

CREWELWORK

Crewel is an old Welsh word meaning 'wool'. Crewel embroidery is produced using wool, rather than cotton or silk, because it gives a much thicker and raised appearance to the finished piece. Crewel embroidery can be found on clothing, cushions, pillowcases, bags and framed wall pieces.



Crewel embroidery probably originated from the earliest Welsh spinners, who produced two-ply wool to decorate their clothing. Very early examples have not survived; the most famous one still in existence is the Bayeux Tapestry in Normandy, France, which was created in the eleventh century.

In the Jacobean period (1603–25), crewelwork became popular for the decoration of domestic furnishings of large houses. Themes from the natural world of flora and fauna were embroidered on linen and cotton twill-weave fabrics. Embroidered jackets for both men and women were also popular. At this time, foreign traders brought brightly coloured textiles incorporating designs of exotic birds and animals from the Far East to England. These fabrics were the inspiration for vivid designs; tree-of-life foliage designs were common. During the rest of the Stuart period (1603–1714), crewelwork reached the height of its popularity as young ladies took up this form of needlework as a hobby to create furnishings for their own homes.

In the following century, there was a surge of interest in paintings accompanied by the embroidery skill known as needle painting. Highly skilled needlewomen reproduced the detailed work of portraits using crewel wools.

Although crewel embroidery was traditionally made using highly twisted two-ply wool, modern embroiderers have an extensive choice of threads, including silk, mercerised cotton and metal threads. With such a wide range of materials available, the traditional two-ply wool is now less popular. Nevertheless, the general stitches have stayed the same. Designs have developed over time as well, and although the tree of life is still a fairly common theme in crewelwork pieces, it has declined in popularity. Often pieces of embroidery worked in crewelwork stitches are referred to as freestyle embroidery.



1. Jacobean crewelwork bird worked in crewel wools on linen twill by *Lizzy Lansberry*.
2. Crewelwork rooster worked using a range of wools on a linen twill background by *Mary Corbet*.
3. Crewelwork cushion cover worked using stranded cottons on a linen fabric by *Hiroimi Widerquist*.
4. Surface embroidery worked using stranded cottons and perle on a white linen background by *Jo Avery*.
5. Crewelwork carnations worked in a range of wools on a vintage cotton and linen mix by *Eva-Maria Nerling*.

TRELLIS WORK

TUTORIAL

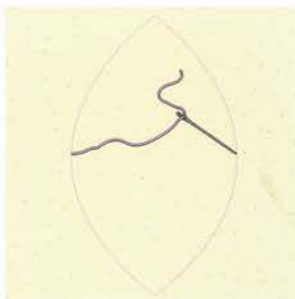
This popular stitch is generally used for large areas because it can cover them fairly quickly. The basic trellis is a grid that can be worked in a range of different sizes. When starting and finishing a thread, make sure you do so on the design lines; you will work an outline stitch around your design once the trellis is complete.

Materials

- Fabric
- Chenille or embroidery needle
- Thread
- Embroidery scissors

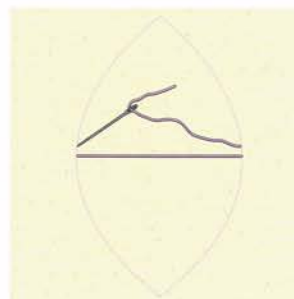
Step 1

Always start the bars in the middle of the shape because this helps to keep the grid even. Bring the needle up on the design line and take the needle down horizontally across on the opposite design line.



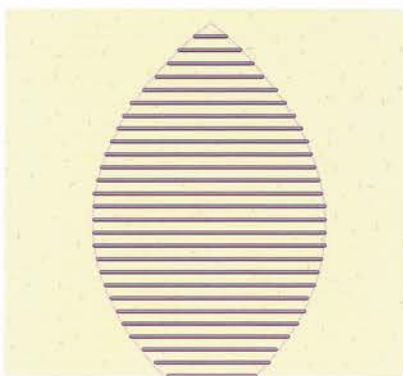
Step 2

Bring the needle up the desired distance above the first line. Take the needle down on the opposite side.



Step 3

Continue working the bars to the top of the shape and then work the lower section in the same way.

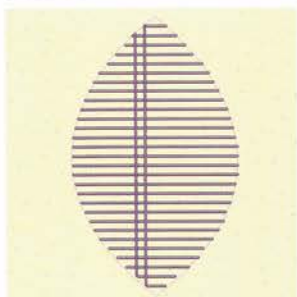


TIP

If you want to add patterns once you have worked the grid, decide on the pattern first because this will determine the size of the squares you need.

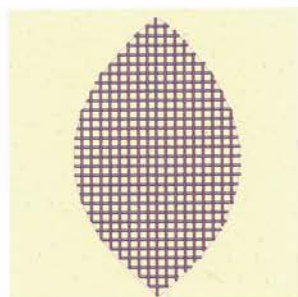
Step 4

You can now start working the vertical bars. Start the vertical bars in the middle of the shape. It is important to stitch the bars at 90 degrees to the bars already worked so that you create squares.



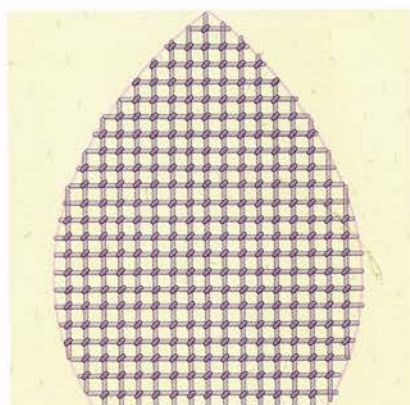
Step 5

Work the vertical bars in the same way that you worked the horizontal ones, until the shape is covered.



