

How to Cross-Stitch on Linen

What you will need:

- a ruler
- a good pair of scissors
- a size 20 tapestry needle
- embroidery floss
- linen (see Marking Sampler Chart and Instructions)
- Optional: 1 1/2" to 2" wide acid free tape or masking tape*

* If you do use masking tape, you need to be aware of the fact that it can be bad for the linen if left on the fabric. You should remove it right after you finish your project. Have someone help you at first when removing the tape from your needlework.

When you are just learning to cross stitch on linen, it is best if you can get a little help from a relative who stitches on linen or help from a local needlework shop. You really only need a little assistance to get started. It is nice to have someone watch you until you catch on. The wonderful thing about this ancient craft is that it does not take a long time to master...maybe ten minutes!

1. After you cut your linen to the right size (see Getting Started), take the acid free tape (1 1/2" to 2" wide is best) and put it around the edges of the linen. This way the edges of your linen won't fray. Put about 1/4 " of the linen on the tape.

There are various other methods that you can use to prevent your edges from fraying. You can whip stitch the edges, or you can use a sewing machine and zig zag the edges.

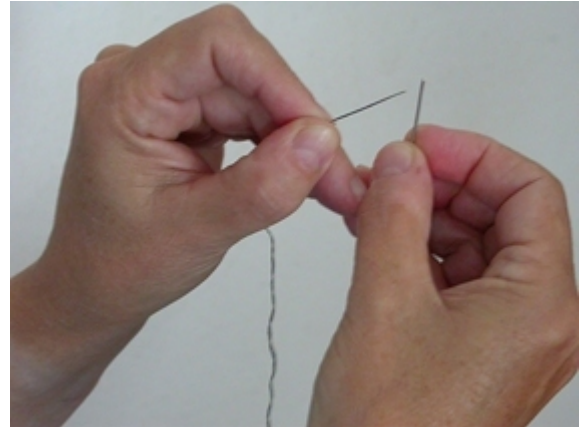
2. To begin, take your skein of embroidery floss, find the end of it and gently pull it out 18" long and cut it.

Next, you will notice that there are six strands to this piece of embroidery floss. You only need to use two strands. Separate out two strands from the other four strands.

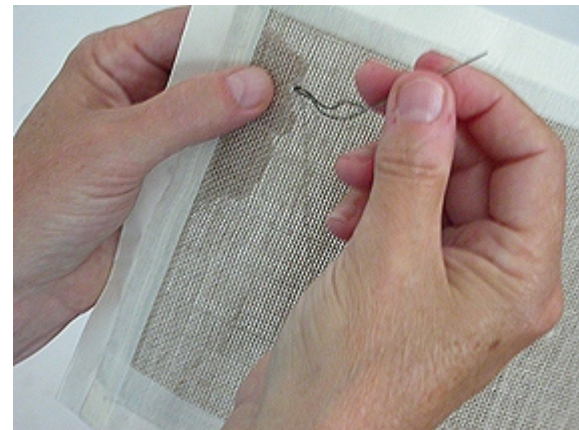


In order to separate the embroidery floss, with your thumb hold the separated pieces against your forefinger. Put your middle finger between the separated floss. While holding the two separate pieces of floss securely with your thumb, take the forefinger of your other hand and move your finger down. Continue to separate the pieces of floss. Once that is done, put aside the four strands of floss. You are ready to thread your needle.

3. Moisten the end of your two strands of embroidery floss so that it becomes stiff. Put it through the eye of the needle. You will want to pull it through about four inches in the beginning. As you continue to stitch, make sure that your embroidery floss does not double up with four strands instead of the two strands.



4. Now you are ready to begin! The size you have cut your fabric will give you a 2" border all around the design. Take your ruler and go down 2" from the top of the fabric and then measure 2" in from the side of the fabric. At that point (2" from the top & 2" from the side) bring your threaded needle from the back of the fabric through a hole in the fabric at that specific spot. Leave about one inch as a "tail" at the back of the fabric. You will not knot your fabric, but tuck the tail under your first few stitches. Knotting is a big "don't" in cross stitch!



5. Put your middle finger (of the hand you are holding the fabric with) and hold it over the one inch piece of floss at the back of the linen. Now begin to make your first stitch.

6. To make a stitch, bring up your threaded needle from the back of the fabric and from that starting point go up two fabric strands and go over two fabric strands and place your needle there. Pull it through all the way. It will look like a slanted line. (/)



7. Next, take your needle and go down two threads and bring your needle from the back of the fabric to the front and pull the thread up and cross over the slanted line and make an "X". The top part of your X will be two fabric strands apart and the bottom part of your X will also be two fabric strands apart. You have your first stitch completed.



Everyone teaches counted cross stitch with a method that they believe is correct. You will find many differing views on "how to begin stitching the chart". While it is, I believe, imperative to follow certain rules (see do's and don'ts below), I think it is also important that needlework should be

enjoyable. The way I will instruct you to stitch is the way I stitch. Others might have a different approach, but I like my method. By using it, I think you will have the least amount of counting errors! We therefore will NOT find the center of the graph, but will follow from No.4 above. You will measure 2" down from the top of the fabric and 2" from the side of the fabric and insert your needle and make your first stitch.



8. Now you will proceed to outline the entire marking sampler. By that I mean, you will cross stitch the "box" that is around the entire design. It is very important to stop every once and a while and count, as well as check your stitches to make sure that you did them properly! If you count this outline of your marking sampler correctly and do your stitches accurately, then it will be easier to count the alphabets and numbers and catch any future mistake you may make more quickly. If this outline of your marking sampler is inaccurately counted and you have too few stitches or too many stitches, or if any of your stitches are done incorrectly, then everything will be off on your entire sampler. If you make a mistake, it is important to take it out and correct it. You will be glad you did!

Do's and Don'ts of Counted Cross Stitch

1. Do make sure your hands are clean whenever you begin stitching.
2. Do keep your needlework in some type of clean bag (actually, we will make one this year for your work).
3. Do make sure when you stitch that the top threads of your "X" slant in the same direction. It doesn't matter which direction it slants as long as it goes in the same direction in your entire piece.
4. Do mark the top of your work (on the tape), with the word "top". The reason I say this is because since you will be doing the entire outline of your marking sampler, it is very important that you do NOT turn your work. Always keep the top of your work facing up or your stitches will go in different directions!
5. Don't squeeze your stitches. You do not want to make the cross stitch so tight that it pulls your linen and distorts the fabric.
6. Do weave the thread through four or five stitches at the back to end your work. Once you have started your work, you can begin in the same manner, by weaving it through four or five stitches at the back. As I mentioned earlier, you should never knot your work. Make sure that you keep all of your ends cut.
7. Don't take your thread from one area of work (two or more stitches) to another. It is better to end the stitches and begin in the other area with new stitches. You never want to see threads going from area to area on the back.
8. Do let your threaded needle hang down to unwind the thread. This will help your stitches stay as flat as possible.