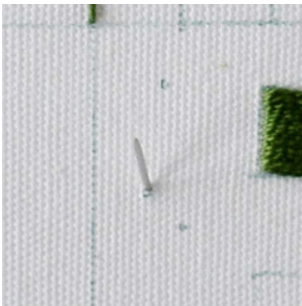
Continue adding parallel stitches until the shape is filled.



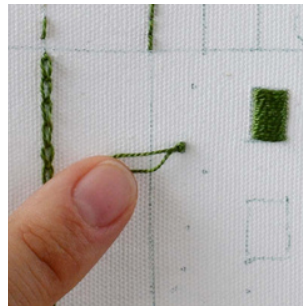
Embroider Satin stitch with a single strand of embroidery floss and with more strands. Also, fill the shape vertically, horizontally, and diagonally.

French Knots

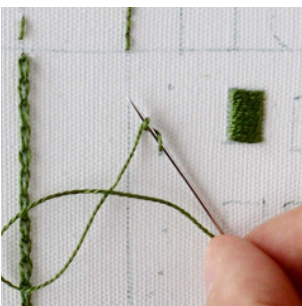
French Knot stitch is a textural decorative hand embroidery stitch. It has many uses, from filling areas and accent stitches to being part of complex composite stitches.



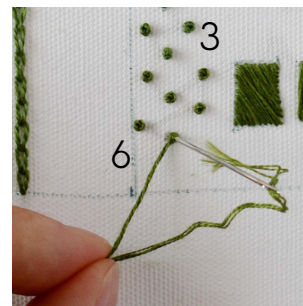
To make a French knot, take the needle to the fabric's surface and pull all the thread up.



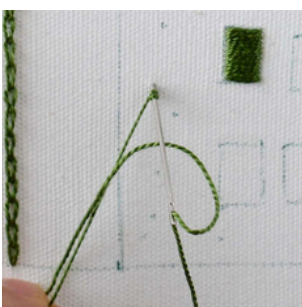
Pull the needle from the back side while holding the working thread in tension with another hand. Keep the thread in



Hold the needle in one hand and wind the thread around the needle two times with the other hand. Push the needle tip to the fabric close to the starting point. Hold the needle and pull the working thread to tighten the wound thread.



tension until the last moment when the knot is formed. This will help to avoid tangled threads



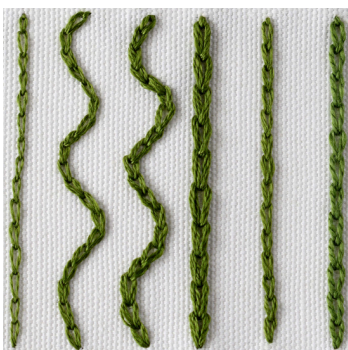
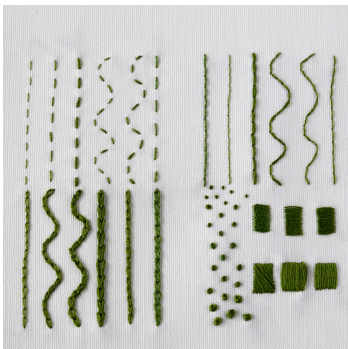
Push the needle tip to the fabric close to the starting point. Hold the needle and pull the working thread to tighten the wound thread.

This stitch requires some practice and patience. Try embroidering French knots with a single strand, two strands, or all six strands of embroidery floss. Note how the knot's size changes and which number of strands is your favorite.

on the Practical Embroidery blog

Additional resources

- If you need help choosing your supplies, read the "[Hand embroidery supplies, tools, and materials](#)" page where I listed my favorites.
- Wonder how to avoid knots and secure the stitches when you are done? Read "[How to start and end embroidery stitches](#)" for ideas and guidance.
- Want to practice the stitches you learned? Head to the [DIY projects and tutorials](#) page and choose your next hand embroidery project.



Why Practical Embroidery?

For the beginner, learning hand embroidery might be intimidating. When I started to embroider, I made all the possible mistakes - I chose the wrong fabric, bought low-quality threads, puckered the stitches, and had strange color combinations.

Then, I spent hours learning about needles, threads, hoops, scissors, and fabrics. I learned hundreds of hand embroidery stitches and tried various methods of transferring the patterns. I read books, learned with online courses, and even went to a fashion school, so you don't have to.



Questions?

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