STITCH PEOPLE

CROSS-STITCH 101

A basic learning guide for beginning cross-stitchers.

CROSS-STITCH 101

Hi there! I'm Lizzy Bean, the founder of Stitch People. Thank you so much for downloading this guide! I'm so excited you've decided to learn to cross-stitch. Cross-stitching is a wonderful art that has existed for thousands of years. It's a beautiful tradition to carry on. Creating needlework art to hand down to future generations and to give as gifts is relaxing, fun, and extremely satisfying. Let's dive in!

For more info about How to Cross-Stitch, check out our "How to Cross-Stitch" video on YouTube: YouTube.com/StitchPeople

MATERIALS

Generally speaking, materials will remain the same for all cross-stitch projects. You can order them online, pick them up at your local craft store, or, you can purchase a cross-stitch starter kit from StitchPeople.com where we've taken all of the guesswork out of getting started! Use the coupon code crossstitch101 at checkout for 10% off your kit, and remember there is free shipping included with your purchase (in the US)!

- Aida Fabric: Aida fabric is a special, grid-type fabric used for cross-stitching. It has an open weave, which allows you to see the holes that are utilized in the corners of each cross-stitch. Aida fabric's identifying number represents how many squares (or stitches) fit into an inch. Size 11 Aida fabric will fit 11 cross-stitches in an inch. Size 14 Aida fabric will fit 14 cross-stitches in an inch, and so on.

- Embroidery Floss: The type of thread used for cross-stitching is called floss. There are many brands, but I recommend DMC for its quality and versatility. It is commonly found at craft stores and has a wide variety of colors. Embroidery floss is a loose "rope" of 6 individual threads. The pattern(s) you use to cross-stitch will usually specify how many threads of floss to use for your project.

- Embroidery Frame or Hoop: These are used to help you stabilize and handle your work. They come in many sizes, shapes and materials. What you need will depend on your work and personal preferences. For this project, I recommend a 3-inch hoop.

- Needle: I prefer to use regular embroidery needles with a sharp point. This allows me to go "outside the lines" of the Aida fabric. A beginner may wish to use a tapestry needle which has a rounded tip.

- Scissors: It will be useful to have a pair of small embroidery scissors, and a larger pair of fabric scissors.

- Pencil: A water-soluble crafting pencil works, or a light use of a regular graphite or mechanical pencil.

- Pattern: After completing the free pattern in this PDF, you can download more free patterns at StitchPeople.com/freebies or make your own family portrait pattern with Stitch People's pattern library!
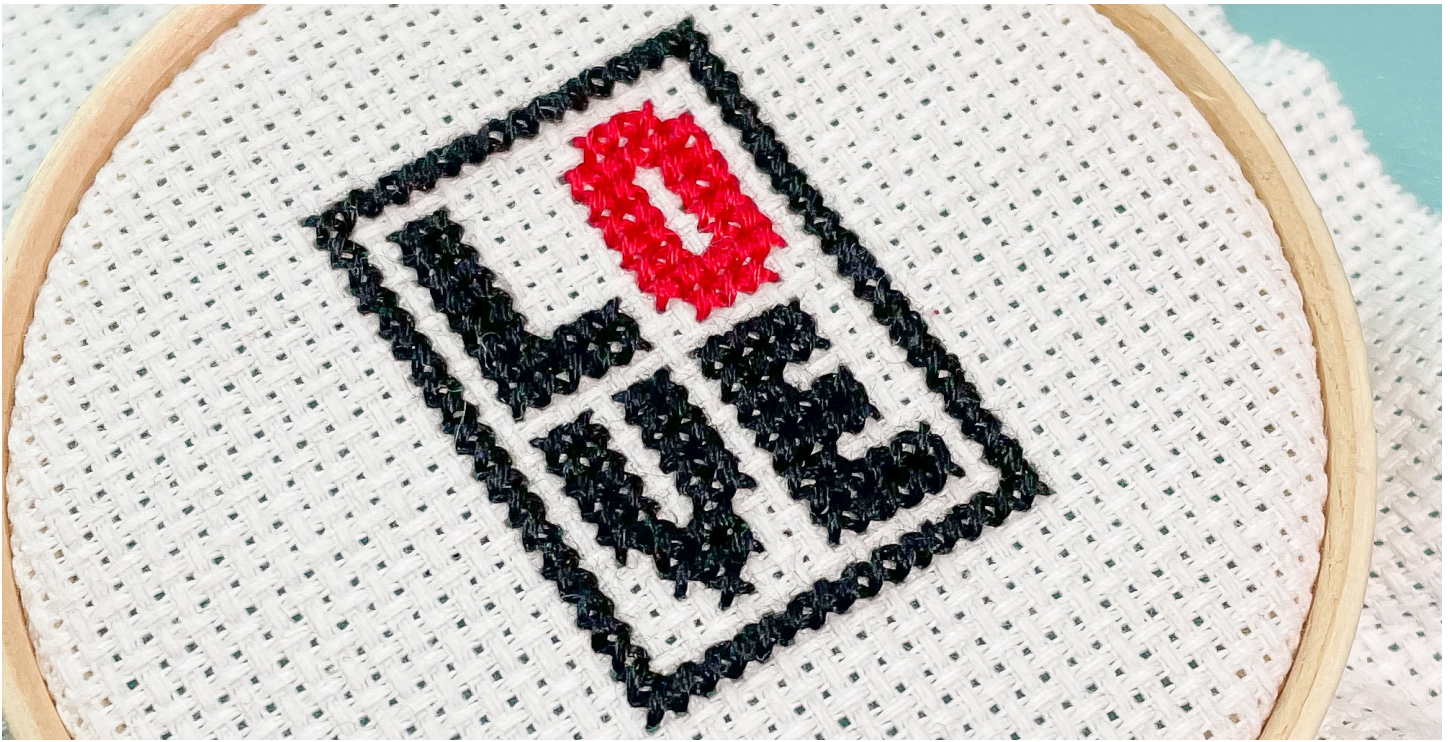
STEPS TO CROSS-STITCH

1. FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE PATTERN AND ACQUIRE NECESSARY MATERIALS

2. CUT YOUR FABRIC TO SIZE & MARK THE CENTER OF THE FABRIC

3. SECURE YOUR FABRIC IN A HOOP OR FRAME

4. FIND A STARTING POINT ON YOUR FABRIC IN RELATION TO THE PATTERN

5. BEGIN STITCHING!

6. SWITCH COLORS AS NEEDED

7. FINISH THE PATTERN & DISPLAY WITH PRIDE!

LOVE PATTERN

This is the pattern we'll use to learn to cross-stitch! The red dot will not be stitched and merely marks the center point of the pattern. The red lines mark every 5 squares.

Pattern dimensions: 15 squares wide x 21 squares tall
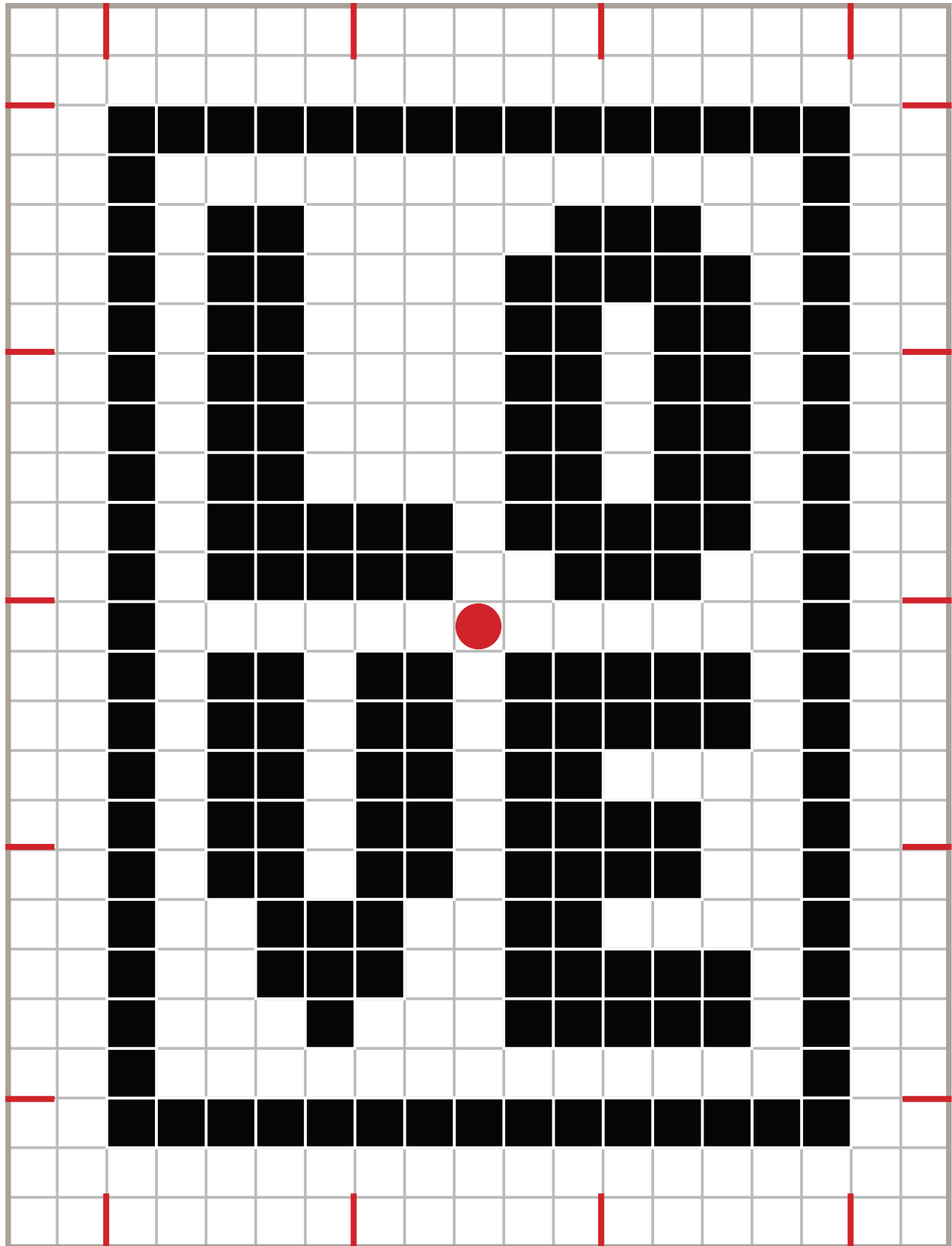
STITCHING A PATTERN

This simple pattern is a great way to begin your cross-stitching hobby! It's up to you if you'd like to stitch it in all one color, two colors, or many colors (see options below). One color will be the easiest option...but why not challenge yourself?

