



How to Needlepoint

A quick guide for the on the go learner to get started stitching

By Casey Sheahan

What is needlepoint?

Needlepoint is a type of embroidery where wool, cotton or silk is threaded through an open weave canvas.

Needlepoint can be used to create many different objects, crafts or art canvases.

Sources : Colorsheets, Viviva, and Shovava. "What Is Needlepoint? Learn the DIY Basics to Begin This Fun and Colorful Craft." My Modern Met, 9 Sept. 2018, <https://mymodernmet.com/what-is-needlepoint/>.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Needlepoint." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 4 Sept. 2019, [https://www.britannica.com/art/needlepoint#:~:targetText=Needlepoint as it is known,the foundation for the embroidery](https://www.britannica.com/art/needlepoint#:~:targetText=Needlepoint%20as%20it%20is%20known,the%20foundation%20for%20the%20embroidery)

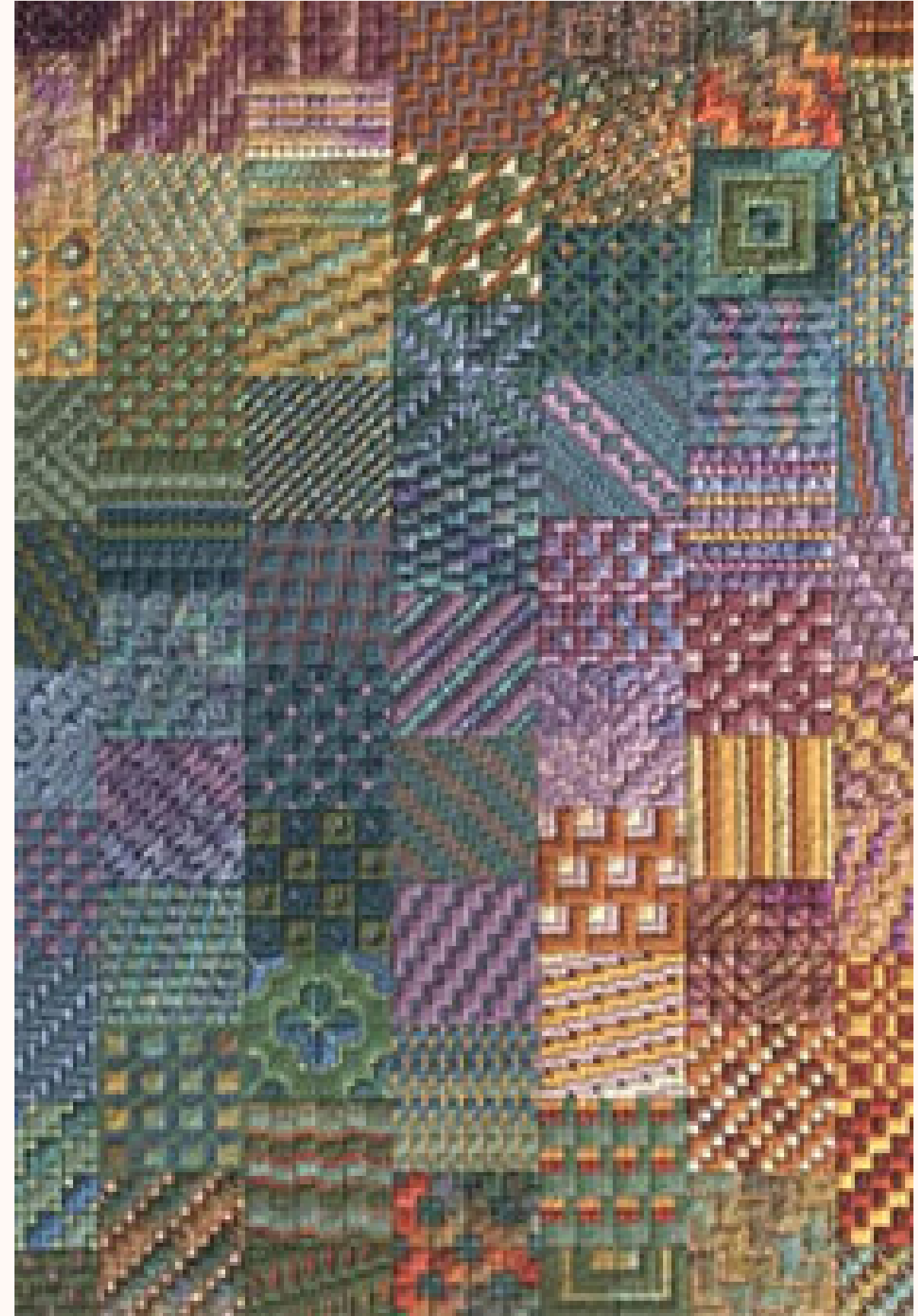


History of Needlepoint

Needlework has been around for centuries. Throughout history we have seen a variety of different types of stitching. Tapestries have been found dating back to the 15th century and needlepoint was even found in the cave of a Pharaoh. In the 17th century when upholstered furniture became popular.

Getting Started

Now that you know a little more about the history of needlepoint, you will start collecting your materials to begin stitching.



Getting Started

Material Options: Threads and Yarns

