



## Decorative Stitches - Part One Tutorial

Have you ever been reluctant to try a project that features decorative stitches or hand-embellishing because you weren't sure how to do the stitches? Well, you've been missing out! Decorative stitches are fun and easy, and I've often said that embellishing is my favorite part of creating a new design. Decorative stitches only *look* complicated, but we're going to break them down into individual steps so it's just a matter of bringing your needle up at one point and down at another. Before long, you'll be happily stitching away and your friends will want to know how you do it! But first, let's quickly cover the types of threads to use:

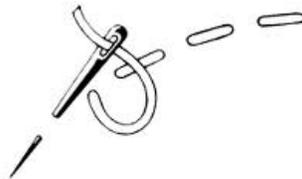
Threads come in all types of fibers, including cotton, wool, polyester and silk, to name a few. You can also use metallic threads, yarn and just about anything you can string through the eye of a needle. I've been asked many times what threads I use for my patterns, so here's my secret: I use plain old embroidery floss I buy at my local craft or fabric store (yep, that's as secret it gets). I use embroidery floss because it's cheap, comes in a gazillion colors and creates a beautiful result, but mostly because I already have a huge basket of it in my workroom. Now, I'll admit I sometimes get a little fancy and use hand-dyed embroidery floss or lovely threads by Valdini like you'll see below, but I usually stick to whatever is in my floss basket. If you'd like to learn how to dye your own embroidery floss (called "overdyeing"), you can find a nice tutorial on my blog at <http://americanpiedesigns.blogspot.com/2013/02/new-tutorial-how-to-over-dye-embroidery.html>.



**So Let's Get to It!** There are hundreds of decorative stitches, but they all boil down to several basic stitches that are worked with slight variations. We're going to start with seven of the most popular, and then I'll show you more stitches in later tutorials coming next week:

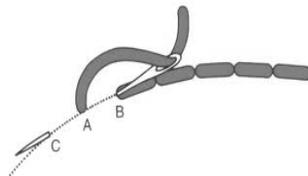
- 1) Basic Running Stitch
- 2) Back Stitch
- 3) Blanket Stitch (also known as the Buttonhole Stitch)
- 4) French Knot
- 5) Cross Stitch
- 6) Herringbone Stitch
- 7) Daisy Chain (Daisy Stitch; Lazy Daisy; Chain Stitch)

**Basic Running Stitch:** This is probably the easiest decorative stitch to learn. It can be worked in straight or curved lines and is used for outlining and making stems and vines. To begin, bring your needle up from underneath. Next, weave the needle in and out of the fabric, taking two or three evenly-spaced stitches. Pull the needle through and repeat as desired. If I am working with a quilt or other material where I am stitching through layers, I like to make one stitch at a time, rather than loading two or three stitches on my needle at once. Stitching one stitch at a time makes each stitch look fuller and more finished.



*Basic Running Stitch*

**Back Stitch:** This stitch is a variation of the basic running stitch. I use it for outlining, making stems and vines and anywhere that I want a bolder line. Bring your needle up at A, down at B and back up again at C. Pull the needle through and repeat as desired.



*Back Stitch*

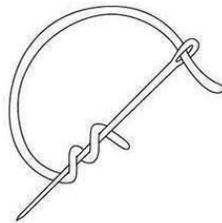
**Blanket Stitch (also known as the Buttonhole Stitch):** This popular stitch is often used to finish the edges of baby blankets and when appliqueing on wool. When worked with small stitches, it can also be used for outlining. The stitch is worked from left to right. For a standard-size stitch, bring your needle up from underneath at the edge of your patch or template. Move to the right approximately 1/4". Push your needle back down through both the patch and the background at a point about 1/4" from the edge of the patch and back up again at the edge of the patch. Be sure to loop the thread under the needle as you complete this stitch. Each stitch should be

about the same length and distance apart. Remember, you can vary the size and width of your stitch depending on your project.



