

ITHACA CROSS STITCH

CROSS STITCH BASICS

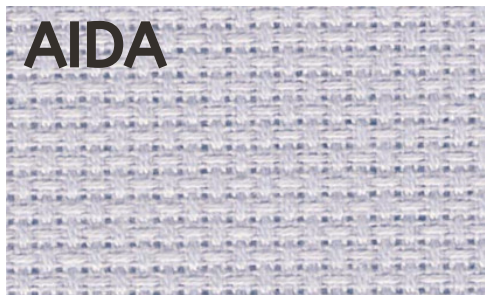
Cross stitch is a form of sewing that's comprised of X shaped stitches.

The fabric (Aida) has lots of holes in it in a grid like format, which allows you to easily stitch the crosses in straight lines, keeping your pattern really neat.

Aida can start off very stiff, but the more you handle it the softer it will be.

Don't worry about any creases you may get whilst stitching, you can iron these out once you've finished stitching.

The embroidery thread is made up of 6 strands. For the Ithaca pattern you will only need to use 2 of these strands at a time when stitching.



TO HOOP OR NOT TO HOOP?

Do you have to use a hoop when cross stitching? Short answer...no. It all comes down to personal preference. The benefit of using a hoop is that it keeps the material taut and makes it easier to see where to stitch. However sometimes, especially if you are stitching around the edges of the pattern, it is easier to stitch without the hoop. Try both and see which you prefer.

IN THIS KIT

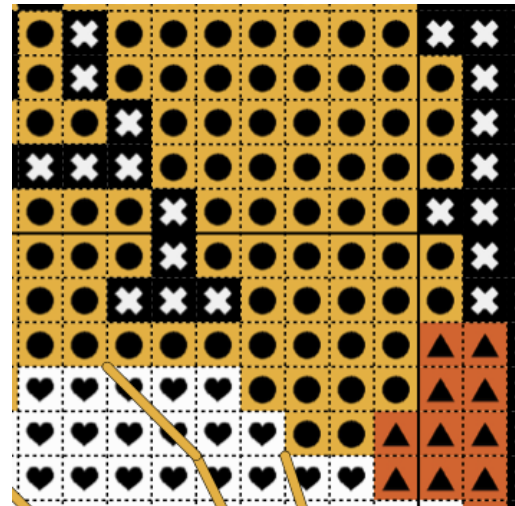
This kit includes: fabric, 6 inch embroidery hoop, pre cut thread, needle, A4 printed design, instructions. The only things you will need to provide is a pair of scissors (any scissors will do, but the sharper the better) and a pencil.

I'd also advise having something to store your cross stitch in when you're not stitching it just to keep it safe and clean. This can be anything; an envelope, a plastic wallet etc.

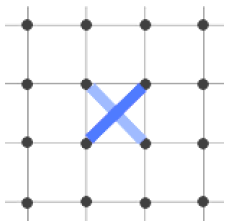
Once finished the pattern will be framed in the 6 inch embroidery hoop.

THE CHART & HOW TO READ IT

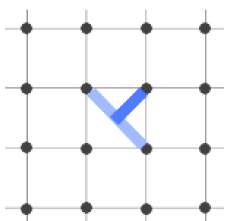
A cross stitch chart tells you everything you need to know about where to stitch, what type of stitch to use and what colour to use. Each square on the chart represents a cross stitch. The grid lines on the chart help you keep count of where you are. The colours & symbols on the chart correspond to the coloured threads listed in the pattern key and provided in the kit.



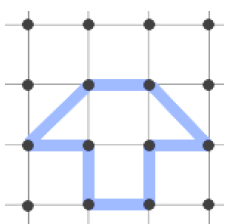
This pattern contains 3 types of stitches: cross stitch, 3/4 stitch and back stitch.



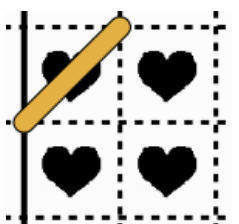
A cross stitch is comprised of 2 stitches crossing over one another diagonally. On Aida the stitches cross over one square of the fabric and use all 4 points of the square. On the chart each square represents a cross stitch.



A 3/4 stitch is comprised of 1 half diagonal stitch with a full diagonal stitch that crosses over it. On Aida it only uses 3 points of a square. They are represented on the chart by triangles..