Althea DeBrule outlines some of the most common types of threads used in needlepoint.

Persian Yarn: By far the most popular yarn used for needlepoint. Persian wool can be purchased in hundreds of colors from delicate hues to bold shades.

Tapestry Yarn: Tapestry wool is a single strand thread that cannot be separated for fine stitching.

Crewel Yarn: Crewel wool is best known for its use in working Crewel embroidery on fabric. This fine weight yarn is similar in texture to one ply of Persian yarn.



Silk Thread



Cotton Thread

Crewel Yarn

Persian Yarn



Cotton Thread: Spun as individual strands and sold in groups of four to twelve, cotton threads are the least expensive of all needlepoint yarns. Depending on what's needed for good canvas coverage, each group can be pulled apart or "stripped" and put back together.

Silk Thread: By its very nature, 100% silk is more expensive than cotton or wool. The wispy thread is very delicate and seems to have a mind of its own. Lots of care must be taken when working with silk.

Metallics and Novelty Threads: there are so many threads that fit this category that it is hard to keep up with new ones released each year. Metallic braids, ribbons, and cords can be purchased in different sizes in a variety of shades of any color you need.

Source: DeBrule, Althea. "Everything You Need to Know to Choose Needlepoint Thread." The Spruce Crafts, The Spruce Crafts, 20 Oct. 2019, <https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/needlepoint-yarns-and-threads-2479757>.

