Hand embroidery stitches

108 stitches from A to Z, with every step drawn. Each stitch's own page, with the words of every step, its tips and what goes wrong, is at flossfield.com/embroidery/stitches/.

In the pictures of the steps the thread comes up at A, goes down at B and comes up again at C, and so on; a pale thread was worked before, and a broken line lies behind the cloth. Print the pages you want: the list says where each stitch stands.

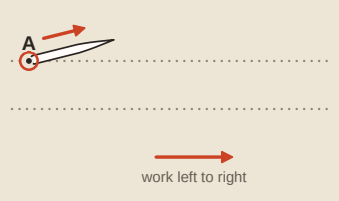
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Arrowhead stitch

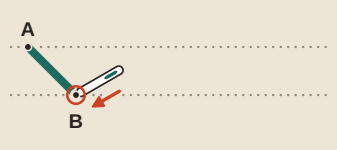
Beginner. For zigzag borders and outlines, light fillings made of stacked rows, single V shapes worked on their own and counted thread work and blackwork. Also called arrow stitch.



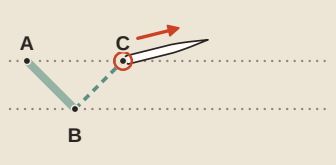
The finished stitch



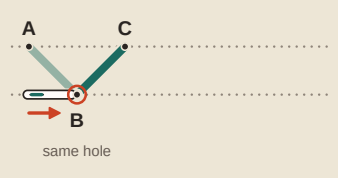
1. Come up on the upper line



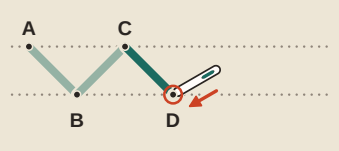
2. Slant down to the lower line



3. Come up on the upper line again



4. Go down in the same hole



5. Start the next V

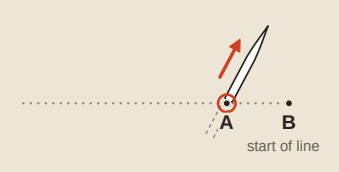


6. Repeat along the line

Back stitch

Beginner. For outlines, lettering, straight and curved lines and a base for whipped and threaded stitches. Also called backstitch.

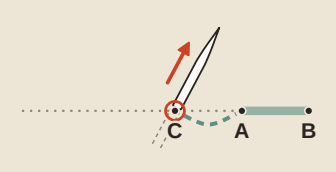
The finished stitch



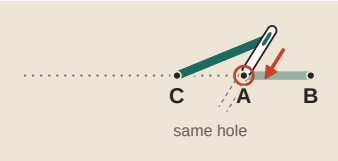
1. Come up one stitch from the start



2. Go down at the start of the line



3. Come up one stitch ahead



4. Go back down into the last stitch



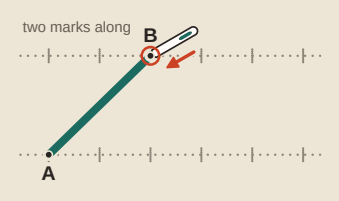
5. Repeat along the line

Basket stitch

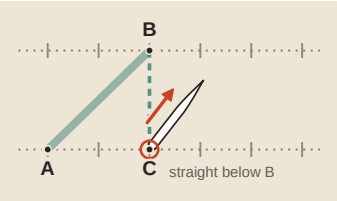
Easy. For borders and bands, broad stems, bold outlines, the rim, foot and handle of a basket and counted bands on canvas or other cloth with even threads. Also called crisscross herringbone stitch.



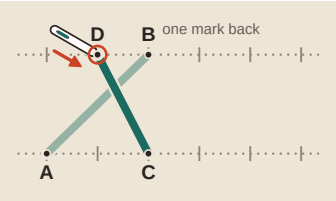
The finished stitch



1. Make a long stitch forward

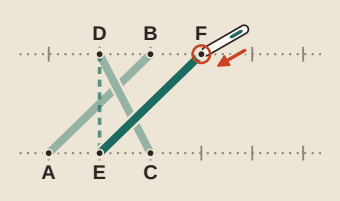


2. Come up straight below

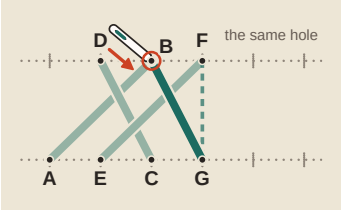


3. Make a shorter stitch back

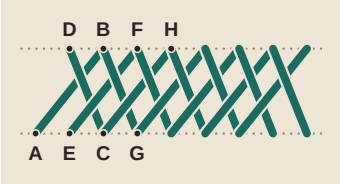
Basket stitch, continued



4. Go forward again, side by side



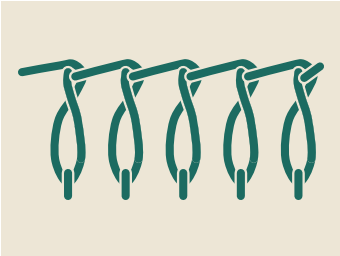
5. Go back into the hole at B



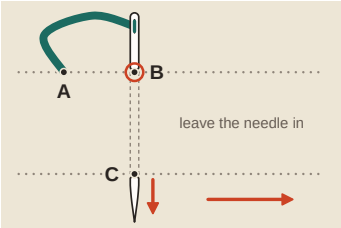
6. Forward and back to the end

Basque stitch

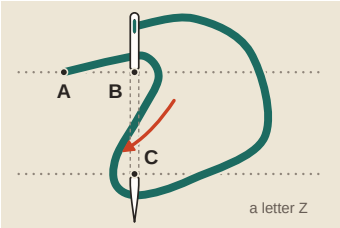
Intermediate. For borders and edgings, wavy and curved lines on clothes, flowers and rings, crazy quilt seams, outlines in bold thread and fringes, grass and foliage. Also called twisted daisy border stitch.



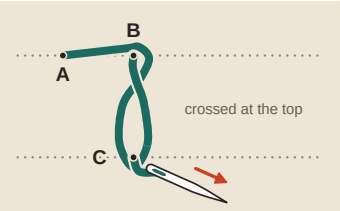
The finished stitch



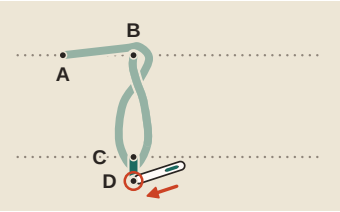
1. Go down at B and out at C, and stop



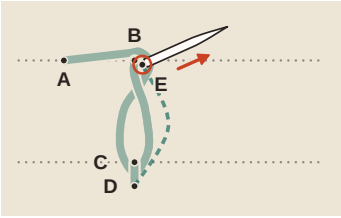
2. Lay the thread around the needle in a Z



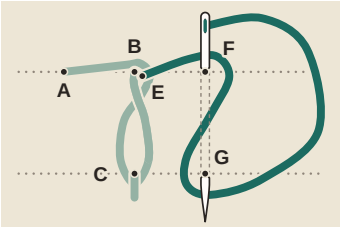
3. Pull the needle through



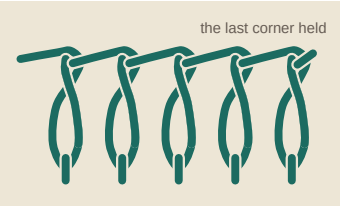
4. Hold the end of the loop



5. Come up at E beside the top of the loop



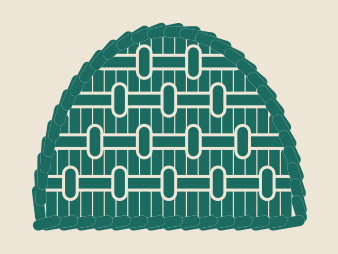
6. Make the next loop from E



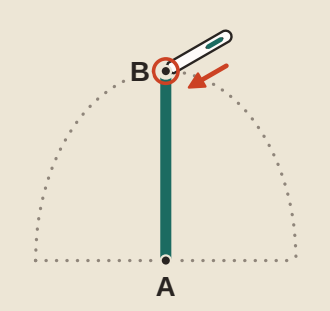
7. End the row

Bayeux stitch

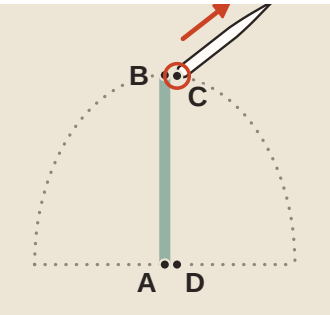
Easy. For large flat areas of color, animals, hills, water and clothes in a picture, leaves in crewel work, medieval designs and saving thread on a big filling. Also called laid and couched work and refilsaumur.



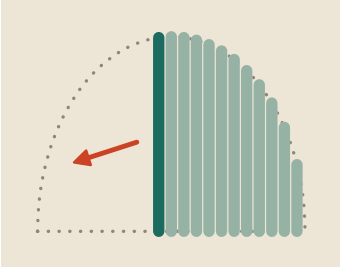
The finished stitch



1. Lay the first thread

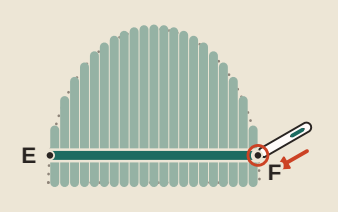


2. Come up right beside B

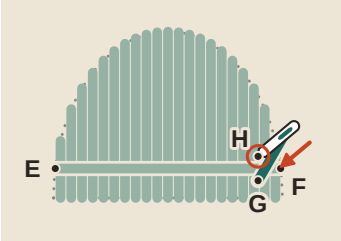


3. Cover one half, then the other

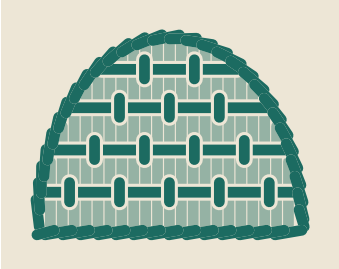
Bayeux stitch, continued



4. Lay one bar across



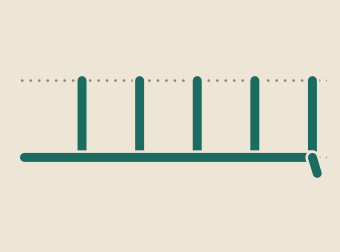
5. Tie the bar down



6. Add bars, then outline the shape

Blanket stitch

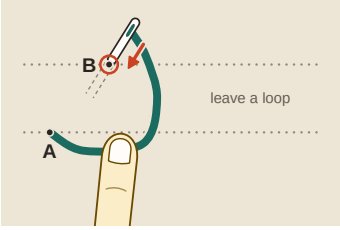
Beginner. For finishing the edges of felt and blankets, outlining applique, which is a shape of cloth sewn on top of another, borders and outlines and wheels and scallops. Also called open buttonhole stitch and blanket edge.



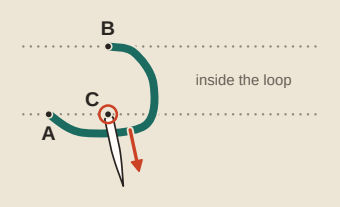
The finished stitch



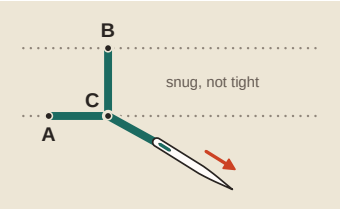
1. Come up on the edge line



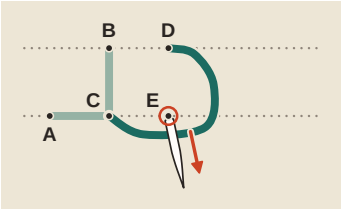
2. Go down on the upper line



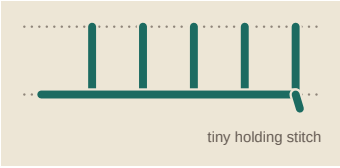
3. Come up inside the loop



4. Pull the loop snug



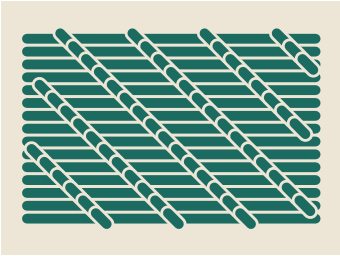
5. Repeat one stitch to the right



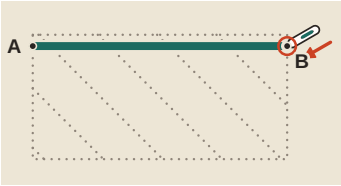
6. Hold the last corner down

Bokhara couching

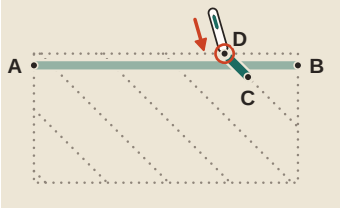
Easy. For leaves and large petals, round flowers and medallions, solid backgrounds with a pattern, birds and other bold shapes and wide bands. Also called Bukhara couching, Bokharan couching and laid oriental filling.



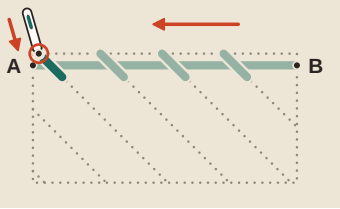
The finished stitch



1. Lay the first thread

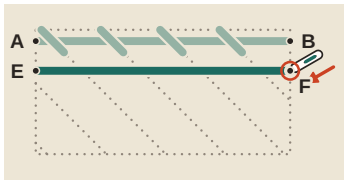


2. Tie it on the way back

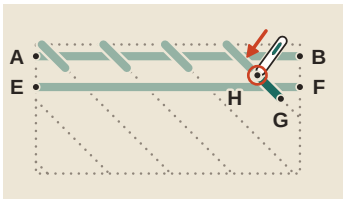


3. Tie it at every line

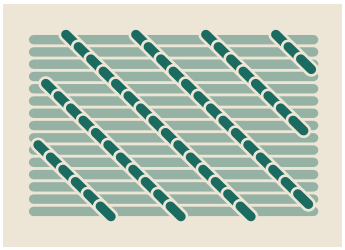
Bokhara couching, continued



4. Lay the next thread close below



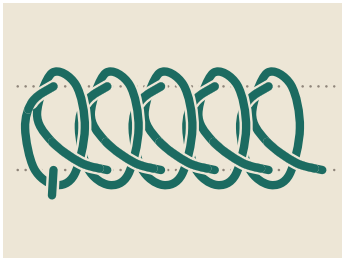
5. Let the ties step along the lines



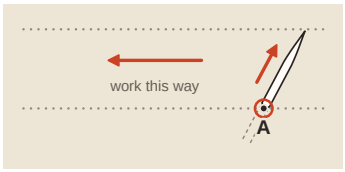
6. Fill the shape

Braid stitch

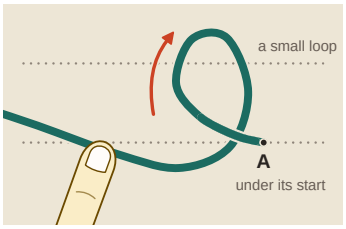
Intermediate. For borders, solid raised lines, straight or curved, stems, outlines of bold shapes and lines in metallic thread. Also called Gordian knot stitch and cable plait stitch.



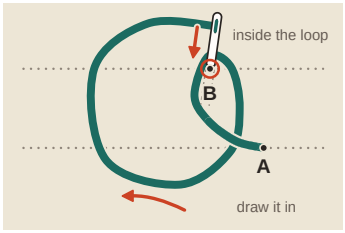
The finished stitch



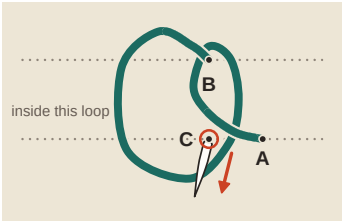
1. Come up on the lower line



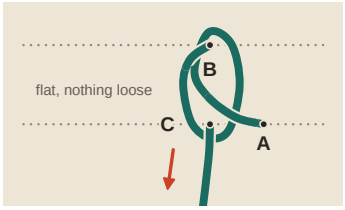
2. Lay a small loop, taller than the band



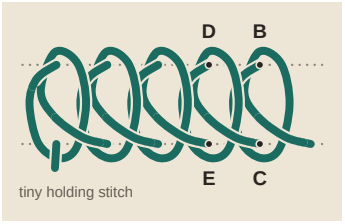
3. Go halfway down at B and draw the loop in



4. Come up inside the second loop



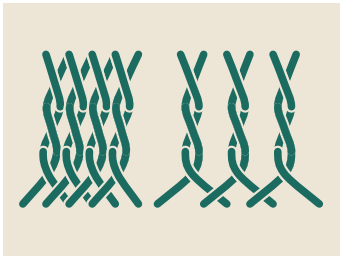
5. Pull toward you until both loops lie flat



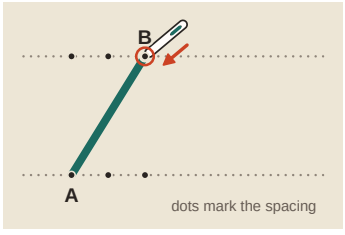
6. Repeat close by, then anchor the last loop

Breton stitch

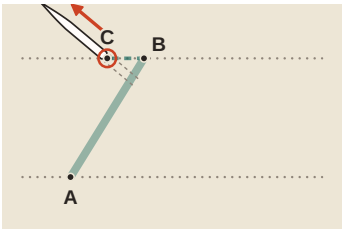
Easy. For borders on clothes and table linen, collar, cuff and hem edges, crazy quilt seams, wavy lines and rings, rows side by side as a textured filling and grasses, bark and thorny stems. Also called twisted herringbone stitch.



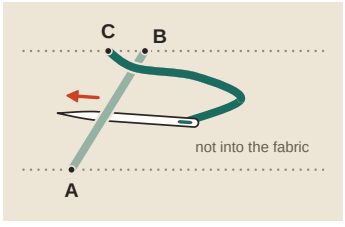
The finished stitch



1. Make one steep slanting stitch

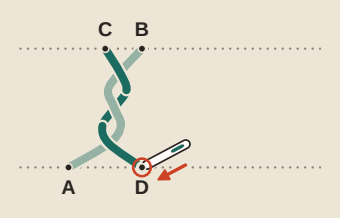


2. Step one dot back and come up

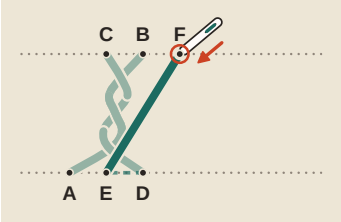


3. Slide the needle under the slant

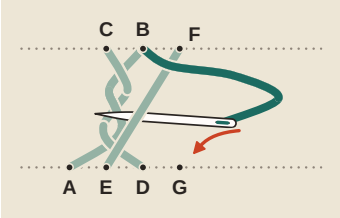
Breton stitch, continued



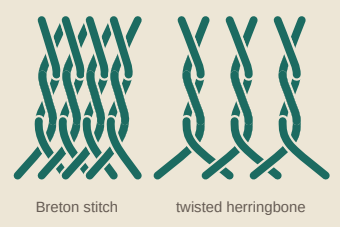
4. Pull snug and go down at D



5. Begin the next stitch between A and D



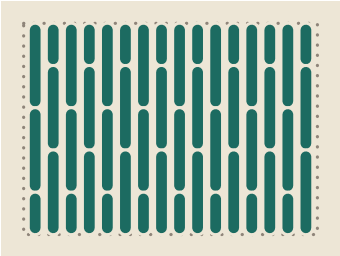
6. Share the hole at B and wrap again



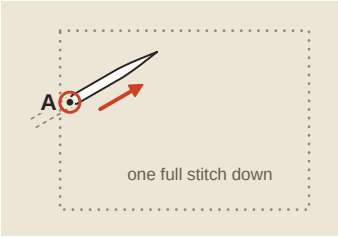
7. End the row, close or open

Brick stitch

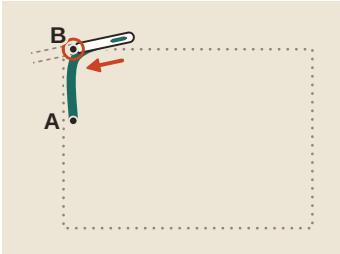
Easy. For filling shapes that are too large for satin stitch, shading in bands of color, counted work on canvas and crewelwork and other surface embroidery.



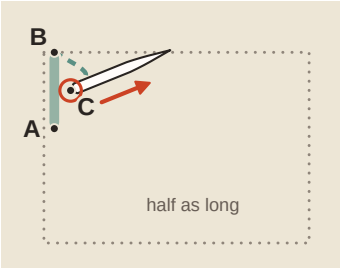
The finished stitch



1. Come up one full stitch from the edge



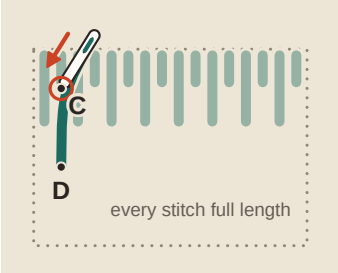
2. Go down on the edge



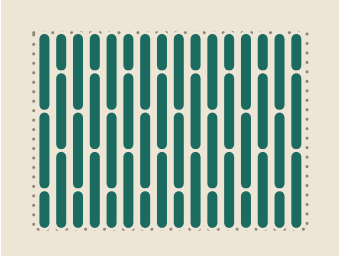
3. Add a half stitch beside it



4. Alternate along the edge



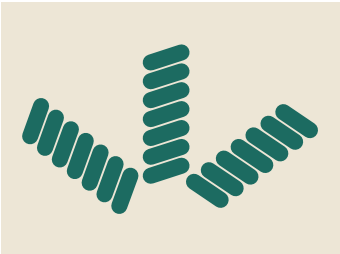
5. Second row: all full stitches



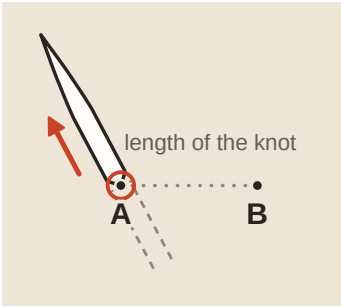
6. Fill the shape and level the edge

Bullion knot

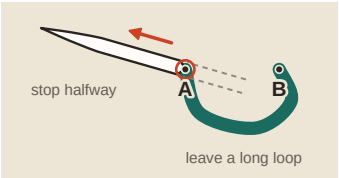
Intermediate. For bullion roses and rosebuds, flower petals and small leaves, flower centers, massed together and textured fillings. Also called bullion stitch, caterpillar stitch, worm stitch, coil stitch and grub stitch.



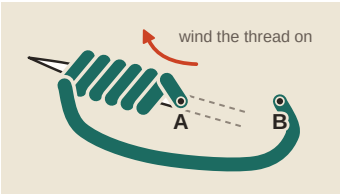
The finished stitch



1. Come up at one end

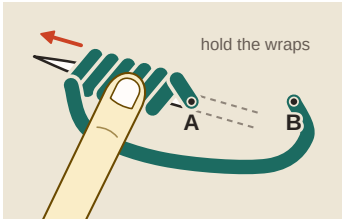


2. Go down at B and come halfway up at A

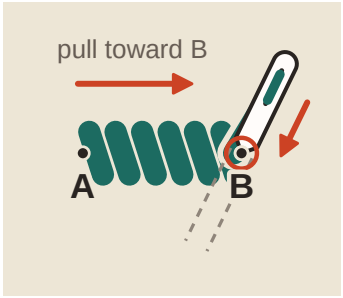


3. Wind the thread around the needle

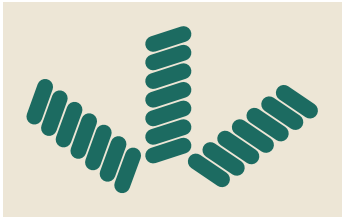
Bullion knot, continued



4. Hold the wraps and pull through



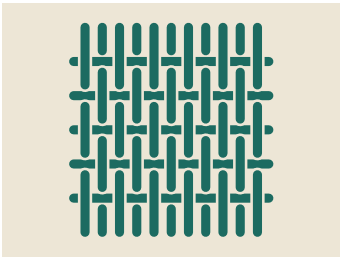
5. Lay the coil down and go down at B



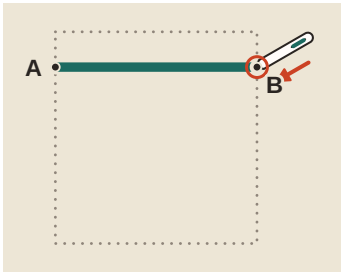
6. The finished knots

Burden stitch

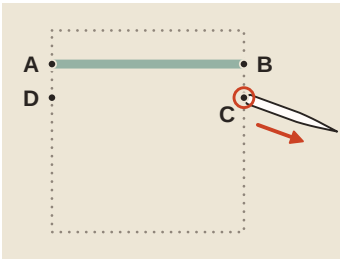
Easy. For shaded fruit, petals and flames, hills, tree trunks and grass in crewel work, baskets and anything woven, feathers and fish and backgrounds, open or solid. Also called cushion stitch.



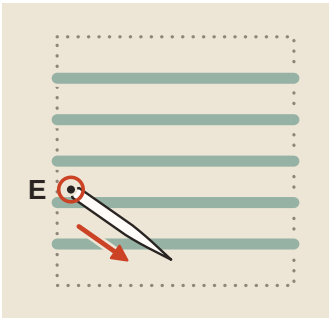
The finished stitch



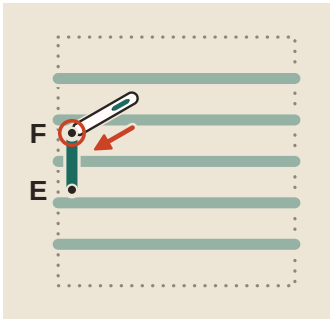
1. Lay the first long thread



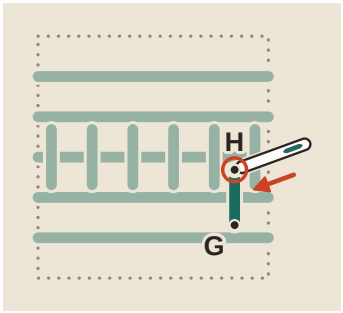
2. Lay the rest at even gaps



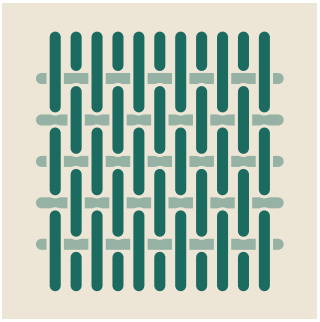
3. Come up above the fourth thread



4. Cross the third, go down below the second



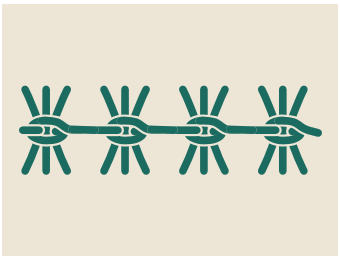
5. Finish the row, then set the next between



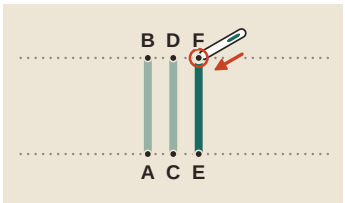
6. Fill the block

Butterfly chain stitch

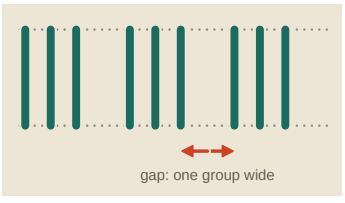
Beginner. For borders, bands on a sampler, curved edgings, two-color lines and children's things. Also called butterfly stitch.



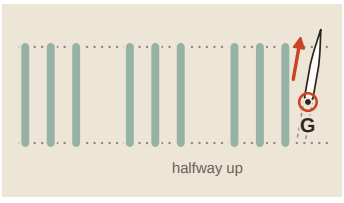
The finished stitch



1. Make three upright stitches

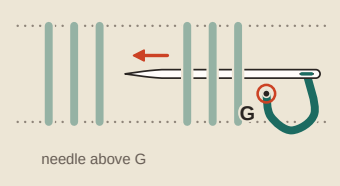


2. Work a row of groups

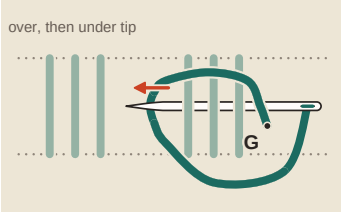


3. Bring the chain thread up at G

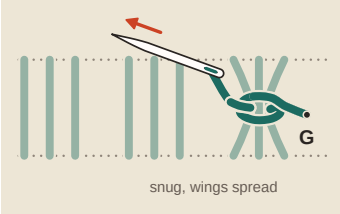
Butterfly chain stitch, continued



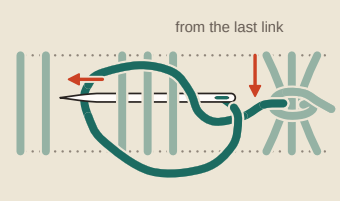
4. Slide the needle under the group, above G



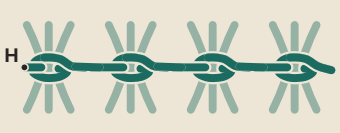
5. Lay the thread over, then under the tip



6. Pull until the group draws in



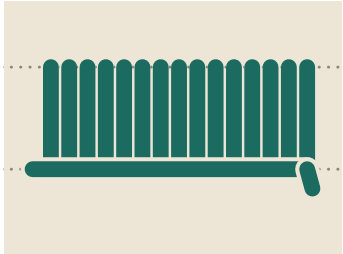
7. Tie the next group



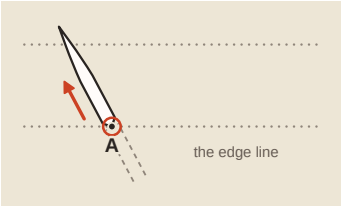
8. Tie every group, then go down at H

Buttonhole stitch

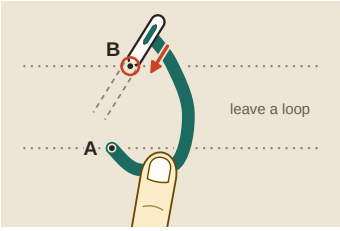
Easy. For edges that are cut into: scallops, and cutwork, where the cloth inside a shape is cut away, edging fabric that is trimmed afterward, outlining applique, which is a shape of cloth sewn on top of another, buttonhole wheels and filled flowers and solid bands and borders. Also called button hole stitch and close stitch.



