

Thank you for purchasing a Red Gate Stitchery pattern! Here are some instructions to get you started. This guide is intended for beginners. If you're an experienced stitcher, move along and get stitching! For the rest of you, keep reading for all the tips you need to get up and stitching in no time. For more patterns and inspiration, visit [www.redgatestitchery.com](http://www.redgatestitchery.com).

## Supplies

Cross stitch doesn't require much in terms of specialized supplies, and everything you need will be available at your local needlework shop or mega-craft store.

## Choose your fabric

You can cross stitch on pretty much any kind of fabric, but the most common types are linen and a cotton fabric called Aida. Aida is a great option for beginners because the weave is even and consistent, it's sturdy, comes in lots of colors, and is available at any needlework shop or general craft store.

Linen and Aida are open weave fabrics, meaning they are made up of a series of holes. The holes are what you stitch into. The number of holes per inch determines the fabric's *count*. For example, 14-count fabric has 14 holes per inch of fabric. Aida commonly comes in anywhere from 11- to 18-count. For beginners, 14-count fabric is a great place to start because the holes aren't too small.

Any cross stitch design can be stitched on any count fabric, but the size of the finished design will vary depending on the count you choose. The higher the count – that is the more holes per inch – the smaller your finished stitches will be and, therefore, the smaller your finished design will be. Your Red Gate Stitchery pattern will tell you what the finished size will be for the most common fabric counts.

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THE ESSENTIALS: Choose a fabric, generally Aida or linen, that you're comfortable stitching on, with a fabric count that gives you the finished size you want for your project. For beginners, 14-count Aida is a good choice.  
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## Thread

Cross stitchers typically use 6-strand cotton embroidery floss. You can find it anywhere – like at your local craft store – and it comes in hundreds of colors. DMC and Anchor are the two biggest manufacturers of embroidery floss, but you can also find lovely hand-dyed floss from a number of makers.

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THE ESSENTIALS: Cross stitch projects typically use 6-strand cotton embroidery floss.  
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## Embroidery hoop

If you're a beginner, using an embroidery hoop is a good way to go. It's not strictly required to do cross stitch, but it will keep the fabric taut and help you make neater stitches, especially when you're just starting out.

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THE ESSENTIALS: Use a hoop if you're a beginner.  
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## Needles

You probably have a whole stash of sewing needles at home, but resist the urge to use them for your cross stitch projects. You want a tapestry needle with a rounded end. They come in various sizes, but size 26 is a good general purpose one. Look for tapestry needles with the needlework supplies in your local craft store (i.e., the same aisle as the fabric and floss), not with the other sewing needles.

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THE ESSENTIALS: A size 26 round-end tapestry needle works well for most projects.

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## Other tools

The other things you need for cross stitching are sharp scissors – the little embroidery ones are nice, but not essential – and good lighting. Daylight is fine if it's nice and sunny. At night you'll definitely want directed task lighting.

## How to stitch

Once you've gathered up your supplies, it's time to stitch! Here's how to get started.

## Preparing the fabric

Don't be stingy when you're measuring how much fabric you need. Better to have too big a piece than one that's too small. Be sure to consider how you're going to finish your work. If you're making a pillow, for example, make sure your fabric is large enough to cover your pillow form. If you're going to frame the piece in an embroidery hoop, a good rule of thumb is to leave about 3 inches extra around the piece. So, for example, if you're going to frame your design in a 6-inch hoop, make sure your fabric is cut at least 9-inches square.

Aida and linen tend to unravel as you handle them, so you'll want to finish the edges before you start stitching. You can be fancy and serge the edges if you have a serger, or do a zigzag stitch on a regular sewing machine. Or if getting out your sewing machine is too much work, just fold masking tape over the edges to prevent them from fraying. Not particularly elegant, but it works.

Put your fabric in a hoop if you're using one. Be careful not to pull the fabric too tight or you may distort the weave.

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THE ESSENTIALS: Cut a big enough piece of fabric to allow for finishing – in general at least 3 inches extra on each side. Finish the edges of the fabric to keep them from unraveling as you work.

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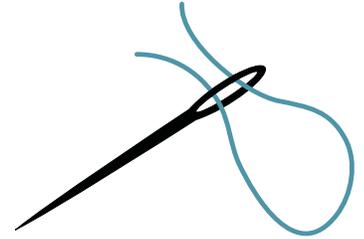
## Threading your needle

To avoid tangles and knots, it's best to work with a length of floss that's about 18 inches long, or approximately the distance between the tips of your fingers and your elbow (a convenient way to measure!). I recommend measuring out a double-length (36") of floss so you can do a knotless start - more on that later.

Standard embroidery floss is made up of six strands twisted together, and it's much too thick to fit through most cross stitch fabric. That means, you'll need to separate out the strands so you can use only one or

two at a time. The number of strands you'll use in your stitching depends on your fabric count. For 14- and 16-count fabric, you will typically use two strands at a time. For 18-count fabric you can use one or two strands depending on how dense you want your stitching to look.

Separate out one strand of floss at a time. Once you have a single strand of floss, fold it in half and thread both ends through your needle to double it. (This assumes you're stitching on 14- or 16-count fabric and want to use two strands.)



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THE ESSENTIALS: Cut a 36-inch length of floss and separate out one strand. Fold the strand in half and thread both ends through the needle.  
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## Reading cross stitch patterns

The grid on a cross stitch chart, or pattern, corresponds to the grid created by the weave of the fabric. Each square on the pattern represents a stitch. Symbols in the squares indicate what color the stitches are.