Refer to the pattern dimensions on the previous page or beneath the pattern to the right. Feel free to count the dimensions out yourself to verify. Before reading further, see if you can compare the pattern size to the size of your Aida fabric to estimate what the final measurements of the finished piece will be. *Hint: it requires a little division!*
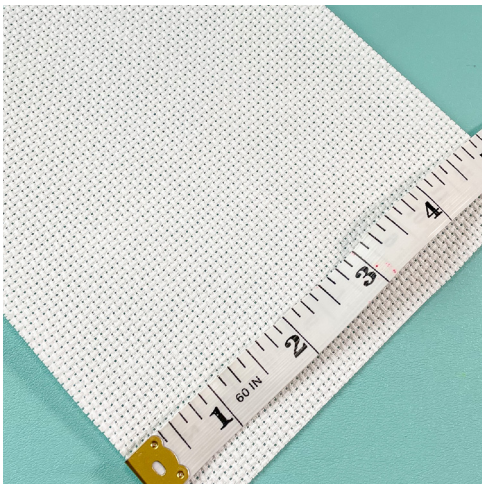
FINISHED PATTERN MEASUREMENTS:

(Divide the pattern dimensions by the size of Aida fabric you're using)

- Size 14 Aida: 1.1 inches wide x 1.5 inches tall

- Size 11 Aida: 1.4 inches wide x 1.9 inches tall
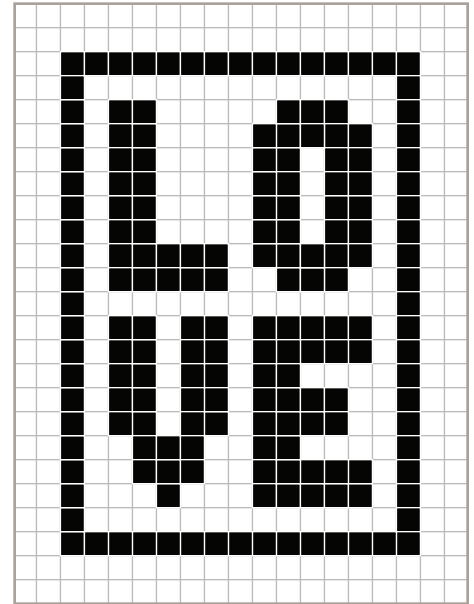
PATTERN DIMENSIONS:
**15 SQUARES WIDE X 21 SQUARES TALL**