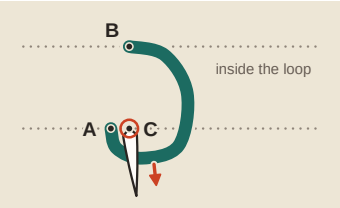
The finished stitch



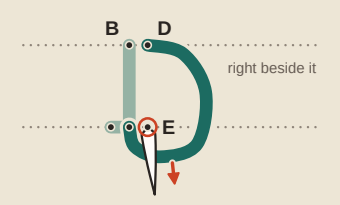
1. Come up on the edge line



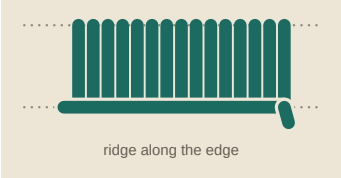
2. Go down just to the right



3. Come up inside the loop



4. Place the next stitch right beside it



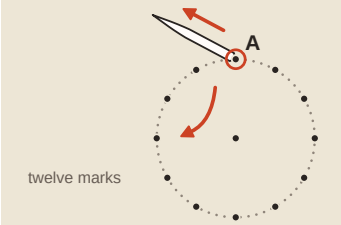
5. Fill the band

Buttonhole wheel

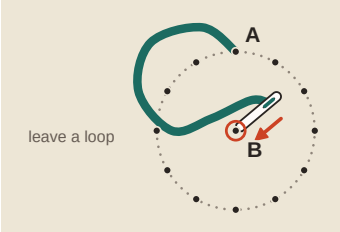
Easy. For round flowers, whole or cut in half, wheels, suns and buttons, small eyelets, borders of half wheels, centers for larger flowers and berries, worked close. Also called wheel stitch, buttonhole ring, buttonhole flower and disk stitch.



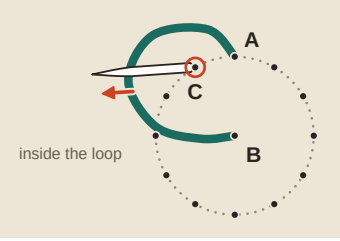
The finished stitch



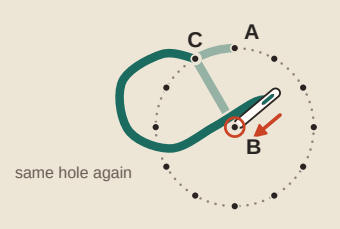
1. Mark the circle and come up on it



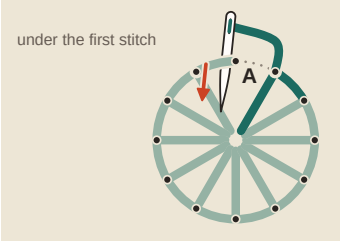
2. Go down in the middle



3. Come up at the next mark, inside the loop



4. Pull snug and go down at B again



5. Join the last stitch to the first



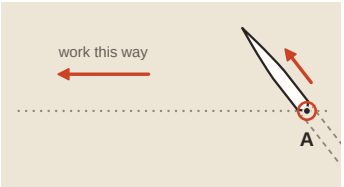
6. Go down in the middle to close the wheel

Cable chain stitch

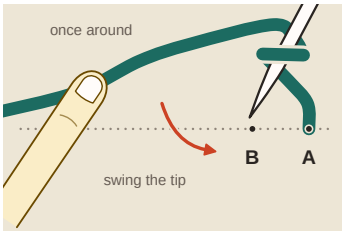
Intermediate. For necklaces, anchor chains and other chains in a picture, borders, outlines with texture, curved lines and scrolls and a line to lace with a second thread or with beads. Also called cable stitch.



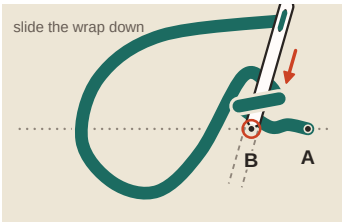
The finished stitch



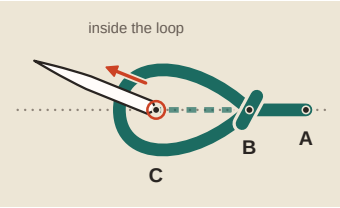
1. Come up at the start of the line



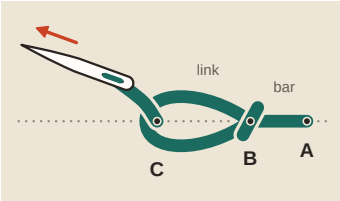
2. Wrap the thread once around the needle



3. Go down at B with the wrap on the needle



4. Come up inside the loop



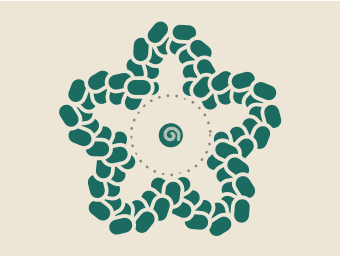
5. Pull through until the link is round



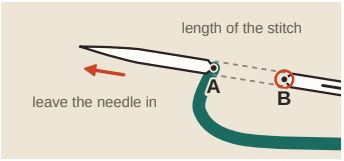
6. Repeat, then hold the last link

Cast-on stitch

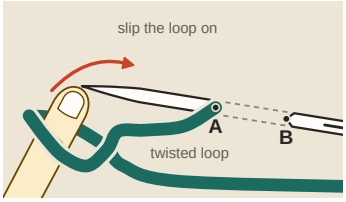
Intermediate. For petals of raised flowers and roses, leaves, clusters of raised texture and Brazilian embroidery.



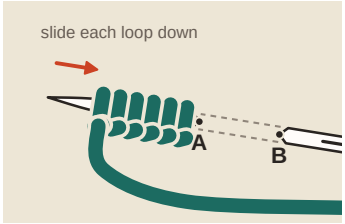
The finished stitch



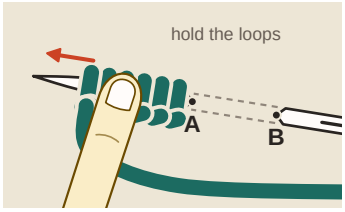
1. Come up at A, then scoop from B to A



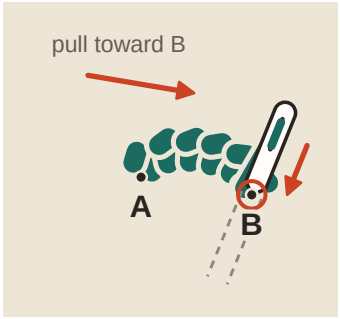
2. Twist a loop and slip it on



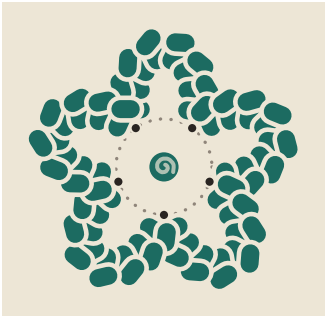
3. Slide the loop down and cast on more



4. Hold the loops and pull through



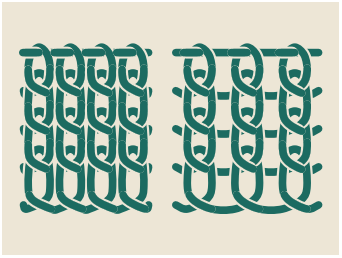
5. Pull toward B and go down at B



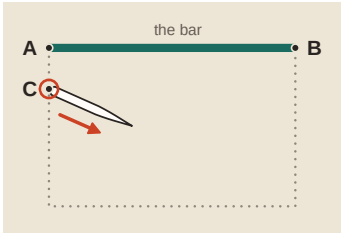
6. The finished stitches

Ceylon stitch

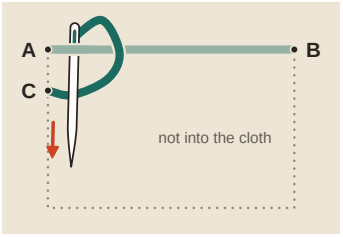
Intermediate. For tiny sweaters, scarves, socks and hats on a figure, baskets, nets and shawls, fillings that lie on top of the cloth, a wide decorative line, raised shapes, as in stumpwork (embroidery that stands up from the cloth) and metallic and other threads that are hard to pull through cloth. Also called cross-knit loop stitch.



The finished stitch



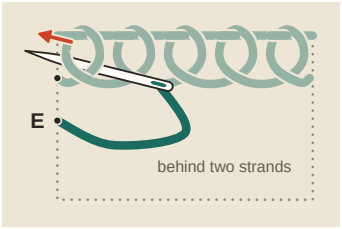
1. Lay a bar and come up below it



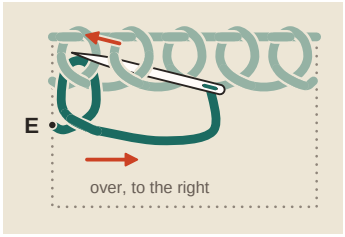
2. Slide down behind the bar



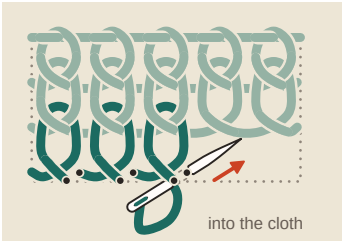
3. Make a row of loops and go down



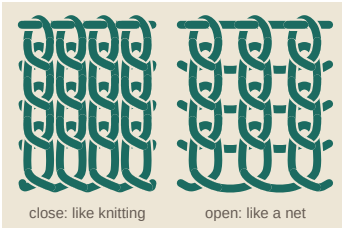
4. Come up on the left and slide behind a loop



5. Lay the thread over itself and go on



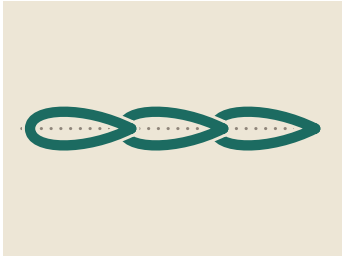
6. Catch the last row in the cloth



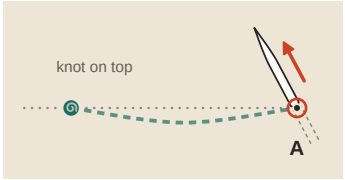
7. Fasten off on the back

Chain stitch

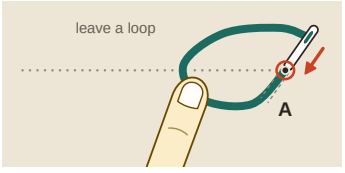
Beginner. For outlines, stems and curved lines, lettering, borders and filling shapes in rows. Also called chainstitch and point de chainette.



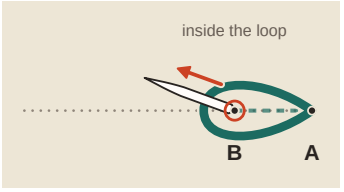
The finished stitch



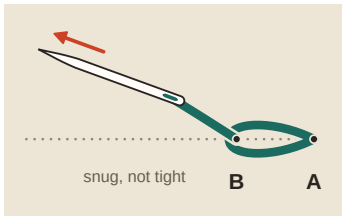
1. Come up at the start



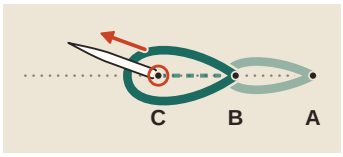
2. Go back down and leave a loop



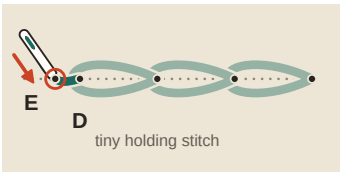
3. Come up inside the loop



4. Pull the loop snug



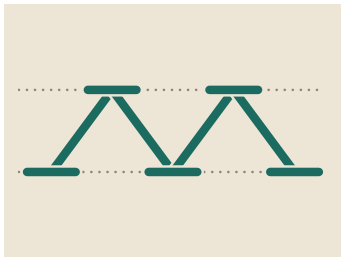
5. Start the next link inside the last



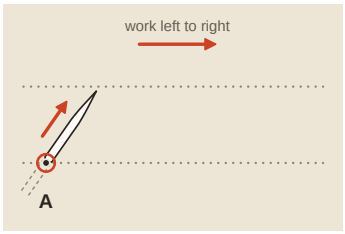
6. Anchor the last loop

Chevron stitch

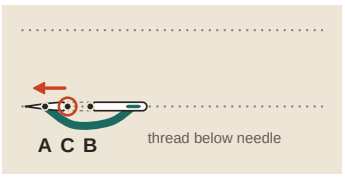
Easy. For border lines and decorative bands, seam embellishments, light fillings made of repeated rows and diamond patterns made from mirrored rows.



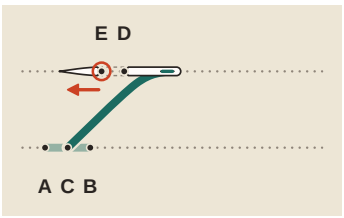
The finished stitch



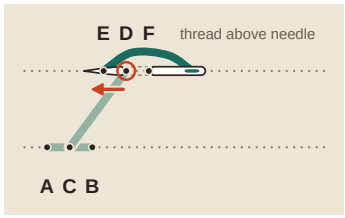
1. Come up on the lower line



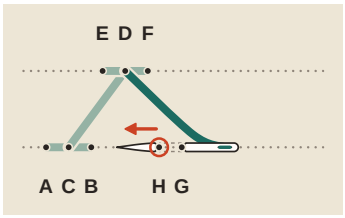
2. Make a bar and come out in its middle



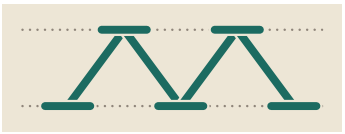
3. Slant up to the upper line



4. Make the upper bar



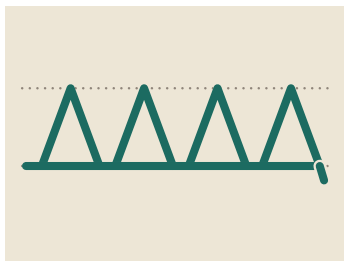
5. Slant down and start the next bar



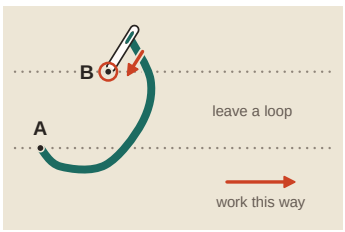
6. Repeat along the band

Closed buttonhole stitch

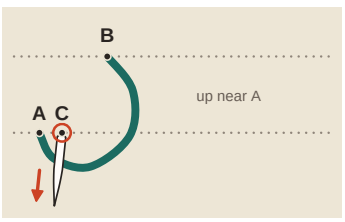
Easy. For edges of felt, wool and other thick cloth, borders and hem lines, mountains, tents, roofs and fences, decorated seams in patchwork and fillings, row above row. Also called closed blanket stitch.



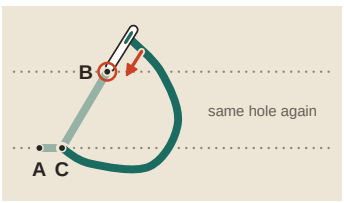
The finished stitch



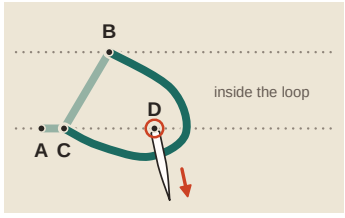
1. Come up at A, go down at B



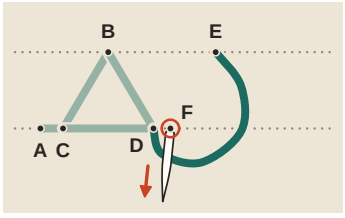
2. Come up near A, inside the loop



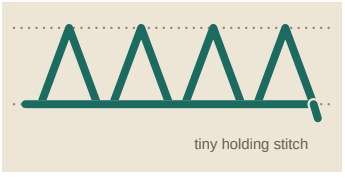
3. Go down at B again



4. Come up at D, inside the loop



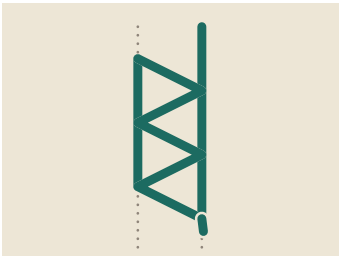
5. Start the next triangle



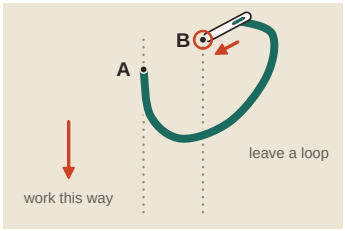
6. Hold the last corner down

Closed feather stitch

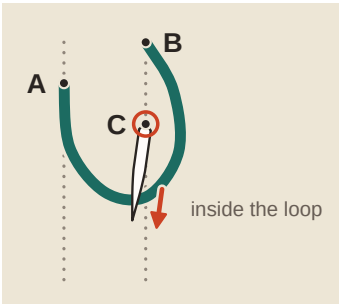
Easy. For bands and borders, seams in patchwork and crazy quilting, tying down a ribbon, a cord or laid threads, collars, cuffs and napkin edges, baskets, tree trunks and seaweed and open fillings, band beside band.



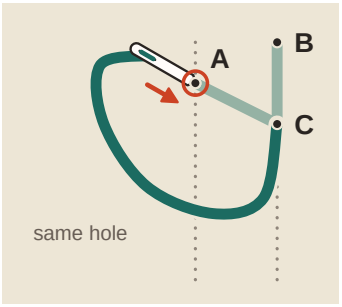
The finished stitch



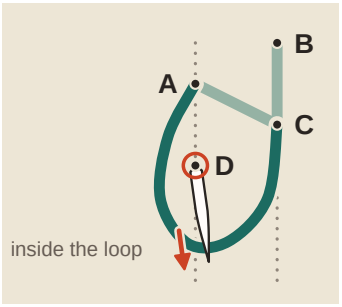
1. Come up at A, go down at B



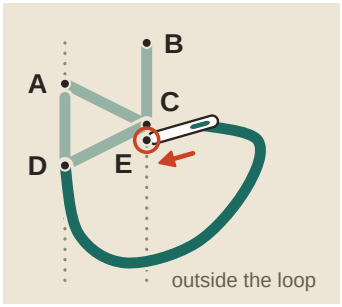
2. Come up at C, inside the loop



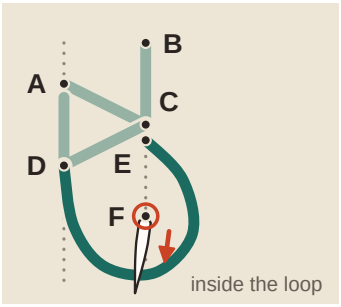
3. Go down at A again



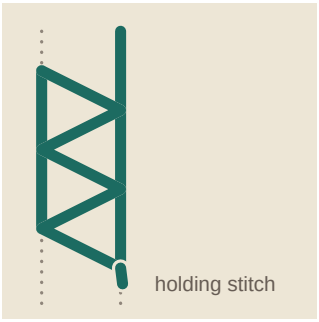
4. Come up at D, inside the loop



5. Cross over and go down at E, below C



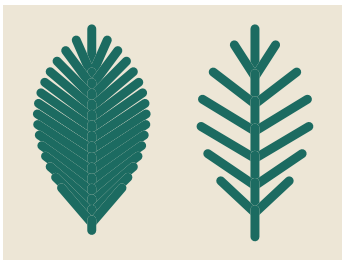
6. Come up at F, inside the new loop



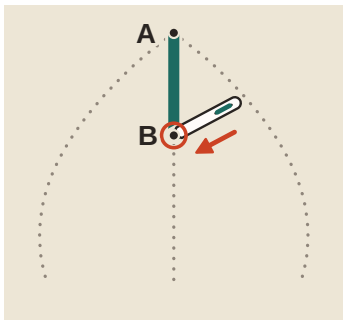
7. Hold the last loop down

Closed fly stitch

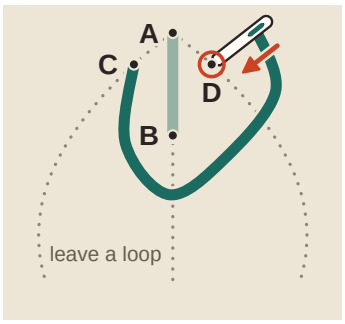
Beginner. For leaves with a raised middle vein, feathers, petals with a center line, solid bands and borders, thick stems and small fern fronds, when the Vs are spread apart. Also called close-stacked fly stitch and attached fly stitch.



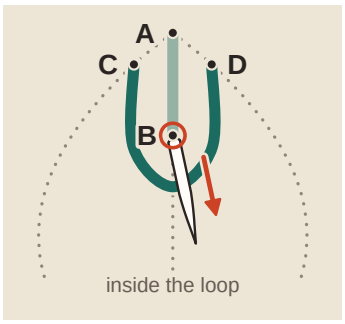
The finished stitch



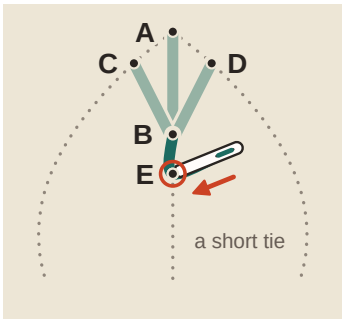
1. Make one straight stitch at the tip



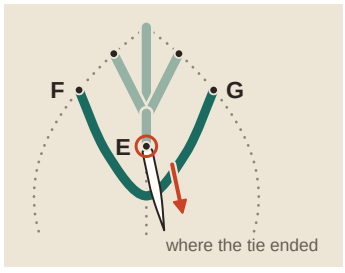
2. Go across to the other edge, with a loop



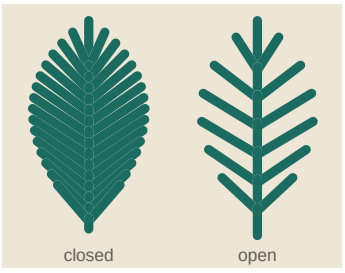
3. Come up at B, inside the loop



4. Tie it with a short stitch



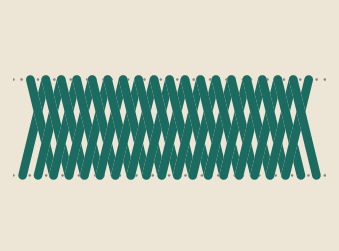
5. Work the next V right below



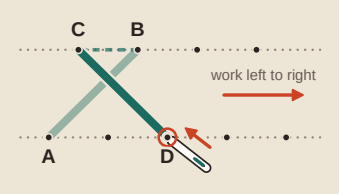
6. Fill to the base of the leaf

Closed herringbone stitch

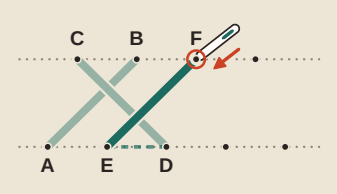
Easy. For solid borders and bold lines, stems, petals and leaves that taper, shadow work on sheer fabric, narrow shapes filled with solid color and letters drawn with a double line. Also called close herringbone stitch, double back stitch and crossed back stitch.



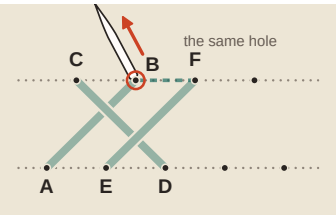
The finished stitch



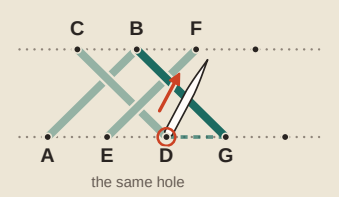
1. Make one herringbone cross



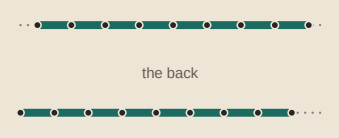
2. Step back and slant up again



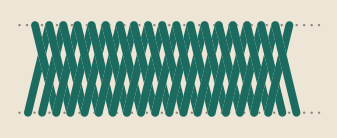
3. Come up in the hole at B



4. Cross down, then come up in the hole at D



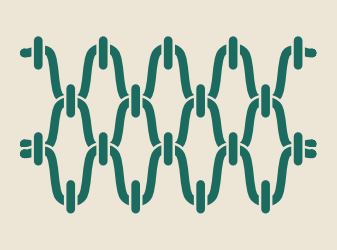
5. Turn it over and check the back



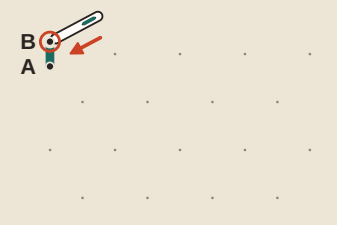
6. Keep both edges closed to the end

Cloud filling stitch

Beginner. For clouds and sheep, light backgrounds, leaves and petals in wool (crewel work), bands and borders and two-color fillings. Also called cloud stitch and Mexican stitch.



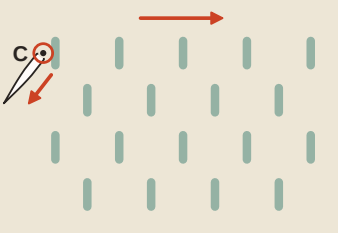
The finished stitch



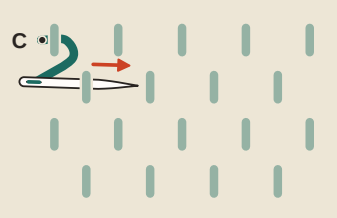
1. Mark a grid and make one small stitch



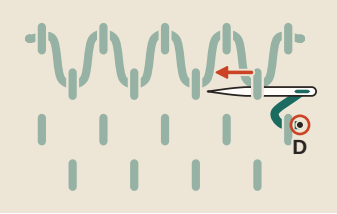
2. Cover the shape with upright stitches



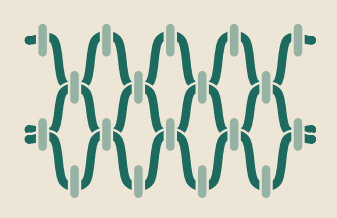
3. Bring up the lacing thread



4. Slide under the top stitch, then the lower one



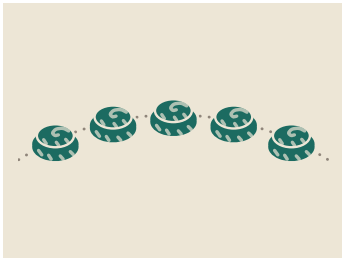
5. Lace to the side, then turn



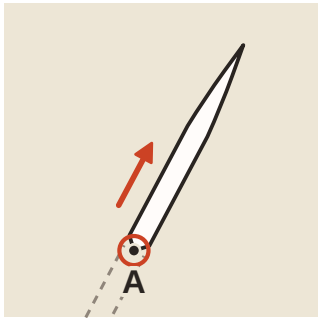
6. Lace row after row

Colonial knot

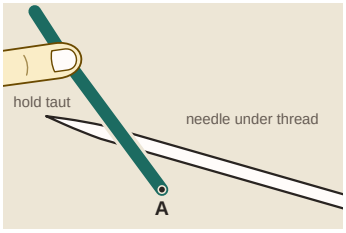
Easy. For candlewicking, flower centers and accent dots, textured fillings and anywhere a French knot is called for. Also called candlewicking knot and figure eight knot.