## Where to start

You want to start stitching somewhere close to the middle of the design. Typically, an arrow at the top of the chart and another along one of the sides indicates the middle points. Trace along those lines, and where they intersect is the middle of the pattern.

To find the middle of your fabric, fold it in half, and then in half again. Crease it lightly. You can use a pin or a small stitch to mark the middle point if you want. (Of course, you'll need to do this before you put your fabric in a hoop if you're using one.)

Starting in the middle is not a hard and fast rule. If the middle looks complicated, go ahead and start somewhere else. Just make sure you've measured so the final design will be (mostly) centered on your fabric.

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THE ESSENTIALS: A good place to start stitching is often the middle of the design. Fold your fabric to find its center point.  
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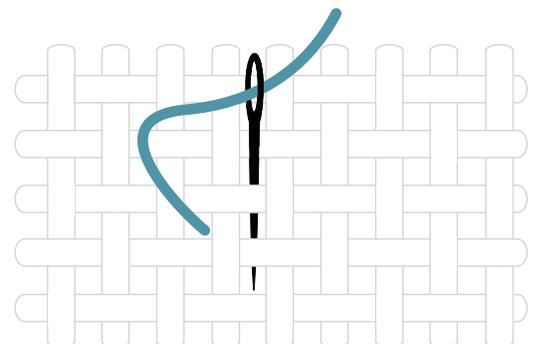
## How to stitch

If you followed my instructions above and cut yourself a double length of floss that you then folded in half before threading your needle, you'll be able to do what's called a loop, or knotless, start. It's lovely.

STEP 1: Starting from the back side of the fabric, bring the needle up through a hole toward the front of the work, leaving a couple of inches of thread at the back. Because you doubled it, the thread will make a loop in the back.

STEP 1

Next pass your needle through a hole diagonally across from where you started, bringing it through the loop of thread you left in back. Give a little tug to secure the thread.



STEP 2: Continue stitching following the diagram on the right to complete a row of half stitches, going up at 1, down at 2, up at 3, down at 4, and so on.

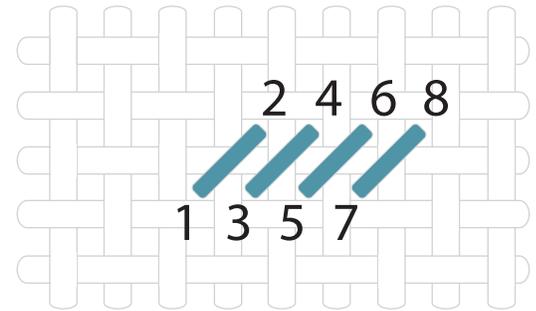
Be careful not to pull your stitches too tight or you'll distort the weave of the fabric. The stitches should lie flat against the fabric but not pull against it. Try to use a nice even tension.

STEP 3: Now return making a row of half stitches in the other direction, going up at 1, down at 2, up at 3, down at 4, and so on.

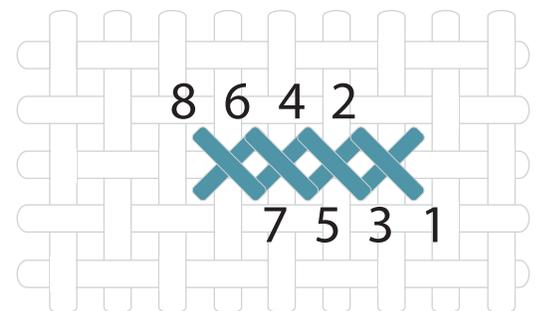
TIP: It doesn't matter which direction you stitch in – that is, whether you start with half stitches that slant to the right (////) or to the left (\\\\), but pick one and be consistent. All your X's should be crossed in the same direction.

STEP 4: Keep stitching until you reach the end of the thread (or until you run out of stitches in your pattern). On the back side of the fabric, pass the needle through at least three completed stitches to secure the thread.

STEP 2



STEP 3



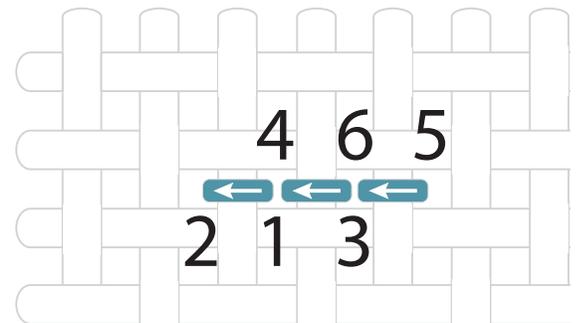
## Backstitching

Many Red Gate Stitchery patterns feature a silhouette that is outlined in backstitch for better definition. Backstitches are depicted as straight lines on the cross stitch pattern. You should wait until all your cross stitches are done before you start in on the backstitch outline. When backstitching, use only a single strand of floss as opposed to the double strand you used when cross stitching.

Start on the back of your fabric by running the needle through at least three stitches to secure the thread. Make short vertical or horizontal stitches following the pattern show in the diagram on the right.

TIP: Need more instruction? There are tons of how-to-cross-stitch tutorials and videos on the web. Just do a search and pick your favorite.

BACKSTITCHING



## Tips and tricks

- Some stitchers say the back of your work should be as neat as the front, but really, who's going to see the back except you? Don't stress about it. The only thing you want to avoid is long jumps across the back that might show through the fabric, particularly across areas that aren't stitched. When moving to a new area of the design, you should end your thread and then begin it again at the new spot.
- As you stitch, the thread will tend to get twisted. Every once in a while, let your needle and thread hang freely to let it unwind.