CUT THE FABRIC

The color of fabric you choose to use is up to you, though bright white will be a crispy, modern look. **Cut your fabric to size by adding two inches around all sides of what the final pattern measurements will be.** This will leave plenty of room to fit your fabric into an appropriately sized embroidery hoop (3" or 4" in this case) and prevent the fabric from fraying into where your cross-stitch work will be.

- Size 14 Aida: Cut fabric to 5 inches wide x 5.5 inches tall

- Size 11 Aida: Cut fabric to 5.5 inches wide x 6 inches tall

MARK THE CENTER POINT

Fold your fabric in half width-wise and length-wise to determine the center point of the fabric and lightly mark it with a pencil. If you'd like, you can lightly mark the edges of the pattern by counting out from the center to make sure you don't lose your place.
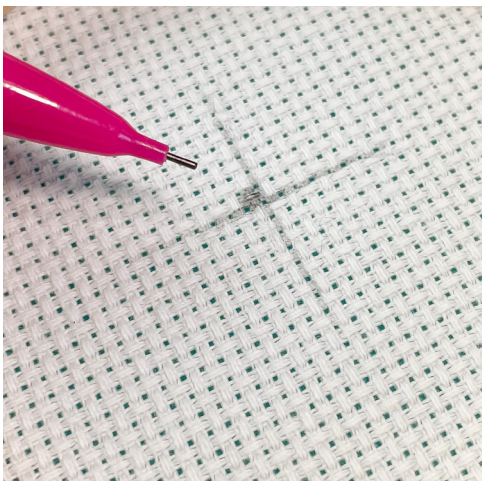
Note: Due to the dimensions of the pattern, the starting point (indicated by the red dot) falls on a full square of the grid. However, if you folded your fabric width- and length-wise to find the fabric's center point, you likely marked it on lines/holes of the Aida, rather than a full square in the weave of the fabric. That's ok! Just choose a square adjacent to the center point you marked, mark it as the center *square* and proceed accordingly.

ADD THE HOOP

Secure your fabric in the embroidery hoop or frame that you choose. Pull the edges of the fabric tight! A 3-inch or 4-inch hoop should suffice for this pattern. Do your best to center the fabric in the hoop. You've got this!

FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE PATTERN

Take a moment to look at the pattern and visualize how the grid of the pattern will translate directly to the grid of the Aida fabric. Look at the center point of the pattern (count it out!) and understand how that center point aligns to the center point on the fabric you've already marked.

PREPARE THE FLOSS

Choose one of the color combinations below to complete your pattern, or choose your own colors! Decide where you want to begin (I'd recommend stitching the border first), and **cut a length of floss** of the appropriate color. Hold the tip of the floss in your index finger and thumb, and cut a length that extends up to around your bicep. Working with a length of floss that is too long can cause twisting and knotting.

Split your 6-strand embroidery floss to begin stitching. Rarely are all 6 strands used at once when cross-stitching. **Use 3 strands of floss with size 14 Aida fabric. Use 4 strands of floss with size 11 Aida fabric.** Work slowly and don't worry if the floss starts to bunch. Just loosen it up and keep pulling the strands apart.

MONOCHROMATIC WITH A POP:

- Border & Letters L, V, E: DMC 310 - Black
- Letter O: DMC 666 - Bright Red

BRIGHT & BOLD:

- Letter L: DMC 3846 - Turquoise
- Letter O: DMC 742 - Light Tangerine
- Letter V: DMC 600 - Very Dark Cranberry
- Letter E: DMC 911 - Medium Emerald Green
- Border: DMC 311 - Medium Navy Blue
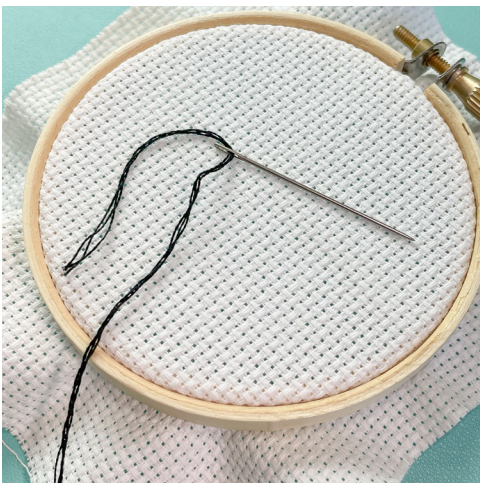
THREAD THE NEEDLE

Work slowly if you have to! **Feed the ends of your floss through the eye of your needle. Pull the floss through the needle one or two inches** and, as you stitch, hold your needle at the base (near the eye) to keep the floss secured as you work. Do not knot your floss.
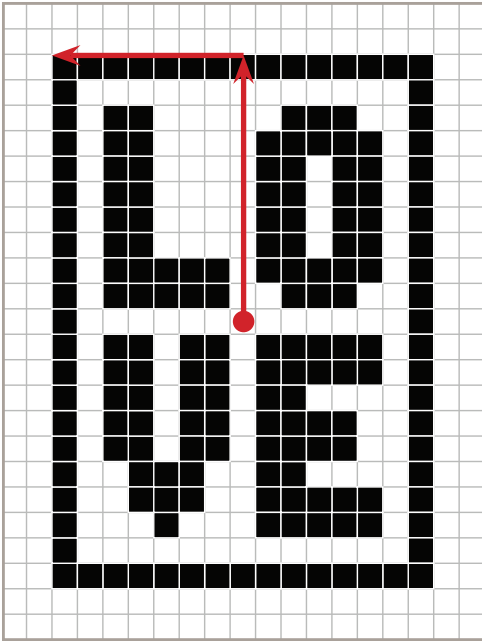
FIND YOUR STARTING POINT

It's almost time to start stitching! First, figure out where you're going to start. I recommend starting with the border, since it's straight lines.

On the pattern - from the center point, **count up** to get to the top edge of the pattern (10 squares) then **count left** to get to the top, left corner of the pattern (7 squares). (See arrows on the pattern to the left).

Now, find that same point on your fabric. Remember that the grid of the pattern translates directly to the grid of the Aida fabric.

On the back of your fabric, **count 10 squares up** from your center square, then **count right 7 squares** to get to the top, left corner of the pattern. YES, you read that correctly!
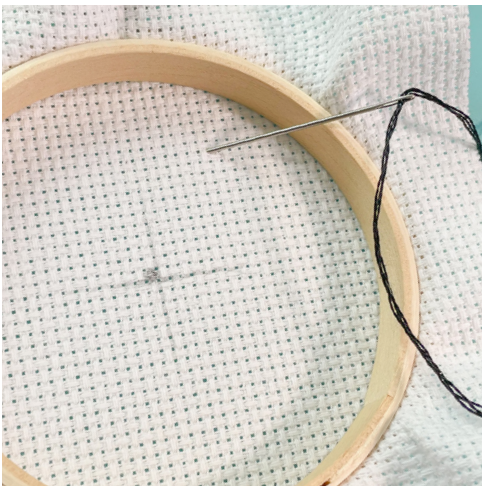
Keep in mind the BACK side of your fabric is a mirror image of what the pattern will look like on the front. When you flip your hoop over to begin to stitch, the needle will be coming through at the top, left corner of your pattern if you count to the top and count right on the back side.

Put your needle through from back to front at this point.

CREATE YOUR FIRST DIAGONAL

Flip your hoop over, so you're looking at the front. **Pull your needle through the fabric slowly.** On the back side, leave a tail of about one inch and hold it lightly with the index finger of your left hand so the tail does not pull through. We'll secure that in a moment.

Then, put your needle through your fabric one hole to the right and one hole down from where your floss is coming through. This will create a diagonal straight stitch. **Don't pull too tight!** Just pull tightly enough for the stitch to lay flat against the fabric. There should never be any pulling or distortion of the holes in the Aida Fabric.

