

Needlecraft Tips, Tricks & Frequently Asked Questions

Most of the questions we get asked as seasoned needlecrafters or retailers have lengthy answers. There are some questions though which can be dealt with in a 'short and sweet' manner.

So, a great way, I thought, of heading into 2017 is to tackle the short and sweet so that we can get going with our stitching goals.

The following are in no particular order or preference, just random issues that sometimes crop up.

- **Must I use a hoop when I cross stitch or embroider?**
 - Preferably, as it helps with even tension. Some embroidery stitches, like 3 dimensional stitches require you to NOT use a hoop. Susan Bates hoops as well as Morgan Hoops are excellent options as they are made of strong durable plastic and they keep fabric taut for longer.
- **What is the difference between an embroidery needle and a tapestry needle?**
 - Tapestry Needles have blunt tips specifically so that you do not catch the thread fibres in the fabric. Cross Stitchers use tapestry needles. Embroiderers use embroidery needles. They are sharp tipped for piercing the fabric.
- **What is the right sized needle to use?**
 - THE HIGHER THE NUMBER THE THINNER THE NEEDLE
 - For Cross Stitchers there are 3 sizes: TAPESTRY Size 24, 26 and 28. Rule of Thumb: Aidas up to 14 or even 16 count = size 24, Aidas and evenweaves from 18 count to about 27 count = size 26. Evenweaves and Linens from 28 count upwards = size 28 needles. When in doubt go middle of the road and use the size 26
 - For Embroiderers: Popular sizes are Crewel or Embroidery Needles from size 7 to 10. Generally the thread thickness will determine the needle size for you. Chenille Needles from sizes 20 to 26 are also useful for working with the thicker perle threads. For Bullion stitches be sure to use a Milliners / Straw Needle....WHY? In order to keep the bullion loops even throughout it is best to use a needle with a straight shaft (i.e it doesn't taper towards the tip). It is therefore best for embroiderers to have a selection of needle types and sizes in their stash boxes. Other needles which come in handy are beading needles in size 12 which are great for using with petite beads. All these needles are available in the John James range.

- **What is the difference between Aida , Evenweave and Linen?**

Fabric	Difference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aida 	<p>Aida fabric is the most popular cross stitch fabric. It is generally made from 100% cotton, and it comes in several different counts as large as Herta (6 count) and as fine as 20 count.</p> <p>Aida is a blockweave fabric. The fabric is made up of little squares with four holes at the corners. The stitches are formed using these holes. It is available in many different counts, but the most common are 14, 16 and 18 count. Hardanger is also considered a blockweave fabric</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evenweave 	<p>The term evenweave applies to any fabric that is "evenly woven", so any fabric which has the same number of threads per inch in both the vertical and horizontal directions, and all the threads have the same thickness.</p> <p>The counts are different from Aida, because in this case, we do not count the squares, but the threads</p> <p>Examples of Evenweaves are: 27 Count Linda and 25 or 28 Count Lugana, 20 Count Bellana</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Linen 	<p>Linen is a natural fiber. The main difference between linen and evenweave is that linen threads do not all have the same thickness, so basically the stitches per inch may not be equal vertically and horizontally.</p>

- **How do different cross stitch fabrics affect the final size of the stitched piece?**
 - The HIGHER the fabric count the SMALLER / FINER the finished piece
- **How does stitching on aida differ from stitching on evenweave or linen?**
 - When stitching on aida, stitching happens in the blocks because Aida is a block weave fabric. When stitching on evenweave or linen the basic rule is to stitch over 2 threads of the fabric. You can choose to stitch over 1 thread of the fabric for a very fine, painting like effect.

- **Why is cross stitch fabric so expensive and do I have to purchase a metre at a time?**
 - The price of cross stitch fabric is not only attributed to it being imported but also because its made of 100% of its natural fibre, either cotton or flax (linen). Sometimes an artificial fibre will be used in conjunction with the natural fibre for example: lurex for a gold or silver effect OR Viscose (as in the case of lugana which is 52% Cotton and 48% Viscose). At Needlework Emporium I do not force my customers to purchase a metre at a time as I believe that cross stitchers do not work in metres of fabric, hence I custom cut the fabric for my customers which effectively reduces the price considerably.
- **Can I make a final piece smaller or bigger and how do I do that?**
 - Yes. Please see my article on Calculating Cross Stitch Fabric: <http://www.needleworkemporium.co.za/blog/item/37-calculating-cross-stitch-fabric>
- **How important is it to use embroidery scissors?**
 - In order to create beautiful pieces in any craft, a good set of tools is key. The correct tools for the task, automatically makes life easier and the task at hand, more enjoyable. Scissors are imperative as lots of snipping of threads are involved in both cross stitch as well as embroidery. The size of embroidery scissors makes them ideal for the task. They also fit into floss boxes.
- **How do I store my threads?**
 - This is a matter of preference but this is how I work:
 - 5 x LARGE Floss boxes can hold the entire DMC Solid range (about 460 colours). Threads are filed numerically for cross stitchers and in shades for embroiderers. I then have 4 extra floss boxes for projects only: 2 x large and 2 x medium. In these boxes I will file my threads for specific projects together with a pack of needles and a pair of embroidery scissors
- **Do I have to use a Needle Organiser?**
 - Again, preference but be warned as once you START using a needle organiser, you will not want to stitch any other way. Needle Organisers are great as it eliminates the need to constantly unthread and rethread your needle. Needles are all prethreaded and filed on the organiser against the specific symbol for that project. You need lots of needles and YOU WILL STITCH LIKE A LITTLE MACHINE – I love them! Pako makes a great needle organiser.
- **There is a project I am keen on but its only available as a kit. Can I get just the pattern?**
 - In 99.9% of cases kits are not available as stand alone charts so if there is something you like, you are almost forced to take the kit.
- **Is it possible to change the background fabric so that it differs from the original?**
 - Absolutely. Just be careful when doing this as the designer might have chosen a colour for a particular reason e.g sky blue aida to depict a bit of sky or water

These are the most common questions I get asked as both a needlecrafter and a retailer. If you have any further question please feel free to contact me on info@needleworkemporium.co.za