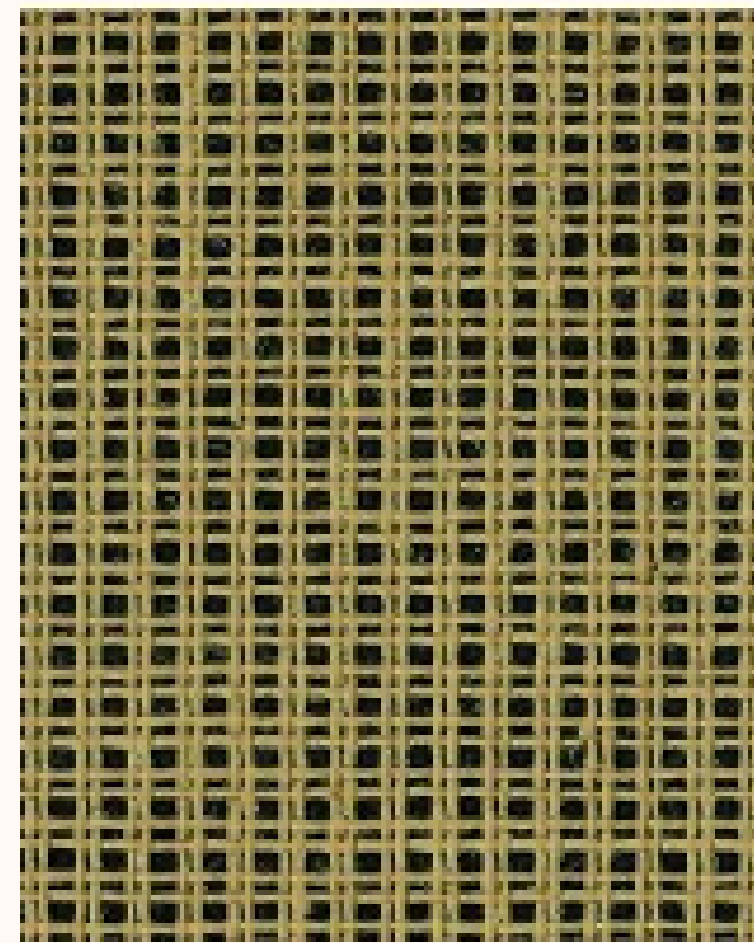
Getting Started

Material Options: Canvas Options

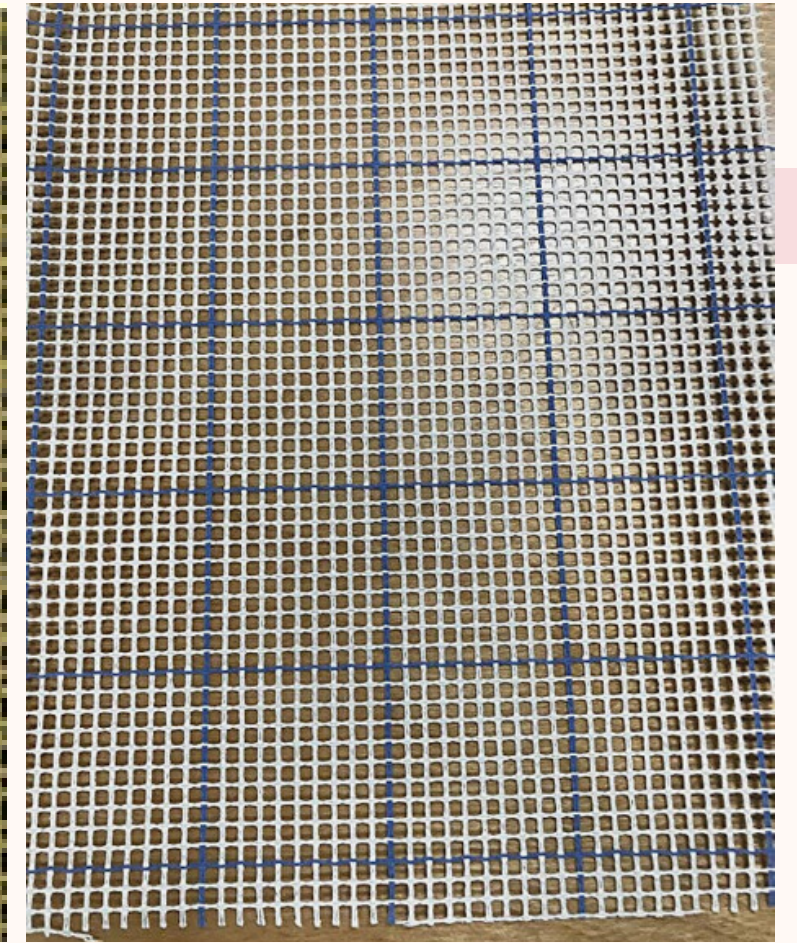
Willow Fabrics explains the different types of Canvas options for your Project:

Mono/Single De Lux "Royal" Canvas: This is a needlepoint canvas with mesh of single vertical and horizontal threads. This allows the stitches to move, making mono/single canvas the person choice for projects that will be subjected to uneven pressure, such as pillows and chair cushions.

Mono Interlock Canvas: This canvas is a needlepoint canvas with a single horizontal thread wrapped by two vertical threads, "locking" the mesh at intersections. Projects using this type of canvas have less distortion due to the locked mesh, making it more stable. This is what comes in a needlepoint kit and it is less expensive than mono/single canvas.