*Blanket Stitch*

**French Knot:** I use french knots for flower centers, bird's eyes, etc. It can also be used in clusters and worked close together to fill an area, which will produce a textured, nubby result. To make the french knot, bring your needle up from underneath. Hold the needle in one hand and with the other hand wrap the thread around the tip of the needle once and pull it snug around the needle. Wrap the thread around the tip of the needle a second time, again pulling it snug. I often wrap the thread around the tip of the needle a third time so I get a bigger knot, but if you are a beginner I suggest you stick with just two wraps around the needle. Now, while continuing to keep the thread snug around the needle, re-insert the tip of the needle back down into the fabric exactly next to where you came up. Slowly pull the needle through while your other hand keeps the thread taut. Once the needle has pulled all the way through, use your fingertip to hold the knot in place while you pull the rest of the thread through the fabric. Snug it up so it forms a nice knot and you are finished!

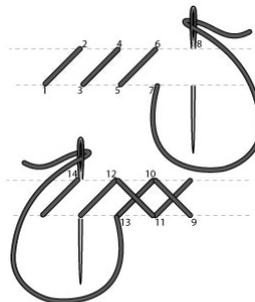


*French Knot*

**Cross Stitch:** There is more than one way to complete the cross stitch. It can be worked one stitch at a time, or it can be worked in rows such as when embroidering large areas on a pillowcase or similar project. To work it one stitch at a time, bring your needle up from underneath at 1 and insert it back down through your fabric at 2. Bring needle up at 3 and back down at 4. Repeat the sequence as many times as desired. If you want to work rows of cross stitch to fill an area, work the first half of the stitch all the way along the row and then return and work the second half of the stitch back to the beginning of the row.

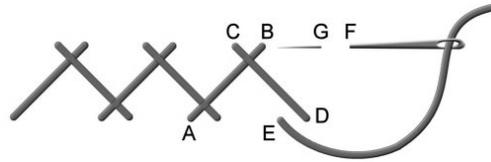


*Single Cross Stitch*



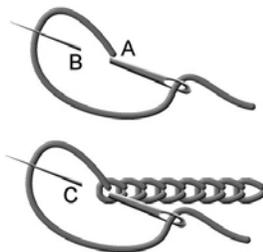
*Cross Stitch Worked in Rows*

**Herringbone Stitch:** The herringbone stitch is a variation of the basic cross stitch. It is often used to embellish crazy quilts and also often used as a decorative stitch in borders. Bring your needle up from underneath at A and insert it back through your fabric at B. Bring your needle to the front again at C and back down at D. Bring your needle up at E, down at F and back up again at G. Repeat the sequence as many times as desired.

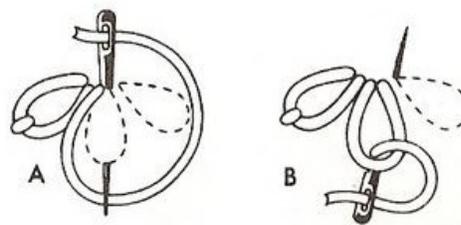


*Herringbone Stitch*

**Daisy Chain (also known as the Daisy Stitch, Lazy Daisy and Chain Stitch):** This is a very popular decorative stitch used for outlining and can also be used to create flower stems and other embellishments. If worked in a circular direction, it creates the look of petals on a flower as shown below. To begin, bring your needle up at A as shown in the diagram on the left, and then insert your needle back into the same hole and out at B, carrying your thread under the needle point. Pull your needle on through. Point B is now the beginning point of the next stitch.



*Daisy Chain*



*Lazy Daisy Stitch*

**It Looks Complicated, But It's Not!** Like I said, decorative stitches look hard, but it's just a matter of bringing your needle up at one point and down at another--easy peasy! In no time at all, you'll be embellishing your quilts, jackets, pillows and other projects with decorative stitches and your friends will be in awe and wondering how you do it!

## **Where Can You Find My Patterns?**

### **American Pie Designs by Melanie Pinney**

11132 Tioga, Boise, Idaho 83709 (208) 870-9118

**Website:** [www.americanpiedesigns.com](http://www.americanpiedesigns.com)

**Blog:** <http://americanpiedesigns.blogspot.com>

**Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/americanpiedesigns>

<http://www.etsy.com/shop/americanpiedesigns>

**Email Me!** [melanie@americanpiedesigns.com](mailto:melanie@americanpiedesigns.com)