Step 6

Once you have worked the grid, you need to secure the bars. At the moment, the stitches are very long and it would be easy to catch them. Work small diagonal stitches where the threads cross. Keep these stitches small so that they do not encroach too much into the squares. Take care to ensure that the squares are not distorted by pulling on the bars.



TIP

If you are not sure where to bring up the needle, poke the needle halfway through the fabric and lay it down on the fabric. This gives a good guide to where the stitch will lie without you actually working a stitch.

CHAIN STITCH AND DETACHED CHAIN STITCH

— TUTORIAL —

Chain stitch is a continuous line of interlocking loops, each held down by the next one. You can work chain stitch in a single line or as a series of rows to fill an area. A single chain stitch on its own is known as a detached chain stitch or lazy daisy stitch.

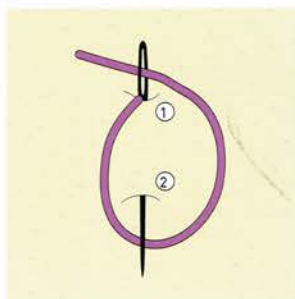
Materials

- Fabric
- Embroidery or chenille needle
- Thread
- Embroidery scissors

CHAIN STITCH

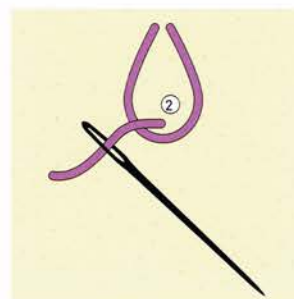
Step 1

Bring the needle up and down through the same hole, 1. Before pulling the needle down, ensure that a loop is left on the top of the fabric. With the loop still visible, bring the needle up along the design line, at the length that you wish the stitch to be, 2.



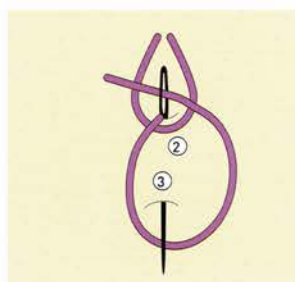
Step 2

While holding the needle in the loop, with the other hand gently pull down the thread that remains underneath the fabric. Bring the needle and thread all the way up through the loop, 2. You are now ready to start the second stitch.



Step 3

Take the needle back down at 2, then bring it up a stitch's distance below at 3. Continue in the same way along the design line.



Step 4

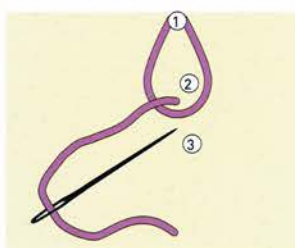
To end the row, instead of taking the needle back down within the loop, insert it just below at 4 to work a small securing stitch.



DETACHED CHAIN STITCH

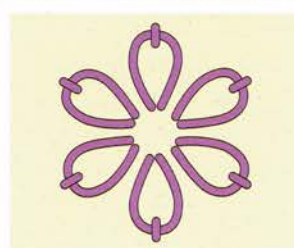
Step 1

Work a single chain stitch as described in Step 1 of chain stitch (up and down at 1, back up at 2 and down at 3), but finish the loop as in Step 4 of chain stitch.



Step 2

You can work four or five detached chain stitches in a circle to make a flower.



STEM STITCH

TUTORIAL

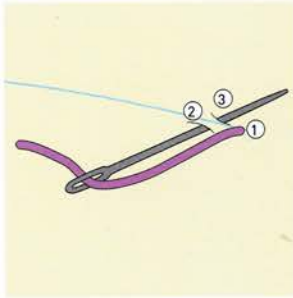
Stem stitch is a popular outline stitch. When worked with the loop to the opposite side, it is called outline stitch.

Materials

- Fabric
- Embroidery or chenille needle
- Thread
- Embroidery scissors

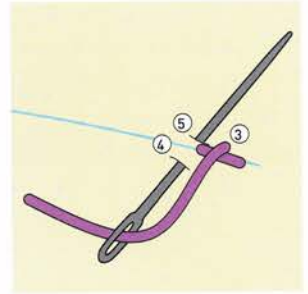
Step 1

Bring the needle up at the start of the design line, 1, and take the needle down farther along the design line to 2. Pull the needle and thread through the fabric, leaving a loop of thread on the top of the fabric. Keep the loop to the right and bring the needle up in the middle of the stitch along the design line to 3. Pull the needle and thread up. You have completed the first stitch, and this is where you start the next one.



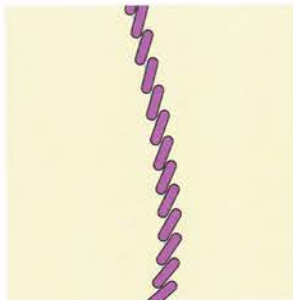
Step 2

Take the needle down farther along the design line to 4, keeping the loop to the right. Try to keep the stitches the same length. Bring the needle up halfway along the stitch; this should be where the last stitch ended (5).



Step 3

Continue along the design line, working the stitches in the same way. Every time you work a stitch, make sure you keep the loop to the same side. When you work upwards, it is easy to remember that the loop is always to the right.



TIP

Stem stitches should run from bottom left to top right.