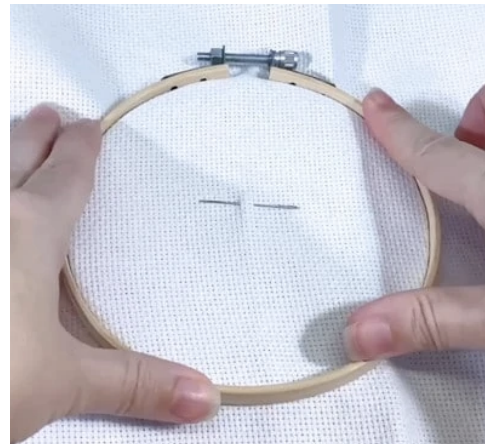
Back Stitch is a line of straight stitches. In the Ithaca pattern it is used to add detail and is stitched last, over the cross stitches. They are represented on the chart by thick straight lines.



PREPARING YOUR FABRIC, HOOP & THREAD

It's always best to start stitching any cross stitch from the centre point (or as close to the centre as possible). You can find the centre point of your Aida by folding it in half and then in half again, so you end up with a square a quarter of the size of the original fabric. The intersection of these two folds is your centre point. Use a pencil to make a slight mark on the fabric at this centre point and then unfold the fabric. This centre point mark corresponds to the intersection of the horizontal and vertical red lines on the chart.

Next, take your hoop and slightly unscrew the outer hoop enough that you can slip the inner hoop out. Place the inner hoop on a flat surface and lay your fabric on top (with the pencil mark facing down so you can't see it). Try to position the fabric so there is approximately the same amount of fabric hanging over the edge of the inner hoop on all sides. Feel where the edges of the inner hoop are and place the outer hoop on top. Use both hands to evenly push it down onto the inner hoop.



If the hoop feels too tight to push over the fabric then remove it, loosen the screw slightly, and try again. Alternatively if you are able to easily push the outer hoop over the inner hoop and the fabric feels loose, remove the outer hoop, tighten the screw a little more, and try again. It may take a few attempts before you are happy with the tension of the fabric.

Once the fabric is sitting well inside the hoop then slightly tighten the screw a little more to secure it in place. However if the fabric isn't quite positioned right then pull evenly on both sides to straighten it out before tightening the screw. Make sure not to just pull on one side of the fabric as you will distort the fabric which will then distort your stitches.

As the completed pattern will fill the entire space in the hoop you will need to reposition the fabric within the hoop as you stitch around the edges of the pattern to make sure you can access these parts of the fabric.

This entire pattern should be stitched using **2 strands** of thread. We will be starting by stitching with the yellow thread (code 3821) so take a length of this colour and separate the ends of the thread so you can see all 6 individual strands. Gently pull 2 strands away from the rest of the thread. Take it nice and slow or you may end up getting the strands tangled. Once you have separated 2 strands, thread them onto the needle and pull through to create a tail a few inches in length.

Do not pull it all the way through, the tail should only be a few inches long. Do not tie any knots in the thread.

TIPS FOR STITCHING

You're now ready to start stitching, but first some last minute tips...

- Always make sure you have clean hands before you start stitching, you don't want to end up with marks on your fabric or thread.
 - At the end of each stitching session take the fabric out of the hoop to prevent creases or distortion. Keep it somewhere safe and clean like a plastic wallet or envelope.
- Take your time whilst stitching and keep an eye on your length of thread as it can sometimes get a bit tangled.
- Count, count and then count again. There is nothing worse than getting part way through the pattern and realising that you have counted wrong and have ended up with too many or too few stitches. I find it helpful to mark off the squares on the pattern as I stitch them to make sure I don't lose count.
- Cross stitch is very forgiving so don't worry if you do make a mistake, just remove your needle from the thread and gently unpick the stitches. Don't attempt to stitch back through the holes as you will likely end up tangling your thread.

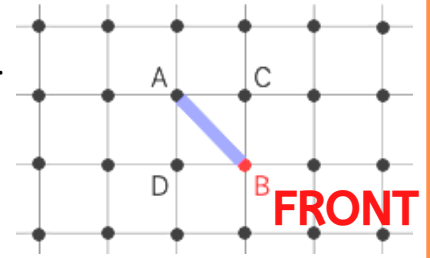
If you are struggling with any of the stitches in this pattern then there are lots of cross stitch tutorial videos available to watch on YouTube and Pinterest.