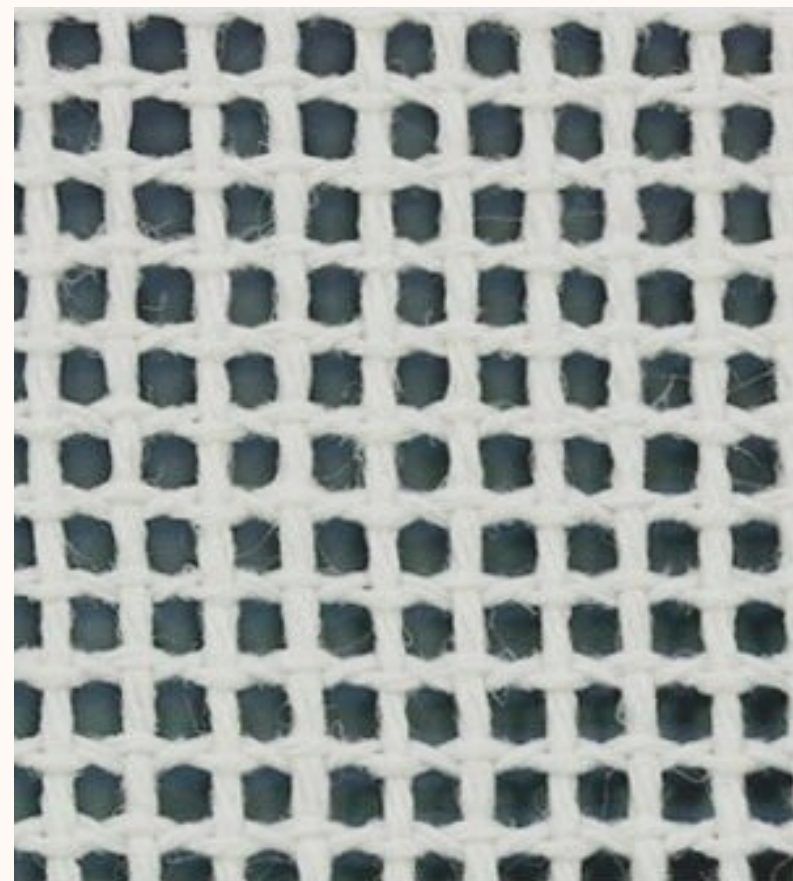
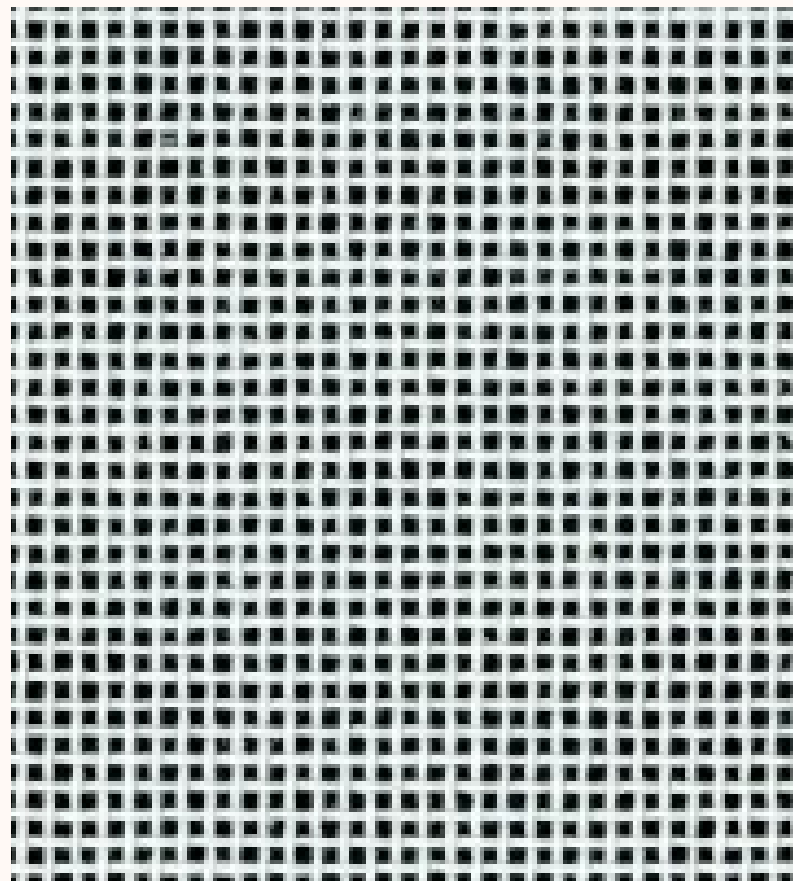
Double/Duo or Penelope Canvas



Rug Canvas

Mono/Single De Lux Canvas

Mono Interlock Canvas



Double/Duo or Penelope Canvas: Instead of the single thread that makes up mono or single canvas, double/duo or Penelope canvas has a double thread mesh (two vertical and horizontal threads woven together). This makes it very durable to work with and comes in a wide variety of counts/gauges/holes per inch.

Rug Canvas: Rug Canvas is made up of a large mesh of strong cotton threads. This mesh is formed by twisting two threads around each other lengthwise and locking them around a twisted crosswise thread (the threads cannot be separated).

Getting Started

Material Options: Needle Options

Ellen Johnson helps explain the purpose of the needle and how to choose the correct size of needle.