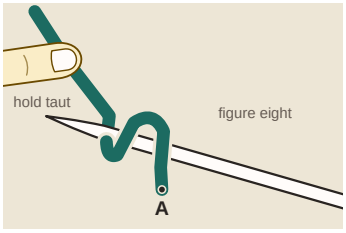
The finished stitch



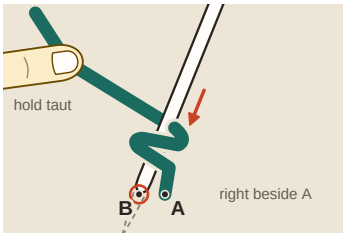
1. Bring the needle up



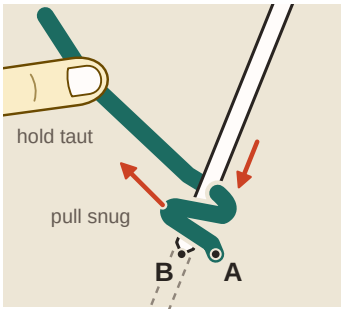
2. Slide the needle under the thread



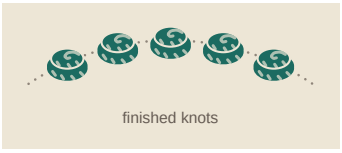
3. Wind the thread back in a figure eight



4. Go down right beside A



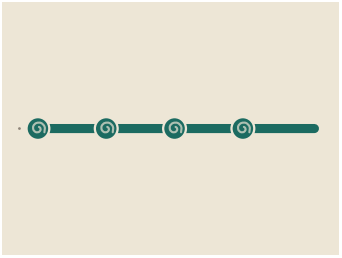
5. Snug the knot and push through



6. The finished knots

Coral stitch

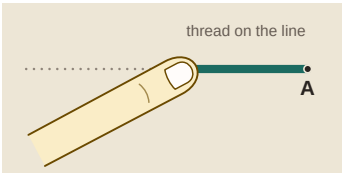
Easy. For textured outlines, stems and tendrils, curved lines and knotted fillings worked in rows. Also called coral knot stitch, German knot stitch, beaded stitch and snail trail.



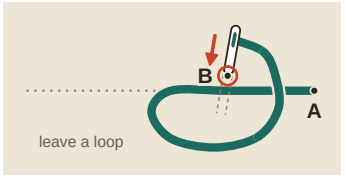
The finished stitch



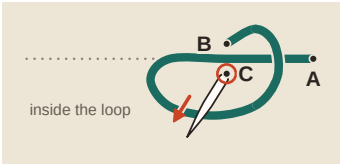
1. Come up at the start



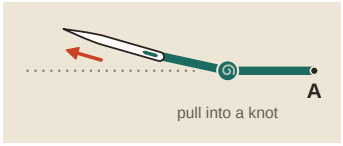
2. Lay the thread along the line



3. Go down just above the thread



4. Come up just below, inside the loop



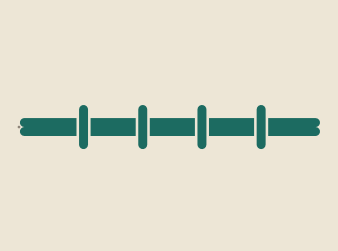
5. Pull the knot tight



6. Repeat along the line

Couching

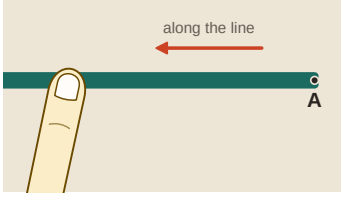
Beginner. For outlines and borders, cord, braid, ribbon and metal threads, curved and meandering lines, covering the edge of applique, a cloth shape sewn on top of another and filling a shape with rows of laid thread. Also called couching stitch, plain couching and convent stitch.



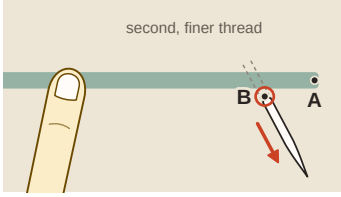
The finished stitch



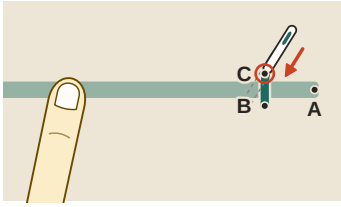
1. Bring the thick thread up



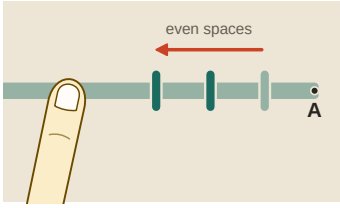
2. Lay it along the line



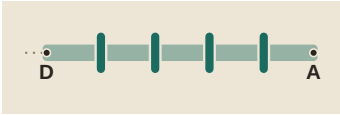
3. Come up beside it with a second thread



4. Go down on the other side



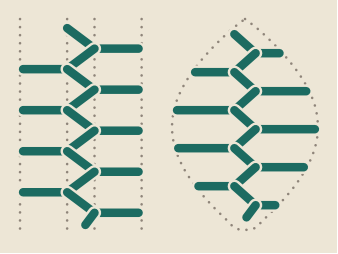
5. Tie it down at even spaces



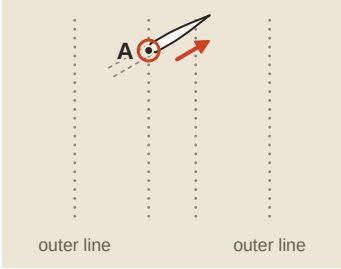
6. Take the end to the back

Cretan stitch

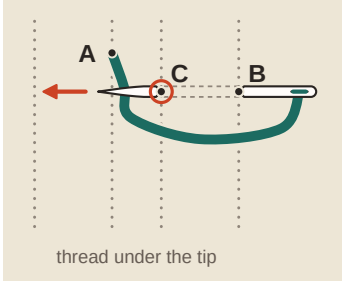
Easy. For filling leaves and petals, bands and broad lines, decorative edges in crazy quilting and wide spaces, filled with several rows side by side. Also called long-armed feather stitch, Persian stitch and quill stitch.



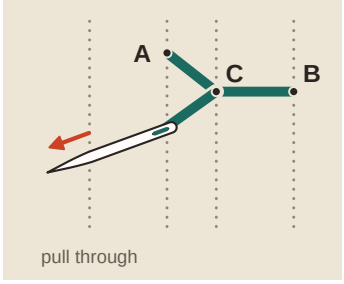
The finished stitch



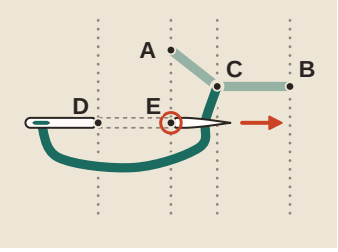
1. Come up on the left inner line



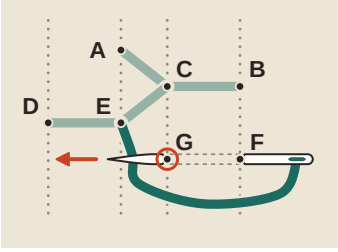
2. Scoop from the right edge



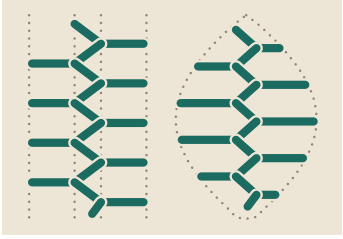
3. Pull through over the thread



4. Repeat on the left



5. Back to the right



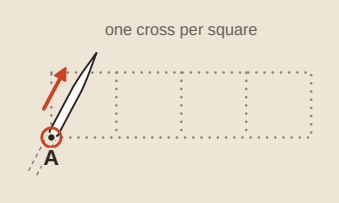
6. Carry on down the shape

Cross stitch

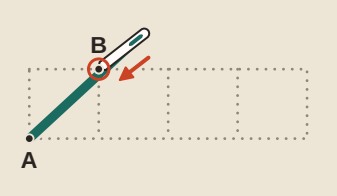
Beginner. For borders and outlines, filling patterns and shapes, marking linens and counted cross stitch from a chart. Also called sampler stitch and point de croix.



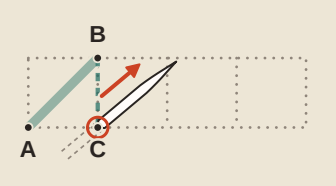
The finished stitch



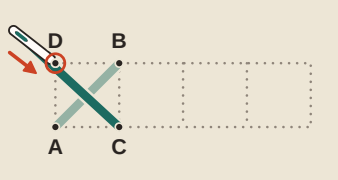
1. Come up at the bottom left



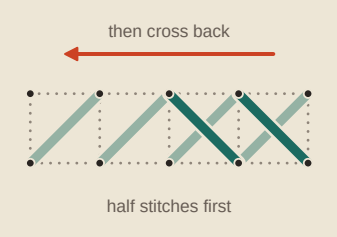
2. Go down at the top right



3. Come up at the bottom right



4. Cross over to the top left



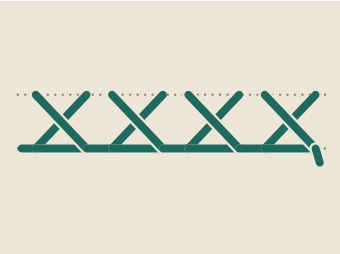
5. Work a row in two passes



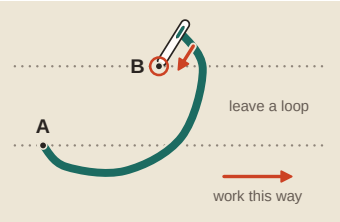
6. Keep every top stitch the same

Crossed buttonhole stitch

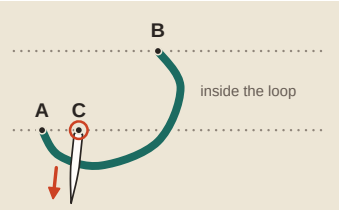
Easy. For edges of felt, wool and other thick cloth, borders and bands, decorated seams in patchwork, lattice fences, trellises and laced boots and open fillings, row above row. Also called crossed blanket stitch and cross buttonhole stitch.



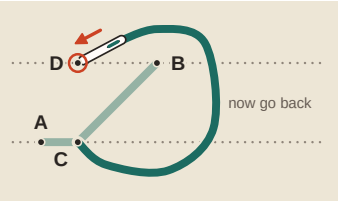
The finished stitch



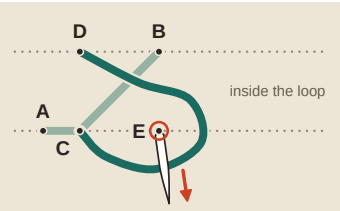
1. Come up at A, go down at B



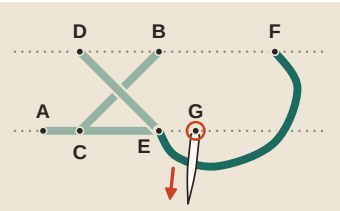
2. Come up at C, inside the loop



3. Go back to the left, down at D



4. Come up at E, inside the loop



5. Start the next pair



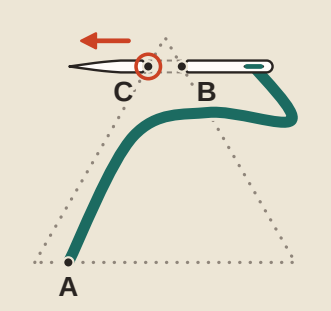
6. Hold the last foot down

Crow's foot stitch

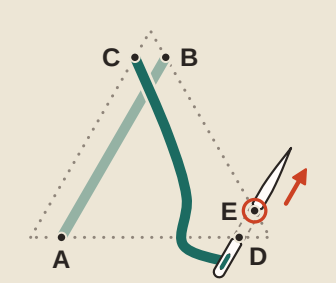
Easy. For the top of a pleat, a slit or a vent, the ends of a pocket, small raised triangles, trees and mountains, the corners of a frame or a napkin, a row of points as a border and one bold motif on a collar or a cuff. Also called crow's foot.



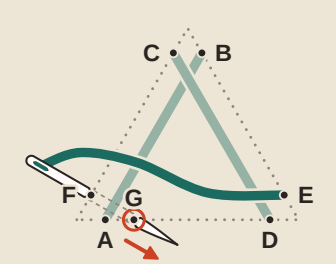
The finished stitch



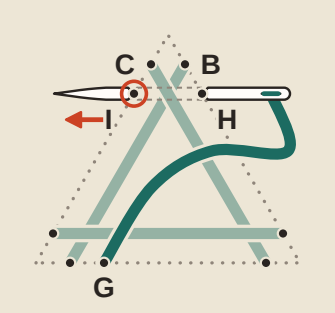
1. Lay the first side and cross the top



2. Lay the second side and cross the corner



3. Lay the third side and cross the corner



4. Begin the second round just inside



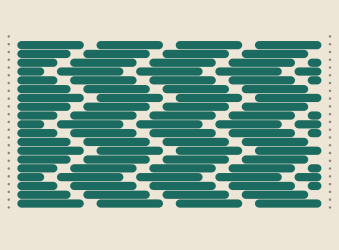
5. Go around and around, always inside



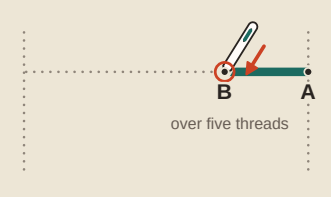
6. Stop in the middle of each side

Darning stitch

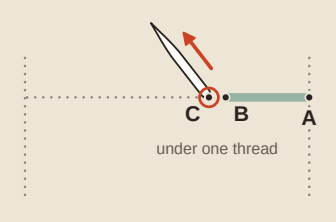
Beginner. For backgrounds behind an unstitched motif, bands and borders on evenweave, light, quick fillings, leaves and petals, with the rows following the shape and geometric patterns in one or more colors. Also called pattern darning and pattern darning stitch.



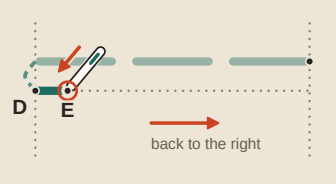
The finished stitch



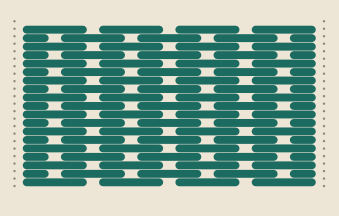
1. Make one long stitch



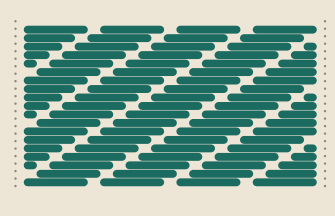
2. Pick up one thread



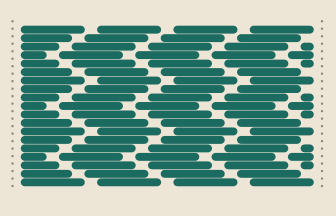
3. For bricks, start the next row half along



4. Pattern 1, brick: repeat the two rows



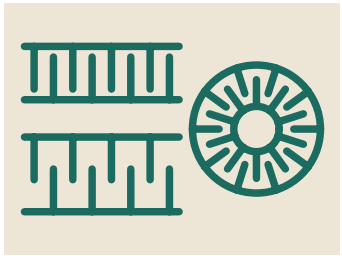
5. Pattern 2, diagonal: one thread each row



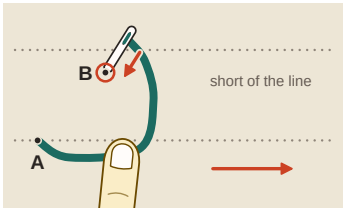
6. Pattern 3, chevron: one way, then back

Double blanket stitch

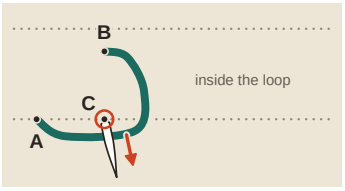
Beginner. For borders with a line on both sides, hems, cuffs and the edges of table linen, two-color bands, rings, wheels and curved outlines, holding down a ribbon or a thick thread and seams on crazy quilts. Also called double buttonhole stitch.



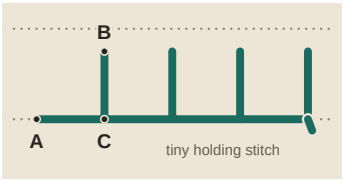
The finished stitch



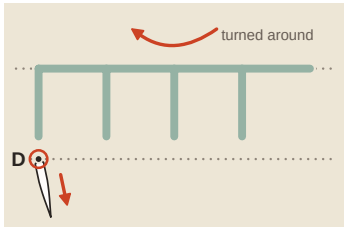
1. Go down short of the upper line



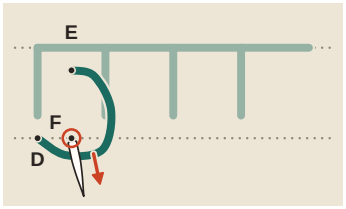
2. Come up inside the loop



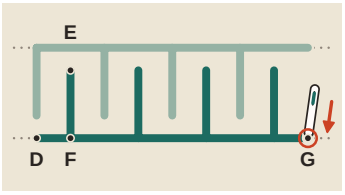
3. Finish the first row



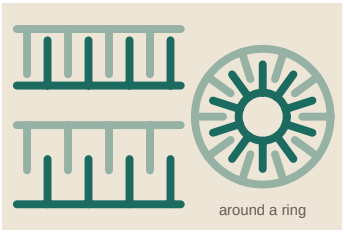
4. Turn the cloth and come up at D



5. Stitch into the gaps of the first row



6. End level with the first row



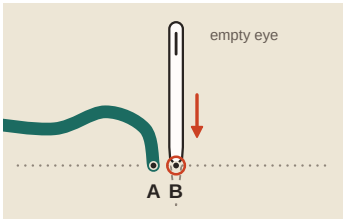
7. Set the rows apart, or work a ring

Drizzle stitch

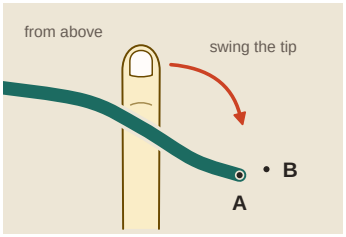
Intermediate. For flower centers and stamens, sea anemones, coral and seaweed, grass, curly hair and fleece and clusters of raised texture.



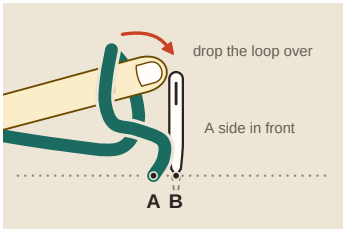
The finished stitch



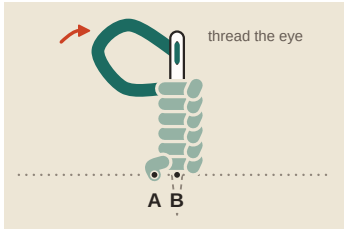
1. Stand the empty needle beside the thread



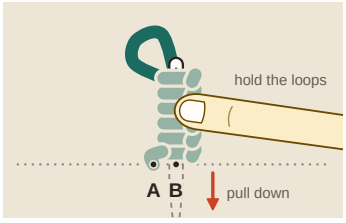
2. Lay the thread over your index finger



3. Swing the finger until the thread crosses, and drop the loop



4. Build the stack, then thread the eye



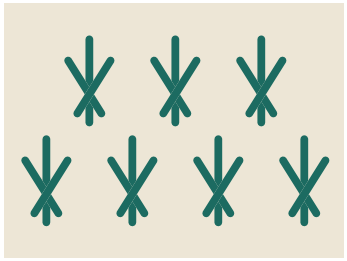
5. Hold the loops and pull down



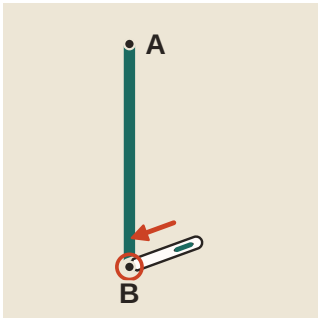
6. Fasten off and shape the stem

Ermine stitch

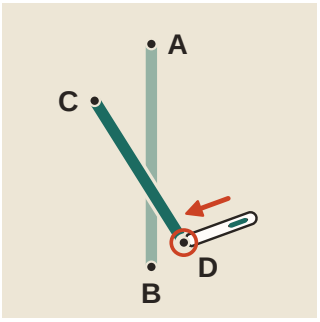
Beginner. For light, open fillings in leaves and petals, scattered marks on a plain ground, simple borders, black thread on white or natural fabric and shading, with the stitches set closer where it is dark. Also called ermine filling stitch and ermine filling.



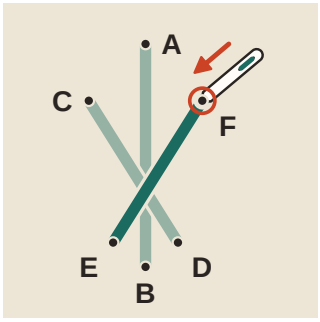
The finished stitch



1. Make an upright stitch



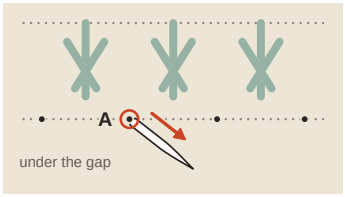
2. Slant down from the upper left



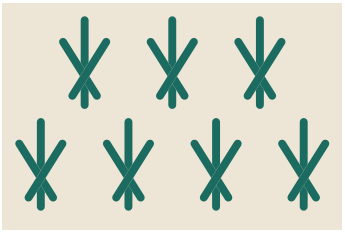
3. Slant up from the lower left



4. Check the shape



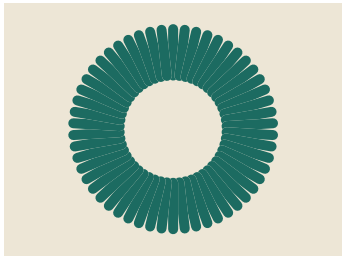
5. Mark rows and start the second



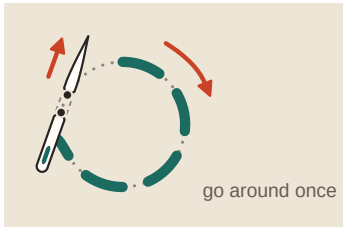
6. Fill the shape in offset rows

Eyelet stitch

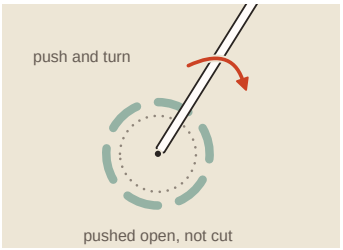
Easy. For broderie anglaise and other whitework, berries, flower petals and centers, borders of small holes, holes for a ribbon, cord or lacing, eyes of birds and animals and a bound hole where a pin goes through. Also called round eyelet and eyelet hole.



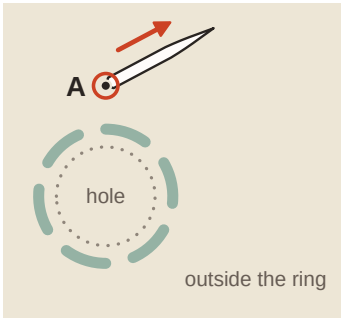
The finished stitch



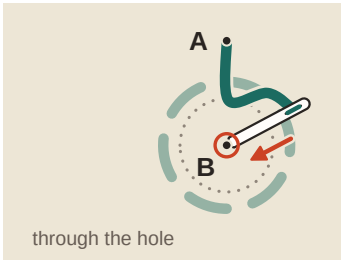
1. Run a ring of stitches



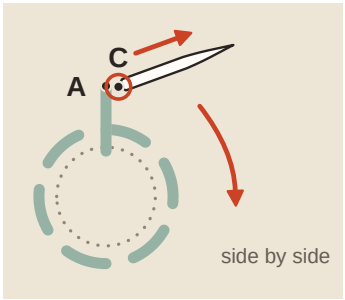
2. Open the hole with an awl



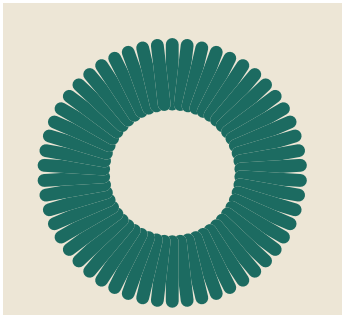
3. Come up outside the ring



4. Go down through the hole



5. Come up close beside it



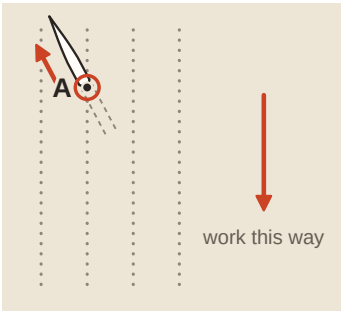
6. Go all the way around

Feather stitch

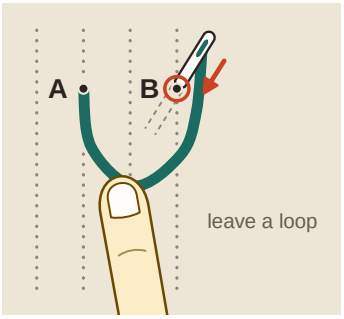
Easy. For vines, twigs and branches, borders, covering seams in crazy quilting, decorating smocks and plain sewing and coral in underwater scenes. Also called briar stitch and single coral stitch.



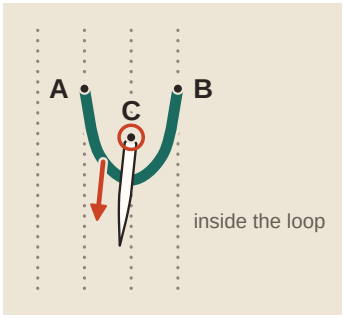
The finished stitch



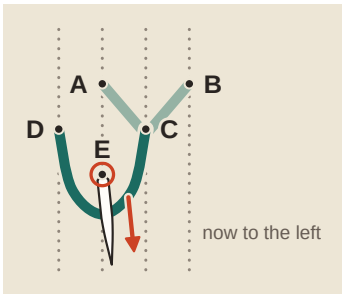
1. Come up at the top



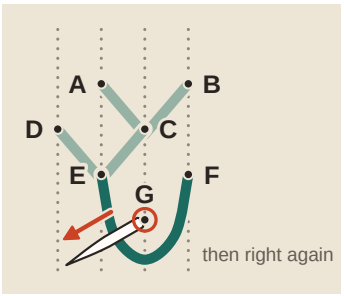
2. Go down to the right, level with A



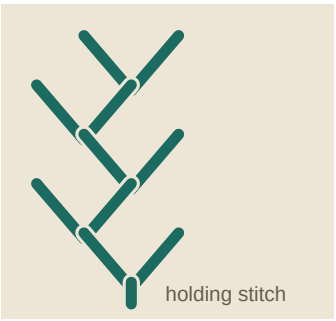
3. Come up inside the loop



4. Make the next loop to the left



5. Then to the right again



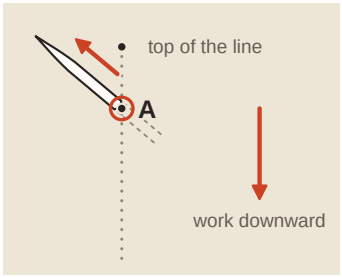
6. Finish with a holding stitch

Fern stitch

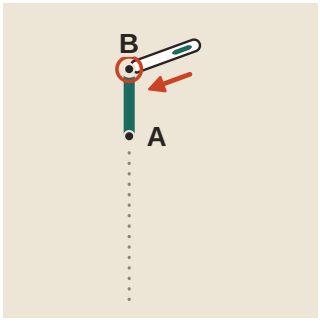
Beginner. For ferns and leafy sprays, greenery around embroidered flowers, decorating leaves and floral shapes, borders and outlines and single groups scattered as a light filling.



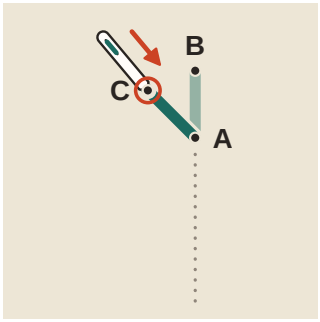
The finished stitch



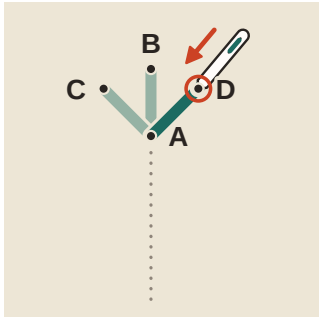
1. Come up one stitch from the top



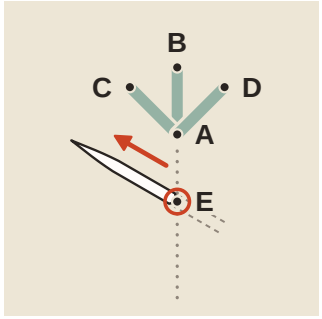
2. Stitch up the line



3. Add the left stitch



4. Add the right stitch



5. Move down for the next group



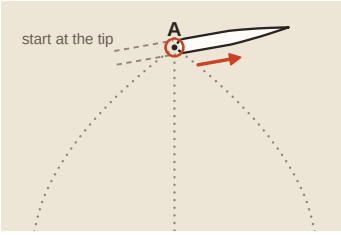
6. Repeat down the line

Fishbone stitch

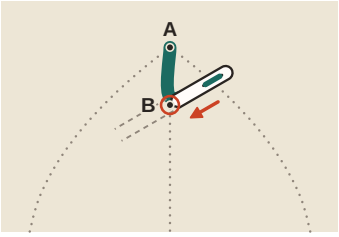
Easy. For leaves, feathers and flower petals.



