

Get started today *xxx*

With everything you need in your cross stitching starter kit you can start right away!

Gather your materials

Fabric

Aida and evenweave are the main fabrics used in cross stitching. Evenweave is softer than aida, making it the best choice for soft furnishings. As aida is the easiest to learn on we've chosen this for your starter kit. Aida is made up of blocks of woven thread and to make a whole cross stitch you stitch through the holes between these blocks as you can see in the diagrams over the page. There are more advanced stitches called Fractionals, which are partial crosses stitched into the blocks of thread, but we'll guide you through these when you've mastered the basics.

To estimate the amount of fabric you'll need for a project, use the information at the bottom of the key. Add 10cms to the finished size which will allow enough fabric to frame your finished picture. Why not make your butterfly into a pretty card for a friend?

Evenweave and aida are available in a variety of colours and in various 'holes per inch' or HPI. This refers to the number of evenweave threads or blocks of aida making up the structure. For example 14HPI is the most widely used – it has 14 aida blocks and therefore 14 stitches per inch. The lower the HPI the bigger the cross stitch. We've chosen 14HPI to get you started.

Stranded cotton

This is available in a huge variety of colours and shades and is sold in skeins. Each thread is made up of

six individual strands twisted together. You will be using two strands to stitch your butterfly. Threads from the leading manufacturers are washable.

Needles

Tapestry needles are best for cross stitching as they have a blunt end and a large eye. The needle in your kit is a size 24 which is ideal for 14HPI aida. Many stitchers use gold-plated needles as they pass smoothly through the fabric and are great if you have a nickel allergy.

As you become more experienced and want to experiment a bit more, you'll start using an embroidery needle for backstitch and French knots. These have a sharper point making it easier for stitches that need to pierce the fabric. See our Products page for a fab needle threader that will save you time and a lot of frustration.

Thread sorter

Sorting your threads before you start stitching will save you from having to hunt around for the correct thread colour when you need it. You can make a sorter yourself. Simply punch a row of holes along the edge of a strip of card, then label each hole with the thread code listed in your project's key. Loosely knot each thread into the corresponding hole and you're all sorted to start.

Frames and hoops

These come in a variety of sizes and shapes and are great for keeping your fabric taut enabling you to stitch more evenly. You can buy especially adapted frames if you

suffer from neck pain or only have the use of one hand and by gently stretching and holding your fabric, they make it easier to stitch. If you find a smaller hoop or frame more comfortable you can still use this for larger projects, simply move it around as you finish each section.

5 tips for starters

- ✓ *When you're sorting your threads, why not thread several needles with different colours and store them on a strip of spare fabric alongside your work.*
- ✓ *To prevent your thread from tangling while you're stitching, let your needle hang loosely every so often. This will allow your thread to unwind gently.*
- ✓ *Use a highlighter pen to mark off the squares on your chart as you stitch. This will help you to find your place, should you be distracted or ready for the next time you stitch.*
- ✓ *A copy holder is great for holding your chart and good for your posture too, as you don't have to look down at your chart. The ruler is handy for keeping your place.*
- ✓ *If you have difficulty seeing the holes in the fabric, use a magnifier. There are many different types and strengths available from free standing to clip-on ones.*

R eading your chart

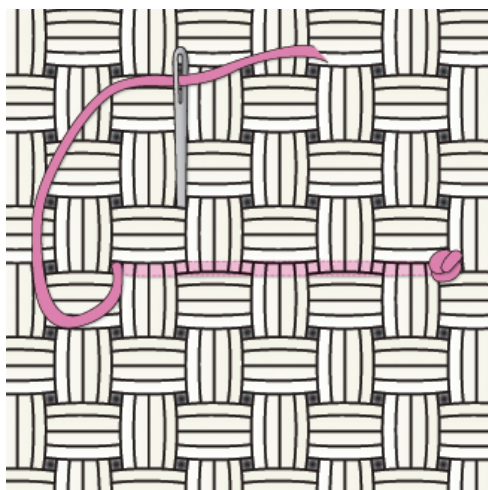
It's best to start reading your chart from the centre – we've marked this for you. As you see the chart is printed on a grid. Each square stands for one cross stitch and contains a symbol which represents a thread colour. The key tells you what colour the symbols relate to.

R eading your key

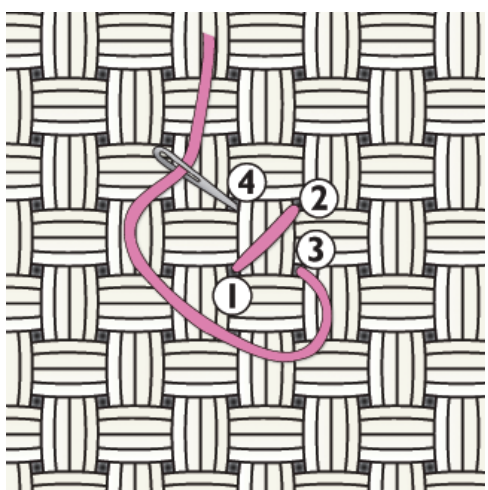
The key gives you the information you need. They will normally list the three main thread suppliers and thread codes for the colours you'll need – always keep to the same thread manufacturer in a project as colours vary slightly. The key will have a column for all the symbols that appear in your chart and the colours they represent. Other information will include the types of stitches used and the number of strands for each stitch. This will normally be two for the cross stitch and one for any backstitch. Your key will also tell you the size of your finished design.