KEEP READING! YOU'RE DOING GREAT!
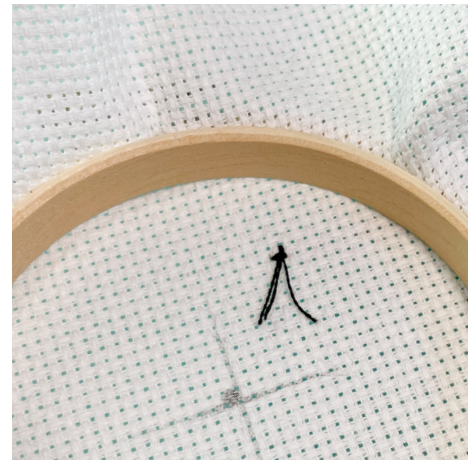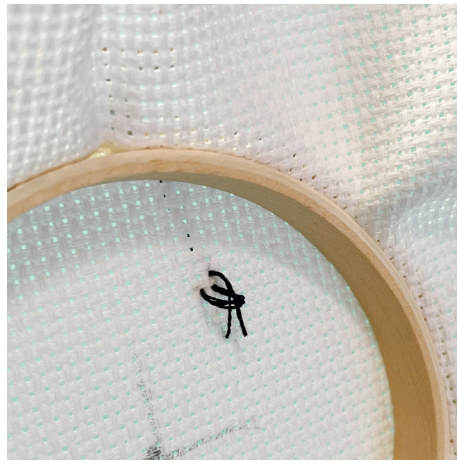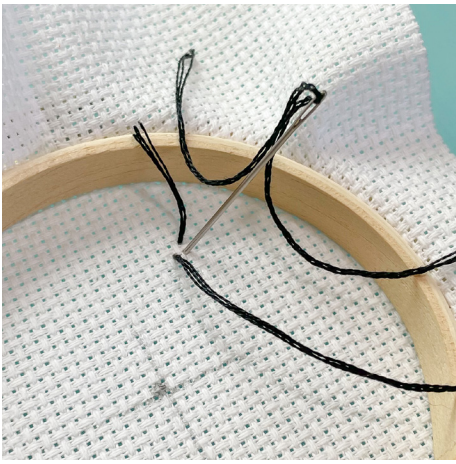
SECURE THE TAIL

To finish this first cross-stitch, take a look at the back side of your work. put the needle in the hole directly beneath the one you initially used to bring your needle through to the front. Begin to pull the needle.

Pull slowly! Keep your left hand index finger on the tail of the floss as you pull your needle through. You'll notice a loop begin to form on the back side of your fabric. This happens naturally throughout the course of cross-stitching. **Feed the loose floss tail through this loop so that as you finish your first cross-stitch, you'll secure the tail and prevent it from pulling loose.**

FINISH YOUR FIRST CROSS-STITCH

Flip your work over to the front side again, and **complete the X shape.** You'll know what to do. There you have it - your very first cross stitch!

Each black square in the "LOVE" pattern shows where to stitch an X shape exactly like you just did. You could complete the entire pattern just like that -- one cross-stitch at a time -- and soon you'll have a finished project! The other option is, when convenient, to....

STITCH IN ROWS

Take a look at the pattern and count how many more squares you've got to stitch in the top row of the border. The top border is 15 squares wide, and we've stitched one already so we have 14 more to go. Since these stitches are all in a row and utilize the same color, it's a great time to stitch in rows instead of one cross-stitch at a time. **Complete the bottom diagonal stitches of each of the 14 remaining cross-stitches** to the right of the completed cross-stitch. Be sure they match the direction of the diagonal on the bottom of the existing stitch. If you have followed the instructions exactly, the bottom diagonals should look like this: \\\\\\\\\\\\\\\
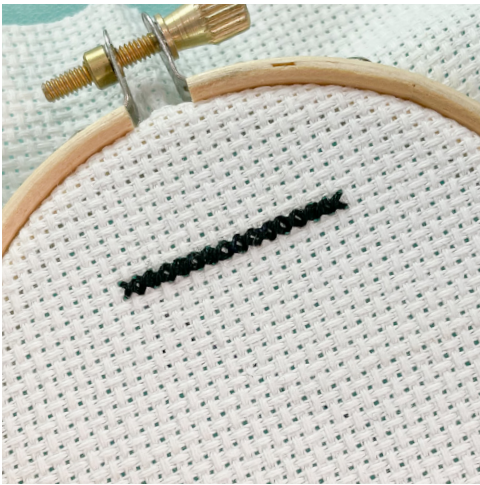
FINISH THE ROW