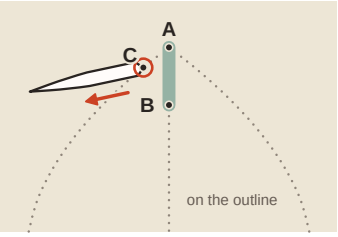
The finished stitch



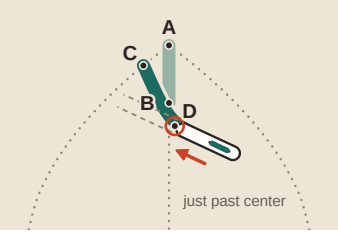
1. Start the thread and come up at the tip



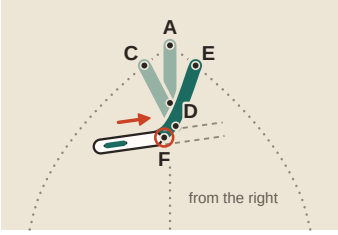
2. Make a short stitch down the center



3. Come up on the edge beside the tip



4. Go down just across the center line



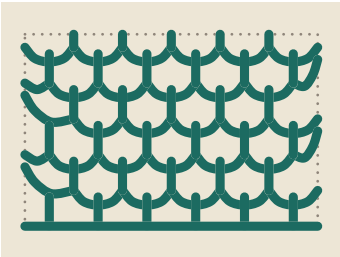
5. Repeat from the other side



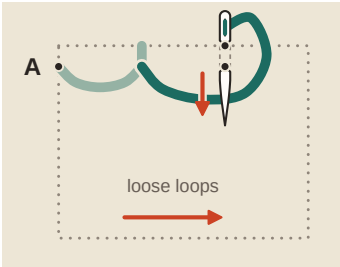
6. Alternate sides down to the base

Fishnet stitch

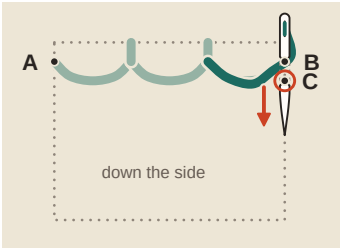
Intermediate. For fishing nets and butterfly nets, baskets, fences and wire, sports goals and hoops, fish scales and dragonfly wings, seen through, light fillings over colored cloth and beehives and pineapples. Also called open buttonhole filling.



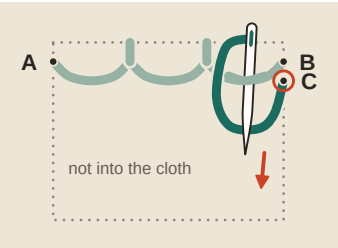
The finished stitch



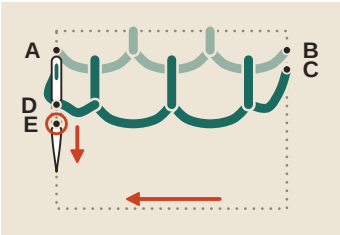
1. Work a row of loops along the top



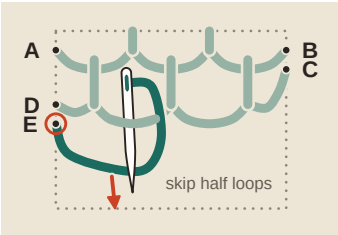
2. Fasten the row at the right side



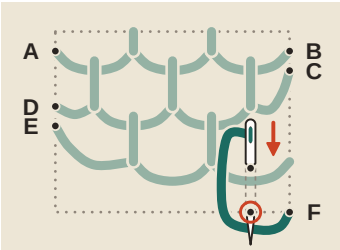
3. Hang the second row in the first



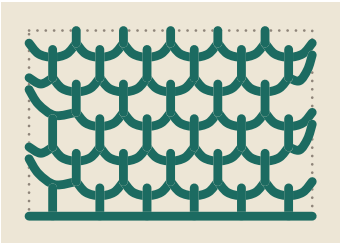
4. One stitch in each loop, then the side



5. Pass over the half loops in the third row



6. Fasten the last row to the cloth



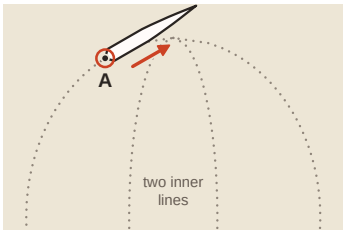
7. End the thread and finish the edge

Flat stitch

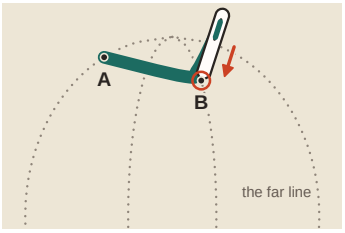
Easy. For flower petals, small leaves with a rounded tip, straight or curved bands, larger shapes, filled with bands side by side and smooth fillings in fine or silky thread. Also called Croatian flat stitch.



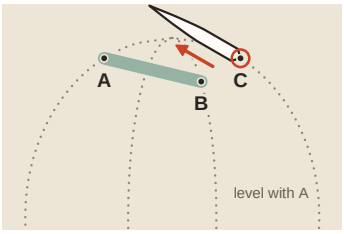
The finished stitch



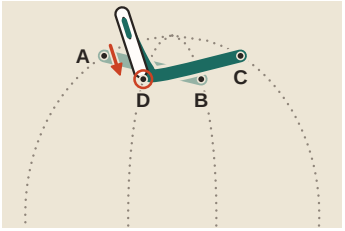
1. Draw two lines and come up at the edge



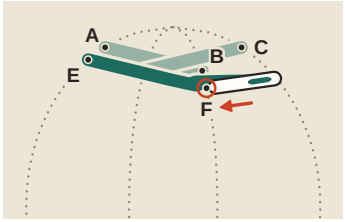
2. Go down on the far inner line



3. Come up on the other edge, level with A



4. Go down on the other inner line



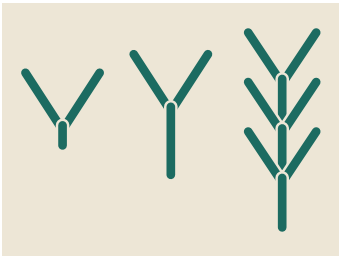
5. Go back to the first side, close below



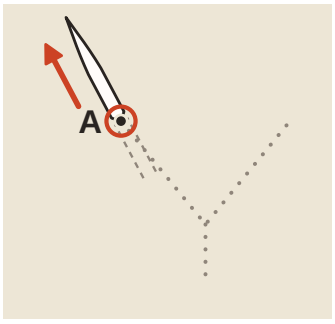
6. Work each side in turn to the bottom

Fly stitch

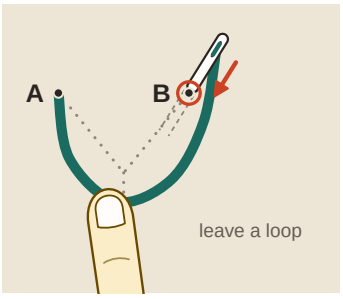
Beginner. For leaf veins and small leaves, ferns and grasses, scattered fills, twigs and foliage and borders worked in a row. Also called Y stitch and open loop stitch.



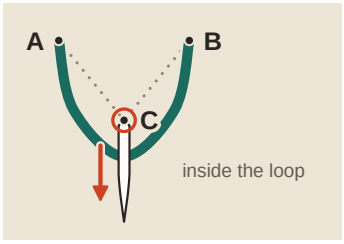
The finished stitch



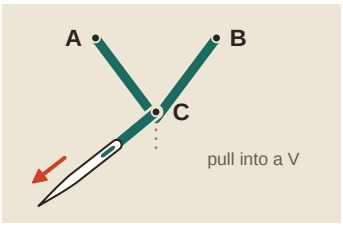
1. Come up at the top left



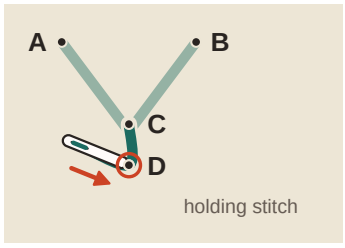
2. Go down at the top right



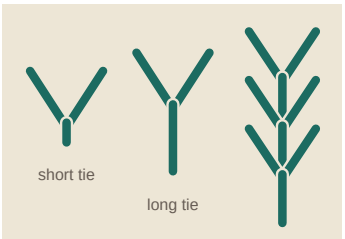
3. Come up inside the loop



4. Pull the loop into a V



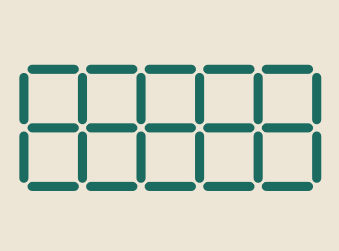
5. Hold the point down



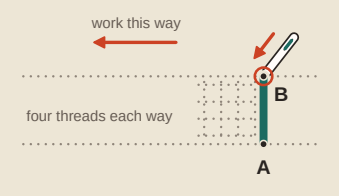
6. Short tie or long tie

Four-sided stitch

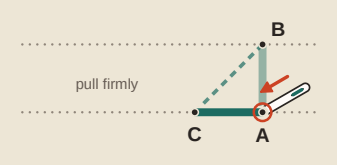
Easy. For borders and dividing lines in whitework, open fillings, row under row, narrow hems, baskets and lattices, frames around a motif and outlines of squares. Also called square open hem stitch and four-sided openwork stitch.



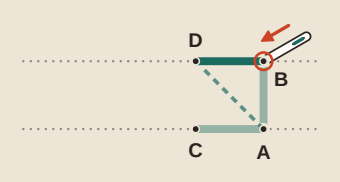
The finished stitch



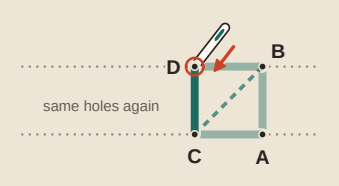
1. Stitch up the right side



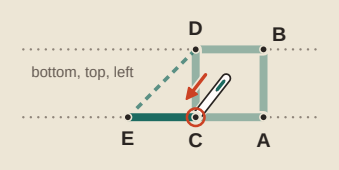
2. Lay the bottom side



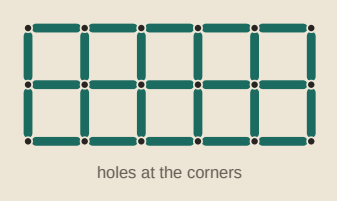
3. Lay the top side



4. Close the square on the left



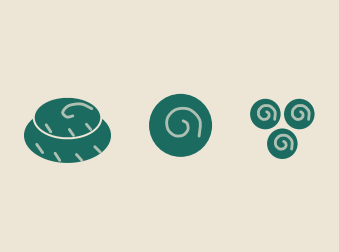
5. Go on to the next square



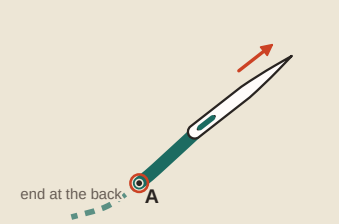
6. End the thread, or turn for another row

French knot

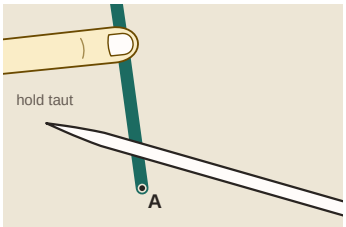
Easy. For flower centers, single accent dots, textured fillings, packed closely together and lettering. Also called French dot and knotted stitch.



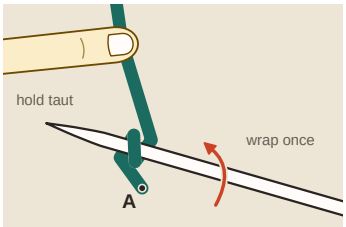
The finished stitch



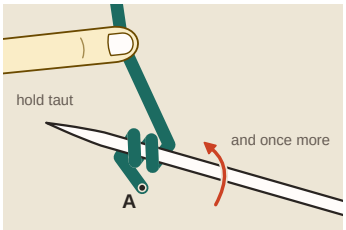
1. Bring the needle up



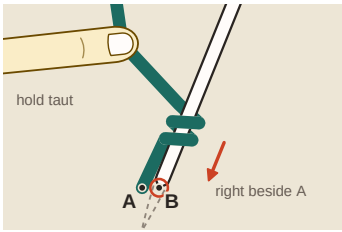
2. Hold the thread taut



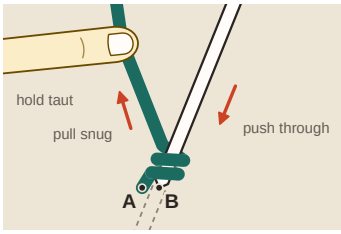
3. Wrap the needle once



4. Wrap it a second time



5. Go down right beside A



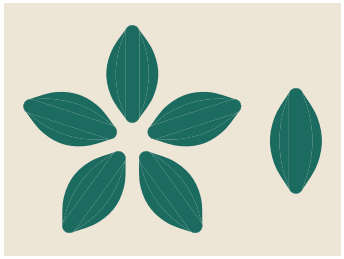
6. Snug the wraps and push through



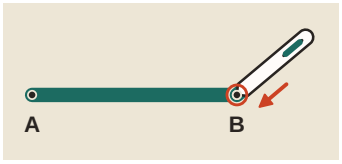
7. The finished knot

Granitos

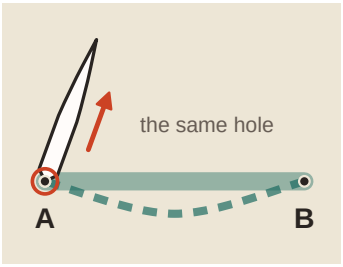
Beginner. For tiny petals and four- or five-petal flowers, buds, berries and seeds, small leaves along a stem, raised dots and scattered fillings and the bodies of bees and other small insects. Also called granito, granito stitch and granitos stitch.



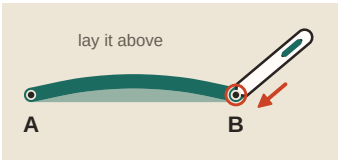
The finished stitch



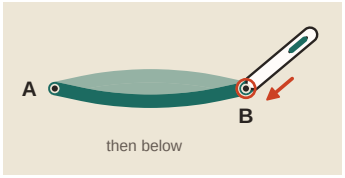
1. Make one straight stitch



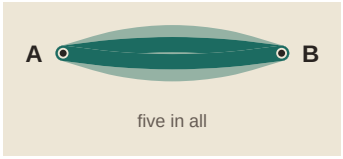
2. Come up again at A



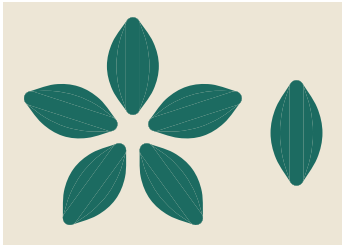
3. Lay the second stitch above the first



4. Lay the third stitch below



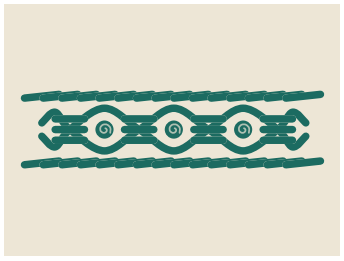
5. Add two more on top



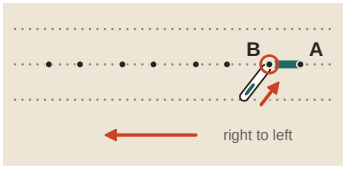
6. Build a flower or a scatter

Guilloche stitch

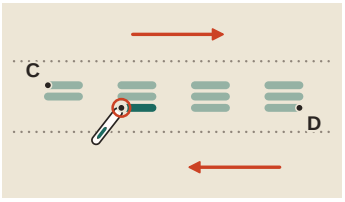
Easy. For borders on towels, table linen and cuffs, frames around a name or a picture, two- and three-color bands, bands on a sampler and belts, bookmarks and box lids.



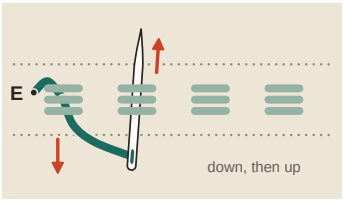
The finished stitch



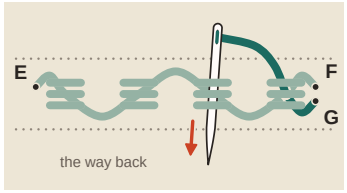
1. Work the middle row of bars



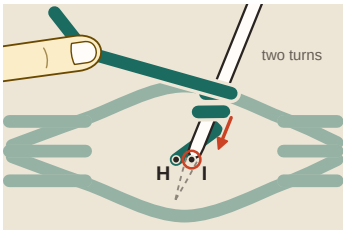
2. Add a row above and a row below



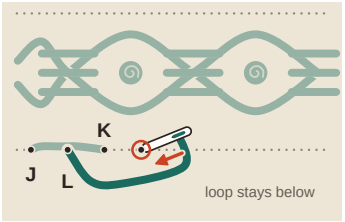
3. Lace down under one group, up under the next



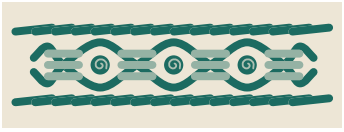
4. Turn at the end and lace back



5. Put a French knot in each eye



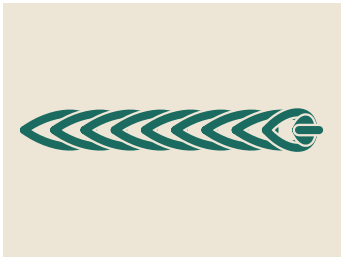
6. Edge the lower side with stem stitch



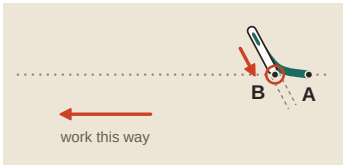
7. Edge the upper side the same way

Heavy chain stitch

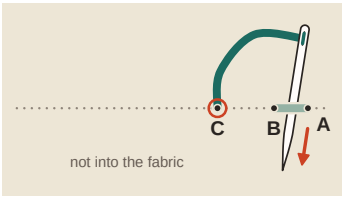
Intermediate. For bold outlines, thick stems, large letters, borders and cords and ropes in a picture. Also called heavy braid chain stitch.



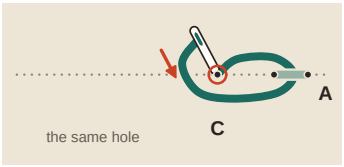
The finished stitch



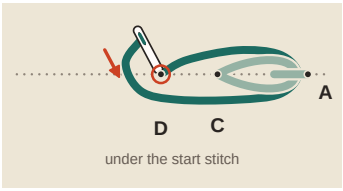
1. Make one small start stitch



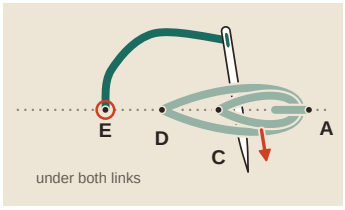
2. Come up at C and slide under that stitch



3. Go back down at C



4. Make a second link from D



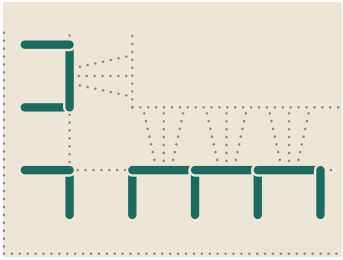
5. Come up at E and slide under both links



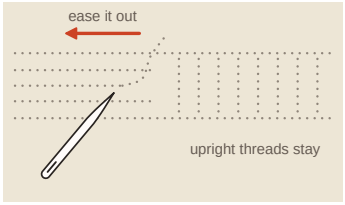
6. Repeat, always under the last two links

Hem stitch

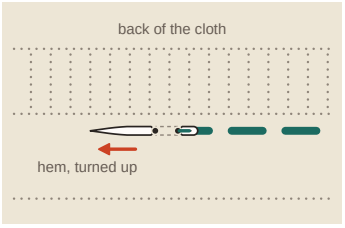
Intermediate. For hems of napkins, runners and cloths, handkerchiefs, ends of pillowcases and sheets, heads of fringes, bands and borders in drawn thread work and a straight frame around an embroidery. Also called hemstitching and openwork hem.



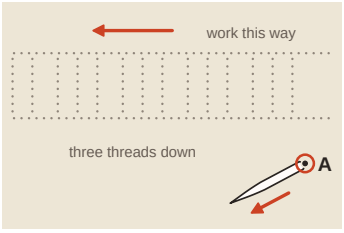
The finished stitch



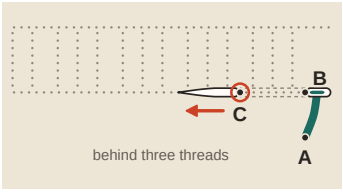
1. Draw out three threads



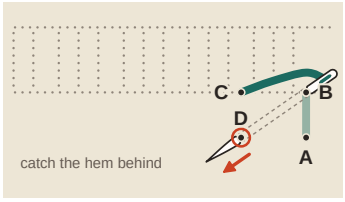
2. Turn the hem up to the band



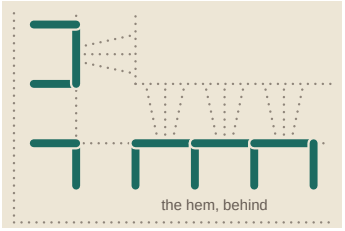
3. Come up below the band



4. Slide behind three threads



5. Go back over them and catch the hem



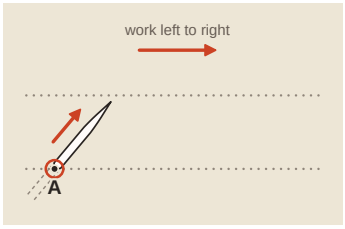
6. Pull, and repeat

Herringbone stitch

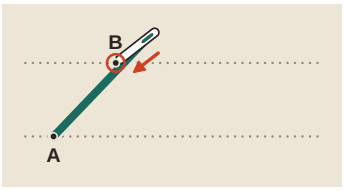
Easy. For borders and bands, decorating seams on crazy quilts, which are pieced from scraps of odd shapes, fastening down a raw seam edge, or the edge of applique, a cloth shape sewn on top of another, filling narrow shapes such as stems and a base for threaded, tied and double herringbone. Also called catch stitch, plaited stitch, Russian cross stitch and Mossoul stitch.



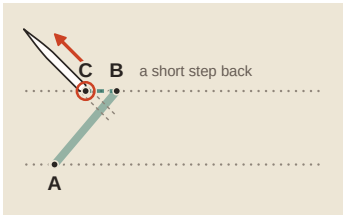
The finished stitch



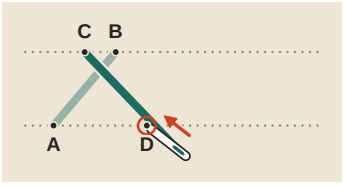
1. Come up on the lower line



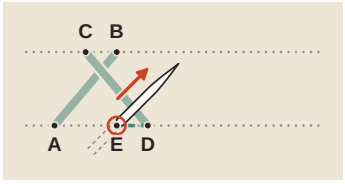
2. Go down on the upper line



3. Step back and come up



4. Cross down to the lower line



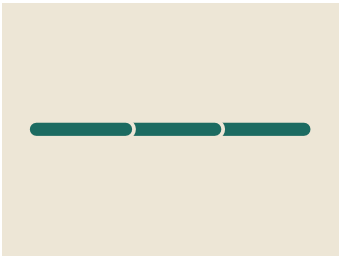
5. Step back again on the lower line



6. Repeat along the band

Holbein stitch

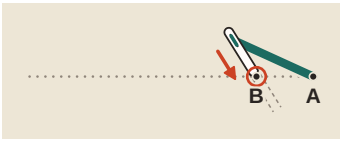
Easy. For blackwork patterns and outlines, which are fine lines in one dark thread on white cloth, reversible embroidery such as collars and cuffs, outlines on counted cross stitch, and on Assisi work, in which the background is stitched and the figure left bare and borders on evenweave fabric, whose threads can be counted. Also called double running stitch, line stitch, two-sided line stitch and Spanish stitch.



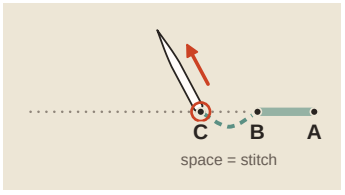
The finished stitch



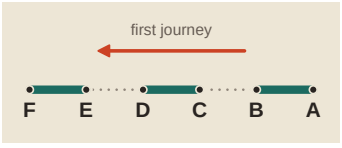
1. Come up at the start of the line



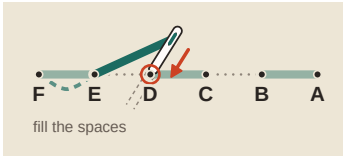
2. Go down one stitch along



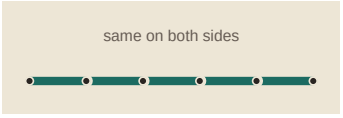
3. Leave a space the same length



4. Finish the first journey



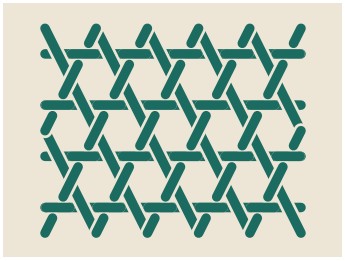
5. Turn back and fill the spaces



6. The finished line

Honeycomb filling stitch

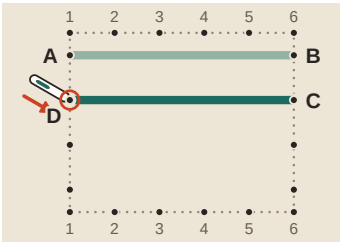
Easy. For beehives, honeycomb and honey jars, a background behind bees, insect wings, flower centers, open fillings in white thread on white cloth and open fillings in wool. Also called honeycomb stitch, net passing stitch and Brussels net stitch.



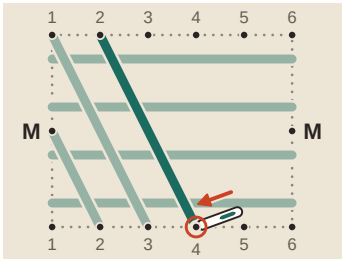
The finished stitch



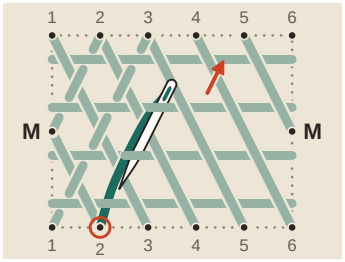
1. Mark the dots



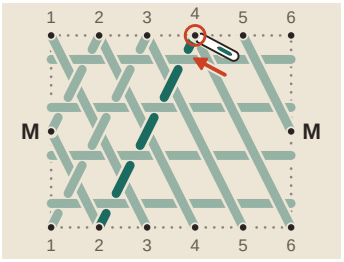
2. Lay four level lines



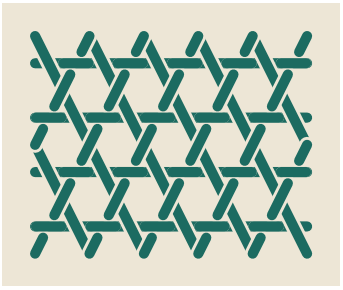
3. Lay slanting lines on top



4. Weave the third set



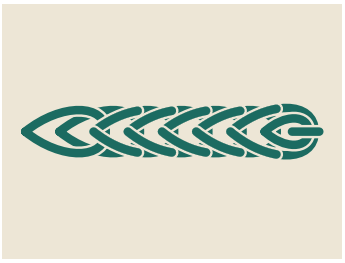
5. Go down, and weave on



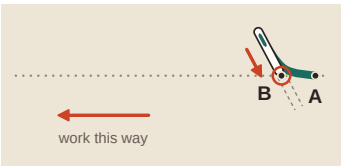
6. Finish the net

Hungarian braided chain stitch

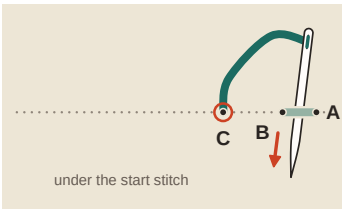
Intermediate. For bold outlines, stems and vines, large letters, borders and folk designs. Also called braided chain stitch, Hungarian chain stitch and Hungarian braid stitch.



