

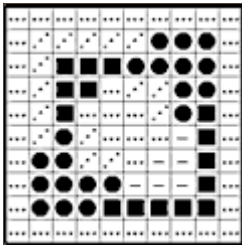
Reading a Cross Stitch Chart

A Scarlet Quince™ Tutorial

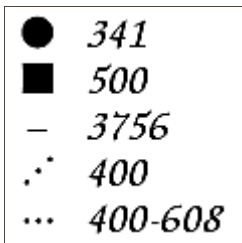
There are two forms of cross stitch, stamped and counted. With **stamped cross stitch**, each stitch is printed in light blue directly on the fabric (usually linen). You follow a set of instructions or a picture to tell you what colors to use, and usually it comes as a kit which includes the fabric, floss, and instructions.

Counted cross stitch is stitched on blank fabric. You refer to a chart that tells you where to place stitches and what colors they should be. Sometimes it comes as a kit but often you start with a chart and purchase the floss and fabric separately.

If you have never tried counted cross stitch before, the chart can seem a little intimidating at first, but it's really no more difficult than reading a road map. On a road map, some roads may be shown as thin black lines, others bold red lines, and others dashed lines. You don't know what they mean until you refer to a key, which will tell you that the thin black lines are 2-lane roads, the bold red lines are limited access, and the dashed lines are dirt roads. Cross stitch charts work in a similar way. Here's how to read them.

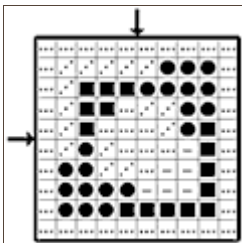


1. There are two main sections to any cross stitch chart. One section is a grid, with a symbol inside each square of the grid. Each symbol represents one stitch of a particular color. If there are blank squares in the grid, that means that no stitch is made there — the fabric shows through.



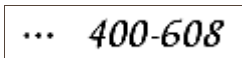
2. The other important section is the key. It tells you what the symbols in the grid mean — what color to use in stitching that symbol. The key is a list of symbols, each with a floss number following it. If a symbol in the key has two floss numbers after it, you use a blend of colors.

Somewhere above or below the key you'll find instructions telling you what brand of floss and how many strands to use. Scarlet Quince charts have a title above the key that says "DMC Color Key", and below that, the instructions "Stitch using two strands of DMC floss. Symbols with two numbers are blended: use one strand of each color." For symbols with one number, you stitch with two strands of the same color.

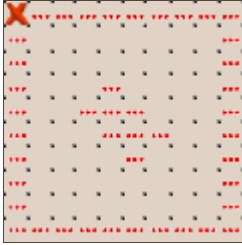


3. To begin stitching, decide where on the chart you will start. This can either be the center of the chart (usually marked with arrows in the margins as shown), or the top left (or another) corner. Also locate the place on the fabric that corresponds to the place you're starting on the chart. See our tutorial [Locating the first stitch](#) for how to do this.

Note the symbol at your chosen starting point. Let's start this chart at the top left. The symbol is 3 horizontal dots. (As it happens, it would be the same if you started in the center. The arrows point between symbols rather than pointing to a symbol, so just pick the an adjacent symbol.)

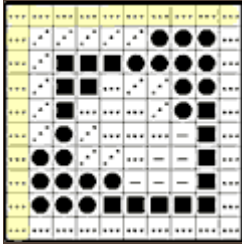


4. Look the symbol up in the key. Thread a needle with the color(s) it specifies for that symbol, in this case one strand of DMC 400 and one of DMC 608. (Going back and forth from the chart to the key may seem cumbersome at first, but you'll quickly learn the most common symbols in the chart and won't have to look them up every time.)



5. Make your first stitch, and look for other occurrences of the same symbol nearby (say within 4-6 stitches). Here is the first stitch completed at the upper left, and all the other places where that symbol is stitched, with the symbol superimposed on the fabric. (Of course there is a margin, not shown, around this stitched area — you never stitch right up to the edge of the fabric.) You'll begin to think of the chart as a representation of what you are stitching, in much the way that a road map represents the landscape around your car.

If you have to skip over stitches in different colors/symbols, you'll need to count on the chart and then on the fabric how far to skip. Charts usually have every 10th line of the grid darker to make counting easier.



6. There are lots of tricks for keeping your place. See our [tips section](#) for those. The most valuable is marking the stitches on the chart as you complete them. A fine-pointed highlighter is the best tool for this. Marking the chart makes it easy to compare it to the stitches on the fabric and orient yourself quickly. Here we show a possible stitching path marked off on the chart.

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