

# Stitching Techniques

THE KEY TO a professional finish for any piece of needlework is to keep the length of the stitches regular and to maintain even tension throughout, whether or not the fabric is mounted on a frame. Take time to sew a small sample piece before embarking on any new project, to become familiar with the stitches and to establish a rhythmic pattern of working. Embroidery stitches are constructed either vertically, usually from top to bottom, or horizontally towards the left or right, although they may appear at any angle in the finished piece. Needlepoint fillings, which form all-over patterns, are worked in diagonal, horizontal, or vertical rows.

## ... LEFT-HANDED WORKERS ...

All the illustrations in the following chapters show how the stitches would be sewn by a right-handed worker, but most left-handed stitchers will prefer to sew in the opposite direction. Hold a small mirror in front of the page to turn the step-by-step diagrams the other way round and to reverse the direction of the needle.

## BEGINNING TO STITCH

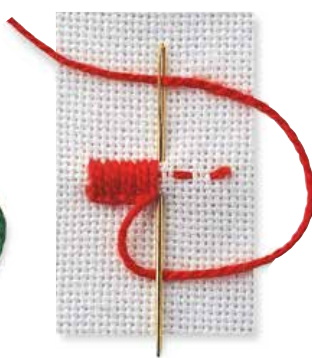
Follow one of the two techniques shown below to start off or to join a new length of thread. Both will help to ensure that the reverse side of the stitching is as neat as the front.

## FASTENING OFF A THREAD

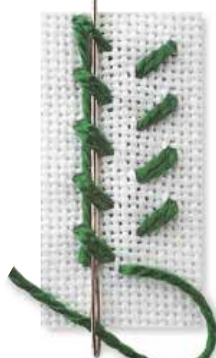
Fasten off the thread when it is no less than 10cm (4in) long. Try not to finish too many threads in the same area as this can create an uneven surface, especially in needlepoint.



**LOST KNOT METHOD**  
Use this technique for needlepoint and open embroidery stitches. Knot one end of the thread and insert the needle from the front, a short distance along the line to be worked. Continue stitching so the thread is held down at the back by the first stitches. Cut off the knot.



**RUNNING STITCH METHOD**  
Use when working embroidery stitches which are spaced closely together and for needlepoint. Leaving a loose end of thread at the back, work a few small running stitches, and stitch over them. The end can then be darned through the reverse of the stitches.



**FASTENING OFF**  
Take the needle through to the wrong side of the fabric and turn the work over. Pass the needle under the loops at the back of the final few stitches for a distance of about 2.5cm (1in), then clip the end of the thread close to the fabric surface.

## WAYS OF WORKING

Holding the fabric in the hand is a familiar sewing technique and some stitches, including looped embroidery stitches, are best worked this way. When the fabric is mounted in a frame, a special two-handed technique is used.

## Embroidering in the Hand

Support the area being worked over the forefinger. Hold the needle in the other hand and slide it in and out in a single movement.

## LOOPED STITCHES

Loop the thread from one side to the other and use the free thumb to hold it down. Pull the needle through over the working thread. The step-by-step diagrams will indicate the point where the thread should be held.

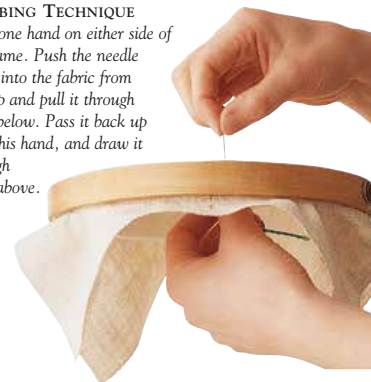


## Using Both Hands

Working with a free-standing frame may prove awkward at first but, with practice, both right- and left-handed workers will find that they can stitch quickly and evenly with two hands.

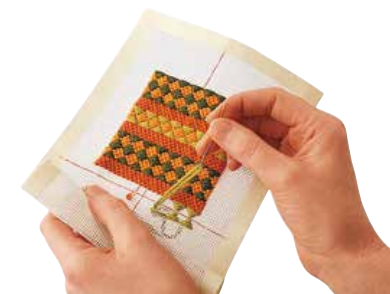
## STABBING TECHNIQUE

Keep one hand on either side of the frame. Push the needle down into the fabric from the top and pull it through from below. Pass it back up with this hand, and draw it through from above.



## Hand-held Needlepoint

Straight, and some crossed, stitches can be worked in the hand without any problems, but diagonal stitches will cause some distortion.

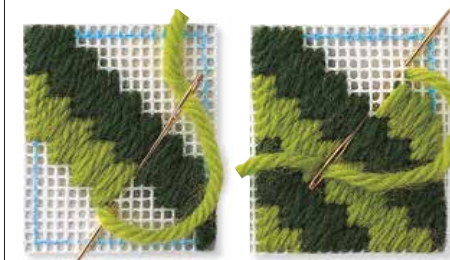


## STITCHING ON CANVAS

Bind the edges of the canvas and start at the far side. Keep the unworked part rolled in one hand, while stitching with the other. Be sure to keep the tension even.

## WORKING NEEDLEPOINT STITCHES

Stitches on canvas are worked into the square holes between the woven threads. To avoid splitting the stitches, always try to bring the needle up through an unworked space and take it down into an already worked hole. Do not pull the yarn too tightly or the holes will become enlarged so the canvas shows through.



**1** Work the first row, then fill in the bottom corner. Start each stitch from an unworked hole and insert the needle in to the base of the stitches in the previous row.

**2** Fill the top corner with stitches worked in the opposite direction, ending each one at the top of the last row. Use this method with the stabbing technique.