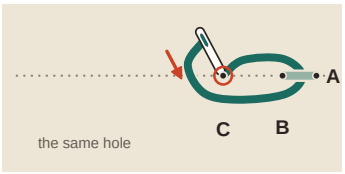
The finished stitch



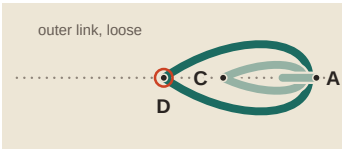
1. Make one small start stitch



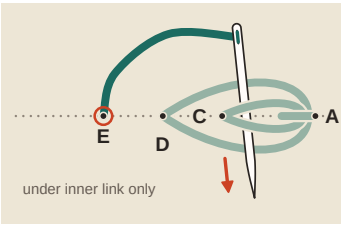
2. Come up at C, slide under the start stitch



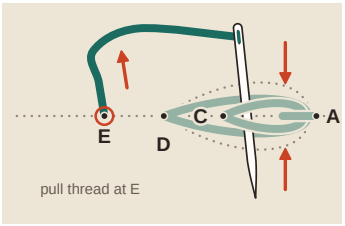
3. Go down at C: the first link



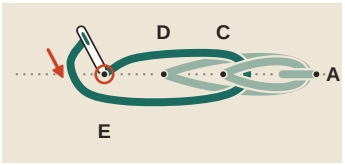
4. Make a second link from D and leave it slack



5. Come up at E and go under the inner link



6. Draw the outer link in



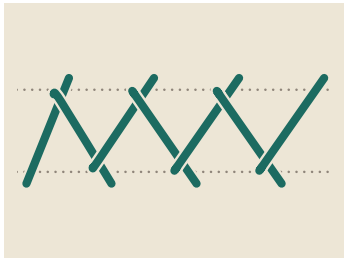
7. Pull through and go down at E



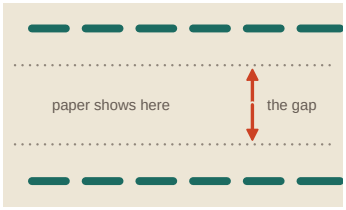
8. Repeat: over the outer, under the inner

Insertion stitch

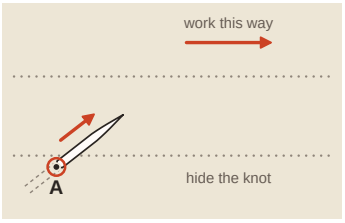
Intermediate. For joining strips and squares of linen, collars, cuffs and yokes, pillow and cushion edges, setting lace or ribbon into cloth, joining the halves of a cloth and a decorative seam. Also called faggoting, fagoting and fagot stitch.



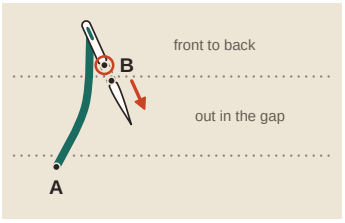
The finished stitch



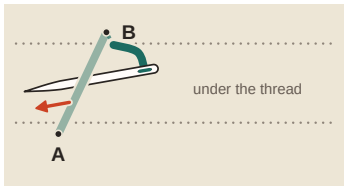
1. Baste both edges to stiff paper



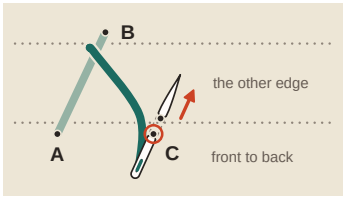
2. Come up in the lower edge



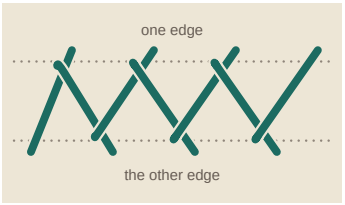
3. Cross to the upper edge



4. Pass under the thread



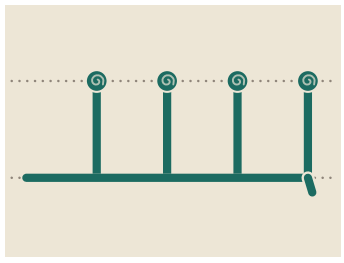
5. Cross back to the lower edge



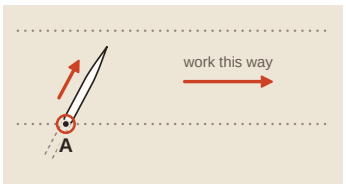
6. Repeat, then take off the paper

Knotted buttonhole stitch

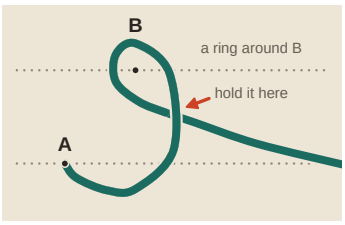
Intermediate. For borders with a row of dots along one side, fringes and edgings, grass with seed heads, flower stamens, antennae and eyelashes, small flowers worked in a ring and holding a thick or fancy thread on the cloth. Also called knotted blanket stitch and top knotted buttonhole stitch.



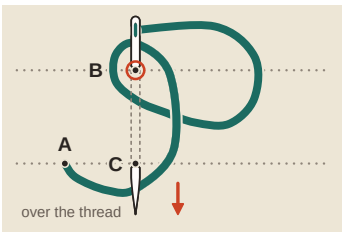
The finished stitch



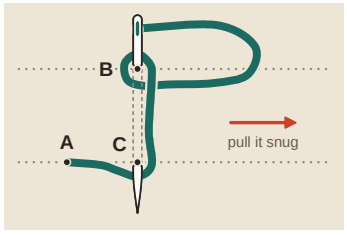
1. Come up at A on the lower line



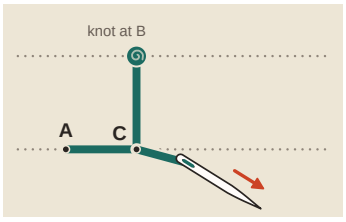
2. Lay the thread in a ring around B



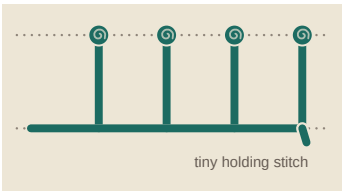
3. Go in at B and out at C



4. Pull the ring snug around the needle



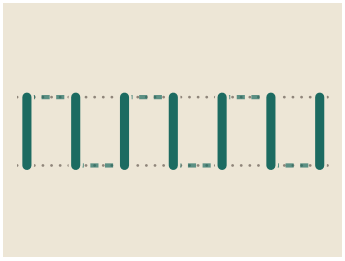
5. Hold the ring and pull the needle out at C



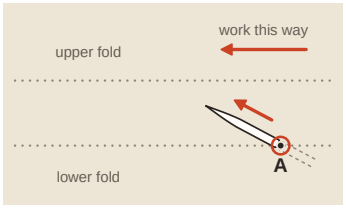
6. Work the row and hold the last corner

Ladder stitch

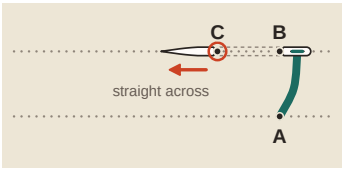
Beginner. For closing a pillow or a stuffed toy, joining two folded edges, mitered corners of napkins and cloths, sewing in a lining, mending a seam that has come undone and covering boards and boxes. Also called slip stitch and invisible stitch.



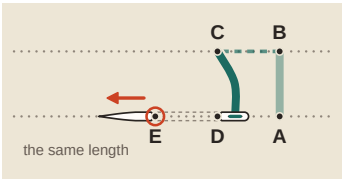
The finished stitch



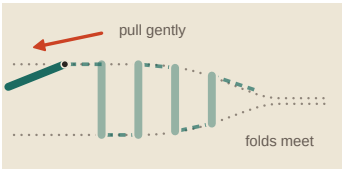
1. Come out of one fold



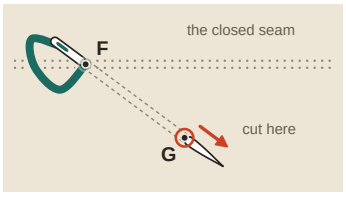
2. Cross to the upper fold and run along it



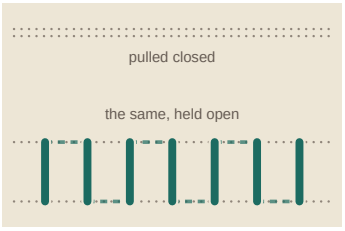
3. Cross straight back and run along



4. Pull until the folds meet



5. Fasten off and hide the end



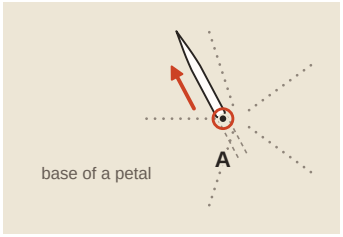
6. Check the seam

Lazy daisy stitch

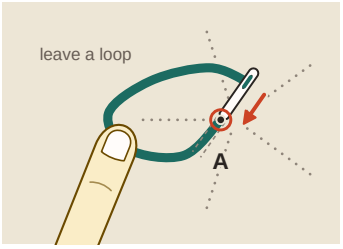
Beginner. For flower petals, small leaves, greenery around flowers and scattered fills over a background. Also called detached chain stitch, daisy stitch, single chain stitch and lazy daisy.



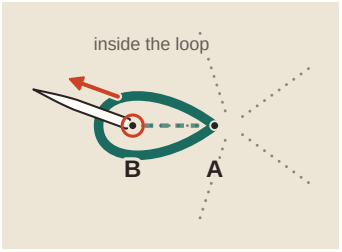
The finished stitch



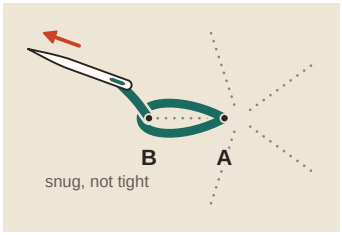
1. Come up at the base of a petal



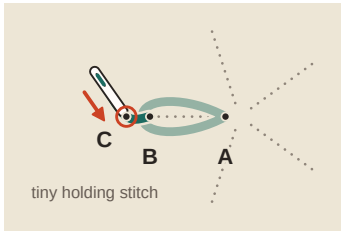
2. Go back down and leave a loop



3. Come up inside the loop



4. Pull the loop snug



5. Hold the tip with a tiny stitch



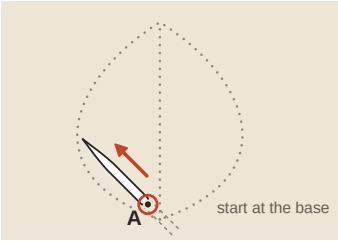
6. Work the petals in a ring

Leaf stitch

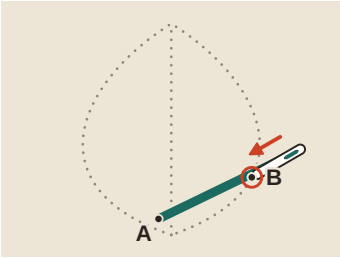
Easy. For leaves and border lines.



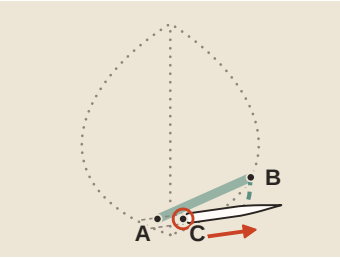
The finished stitch



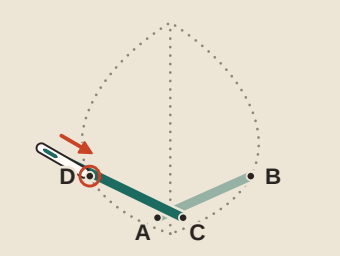
1. Come up beside the center line



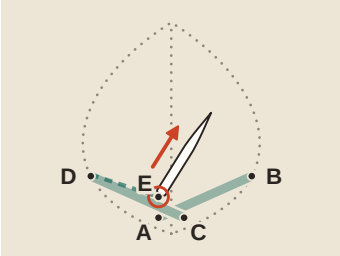
2. Slant up to the right edge



3. Come up on the other side of the line



4. Slant up to the left edge



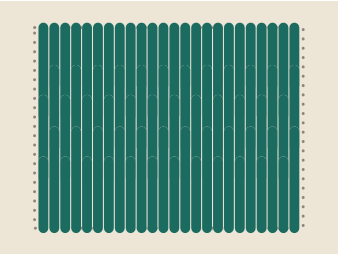
5. Start the next pair above the first



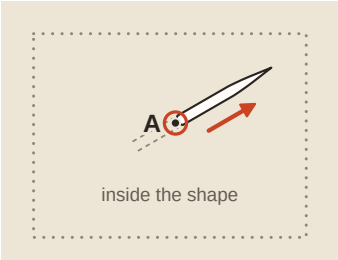
6. Work up to the tip

Long and short stitch

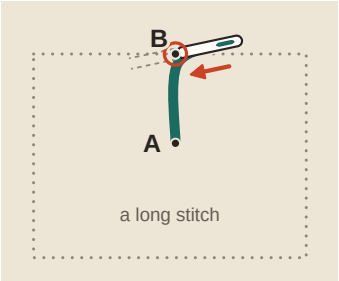
Intermediate. For filling shapes too large for satin stitch, shading from one color to the next, petals, leaves, animals and birds and needle painting, also called silk shading or thread painting. Also called shading stitch, plumage stitch and long and short satin stitch.



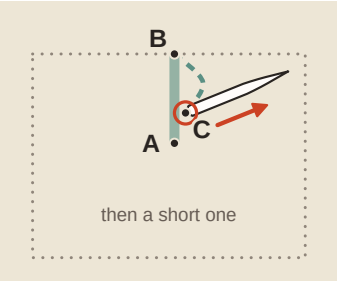
The finished stitch



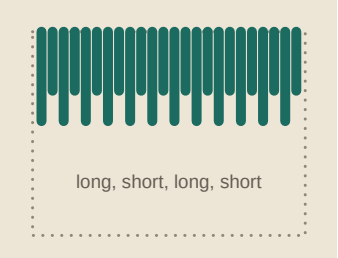
1. Come up inside the shape



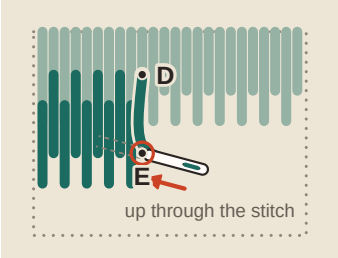
2. Go down on the outline



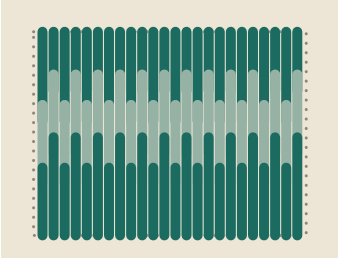
3. Add a short stitch beside it



4. Alternate along the edge



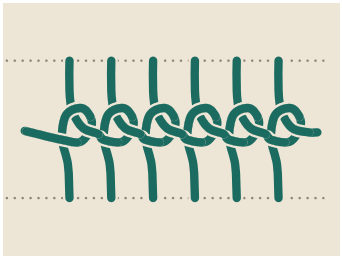
5. Second row: come up through the first



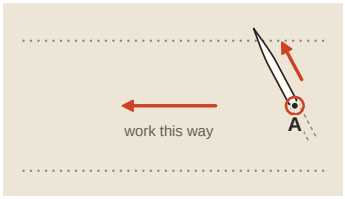
6. Fill to the far edge

Loop stitch

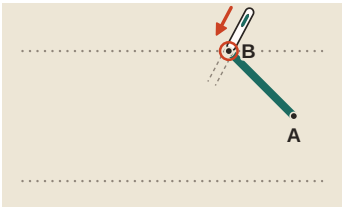
Easy. For borders and bands, straight lines and easy curves, leaves, where the plait makes a center vein, open, lacy fillings and holding down a ribbon or a thick thread. Also called centipede stitch, knotted loop stitch and double buttonhole stitch.



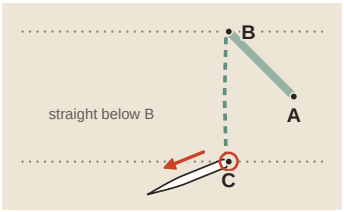
The finished stitch



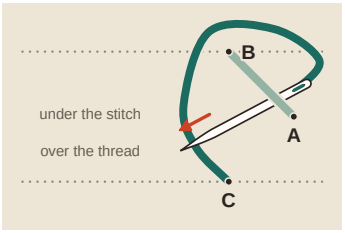
1. Come up in the middle, at the right



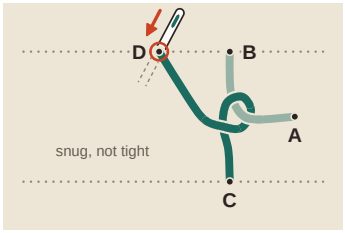
2. Go down on the upper line



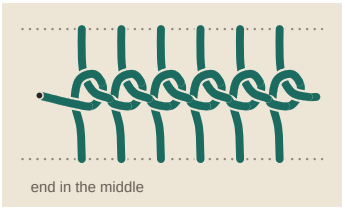
3. Come up straight below



4. Slide under the slanting stitch



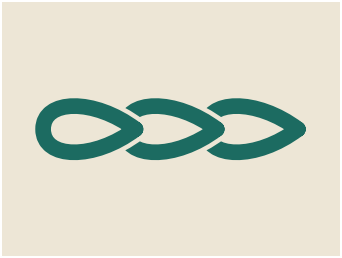
5. Pull snug, then go down on the upper line



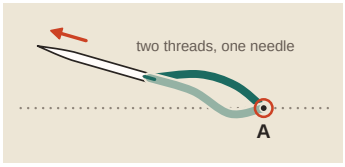
6. Repeat, and end in the middle

Magic chain stitch

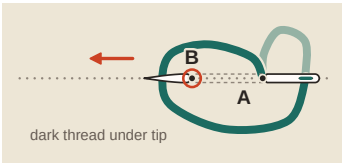
Beginner. For borders, lettering, candy-cane lines, children's things and fillings in checks. Also called checkered chain stitch, chequered chain stitch, alternating chain stitch and two-color chain stitch.



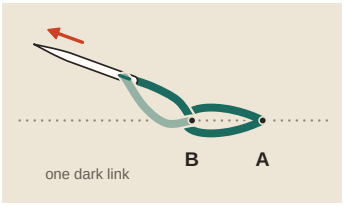
The finished stitch



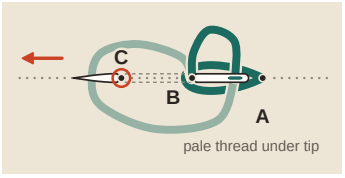
1. Thread two colors in one needle



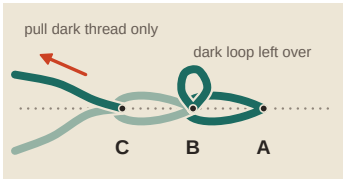
2. Loop only the dark thread



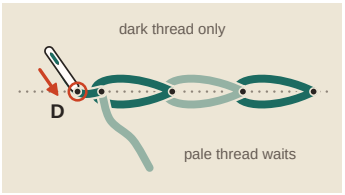
3. Pull through: a dark link



4. Loop only the pale thread



5. Pull the idle thread under



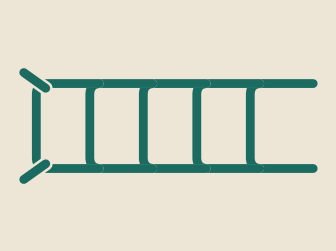
6. Repeat, then take one color down at D



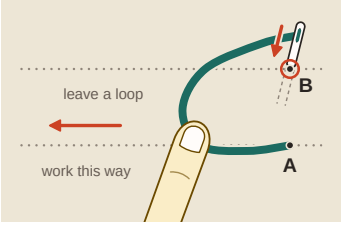
7. Take the other color down inside the link

Open chain stitch

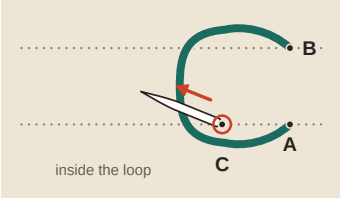
Intermediate. For borders and broad lines, stems and leaf veins, shapes that go from narrow to wide, holding down cord, ribbon or a bundle of threads and a ladder to weave ribbon or thread through. Also called square chain stitch, Roman chain stitch and small writing.



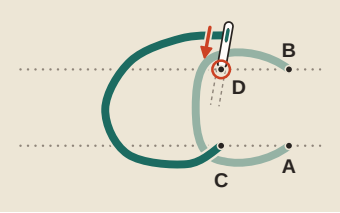
The finished stitch



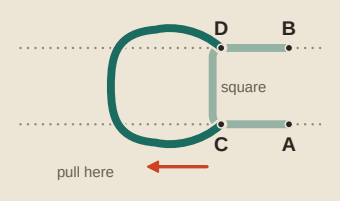
1. Come up at A, go down at B and leave a loop



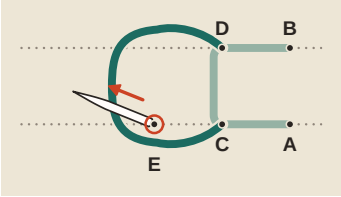
2. Come up at C, inside the loop



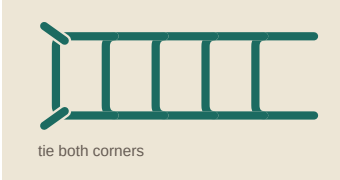
3. Go down at D, inside the same loop



4. Square the first link



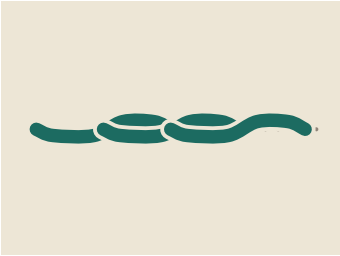
5. Come up at E, and go on



6. Tie down both corners of the last link

Outline stitch

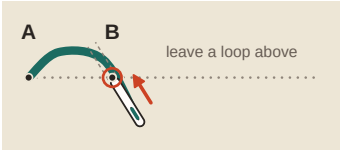
Beginner. For outlining shapes, stems and leaf veins, borders and filling a shape with rows worked side by side.



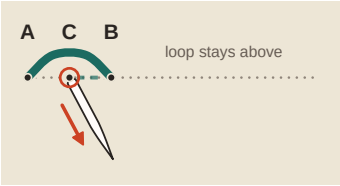
The finished stitch



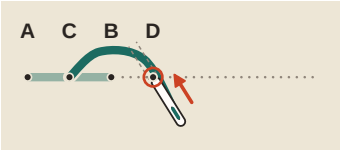
1. Come up at the start of the line



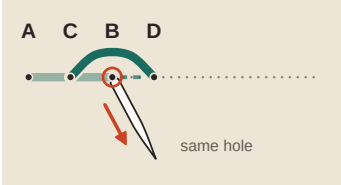
2. Go down one stitch along, leave a loop



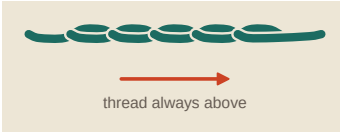
3. Come up halfway back



4. Go down half a stitch past the last



5. Come up at B, where the first stitch ended



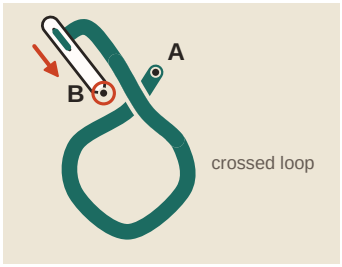
6. Repeat along the line

Oyster stitch

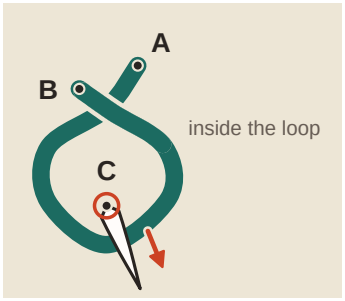
Intermediate. For buds and berries, seeds and small shells, petals of a raised flower, scattered texture over a background, the top of a stalk and single stitches that stand in for a lazy daisy.



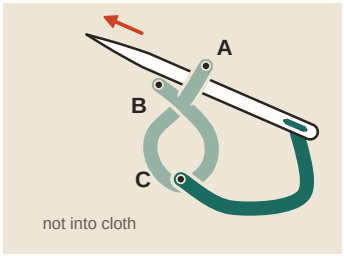
The finished stitch



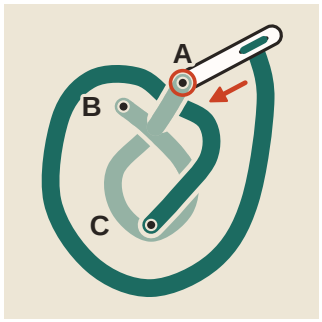
1. Make a crossed loop



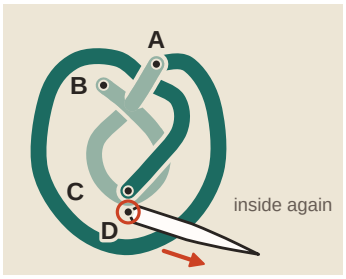
2. Come up inside the loop



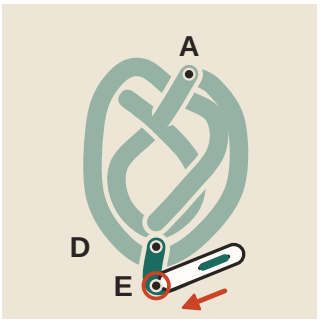
3. Slide under the strand that starts at A



4. Go down at A and leave a second loop



5. Come up at the foot, inside that loop



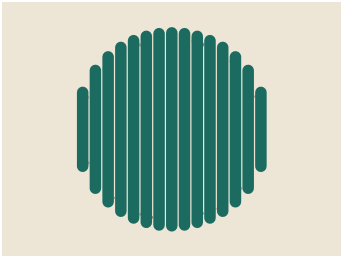
6. Tie it down with a small stitch



7. Make a flower, or finish

Padded satin stitch

Easy. For dots and other small raised shapes, petals, whitework and crewelwork and stumpwork. Also called raised satin stitch.



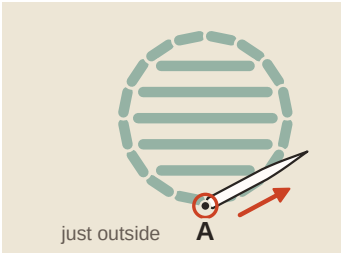
The finished stitch



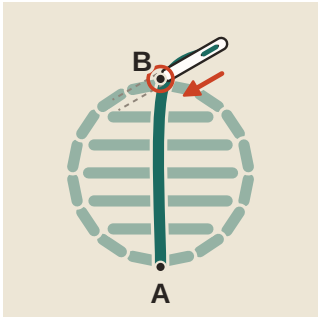
1. Outline the shape



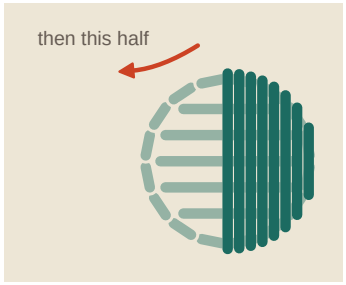
2. Fill the inside with padding



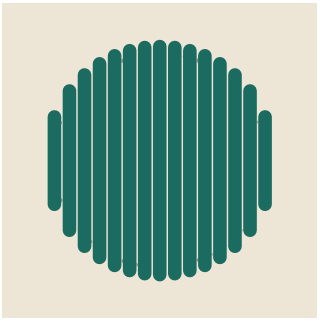
3. Come up just outside the outline



4. Go down straight across



5. Cover one half, then the other



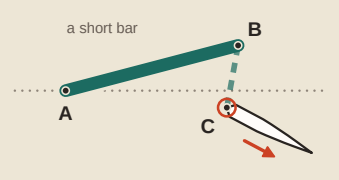
6. The finished shape

Palestrina stitch

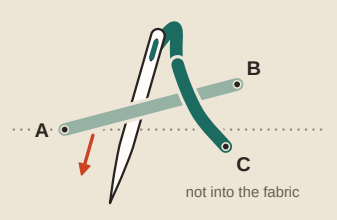
Intermediate. For bold outlines and borders, stems and branches with texture, single-line letters and initials, rows side by side as a raised filling and a beaded-looking edge. Also called double knot stitch, tied coral stitch, old English knot stitch, Smyrna stitch and twilling stitch.



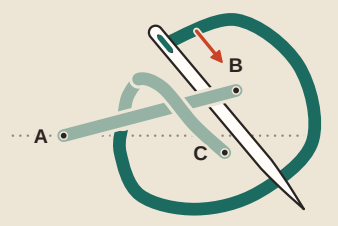
The finished stitch



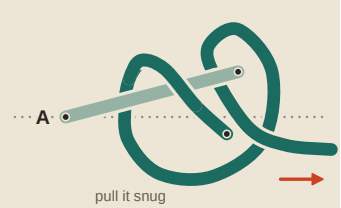
1. Make a short bar and come up below it



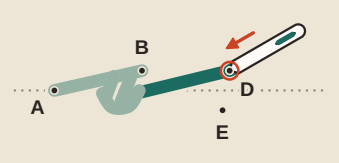
2. Slide the needle down under the bar



3. Slide it under again, inside a loop



4. Pull the knot snug



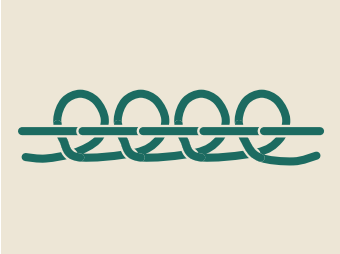
5. Start the next bar



6. Space the knots evenly

Pekinese stitch

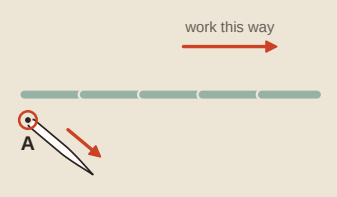
Easy. For decorative outlines, borders and braids, stems and curved lines, fillings in rows, shaded from dark to light, edges of small stitched things and metallic and other threads that are hard to pull through fabric. Also called Chinese stitch and Peking stitch.