R eady to start stitching

- ✓ Find the centre of your chart and note the colour of the central stitch.
- ✓ Take some thread in that colour and cut a length about 40cm (16in).
- ✓ Hold the thread in one hand and gently draw a single strand upwards and out.
- ✓ Repeat so that you now have your two strands ready for stitching.
- ✓ Combine the strands and thread your needle.
- ✓ Next find the centre of your fabric by folding it in half and then in quarters. Unfold.
- ✓ The centre will be where the fold lines cross. This is where you'll make your first stitch.

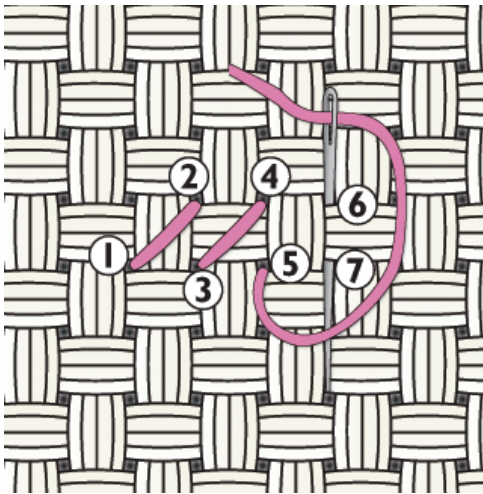


Make a knot at the end of your thread – this is called a waste knot as you're going to snip it off at the end. Take your needle down through the fabric from front to back at a point approximately 1.5in from your starting stitch at the centre of your fabric. Bring the needle back up through the bottom left-hand hole of your first stitch as shown in the diagram. Your knot will be on the front of your fabric, but don't worry about this as you will stitch towards it anchoring down your thread. You will then be able to snip off the knot and your thread will be firmly anchored.



Having brought your needle up through ① take it back down through ② and bring the point of the needle up through ③ exactly as in the diagram. Finish your first cross stitch by taking your needle down through ④ to make the perfect x shape.

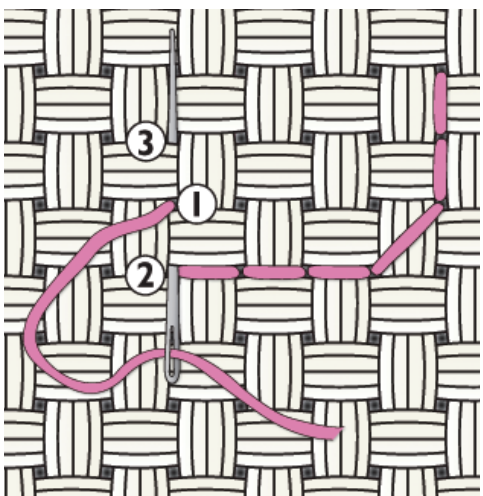
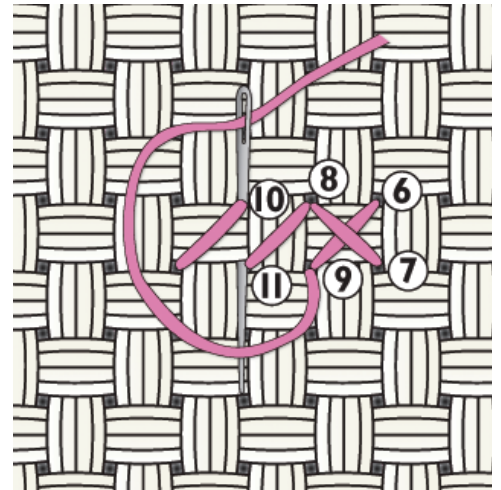
In preparation for your next stitch bring the point of your needle back up through ③ then repeat the process for the next stitch.



For quicker results, particularly for blocks of colour, check on your chart and count how many stitches you need. Stitch the first half of the stitches along the row. Simply follow the diagram until you have stitched the required number of half stitches for your design.

When you've stitched the required number of half stitches bring your needle point up through (7) then begin to stitch backwards along the row, inserting your needle at (8) as shown, to complete your stitches.

To finish off neatly, take your needle to the back of your fabric and anchor it by passing it under a few stitches. Snip your thread close to your aida for a neat finish.



Back stitch

Back stitch adds an outline to your work and is used to create detail and definition. It's normally done with a single thread once you've finished all the cross stitching. It's not difficult to do and really brings your stitching to life.

The stitches are worked backwards over a single block of aida as you can see in the diagram. Simply bring your needle up at (1) and down at (2). Bringing it up again at (3) and down at (1). It's easy to create angles by taking your stitch across the diagonal of the aida block as shown in the diagram.