To finish the 14 cross-stitches, simply **stitch the other direction,** adding the remaining diagonals on top! If you followed the instructions exactly, the top diagonals should look like this: /////////////

KEEP ON KEEPIN' ON

You've got the basics down, now! **Finish the border of the pattern**, stitching as many cross-stitches as there are squares in the pattern's border. When the border is finished, see if you can apply the same steps, logic, and skills to complete the L, O, V, and E.
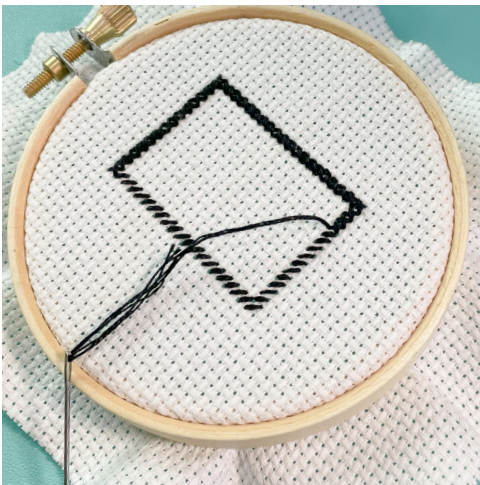
CHANGING THE FLOSS

Whether you simply run out of floss due to a lot of stitching, or you've finished a certain portion of the pattern and need to switch colors, at some point you'll have to swap out your floss. In this case, I've used up my length of floss and it's getting very short. Whatever shall we do?! Don't worry. It's easy!

While there's still some length of floss to work with, flip your hoop over to the back side. **Run your needle through some of the stitches on the back side** and pull it through, and cut the floss.
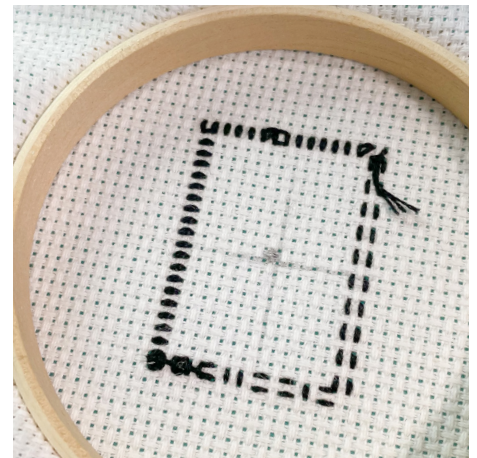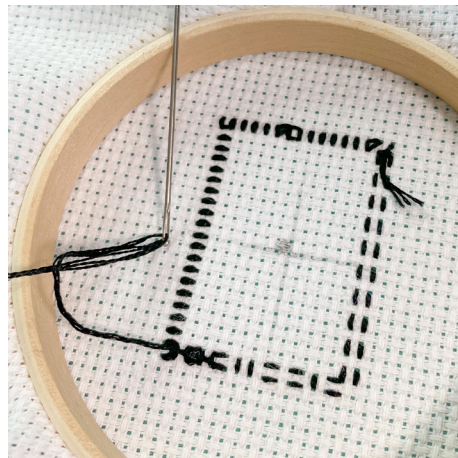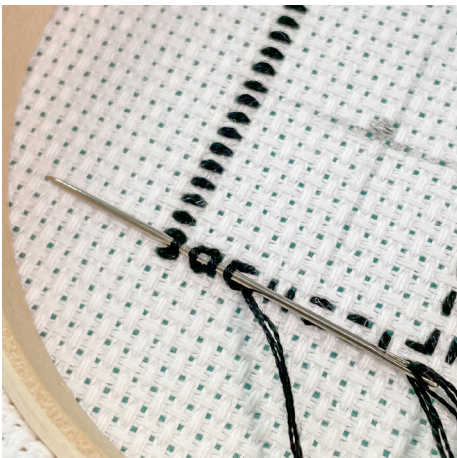
When you're ready to continue, simply repeat the threading steps on page 6 through to the securing-the-tail steps on page 8 and continue on your way! As a reminder, the above steps will be the same rather you're running out of a length of floss or whether you simply need to switch colors.