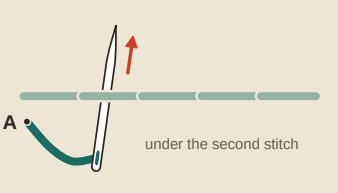
The finished stitch



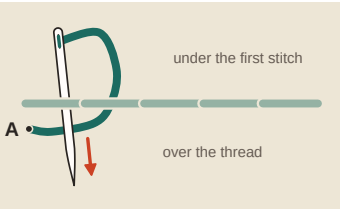
1. Work a row of back stitch



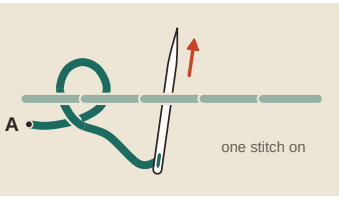
2. Bring up a second thread at the left



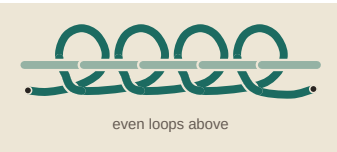
3. Slide up under the second stitch



4. Slide down under the first stitch



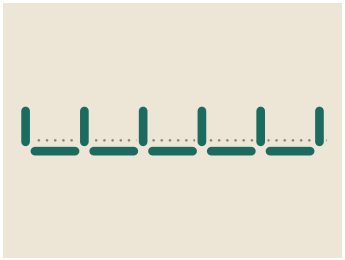
5. Pull snug, then go up under the next



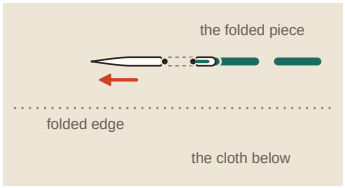
6. Lace to the end and go down

Pin stitch

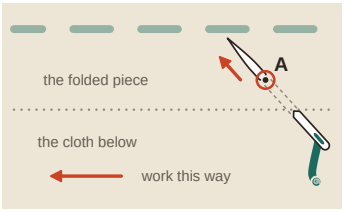
Intermediate. For appliqué on fine white cloth, hems of handkerchiefs and napkins, lace joined to cloth, baby clothes and collars, facings turned to the front, with a shaped edge and a cord laid on cloth, with holes on both sides. Also called point de Paris, Parisian hem stitch and pinstitch.



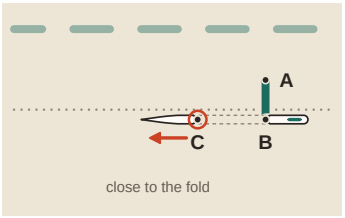
The finished stitch



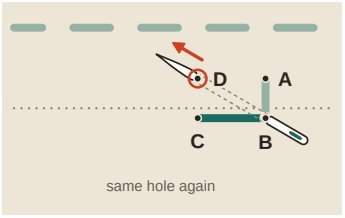
1. Turn the edge under and baste it



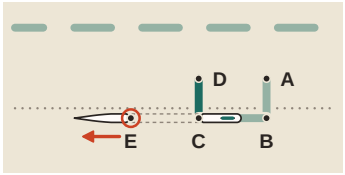
2. Come up just inside the fold



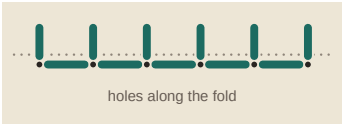
3. Go down beside the fold, come up one along



4. Go back into B and come up in the fold



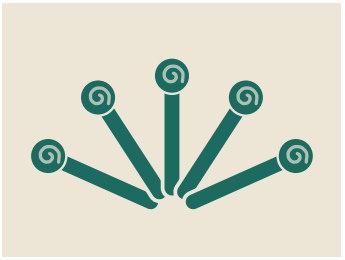
5. Start the next stitch in C



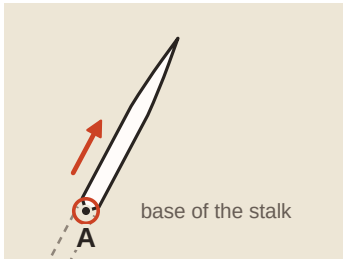
6. Work to the end and fasten off

Pistil stitch

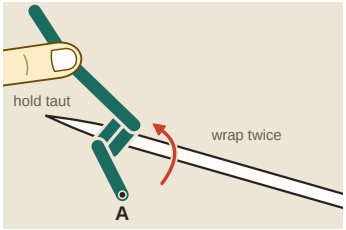
Easy. For the pistils inside embroidered flowers, flower centers and scattered fillings. Also called long-armed French knot, French knot on stalks, elongated French knot and long French knot.



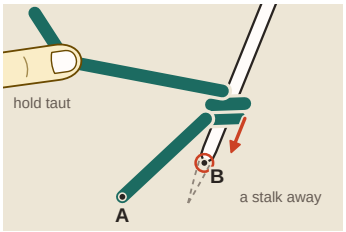
The finished stitch



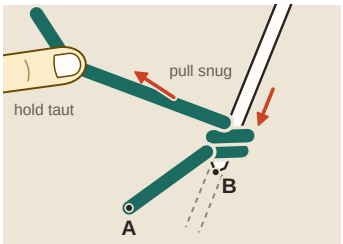
1. Come up at the base of the stalk



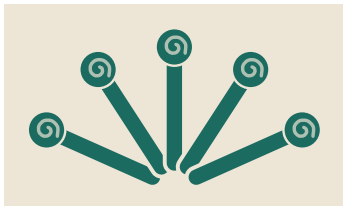
2. Wrap the needle twice



3. Go down a stalk length away



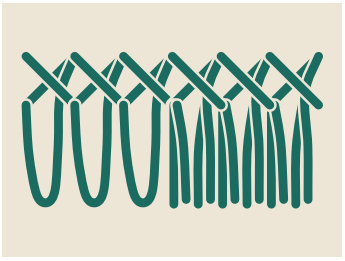
4. Snug the wraps and push through



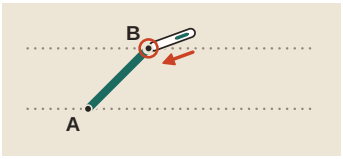
5. The finished stitches

Plush stitch

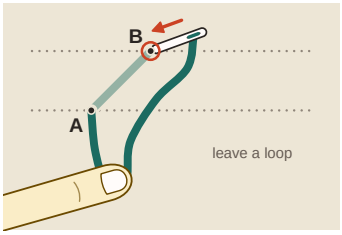
Intermediate. For fur, manes and tails, the fuzzy back of a bee, pom pom flowers and thistles, beards, hats and snow and a thick velvety pile. Also called velvet stitch, Berlin plush stitch and Astrakhan stitch.



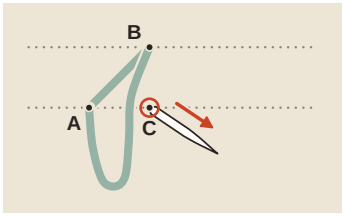
The finished stitch



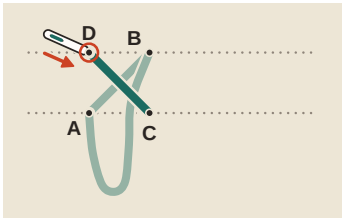
1. Make a slanting stitch



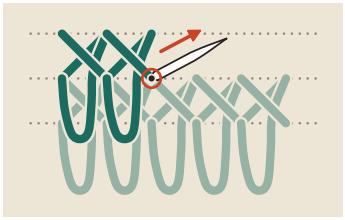
2. Go over it again and leave a loop



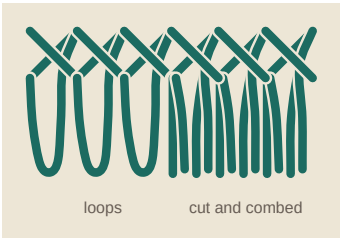
3. Come up at the right of the loop



4. Cross over and lock it



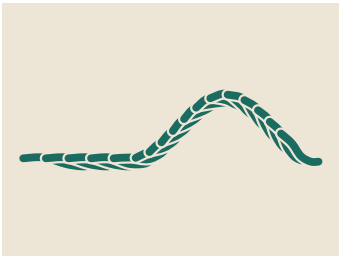
5. Work the row, then the row above



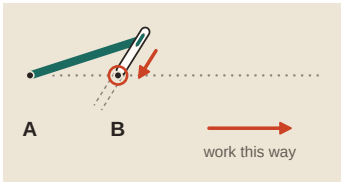
6. Cut, comb and trim

Quaker stitch

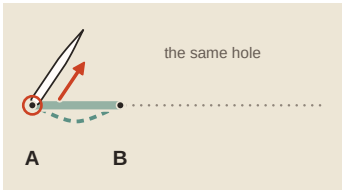
Intermediate. For names and lettering, handwriting and signatures, quotes and verses, fine outlines, stems, tendrils and veins and raised cords, in more thread. Also called split stem stitch.



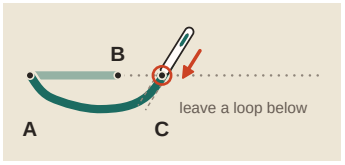
The finished stitch



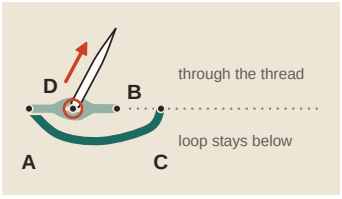
1. Make a short first stitch



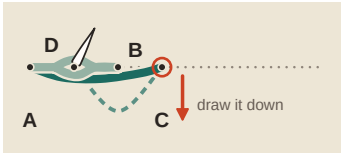
2. Come up again at A



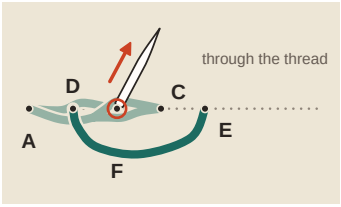
3. Go down at C and leave a loop



4. Come up at D, through the first stitch



5. Close the loop, then pull through



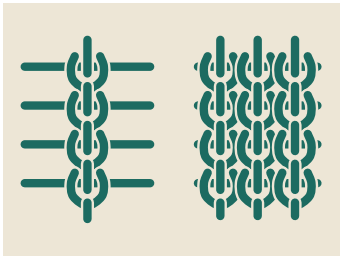
6. Go down at E and come up at F



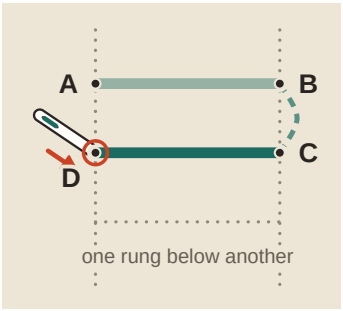
7. Repeat, and end just past the line

Raised chain band

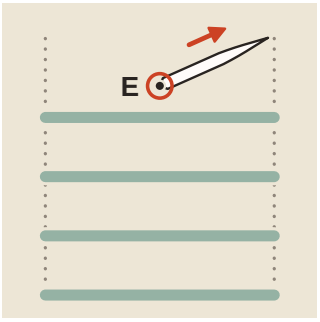
Intermediate. For raised borders and outlines, stems, vines, branches and tree trunks, leaves and other filled shapes in crewel work, raised embroidery (stumpwork), hair, braids and rope and two-color bands on a sampler. Also called raised chain stitch and raised chain band stitch.



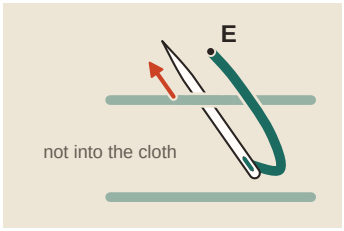
The finished stitch



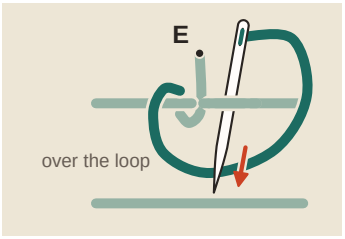
1. Lay the rungs of a ladder



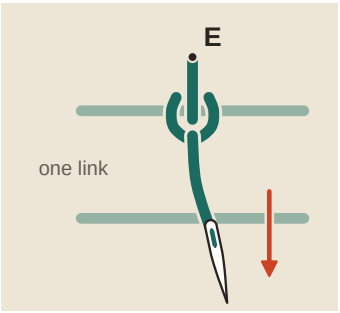
2. Bring the chain thread up at E



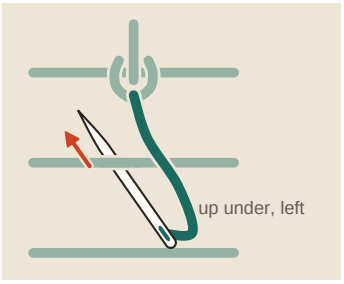
3. Slide the needle up under the rung



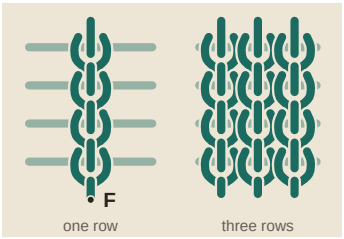
4. Lay a loop and slide down on the right



5. Pull straight down into a link



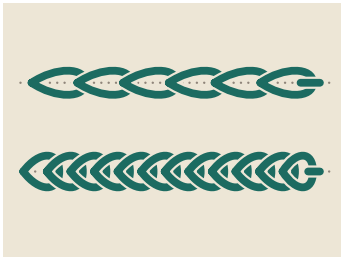
6. Go on to the next rung



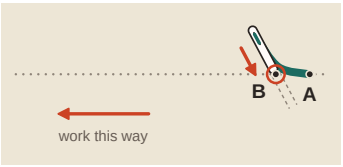
7. End the row, and add rows beside it

Reverse chain stitch

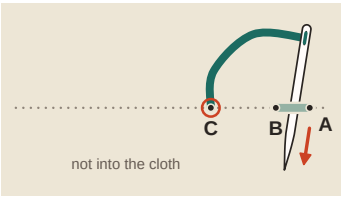
Easy. For outlines, letters, stems and leaf veins, borders, fillings, row beside row and thick, solid lines as broad chain. Also called broad chain stitch.



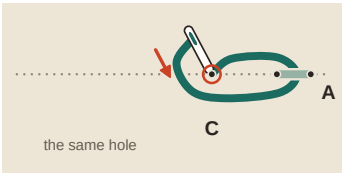
The finished stitch



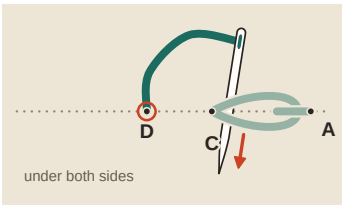
1. Make one tiny start stitch



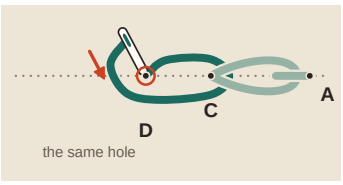
2. Come up at C and slide under that stitch



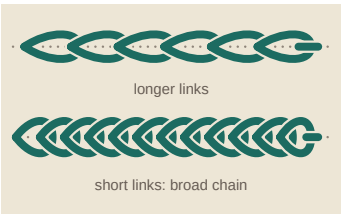
3. Go back down at C



4. Come up at D and slide under the link



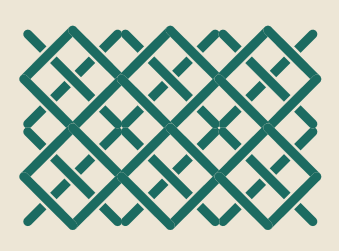
5. Go back down at D



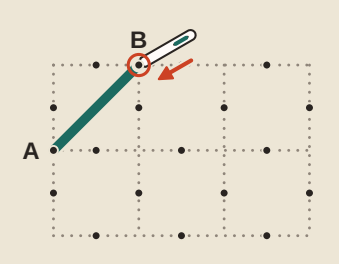
6. Repeat to the end of the line

Rice stitch

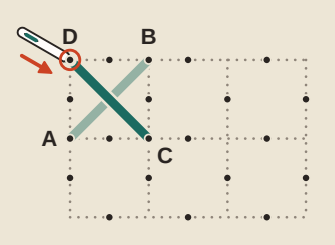
Beginner. For small blocks of close color, borders and bands, checks and diamonds in two colors, backgrounds on evenweave or Aida (cloth you can count) and single squares along a line. Also called crossed corners, crossed corners cross stitch and William and Mary stitch.



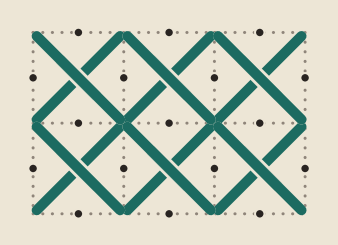
The finished stitch



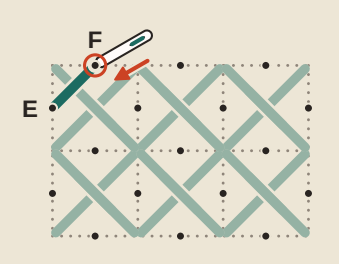
1. Lay the first leg of a cross



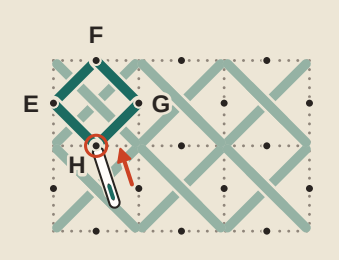
2. Cross it



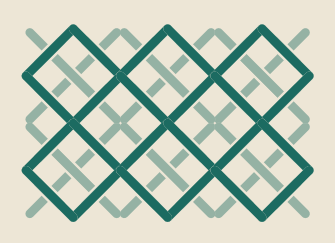
3. Fill the shape with big crosses



4. Tie the first arm



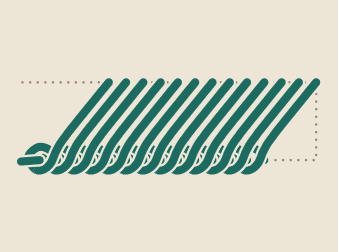
5. Tie the other three arms



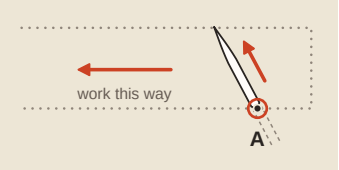
6. Tie every cross

Rope stitch

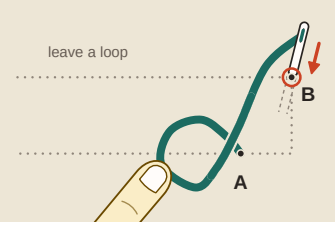
Intermediate. For bold outlines, stems, tendrils and spirals, lettering, ropes and cords in a picture and rows set side by side to shade from dark to light. Also called knotted satin stitch.



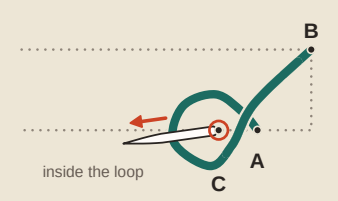
The finished stitch



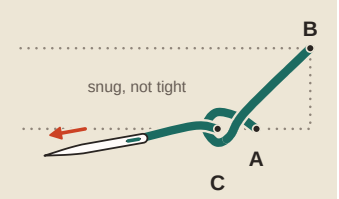
1. Come up a little way in from the end



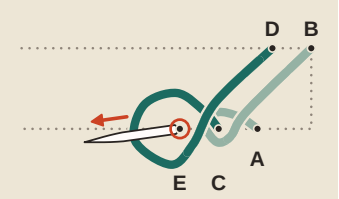
2. Go down on the upper edge, at the end



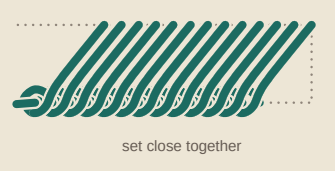
3. Come up inside the loop, close to A



4. Pull the loop into a small curl



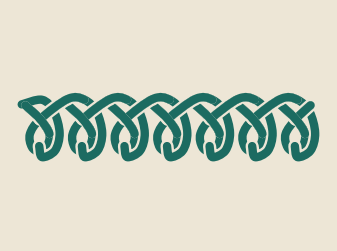
5. Work the next stitch close beside it



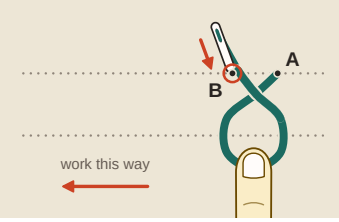
6. Fill the line, then hold the last curl

Rosette chain stitch

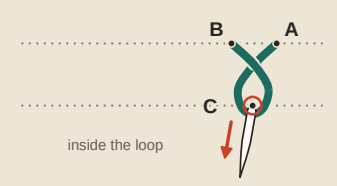
Intermediate. For borders and edgings, small flowers and daisies, curves and spirals, the rim of a circle and collars and cuffs. Also called rosette chain and bead edging stitch.



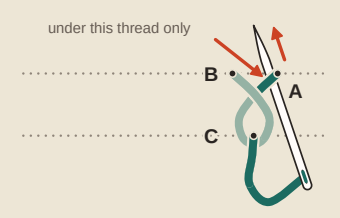
The finished stitch



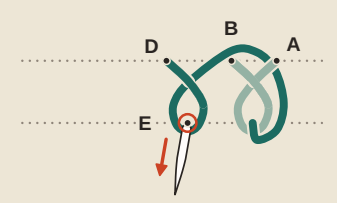
1. Make a crossed loop and go down at B



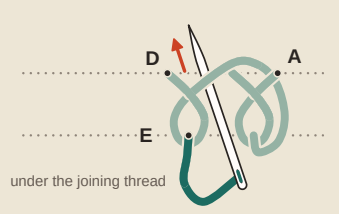
2. Come up at C inside the loop



3. Slide up under the thread at A



4. Make the next loop at D and E



5. Slide up under the joining thread



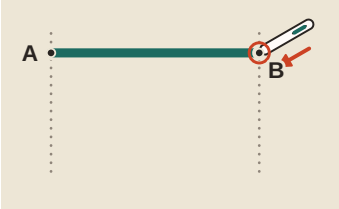
6. Repeat, and end on the upper line

Roumanian couching

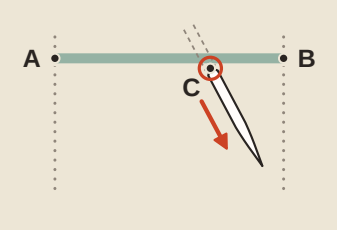
Easy. For wide bands and borders, leaves and petals, large flat areas of color, crewel work and other wool embroidery and saving thread on a big filling. Also called Romanian couching, Rumanian couching, Oriental couching, antique couching, self-couching and New England economy stitch.



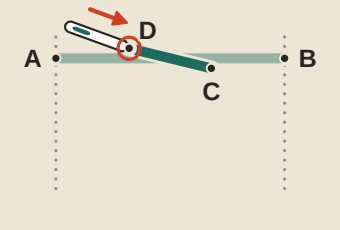
The finished stitch



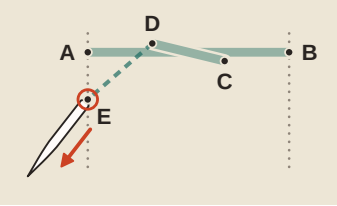
1. Lay a thread straight across



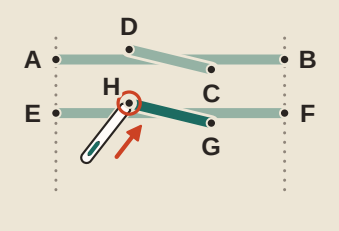
2. Come up below it, on the way back



3. Tie it with one long slant



4. Come up close below A



5. Lay and tie the second thread



6. Fill the band

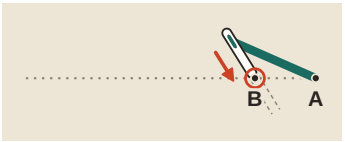
Running stitch

Beginner. For dashed outlines, patterns built from rows of running stitch (sashiko, kantha), quilting and gathering, pattern darning to fill a shape and a base for whipped and threaded stitches.

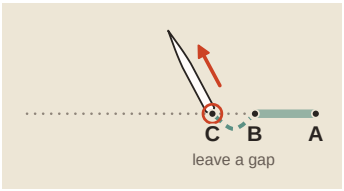
The finished stitch



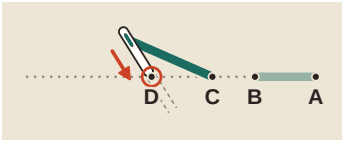
1. Come up at the start of the line



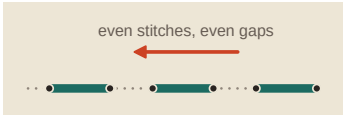
2. Go down one stitch along



3. Leave a gap and come up again



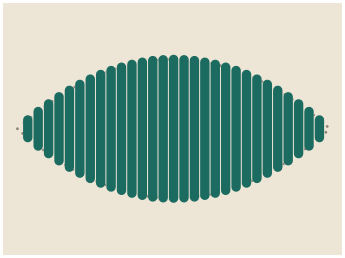
4. Make the next stitch the same length



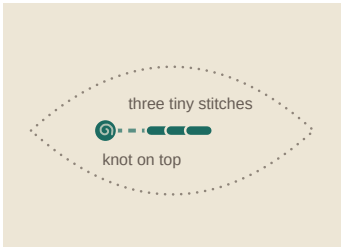
5. Repeat along the line

Satin stitch

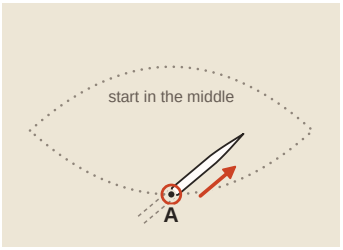
Easy. For petals and leaves, small solid shapes, monograms and lettering and dots. Also called damask stitch.



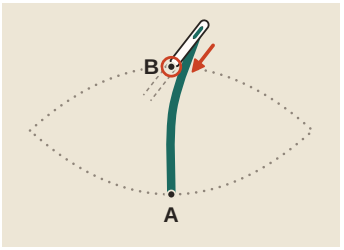
The finished stitch



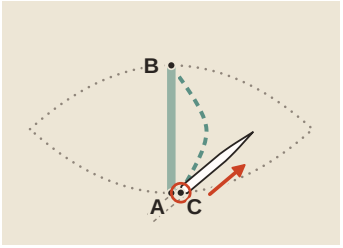
1. Start with a knot you cut off



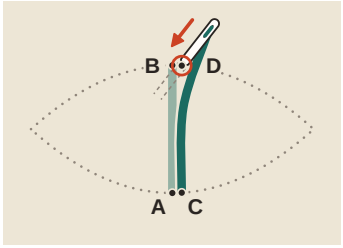
2. Come up mid-edge



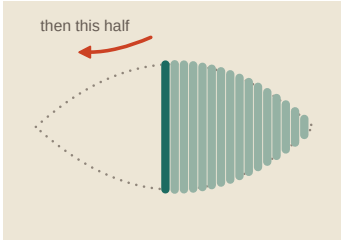
3. Go down straight across



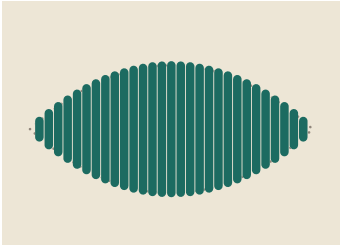
4. Come up right next to A



5. Lay the next stitch beside the first



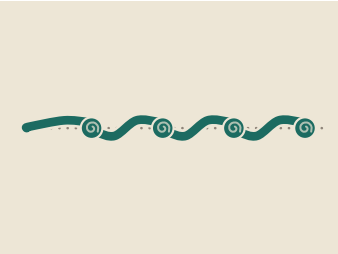
6. Fill one half, then the other



7. The finished shape

Scroll stitch

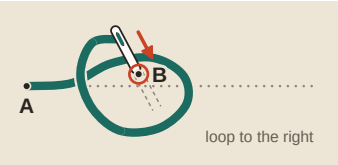
Easy. For wavy outlines and borders, decorative lines and curves, stems and fillings worked in rows. Also called single knotted line stitch.



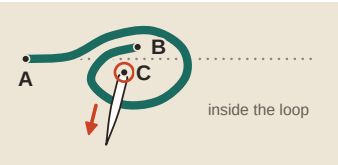
The finished stitch



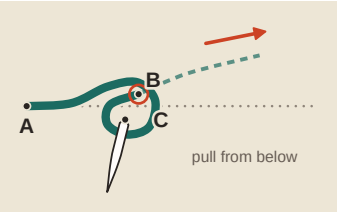
1. Come up at the start



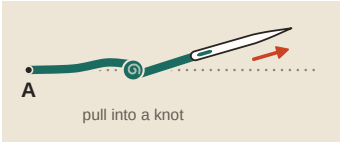
2. Throw a loop and go down inside it



3. Come up just below the line



4. Tighten the loop around the needle



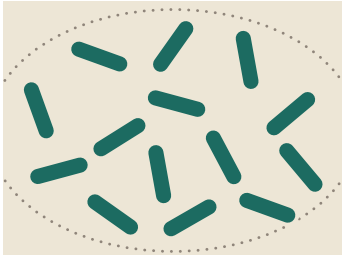
5. Pull the needle through



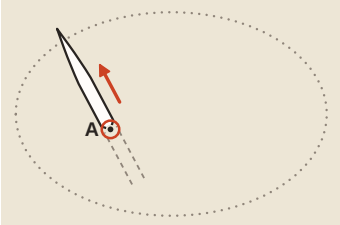
6. Repeat along the line

Seed stitch

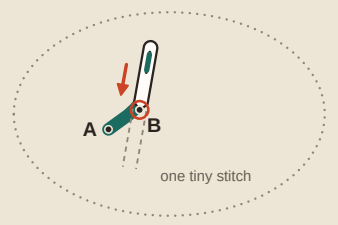
Beginner. For light filling inside leaves and other shapes, shading from dense to sparse, adding texture to a filled area and powdered fillings in crewelwork and whitework. Also called seeding stitch, seeding, speckling stitch and rice grain stitch.