Alternatively, you can always email me at hanniebeedesigns@gmail.com and I would be happy to advise you with any questions or issues you may have.

STARTING TO STITCH

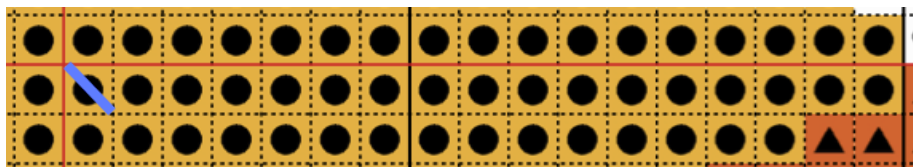
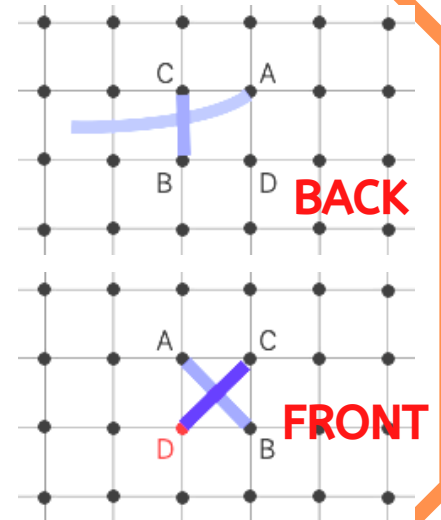
Starting with the yellow thread (code 3821) find the centre point mark on the back of your fabric and push your needle through this hole from the back to the front.

(Point A on the image) Make sure to leave 1 inch of thread (affectionally called the tail) at the back of the fabric and then thread the needle through Point B (from the front of the fabric to the back) making sure not to pull the tail through. Place your needle in the hole at Point C, from back to front, but do not pull it through yet.

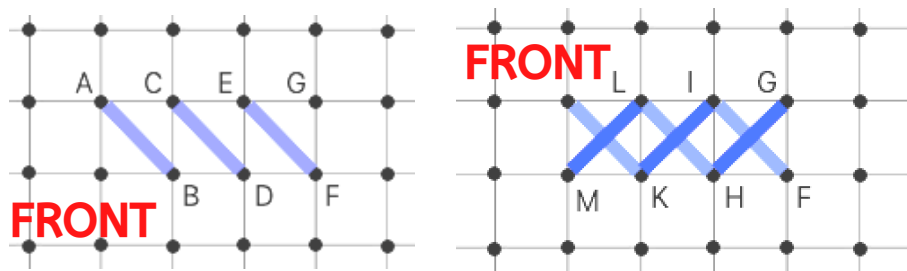


In cross stitch we don't knot the thread as it can make the finished design lumpy, instead as we continue stitching we "trap" the tail under these stitches. As you pull your needle through Point C (from back to front) make sure your tail is being trapped between the stitch and the fabric. The rest of your tail will be secured as you continue to stitch.

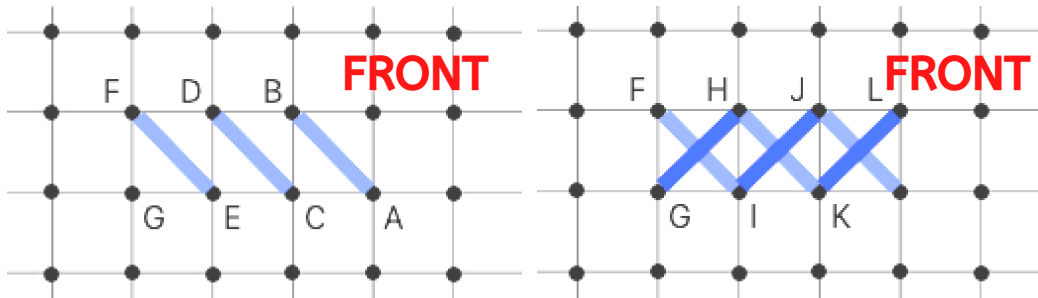
At this point, if you wanted to, you could finish the stitch by threading your needle through Point D from the front to the back in order to make a X.



However, if you take a look at the chart (snapshot above) we have just done half a cross stitch from the centre point. And since there are another 16 squares of the same colour going right across the pattern then it makes much more sense to continue stitching the rest of the row as half stitches first. Once you have a row of 17 half stitches then you should make your way back across these stitches, crossing back over them all the way along the row, until you have 17 completed cross stitches.

