

# How to...

FREE  
information

## Tapestry

### Introduction

Commonly known as tapestry, embroidery on tapestry canvas is also known as Canvas Work or, in the USA, Needlepoint.

The term “tapestry” relates to a weaving process on a tapestry loom. But the term has become the everyday name for Canvas Work – to produce wallhangings which are synonymous with the woven tapestries which proved popular throughout history.

Embroidery on canvas is generally used for creating pictures and cushions and can provide a great deal of enjoyment using just a few basic stitches.

### Equipment needed

#### Canvas

There are three different types of canvas used for Tapestry or canvas work.

The most common canvas is Double Thread Canvas, which has 10 holes to the inch. This type is perfect for printed canvas and the stitches are made through the ‘large’ holes.

Single Thread or Mono canvas is also used for canvas work - particularly for Long Stitch and for designs for beginners.

Interlock canvas is similar to Mono - with a twist in the canvas threads for a better appearance and increased stability.

Canvas is available in different gauges e.g. the number of holes per inch and is also available in Antique or White in colour. The choice is purely a matter of preference (although Antique is more popular).

Important: Never wash canvas work - all canvas embroidery should be professionally cleaned. If washed, the starch and adhesive holding the canvas will disappear and the canvas will become loose and flimsy.

Environmentally friendly water-based inks are commonly used on tapestry canvas; this may cause the inks to run if they are exposed to water or moisture.

#### Tapestry wool

The ideal length of wool to use is 18 inches (45cm) for most canvas work stitches. This avoids fraying and tangling due to excessive pulls through the canvas.



#### Needle

A tapestry needle should always be used. These have blunt points which do not pierce the threads of the canvas. The most common needles for canvas work with Anchor Tapestry Wool are size 18.

## Tapestry frame

The use of a tapestry frame is recommended to keep the canvas taut and there are many types of frame available depending on your personal preferences. Embroidery hoops are not suitable as they will not hold the canvas firmly.

## Additional supplies

Design – printed or chart

Scissors (embroidery)

Backing fabric or picture frame

Masking tape

## Method

With traditional tapestry the whole of the tapestry canvas is covered in stitching (unlike Cross Stitch where areas of fabric are not stitched). However, canvas lace is one example of canvas work where parts of the canvas remain exposed.



## Most popular stitches

There are many stitches which can be used for canvas work. The most popular are Half Cross Stitch or Tent Stitch. The use of Mixed Stitches for additional effect, Long Stitch for quick coverage, or Flame Stitch (a variety of Long Stitch) for Bargello designs on canvas, is also becoming popular.

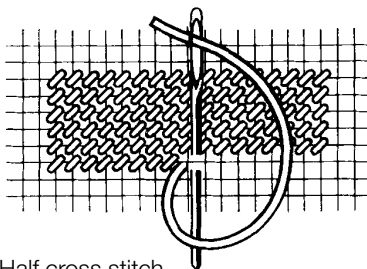
### Half Cross Stitch

Easy to master and mainly used for pictures.

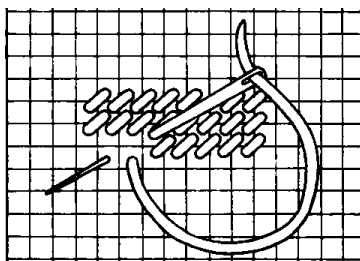
Half Cross Stitch is the most common stitch used for canvas work and is mainly used for pictures, but can also be used for cushion designs.

It is easy to master and comprises of small compact stitches to cover the canvas.

The stitches are diagonal on the front of the canvas and vertical on the back of the canvas.



A. Half cross stitch



B. Tent stitch

The stitch covers one square of the canvas as per the stitch diagrams shown. It is most often used in kits as it uses less wool than other canvas work stitches. (diagram A)

### **Tent Stitch**

Used when harder wearing formation is needed, such as chair seat covers and other furnishing items.

Tent Stitch is similar to Half Cross Stitch and looks identical on the front of the canvas showing small diagonal stitches (diagram B).

However, the back of the canvas is much bulkier with longer diagonal 'stitches' on the back of the canvas.

### **Basketweave Stitch**

Used to fill larger areas, easy to master.

Basketweave Stitch looks identical on the front to Half Cross Stitch and Tent Stitch. It is used to fill larger areas, for example the background of a piece, but is not suitable for fine detail.

Despite the complicated appearance of the reverse it is easy to master and uses roughly the same amount of wool as Tent Stitch. It gives a much harder wearing and less distorted formation.

### **Petit Point and Gros Point**

For fine detail on Double Thread Canvas a tighter version of Tent Stitch is sometimes used to provide extra detail.

The small areas of the Double Thread Canvas are separated and each stitched in Tent Stitch - this is usually called Petit Point. Tent Stitch through the larger hole formations on the canvas is also sometimes called Gros Point.

Four Petit Point stitches will be worked to cover the same area as One Gros Point stitch.

## Techniques

### **Finishing off**

For a neat finish to your canvas work, always darn the wool into the back of the stitches at the start and finish.

Try to avoid taking the wool from one area of colour to another area that is a long distance from the first. It is better to finish an area by darning the end of the wool and to start a new area afresh.

### **Avoiding distortion**

When working with canvas, the repeated direction of the stitches will distort the canvas. This is minimised through the use of a frame, but a frame does not completely get rid of the distortion.

Before finishing as a cushion, or framing a canvas work picture, always have the canvas stretched and blocked to straighten the canvas. This is a simple method of stretching the canvas back into shape by dampening the back of the piece but not washing it, then letting the canvas dry. It should then return to its original shape.

This should be done professionally or can be done at home with some professional guidance, but always refer to the manufacturer's instructions.

## Hints & Tips

- Always make sure you use the correct stitches, especially in a kit. Tent Stitch can use up to 30% more wool than Half Cross Stitch and is usually the reason that wool 'shortages' occur. The best way to check is to look at the back of the canvas. Very often Half Cross Stitch is used on the first row and Tent Stitch on every alternate row. This should be avoided.
- When starting in an unstitched area of canvas, tie a knot in the end of your wool and take the wool through the top side of the canvas about 4 inches from your first stitch. When you have completed your stitches and darned in the end of the wool, go back and cut off the knot, re-thread the length of wool into the needle and darn into the stitches you have just completed. This will provide a neat finish to your canvas work.
- If your wool tangles, let the wool hang loose with the needle at the bottom – the weight of the needle will untangle the wool.
- When working with tapestry canvas it is best to tape over the exposed rough canvas edges with masking tape. This stops the wool catching on the canvas.



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