T

op tips for looking after your stitching

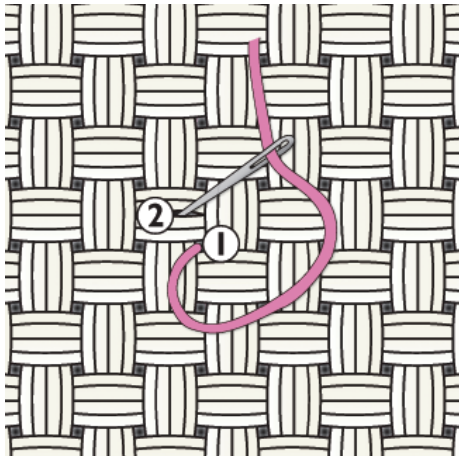
- ✓ Keep your stitching protected and free from dust by storing it in a white pillow case.
- ✓ Store your stitching away from direct sunlight as it will fade the threads and discolour the fabric.
- ✓ Wash your stitching when you've finished so that it looks at its best ready for framing.
- ✓ Threads from the major manufacturers are washable but follow the instructions on the labels.
- ✓ Hand wash in a bleach-free detergent suitable for delicate fabrics and rinse in warm water.
- ✓ If your project includes beads add these after you've washed your work as the colour might run.
- ✓ Place your stitching on a clean towel and gently ease the fabric into shape. Dry flat.
- ✓ To iron your stitching place it on a dry white towel face down and iron on a cool setting on the reverse.
- ✓ Store flat or rolled with the stitches outwards. This prevents crease marks and crushed stitches.

Some fancy bits *xxx*

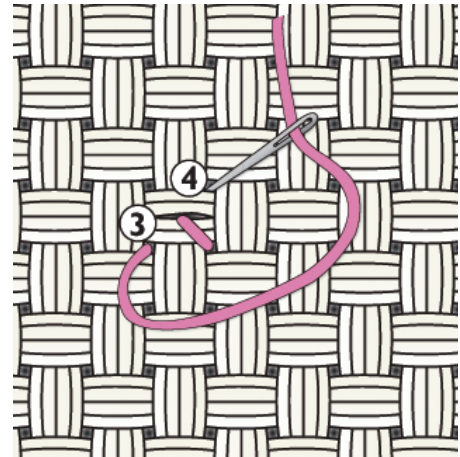
Now that you've mastered the basics, you can move on to learn fractionals and French knots

Fractionals

Fractional stitches are found in more advanced projects, so you won't be needing them for your starter kit. They can be identified on a chart by a smaller version of a symbol in the corner of a single square.



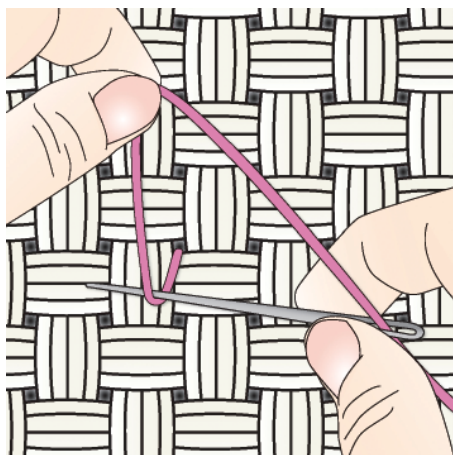
To create a quarter stitch simply bring your needle up at (1) and instead of taking your stitch across the aida block as before, take it half way across, piercing the aida block at (2).



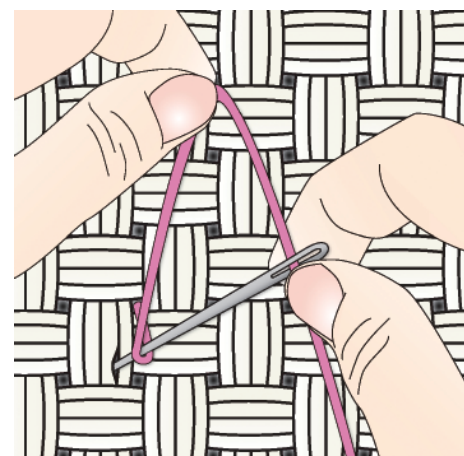
To create a three quarter stitch. Start with a quarter stitch as before, bringing your needle up at (3) and then down through the hole (4) at the top of the aida block diagonally opposite.

French knots

Most French knots are made using one thread and are used for details such as eyes. You'll find them marked on your chart with a circle and as with fractionals, after a bit of practise, you'll soon be stitching them perfectly.



Bring the thread through the fabric and hold it taut between your left thumb and forefinger. The secret of a good French knot is to keep the thread as taut as you can. Wrap the taut thread around the needle twice.



Push the needle halfway through the fabric just next to the first hole – not through the same hole. Slide the wrapped thread down the needle until it rests on the fabric. Gently push the needle right through to tighten the knot.