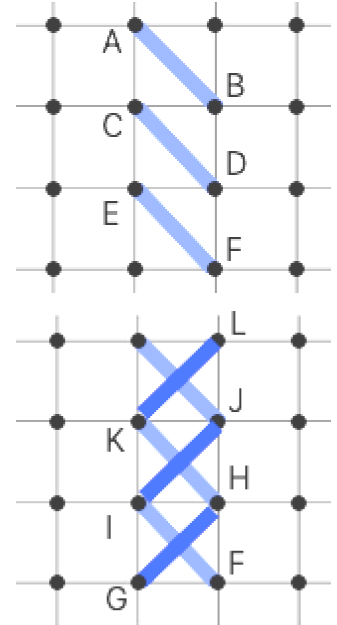


You can use this same technique to stitch to stitch the rest of this row in the opposite direction, however you must make sure that these stitches are identical to the ones you've already done. This time Point A is in the bottom right corner of the square and Point B in the top left corner. You can see from the below diagram that these half stitches look identical to the ones we did on the rest of the row, even though we are moving in a different direction across the pattern. We do this to make sure that our finished pattern has consistent, neat cross stitches.



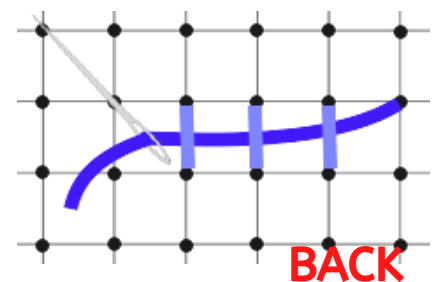
You can use this same technique to stitch vertically too. In the Ithaca pattern there are vertical black columns either side of the pattern for which a vertical cross stitch technique would work much better.

Start at Point A in the top left corner of the square and cross to Point B in the bottom right corner. Then push your needle from back to front through Point C, which sits to the left of the Point B. Continue doing this moving all the way down the column until you reach the bottom, and then stitch your way back up the column crossing over in the opposite direction to close the stitches.



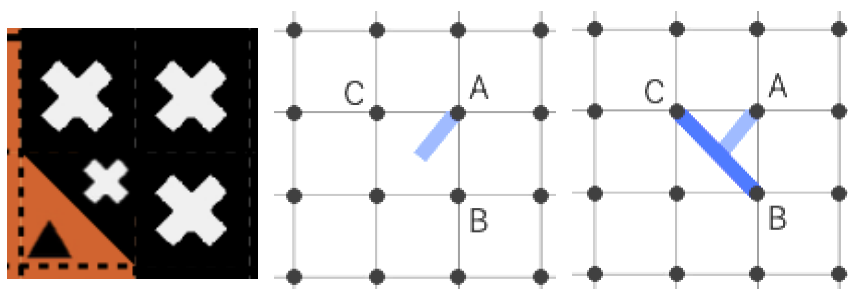
Work your way row by row/column by column across the pattern, starting with the largest sections of colour first. Once you finish a line of stitches if the next line/section is only a few squares away then continue stitching with your current length of thread. However if the next row/section is further away then you will need to finish the length of thread and start a new one.

Do this by passing your needle under 3-4 finished stitches on the back of your fabric to secure it and then cutting the thread.



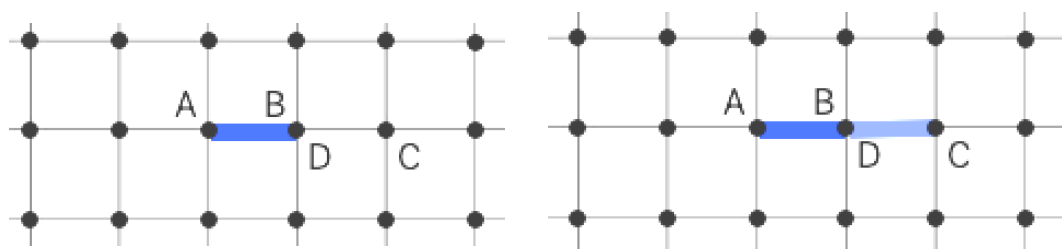
There are a number of 3/4 stitches in the pattern, which appear as triangles on the pattern. 3/4 stitches are the only time you can deviate from the rule of starting all stitches in the same direction. Instead you should always do the shortest part of the stitch first.