FINISHING YOUR PROJECT

When you've finished stitching the pattern (CONGRATULATIONS!) you may wish to display your work. If you stitched using a three or four inch embroidery hoop, I'll show you an option for finishing your project in the hoop to hang up!

First - **make sure your work is centered in the hoop!** We do our best to eyeball it at the start but don't always get it perfect. So adjust your fabric and hoop now so your finished work is as centered as possible.

Then, **trim the excess fabric around the outside edge of your hoop**. Leave around one inch of fabric

Using any leftover floss, or cutting a new length if you have to, **thread your needle but this time DO tie a knot at the long end of your floss. Bring your needle up through the outer edge of the fabric INSIDE of a square of Aida fabric** - not utilizing a hole (so the knot doesn't pull through!)
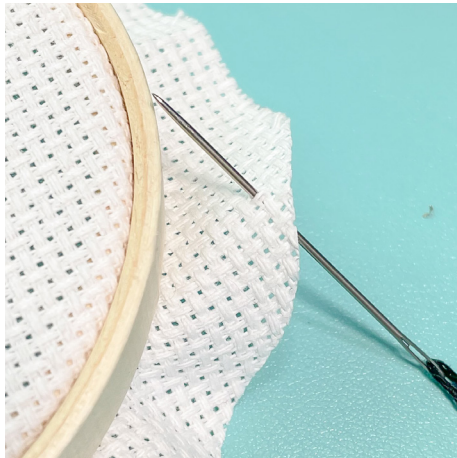
Complete a running stitch around the edge of the excess fabric, pulling very, very tightly as you go. It doesn't have to be a perfectly even running stitch. You may or may not hit the holes of the Aida fabric. When you get back to the starting point, give it a final tug for as much tension as you can. This will pull the edges neatly into the back. Tie off the floss with a knot, or simply secure the floss by creating a number of loops around the Aida fabric.
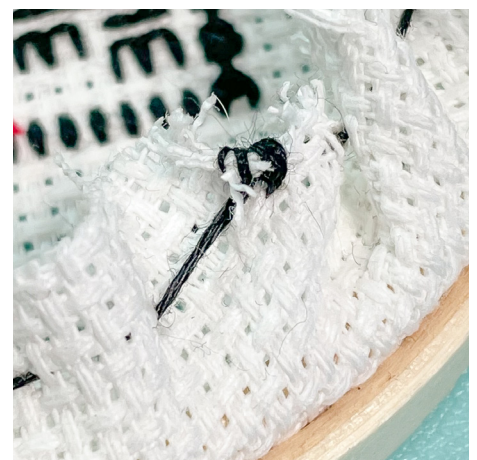
YOU'RE ALL DONE!

Congratulations, you new cross-stitcher, you! You've done it! You learned how to cross-stitch and have completed your first project. Display it proudly in your home or office, or give it to a loved one as a gift. But most of all...

...GET READY TO HAVE A FUN AND FULFILLING LIFELONG HOBBY!

As you stitch more and more, keep these tips in mind to give your work the most pro-like quality!

#1. KEEP THE TENSION CONSISTENT

Don't pull too tightly! Only pull your needle and floss tight enough for the floss to lay flat against the fabric. There should be no distortion of the holes in the Aida fabric.

#2. MATCH THE DIAGONALS

Every cross-stitch has two diagonals to make an X shape. Be sure all the "under" diagonals of every cross-stitch goes the same direction. Same with all of the "over" diagonals!

#3. REFRAIN FROM FLIP-FLOPPING

Try to train your hand-eye coordination from the start. Really try to keep your focus on the front side of your work, rather than constantly flipping from front to back.

#4. "NEXT-TO" NOT "THROUGH"

Many cross-stitches share holes in the Aida fabric. Avoid poking the tip of the needle through threads of existing stitches. Aim for "next-to," not "through."

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ABOUT STITCH PEOPLE:

Stitch People was founded in 2012 by Lizzy Dabczynski-Bean and Spencer Bean. What started as a small, customized, cross-stitched family portrait-making service has expanded into a thriving community of tens of thousands of creative and inspiring stitchers around the world. In addition to custom portraits and custom portrait patterns, Stitch People now offers a vast library of hundreds of mix-and-match, totally customizable cross-stitch family portrait patterns which are available both in physical book form and digital download. Learn more and see what's available at StitchPeople.com!

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