

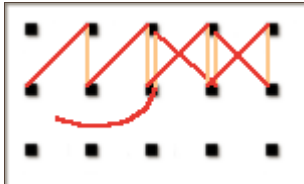
Stitch Path

A Scarlet Quince™ Tutorial

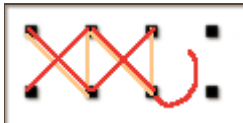
When you cross stitch, you are always thinking about a **stitch path**. "After I finish this stitch, where do I go next?"

In general, you want to stitch in a way that minimizes the amount of floss you use. That's not so much about being thrifty (though thrift is good), but to keep the back neat(er). The less floss on the back the neater it is.

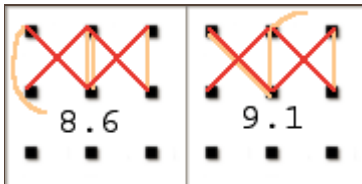
There are basically two options:



One way is to do a set of stitches as a round trip, doing the first half of each stitch on the outbound trip, then return, finishing each stitch as you come to it. (This is also called Danish style, but for clarity we'll call it "round trip" here.) In this and other diagrams, a red line indicates thread on the front of the fabric, while a pink line indicates a thread on the back.

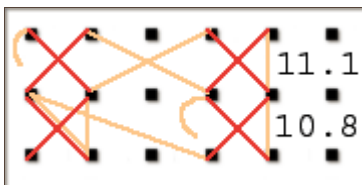


The other basic option is to do a set of stitches as a one-way trip, finishing each stitch completely before starting the next. (Also called English style.)



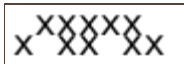
If stitches are right next to each other, the one-way trip uses somewhat more floss than the round trip.

Let's say that the horizontal or vertical size of a stitch is 1 unit. For two side-by-side stitches, a round trip uses 8.6 units of floss, whereas the one-way trip uses 9.1. This isn't a big difference, but for 3 adjacent stitches, it's 12.4 and 14.2 units, respectively, and the more adjacent stitches there are, the more the difference grows.

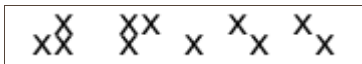


If two stitches are separated a gap of 1 stitch, you still use less floss stitching a round trip (9.4 units) than a one-way trip (9.9 units). But if the gap is **more** than 1 stitch, the situation changes. Now the one-way trip will use less floss. For a gap of two stitches, one-way uses 10.8 units compared to 11.1 for a round trip. If the gap is 3 stitches, one-way uses 11.7 units vs 13.9 for round trip.

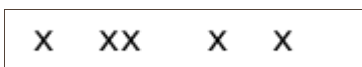
Don't think that you need to constantly be calculating how much floss each situation will use. Just keep these general rules of them in the back of your mind.



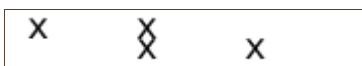
If you have a group of stitches that is basically a rectangle, you will probably want to stitch them as a series of round trips, one per row.



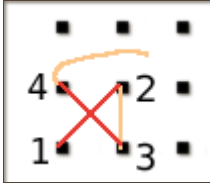
However, if there are a lot of gaps, especially if many of the gaps are more than one stitch, it may be better to stitch a one-way trip from left to right on the first row, then another one-way trip from right to left on the second row.



If you have a single row with gaps, use a one-way trip.



If you have more of a trapezoid with gaps, i.e. the beginnings of the rows don't more or less line up, a one-way trip would be better.



Columns are a special case. You might have a long column, like a border on a sampler, or a short column where there are 2 or 3 vertical stitches. You can do them either as one-way trips or round trips (it's just a row turned on its side). But if you do them as one-way trips, you'll find that you have to do them from top to bottom (assuming that you start the legs of your crosses by coming up at the bottom of the stitch) or you will constantly be needing to come up in the same spot where you just went down. (If you start the legs of your crosses at the top, you will need to work columns from bottom to top.) For example, in the illustration, suppose you come up at 1, go down at 2, up at 3, and down at 4. But now you need to come up at 4!

There's an infinite number of stitch patterns that you'll see. Don't obsess about it, don't be afraid to mix styles, and let your own preferences rule.

Copyright © 2002-2016 Scarlet Quince, LLC. www.ScarletQuince.com All rights reserved.

You are welcome to link to this page or print it for your personal use. You may not use words or pictures elsewhere, or reproduce in quantity, without written permission. You may not sell it or upload it to the internet under any circumstances.