In the case of the below example, to stitch the black 3/4 stitch push your needle through Point A from back to front, and then push your needle from front to back through the centre of the square. There will be no hole in the middle of the square so you may need to push a little harder to get the needle through the Aida. Once you've pulled the thread through push the needle, from back to front, through Point B and then finishing the stitch by pushing the needle through Point C from front to back.



Once you have completed all the cross stitches in the pattern you can use back stitch to add detail to the design. You will first need to trap the end of your thread under some of the stitches on the back of the pattern, near to your Point A hole.

The basic premise of back stitch is that you stitch forwards then backwards to create a long line made up of lots of shorter lines. The below explanation shows you the basic backstitch technique which you can then apply to the backstitch in the Ithaca pattern.

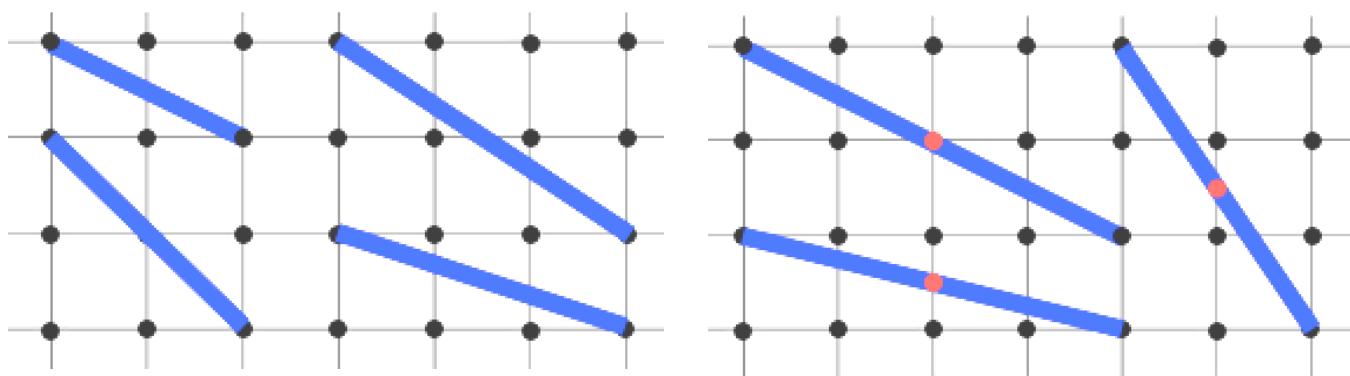


After trapping the end of your thread push your needle through Point A from back to front. Then through Point B from the front to the back. Then move forward to Point C and push your needle through from back to front. Then go back on yourself to Point D and push your needle through from front to back. If you were to continue stitching you would then push your needle through Point C from back to front.

Back stitch is less grid like than cross stitch and does not always go from hole to hole. Sometimes you will need to push your needle through the middle of a square instead.

You should try to use the same length of thread (rather than cutting and trapping your thread for every individual back stitch) and keep your back stitches as short as possible, never travelling further than a few squares away from the last place you pushed through the fabric. This will keep the stitches tight and neat.

The below are examples of the types of lines you will use to back stitch the Ithaca pattern. The lines on the left are short enough to be done as one stitch, however the ones on the right are too long to be just one stitch and should instead be split into multiple stitches to prevent the thread becoming loose. The red dots on these lines are suggestions of where you would split these stitches by pushing your needle back through the fabric.



Once you have finished stitching the pattern take your fabric out of the hoop. You will likely have creases in the fabric and the best way to get rid of these is to iron it. I'd advise covering the pattern with a thin towel (or something similar) and ironing on a low heat so not to damage the thread.

The pattern will fill the entirety of the hoop so make sure when positioning the fabric in the hoops there is no white fabric showing around the edge.

Trap the fabric between the inner and outer hoops making sure it is very taut. It may be that you are not quite happy with the position of the fabric within the hoop on your first attempt so just take it out and try again. It may take a few attempts until you are happy, but once you are tighten the screw on the outer hoop as much as possible to secure the fabric.

Finally, use a pair of scissors to cut away the excess fabric, making sure to cut as close to the back of the hoop as possible so no fabric can be seen around the edges.