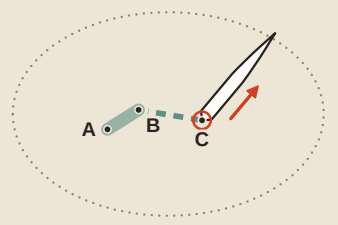
The finished stitch



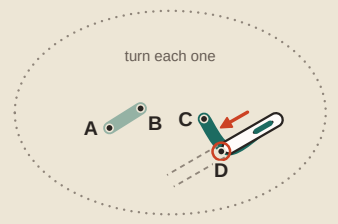
1. Come up inside the shape



2. Make one tiny stitch



3. Come up a short distance away



4. Turn the next stitch



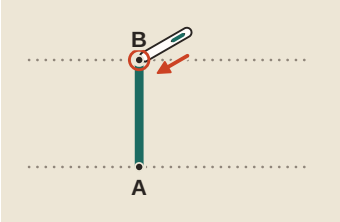
5. Scatter stitches to fill the shape

Sheaf stitch

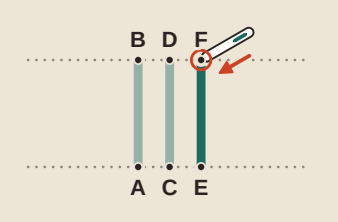
Easy. For open fillings, borders worked in rows or columns and single sheaves scattered over a shape. Also called sheaf filling stitch, bundle stitch and wheat stitch.



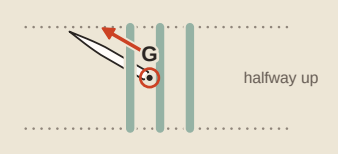
The finished stitch



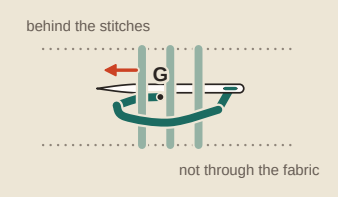
1. Make an upright stitch



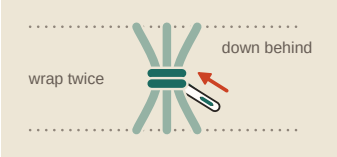
2. Add two more beside it



3. Come up beside the middle stitch



4. Wrap around the bundle



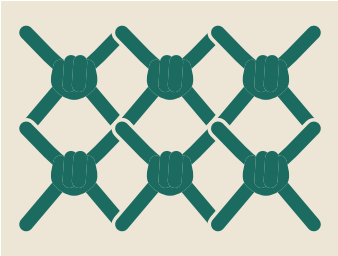
5. Pull snug, wrap again and go down



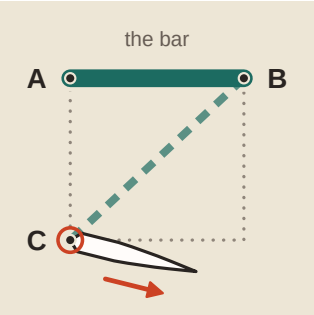
6. Repeat for a row or a filling

Sorbello stitch

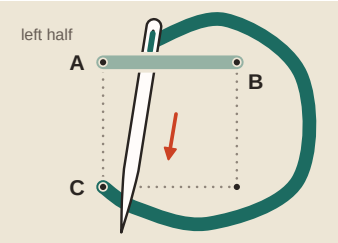
Intermediate. For simple charted motifs worked as you would cross stitch, textured borders, solid filling on a grid, single raised squares and scattered dots and thick outlines on plain fabric. Also called Sorbello knot stitch, Umbrian stitch and punto umbro.



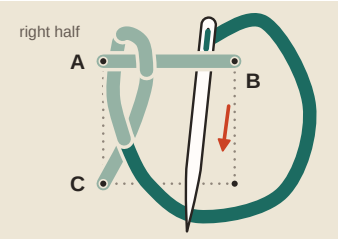
The finished stitch



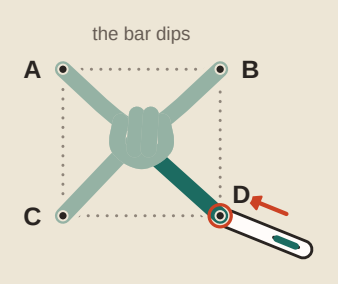
1. Lay the bar and come up at C



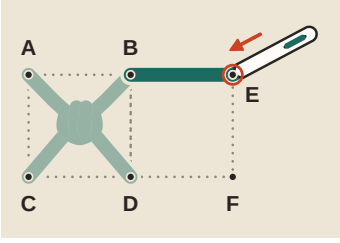
2. Loop over the left half of the bar



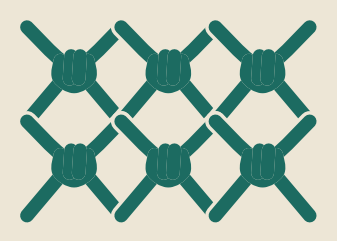
3. Loop over the right half



4. Pull down and go in at D



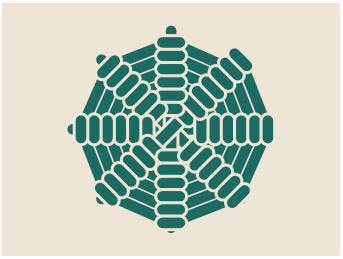
5. Work the next square from B



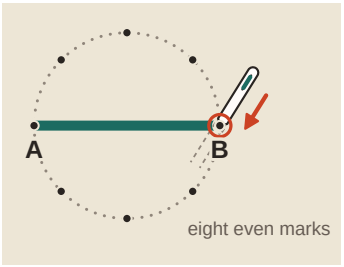
6. Work in rows across the grid

Spider web stitch

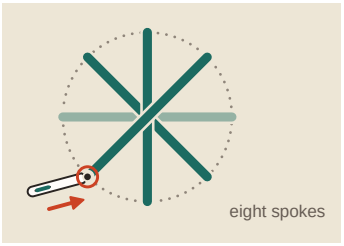
Easy. For raised, textured circles, spider webs and wheels, single decorative accents and ribbonwork and raised embroidery. Also called ribbed spider web, whipped spider wheel, whipped wheel, ribbed wheel and back-stitched spider web.



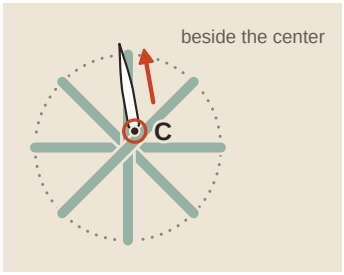
The finished stitch



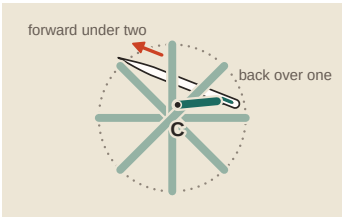
1. Lay the first long stitch



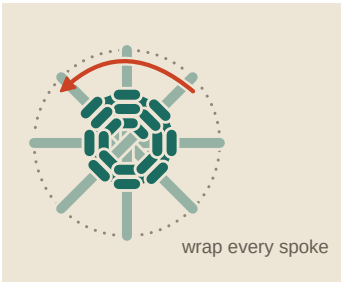
2. Cross three more stitches over it



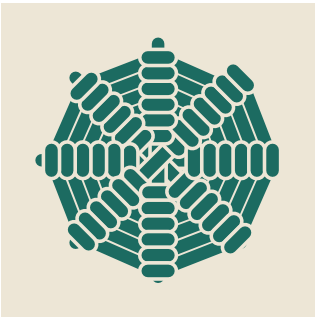
3. Come up beside the center



4. Go back over one spoke, under two



5. Repeat around the wheel



6. Fill the wheel and finish

Split stitch

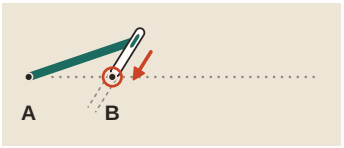
Beginner. For fine outlines, lettering and delicate curves, an edge under satin stitch and long and short stitch and filling shapes with close rows. Also called Kensington outline stitch.



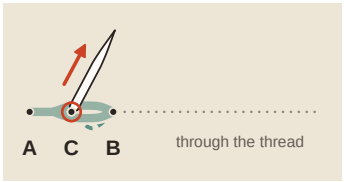
The finished stitch



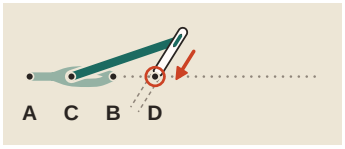
1. Come up at the start of the line



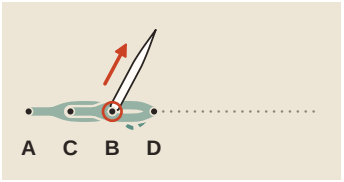
2. Make one straight stitch



3. Come up through the middle of the stitch



4. Go down one stitch length ahead



5. Split the new stitch



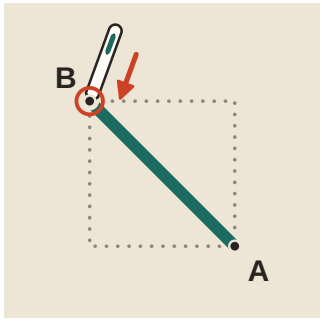
6. Repeat along the line

Star stitch

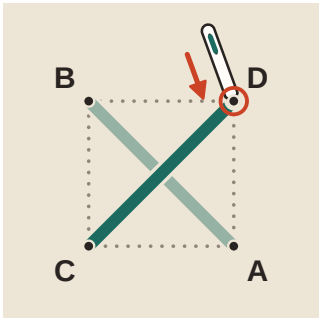
Beginner. For fillings made of repeated stars, powdered patterns of repeated stars and counted work on canvas and evenweave fabric. Also called double cross stitch.



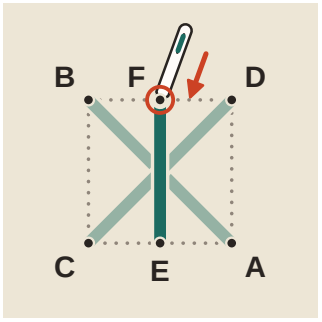
The finished stitch



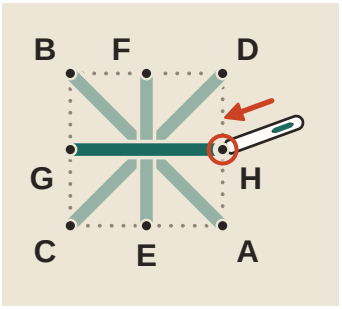
1. Stitch from corner to corner



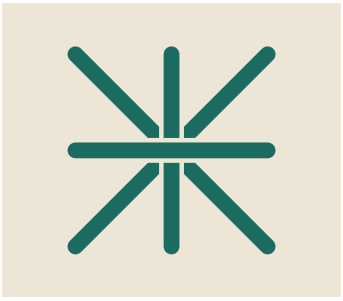
2. Cross it with a second diagonal



3. Stitch straight up the middle



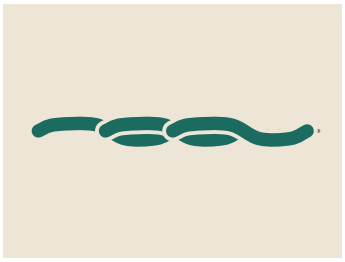
4. Finish with a stitch across



5. The finished star

Stem stitch

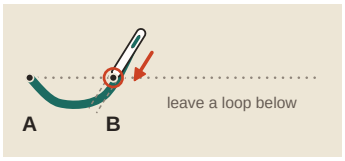
Beginner. For flower stems and vines, curved outlines, cursive lettering, leaf veins and filling a shape with rows worked side by side. Also called crewel stitch, stalk stitch and South Kensington stitch.



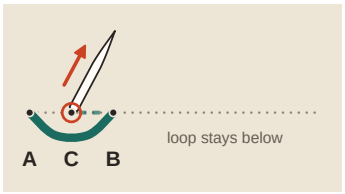
The finished stitch



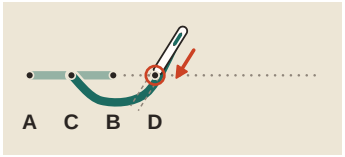
1. Come up at the start of the line



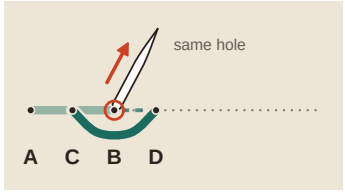
2. Go down one stitch along, leave a loop



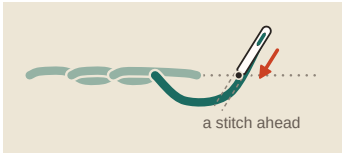
3. Come up halfway back



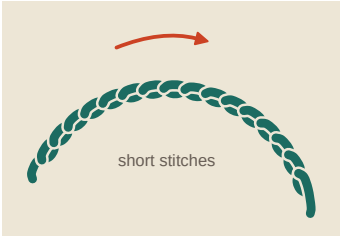
4. Go down half a stitch past the last



5. Come up at B, where the first stitch ended



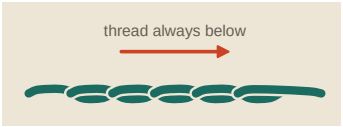
6. Repeat along the line



7. Shorten the stitches on a curve



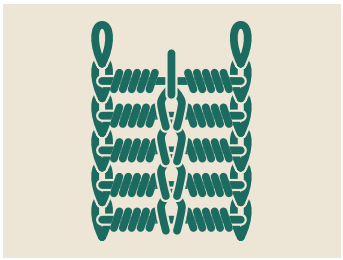
8. Close a circle



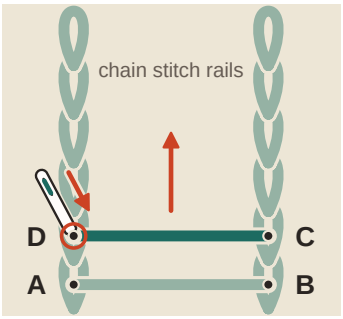
9. End the thread

Step stitch

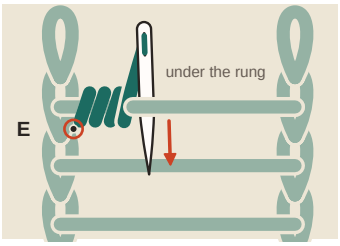
Intermediate. For bold straight borders, raised bands on samplers, raised embroidery (stumpwork), ladders, gates, fences and tree trunks and panels and stripes in formal designs.



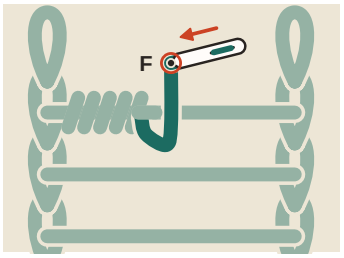
The finished stitch



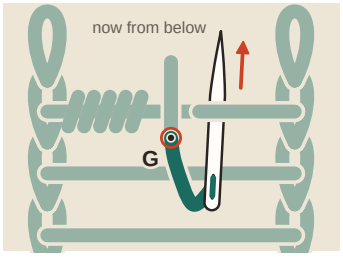
1. Stitch two rails and lay the rungs



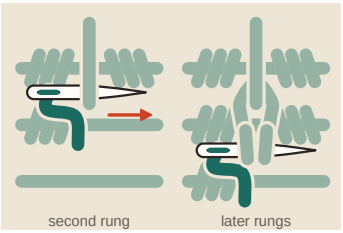
2. Wrap the top rung to the middle



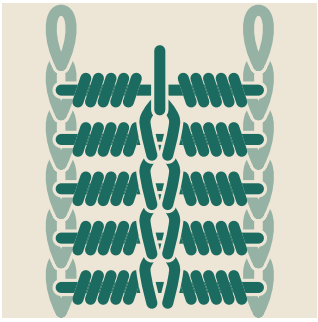
3. Make one upright stitch in the middle



4. Come up below and wrap to the right



5. Loop the second rung to the first



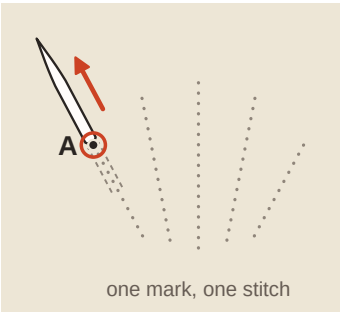
6. Loop every rung to the one above

Straight stitch

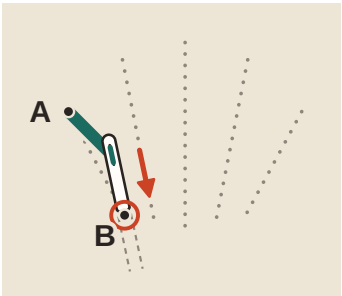
Beginner. For grass and leaf veins, small petals and leaves, stars and snowflakes, insect legs and other fine details and texture. Also called single satin stitch and stroke stitch.



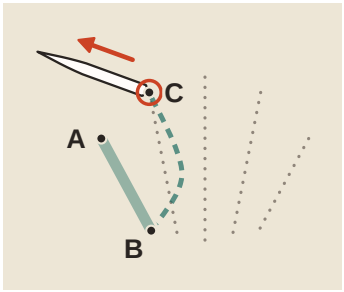
The finished stitch



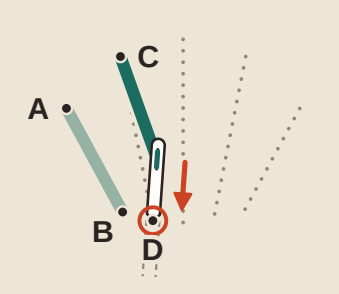
1. Come up at one end of the mark



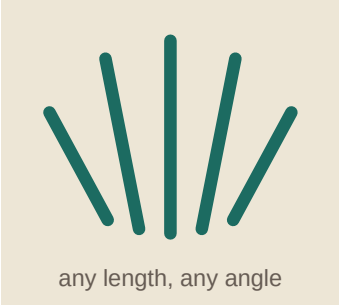
2. Go down at the other end



3. Come up at the next mark



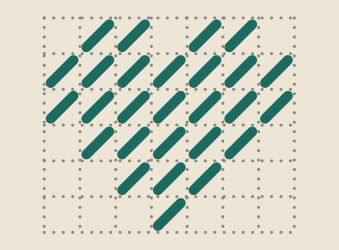
4. Lay the next stitch



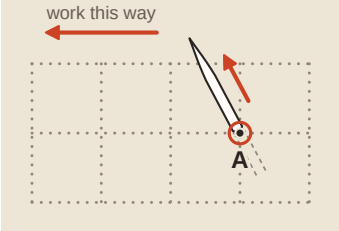
5. Build the shape one stitch at a time

Tent stitch

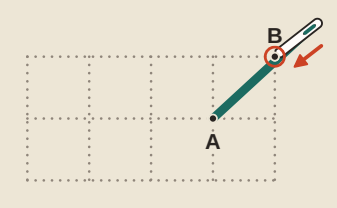
Beginner. For faces and fine detail in a counted picture, small letters and initials on linen, little motifs and borders, filling the ground around a motif, samplers and purses, pincushions and needle books. Also called petit point and continental tent stitch.



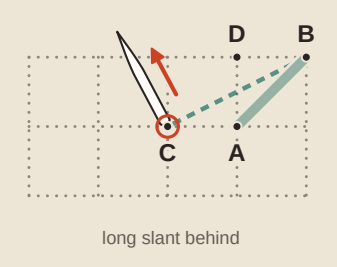
The finished stitch



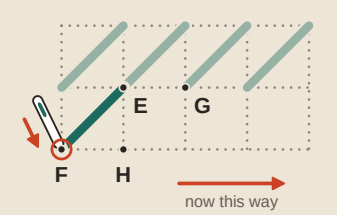
1. Come up at A



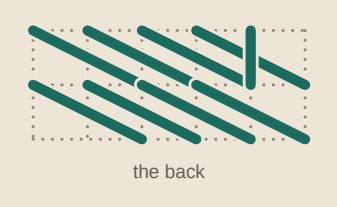
2. Go down at B, up to the right



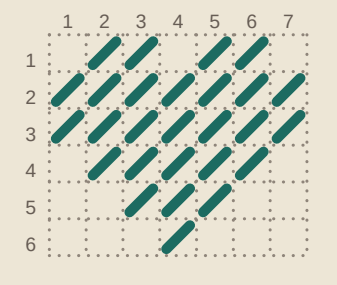
3. Come up at C, one square to the left



4. Drop one row and turn the stitch around



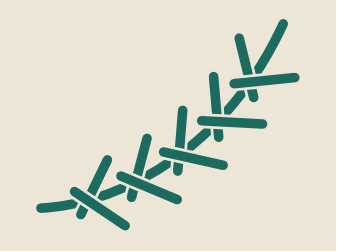
5. Check the back



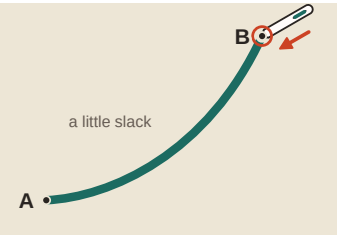
6. Fill the shape row by row

Thorn stitch

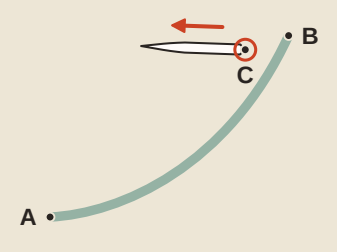
Easy. For thorny stems and brambles, ferns, grasses and winter twigs, fine stems that need more weight, feathers and light borders.



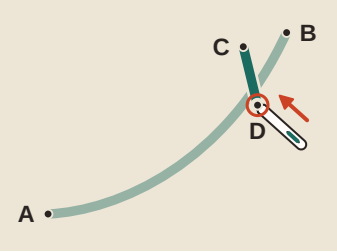
The finished stitch



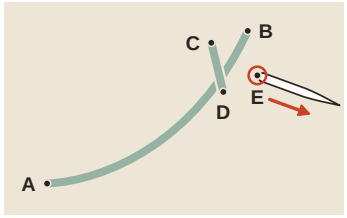
1. Lay the stem



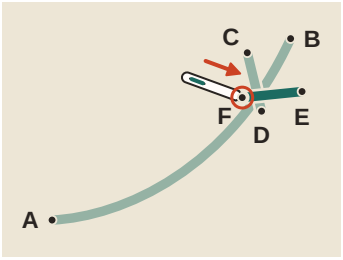
2. Come up beside the tip



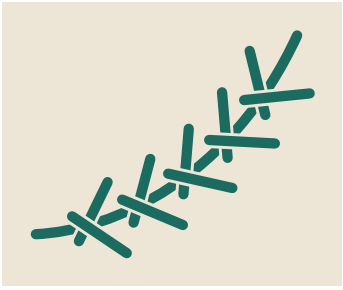
3. Cross the stem and go down



4. Come up opposite



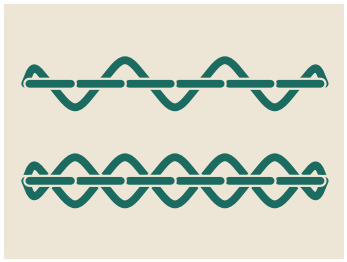
5. Cross again



6. Tie the whole stem

Threaded back stitch

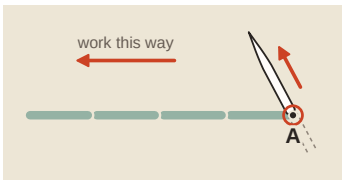
Beginner. For decorative outlines, borders on towels, cuffs and bags, lines in two or three colors, waves, water and curly hair, frames around a letter or a picture, metallic thread, wool and narrow ribbon and a first project for children. Also called laced back stitch and double threaded back stitch.



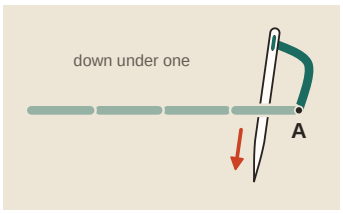
The finished stitch



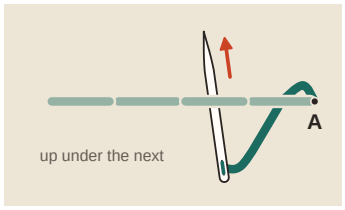
1. Work a row of loose back stitch



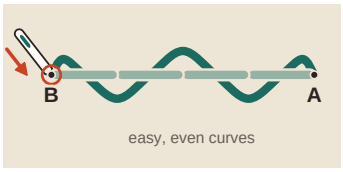
2. Bring up the weaving thread at the end



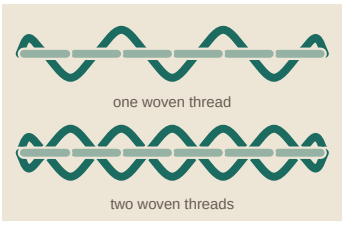
3. Slide down under the first stitch



4. Slide up under the next stitch



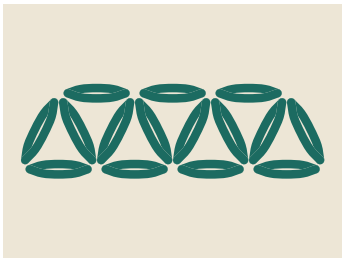
5. Weave to the end and go down



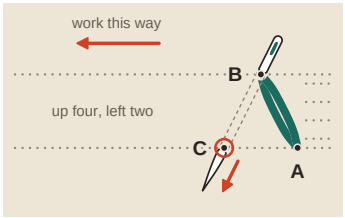
6. Leave it, or weave a second thread through

Three-sided stitch

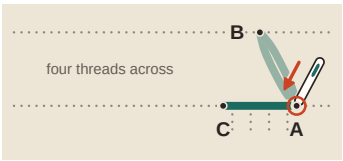
Intermediate. For borders and dividing lines in whitework, narrow hems on fine cloth, holding an applied shape, with cloth cut away after, lace joined to cloth and open fillings, row under row. Also called Turkish stitch, point turc, lace stitch and Bermuda faggoting.



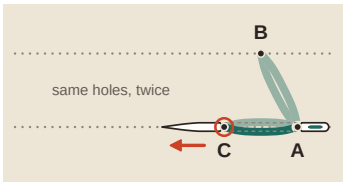
The finished stitch



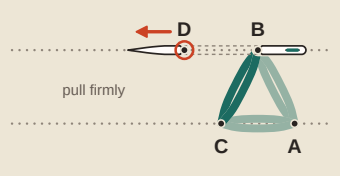
1. Close the right side of the row



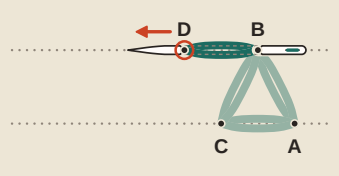
2. Lay the first bottom stitch



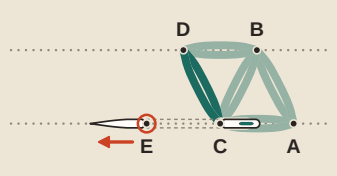
3. Lay it again in the same holes



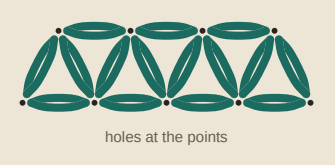
4. Lay the first slant twice



5. Lay the top twice



6. Lay the second slant twice



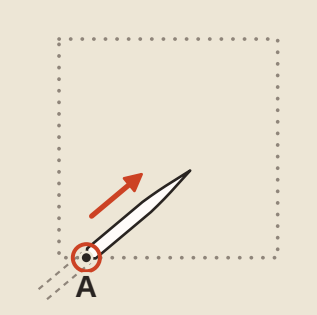
7. Go on, and fasten off

Trellis stitch

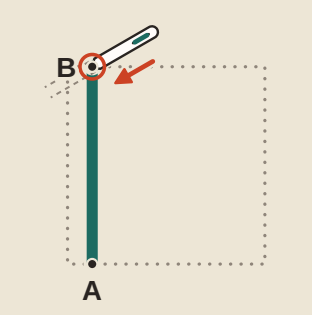
Easy. For filling large shapes quickly, leaves and backgrounds, flower centers and open fillings in crewel work. Also called lattice stitch, trellis couching, square laid filling and Jacobean couching.



