BASIC STITCHES for HAND EMBROIDERY

THE FIRST RULE OF EMBROIDERY

the first rule to remember is that, really, there are no rules. embroidery is versatile and there are so many ways to use a needle and thread to bring a design to life. you are creative and you can do what you want! i encourage you to learn some basics, and then get creative with the way you approach your stitching. your stitches do not need to be perfect. have fun with it, and don’t be afraid to experiment!

S T R A I G H T   S T I T C H E S

straight stitch is the simplest embroidery stitch, and is the basis for many other stitches. it is, simply, a single stitch.

a row of straight stitches in a line is called running stitch, which looks like a dashed line. usually, you want to make each stitch the same length, and each space between stitches the same length. for running stitch, i like my stitches to be about 1/4 inch (about as long as a grain of rice), and each space about 1/8” (about half a grain of rice).

if you scatter straight stitches randomly, they are called seed stitches. you can make them as long or short as you like, as thick or thin, as loose or dense; you can use multiple colors or all one color... the variations are up to you.

B A C K   S T I T C H

back stitch is my favorite stitch and the one i use most. it creates a continuous, smooth line, and is great stitch for outlines and text.

try to keep your stitches uniform in length (again, i like 1/8” - 1/4”) and remember that you need to use shorter stitches when stitching a curved line.

as you stitch, you’ll be bringing the needle up a space (a stitch length) ahead, and then bringing the needle down to the end of the previous stitch.

C H A I N   S T I T C H

chain stitch is an outline stitch that will give your line a bit of texture; it also results in a thicker, bulkier line.

this method of chain stitch is worked in reverse, (so technically this is reverse chain stitch) and i find this to be a bit simpler to work than regular chain stitch.

start with a small straight stitch. then bring your needle up at 1, slide it under the straight stitch (do not go through the fabric), then back down at 1. bring needle up at 2, slide the needle under the previous stitch, back down at 2. repeat.
**C O L O N I A L   K N O T**

I use colonial knots in place of French knots in my work. I find them to be easier to make than French knots, and for me, colonial knots produce neater results.

Knots are all about having the right tension -- you want to keep even tension on your floss as you complete the stitch. Once you have a feel for it, you can experiment with looser, loopier knots to create a shaggy area of fill stitches.

You can also vary the size of the knot. To make bigger knots, you can use more strands of floss, or wrap the floss an extra time around the needle. Most importantly, practice! Soon you'll love knots.

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**S A T I N   S T I T C H**

Satin stitches are really just straight stitches made side by side; very close together but not overlapping. Use satin stitch to cover or fill an area. Stitches can go in any direction, but should be parallel to one another. Satin stitch is a simple stitch, but it takes practice to produce smooth, even areas of color.

I like to use padded satin stitch for irregular-shaped areas. To make padded satin stitch, outline the area using back stitch, and then make a few seed stitches inside the area. Now cover the back and seed stitches with satin stitch, using the back stitches as a guide. This will help give your satin stitches a more defined edge, and will give the area a slightly raised and smooth effect.

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These are just a few of my favorite basic stitches. To learn more, visit my website at cozybluehandmade.com. While you're there, sign up for my newsletter! I love to share stitching tutorials and tips, images from behind the scenes, coupon codes, and the latest news. If you're on Instagram, I'd love to connect with you! Follow me @cozyblue and #cozybluestitchingtipsandtricks. I've also got lots of great tutorials pinned to my 'embroidery' board on Pinterest @cozyblue, and it's a great resource for learning new stitches.

Happy stitching!

xo - Liz