

Long & Short Stitch

Lesson 1: Getting Started

Objectives:

- Gather materials
- Transfer design
- Frame fabric for stitching

Materials:

- Fabric: high count cotton (muslin, calico) in solid color (white, natural) – 12” x 12” square
- Transfer tool (your choice): #2 pencil, water-soluble fabric marker, micron art pen (.005), iron-on pencil, or dressmaker’s carbon – whichever method of transfer you prefer..
- Scotch tape
- Pair of 10” stretcher bars OR a decent embroidery hoop (4” or 6” will work well)
- Iron and ironing board
- Pattern (print it from Needle ‘n Thread)
- #9 or #10 crewel needles (I will use size 10)
- Small, sharp scissors
- Embroidery threads (discussed below) – DMC stranded cotton in the following colors, arranged numerically below for easy shopping. You’ll find them grouped by design element further along in the lesson.
 - 158, 159, 160, 161, 223, 225, 347, 349, 351, 353, 469, 471, 472, 613, 754, 814, 3011, 3012, 3013, 3052, 3855, Ecu
- Pencil for marking stitch direction as you progress
- Good Lighting!

Setting up the Project

1. Print the pattern from the PDF available on Needle ‘n Thread. The design should print at 7” square (7” x 7”). If it does not, enlarge or reduce it to print as close to 7” square as possible. If you want to print the design smaller, you can. The only real difference it will make in stitching is that, in elements that use several (more than two) shades of color, it might be difficult to squeeze in many layers of color.
 - a. Note: The pattern is designed so that you can set up the whole thing (all 8 elements, drawn inside the boxes, with the boxes as part of the design) OR you can draw each individual element on scrap fabric, whichever you prefer.
 - b. Each element in the design will be worked in a specific sequence, graduating in skill level. If you choose to transfer only one element at a time on scrap fabric, make sure you’re following the sequence of the lessons.
 - c. If you are working the elements individually, you can skip the next step. For a hoop, a 4” one will work really well with the individual elements. Make sure your scrap of fabric is at least 5” or 6” square, so that it fits into the hoop comfortably.
2. Cut a 12” square of fabric and stitch the edges with a zig-zag stitch on your sewing machine to keep them from fraying. Alternately, you can whipstitch the edges by hand. I prefer to zig-zag stitch

around the fabric using a machine. And, actually, if you don't want to bother with this step, you don't have to do it! Normally, on a "fine" project, you would do this.

3. Prepare your fabric by ironing it well. You can use starch on the fabric if you wish. It won't make any difference in the stitching, really, and it can be rinsed out when you're finished with the project. You want all the wrinkles out of your fabric before you transfer your design.
4. Choose your favorite method of transferring an embroidery pattern. You'll find several methods discussed on Needle 'n Thread, under "Tips and Tricks for Hand Embroidery." My favorite method for this type of project is to trace the pattern with a #2 pencil. Since we will be using colored embroidery thread, the pencil lines will not interfere with the finished stitching. The following directions assume that you, too, will be tracing the pattern:
 - a. Tape your pattern either to a light box or to a sunny window
 - b. Center your ironed fabric over the pattern, and tape it in place
 - c. Using a #2 pencil (I like mechanical pencils, because they stay sharp), trace the pattern. Do not use sketch strokes to trace your pattern; rather, try to draw each part of the motif in one smooth line, so that you don't have numerous "fuzzy" or thick lines. Try for one smooth stroke rather than multiple little strokes.
 - d. If you are including the dividing lines between the motifs as part of the pattern, use a ruler to keep them straight.
5. Now, with your design transferred on your fabric, you're ready to either tack the fabric to your stretcher bar frame, or set it up in your hoop when it's time to start stitching. For long and short stitch, good tension is essential. Often, one of the drawbacks of long and short stitch shading is getting tension right. If your piece comes out puckered after all that work, it can be very disappointing! So invest in the right tools to ensure good tension. For this, a stretcher bar frame is best (or, if you're really adventurous and can afford it, a small slate frame). Stretcher bars are more affordable. The fabric is secured to the frames using tacks. You can find information on how to set up a project on stretcher bars on Needle 'n Thread, under "Tips and Tricks for Hand Embroidery." If you're using a hoop, make sure that it is one that you can tighten well and that will hold your fabric taut. In wooden hoops, the Hardwick Manor brand is best. "Cheap" wooden hoops from your local craft / sewing store are not really suitable, as you can't tighten them as well as you should; they are made of unfinished wood, so they tend to splinter; and often, they leave marks from the wood on the fabric. If you need to purchase a hoop locally and can't find a good wooden one, look for a Susan Bates plastic hoop (6"), which will serve for the project. Just remember to re-tighten the fabric and hoop often.

You don't need to put your fabric into the hoop until you're ready to start stitching, and, if you're using a hoop, make sure you remove the hoop after each stitching session! Hoops are notorious for collecting dirt and making rings on the fabric (which cannot always be removed!)

6. Now it's time to gather your threads. For this project, I am using a variety of DMC stranded cotton. You do not need more than a skein of each of these colors, and in most cases, you will use a lot less than a skein! You can, of course, use your own threads that you have on hand from your stash, too! Don't feel as if you have to go out and buy new threads! If you do use your own threads, they should be stranded cotton (DMC or Anchor) or an equivalent sized thread, and you should have several shades of any given color.

- a. Element 1 (Boxes) & Element 3 (Circles): 814, 347, 349, 351, 353, 3855, 745, Ecu
 - b. Element 2 (Triangles) & Element 4 (Swirly): 158, 159, 160, 161
 - c. Leaves (all): 469, 471, 472, 613, 3011, 3012, 3013, 3052
 - d. Small Flower: Ecu, 223, 225
7. Organize your threads according to your favorite method. If you don't use any particular organizational method, at least gather them all together and put them in a ziplock bag. Make sure you keep the number tags on them, though, so that you can always be sure you're using the right shade!

In the online lesson, I have included a color card that you can print out. Use card stock for printing, cut out each card, and then punch or cut out the holes.

Cut your thread into your favorite stitching length. I recommend no more than 18" long, but I know some people who are adamant about using Very Long Lengths to avoid switching threads. Personally, I always find my thread getting fuzzier than I like if I go much beyond 18". Most of the motifs are very small, anyway, and you will be switching colors pretty often, so 18" should be sufficient.

Loop your thread into the hole corresponding to the thread number. Fold the length of thread in half, push the folded center into the hole, then pull the two tails left through the loop formed by the folded center. Now you'll be able to pull out one strand of thread at a time, if you pull from the front of the loop.

8. Look at or print the colored image of the design. I colored it with prismacolors (colored pencils). A little exercise in shading might be helpful here, if you've never done anything related to shading before. If you have colored pencils, take them out and try your hand at coloring the different elements of the design, following the basic shading patterns on my copy. You can do this right in front of your computer, if you want, so that you don't have to waste colored ink in printing out my colored image. This step isn't entirely necessary – you'll find colored images of each finished motif for each lesson – but if you've actually never shaded anything before, you might find it a handy exercise to help you get accustomed to the idea of gradual color / shade changes.

Thus ends Lesson 1!

Coming Up! Lesson 2: Inside the Box – Basic Shading