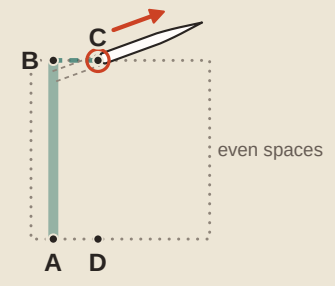
The finished stitch



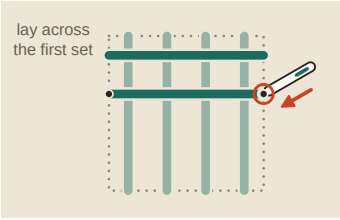
1. Come up on the edge of the shape



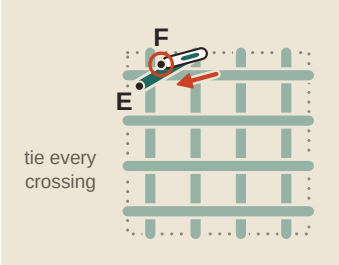
2. Lay a long stitch across the shape



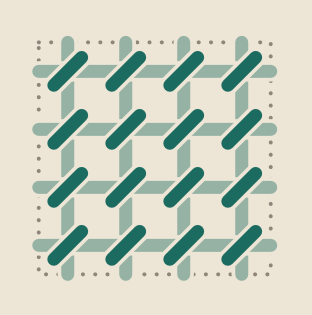
3. Lay the rest of the first set



4. Lay the second set across the first



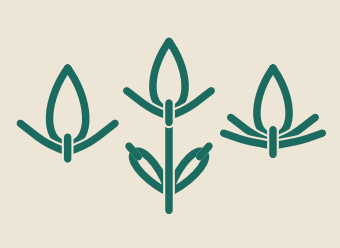
5. Tie down a crossing



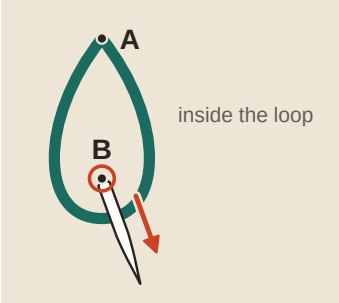
6. Tie every crossing

Tulip stitch

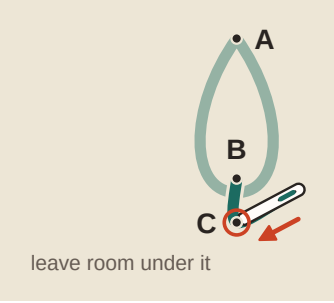
Beginner. For small tulips on a stem, flower buds, a row of flowers as a border, scattered flowers on a plain ground, rings of petals and crazy quilt seams. Also called slipped detached chain stitch.



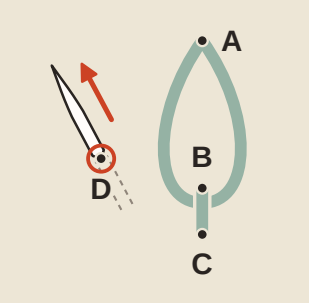
The finished stitch



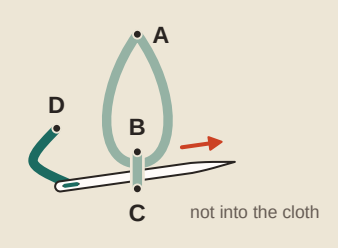
1. Make a loop and come up inside it



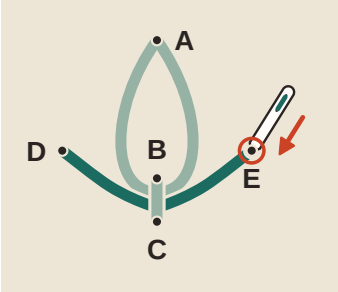
2. Tie the loop with a longer stitch



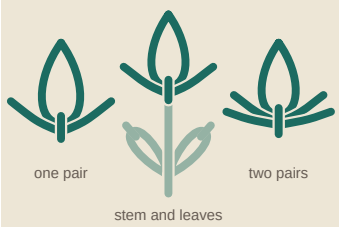
3. Mark D and E and come up on the left



4. Slide under the tie



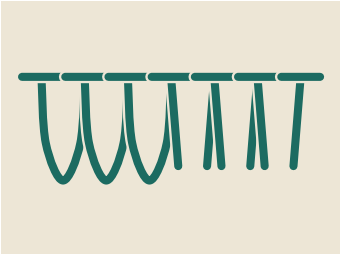
5. Go down on the right



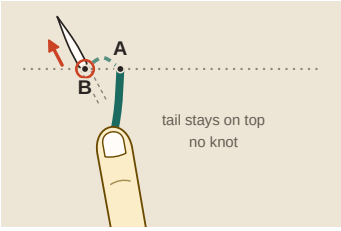
6. Add a stem, leaves or more arms

Turkey work

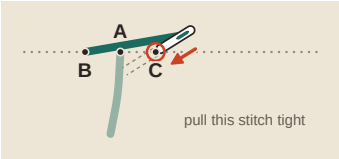
Intermediate. For bumblebees and thistle tops, plush, velvety fillings, fringed, rug-like edgings and stumpwork, which is embroidery raised from the cloth. Also called Ghiordes knot, turkey stitch, Turkey rug stitch, Turkey rug knot and single knot tufting.



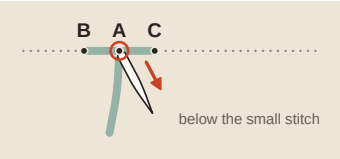
The finished stitch



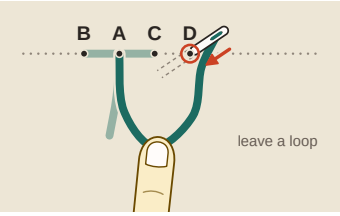
1. Go down from the front, leave a tail



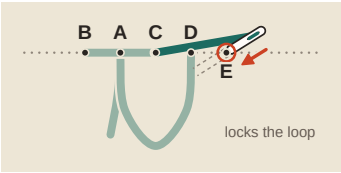
2. Make a small stitch over the tail



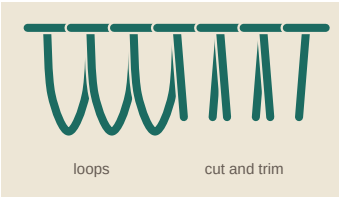
3. Come up in the middle again



4. Go down and leave a loop



5. Lock the loop with a small stitch



6. Fill the row, then cut the loops

Twisted chain stitch

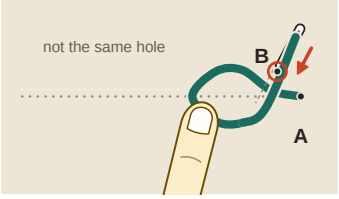
Easy. For textured outlines, stems and branches, rope-like lines, borders and single twisted loops worked on their own. Also called twisted chain.



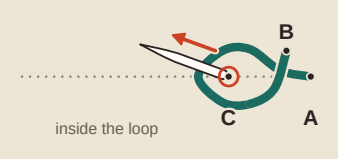
The finished stitch



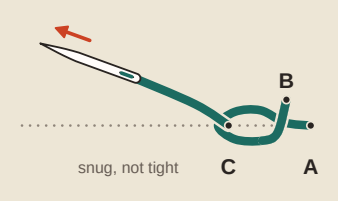
1. Come up on the line



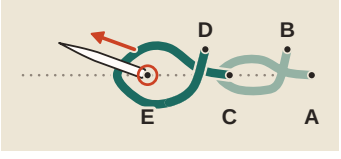
2. Go down beside A, not into it



3. Come up inside the loop



4. Pull the loop snug



5. Start the next link outside the last



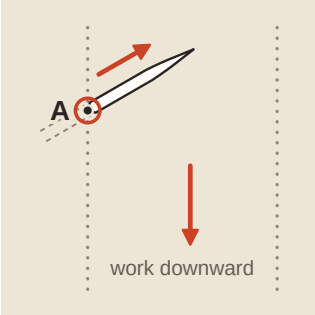
6. Carry on and anchor the last loop

Van Dyke stitch

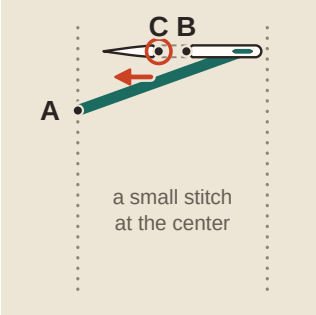
Intermediate. For borders and decorative bands, leaves, where the plait makes a center vein and fillings for leaf-like shapes. Also called Vandyke stitch.



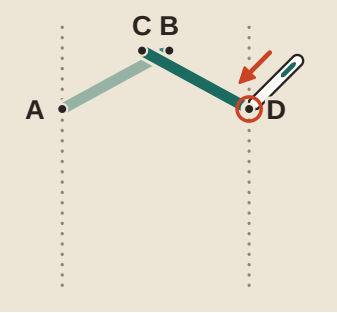
The finished stitch



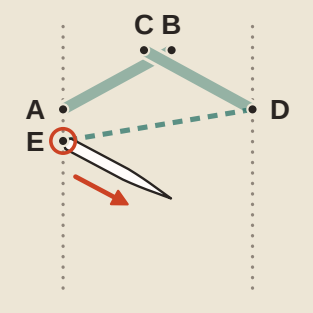
1. Come up on the left line



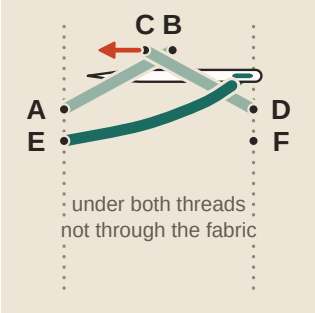
2. Take a small stitch at the top center



3. Go down on the right line



4. Come up just below A



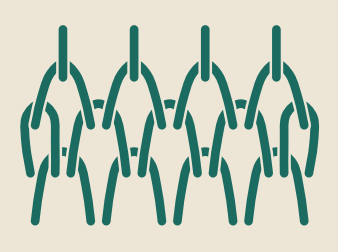
5. Slide under the crossed threads



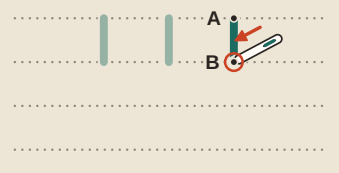
6. Repeat down the band

Wave stitch

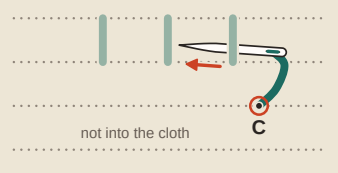
Easy. For fillings, open or solid, shading row by row, water, fish scales and roofs, leaves and petals, wool work and open nets with a bead in each gap. Also called looped shading stitch and closed wave stitch.



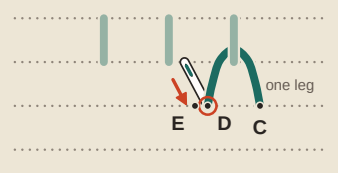
The finished stitch



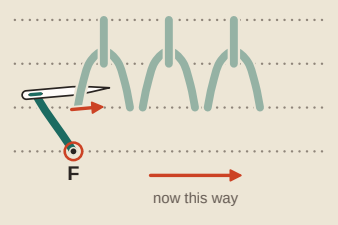
1. Work a row of upright stitches



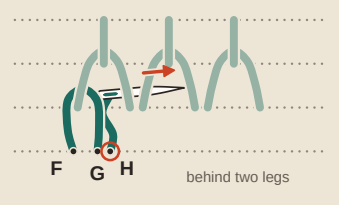
2. Come up at C and slide behind the stitch



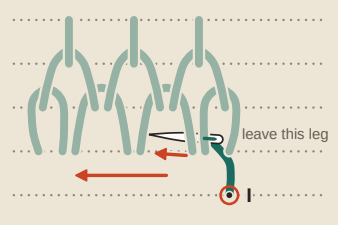
3. Go down at D, to the left



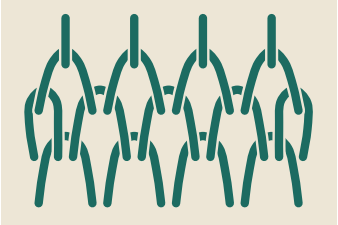
4. Start the next row on one leg



5. Slide behind two legs



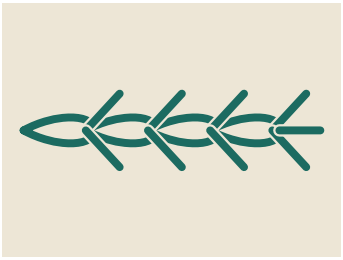
6. Come back for the third row of loops



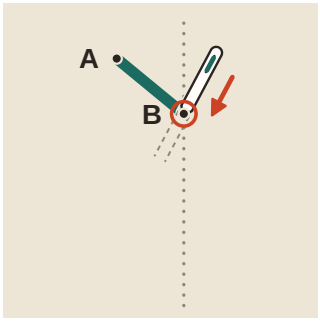
7. Fill the shape row by row

Wheatear stitch

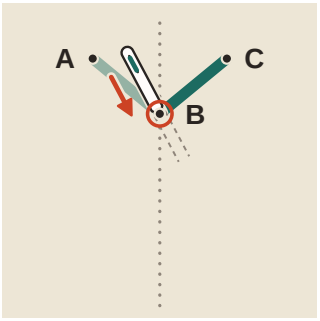
Beginner. For ears of wheat and barley, grasses and ferns, leaf veins, borders and single ears scattered as a filling.



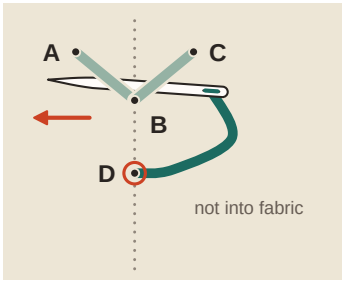
The finished stitch



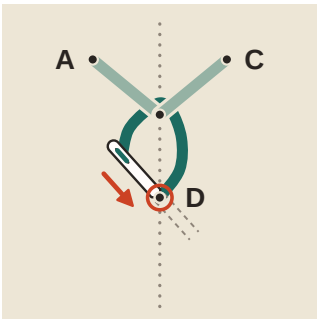
1. Make a slanting stitch from A to B



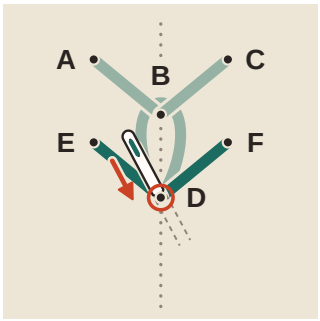
2. Make its mirror from C to B



3. Come up at D and slide under the V



4. Go back down at D



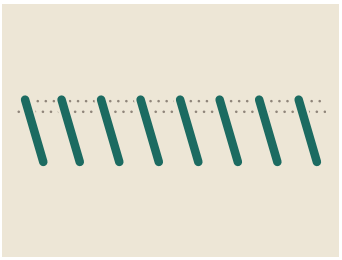
5. Make the next V, with its foot at D



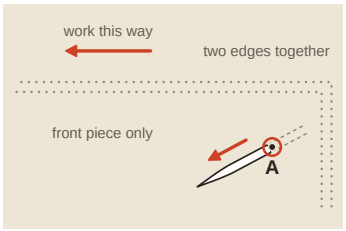
6. Repeat, and end with a link

Whip stitch

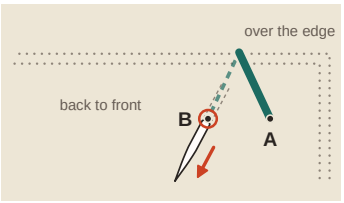
Beginner. For joining two pieces of felt, closing a stuffed shape, sewing on appliqué and patches, joining two folded edges, keeping a raw edge from fraying and rows of beads. Also called overcasting, oversewing, overhand stitch and top sewing.



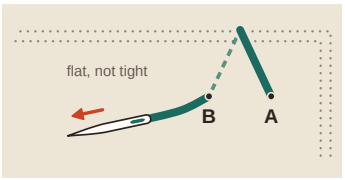
The finished stitch



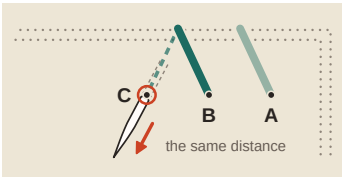
1. Hide the knot between the pieces



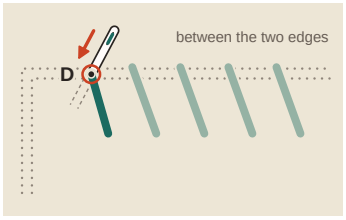
2. Go over the edge and come through



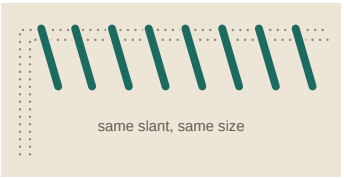
3. Pull until the stitch lies flat



4. Repeat along the edge



5. End between the two edges



6. Check the row

Whipped back stitch

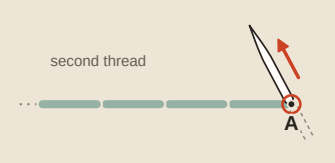
Beginner. For smooth outlines, small lettering, stems and leaf veins, two-color lines and borders. Also called whipped backstitch.



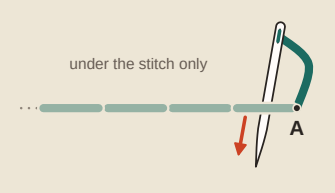
The finished stitch



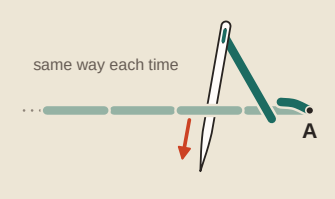
1. Work a row of back stitch



2. Bring up a second thread at the start



3. Slide the needle under the first stitch



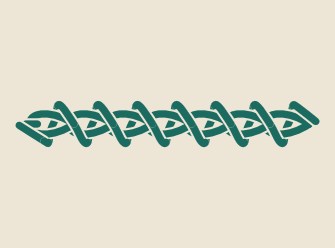
4. Whip the next stitch the same way



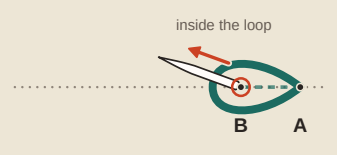
5. Wrap every stitch, then go down

Whipped chain stitch

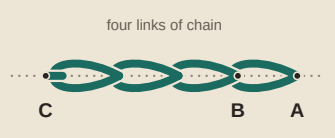
Beginner. For stems, bold outlines, lettering, ropes and cords in a picture and two-color borders. Also called whipped chain.



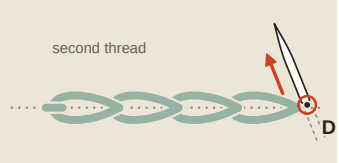
The finished stitch



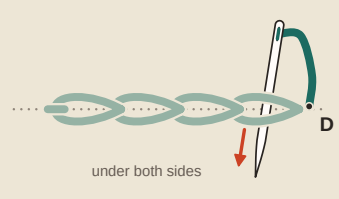
1. Make the first chain link



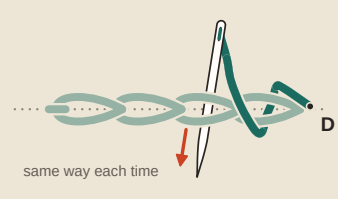
2. Make the row of chain and end it



3. Bring up the second thread at D



4. Slide under the first link



5. Cross the join and slide under the next



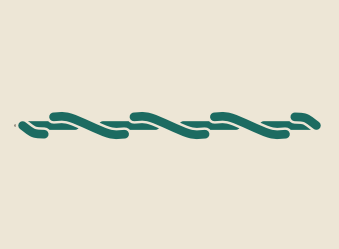
6. Wrap every link, then go down at E



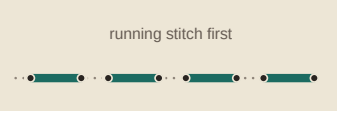
7. Fasten off and look along the line

Whipped running stitch

Beginner. For outlines, two-color lines, quick decorative lines and fillings worked in rows. Also called cordonnet stitch.



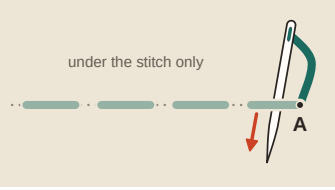
The finished stitch



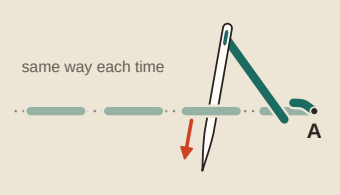
1. Work a row of running stitch



2. Bring up a second thread at the start



3. Slide the needle under the first stitch



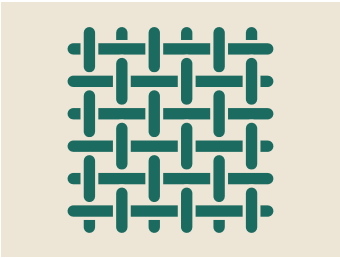
4. Whip the next stitch the same way



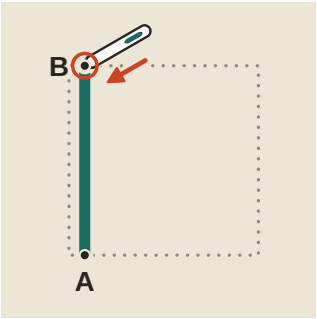
5. Wrap every stitch, then go down

Woven filling stitch

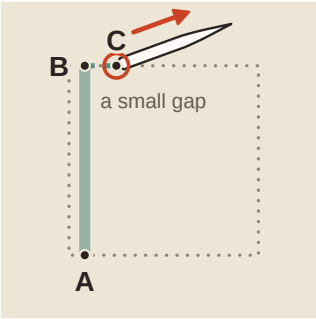
Easy. For filling any area you want to look woven, baskets, hats and other woven things, filling squares and other shapes, two-color and plaid fillings and visible mending over holes and flaws. Also called weave stitch, weaving stitch, basket weave stitch, needle weaving, surface darning stitch and Queen Anne stitch.



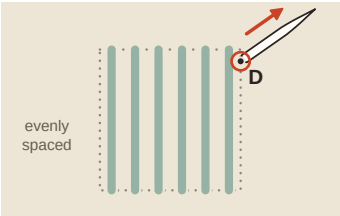
The finished stitch



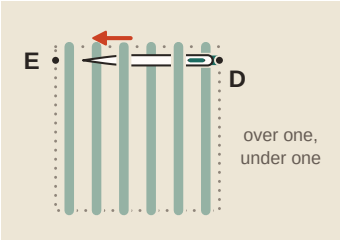
1. Lay the first upright stitch



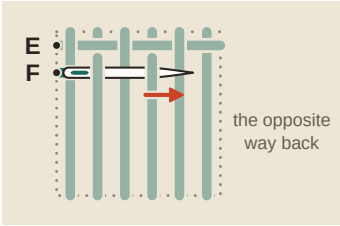
2. Come up a small space along



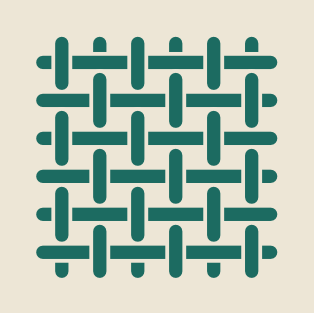
3. Fill the shape, then change the thread



4. Weave over one, under one



5. Weave back the opposite way



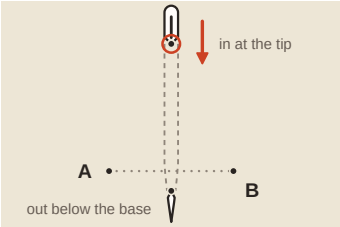
6. Fill the shape with rows

Woven picot

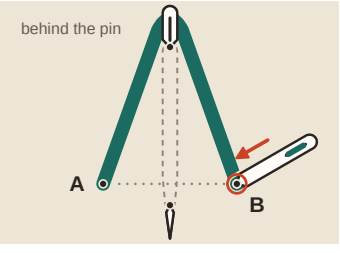
Intermediate. For raised petals and whole flowers, leaves and sepals that stand up, ears, fins, wings and beaks, the raised parts of stumpwork and a rolled bud or rose. Also called woven picot stitch, detached woven picot and needlewoven picot.



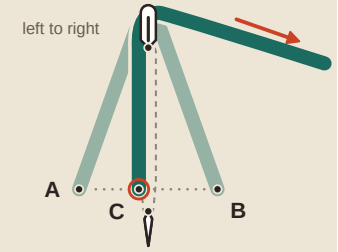
The finished stitch



1. Set the pin

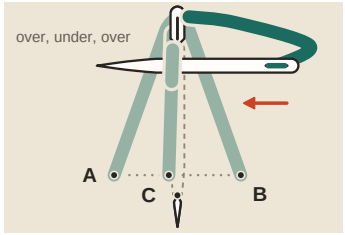


2. Take the thread around the pin

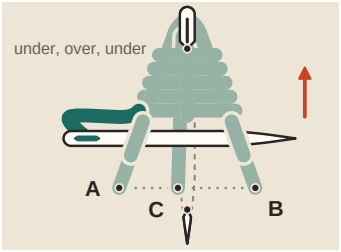


3. Add the middle thread

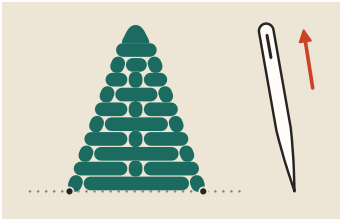
Woven picot, continued



4. Weave the first row



5. Weave back and push the rows up



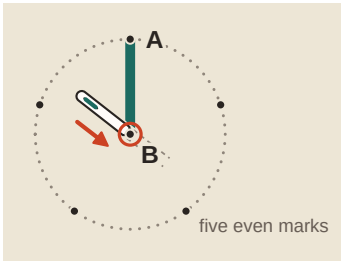
6. Finish at the base and pull out the pin

Woven wheel stitch

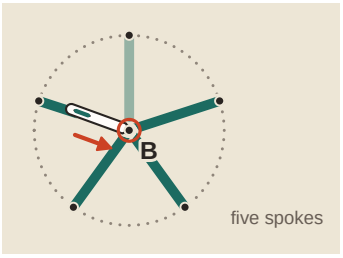
Easy. For roses and other round flowers, ribbon embroidery roses, raised circles and spots and embellishment in surface embroidery and crewelwork. Also called woven wheel, woven rose, woven spider web and woven spider wheel.



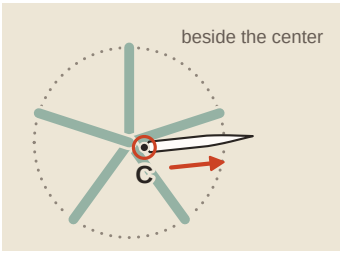
The finished stitch



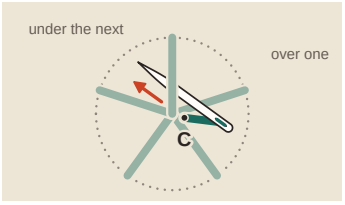
1. Stitch the first spoke



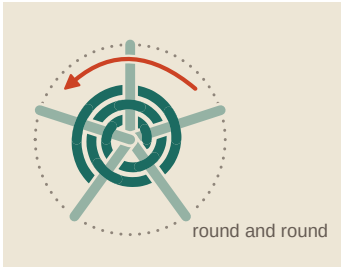
2. Stitch all five spokes



3. Come up beside the center



4. Weave over one spoke, under the next



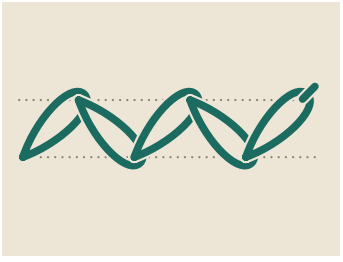
5. Keep weaving around the wheel



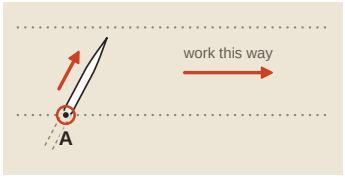
6. Fill the wheel and finish

Zigzag chain stitch

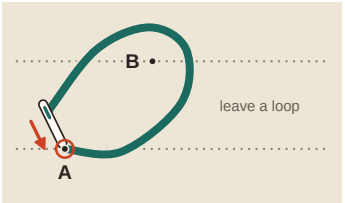
Easy. For borders and bands, edges around a design, ric rac and flat braid held on cloth, mountains, waves and bunting, seams in crazy quilting and open fillings, row above row. Also called zig zag chain stitch and Vandyke chain stitch.



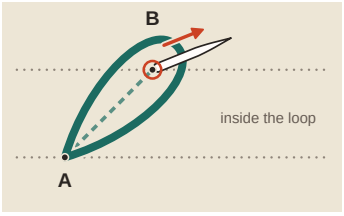
The finished stitch



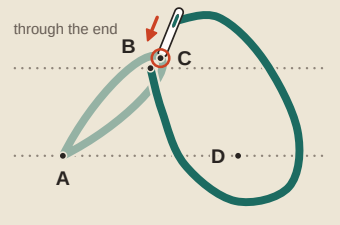
1. Come up at A on the lower line



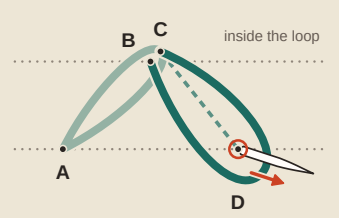
2. Go down at A again and leave a loop



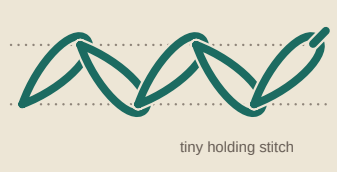
3. Come up at B, inside the loop



4. Go down at C, through the end of the link



5. Come up at D, inside the new loop



6. Work up and down, and hold the last link