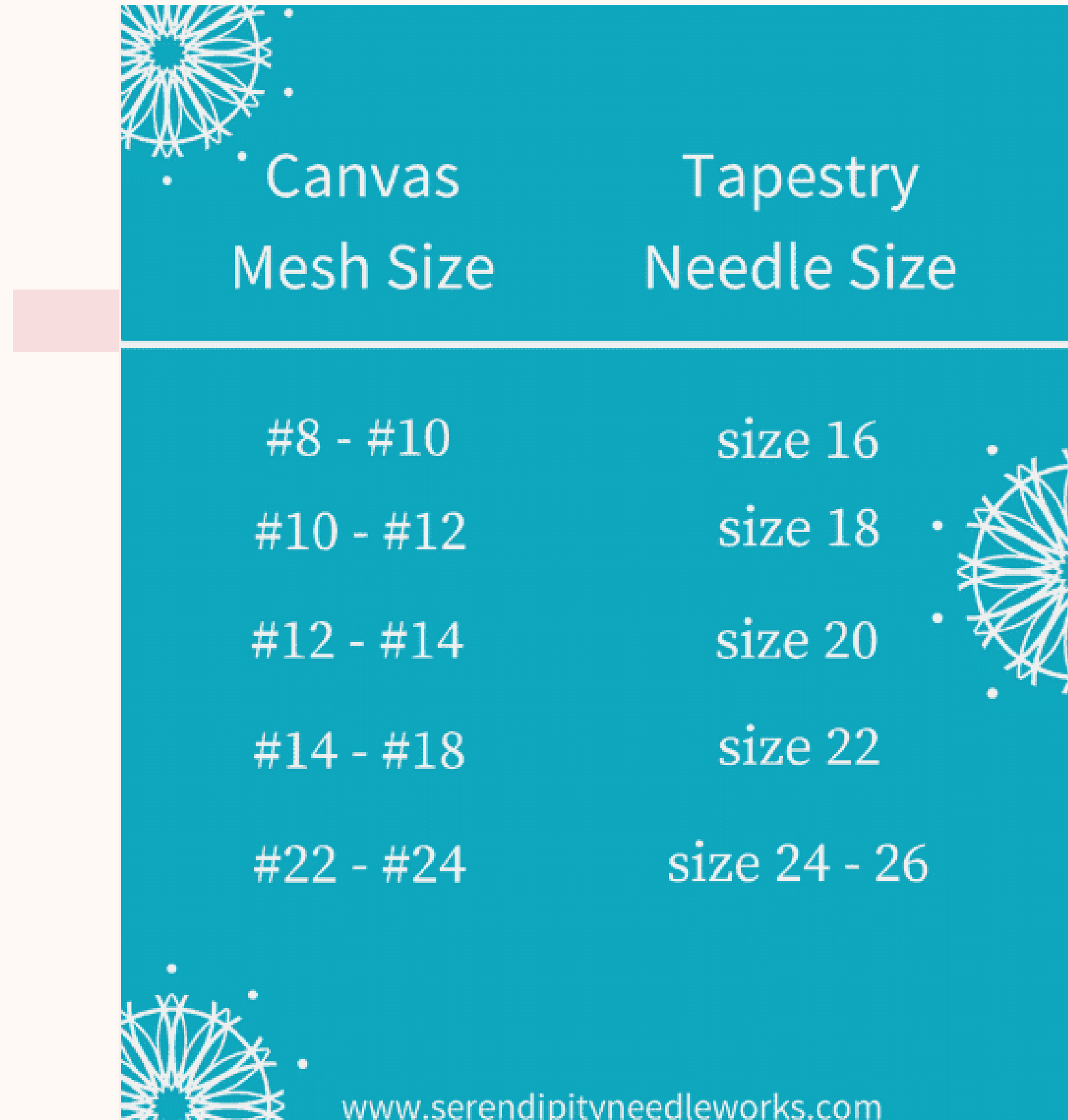
"A needle really has two purposes. First, to carry the thread and second, to open up the canvas just enough to allow the thread to slip through without catching or pulling on the canvas mesh. Canvas can be rough and, if you've ever had your thread shred of fuzz, you were likely using a needle that was too small for your project.

The size needle you use for your project directly correlates to the mesh size of your canvas. A helpful tip to remember is the higher the number assigned to a needle, the smaller the needle. For example, a size 24 tapestry needle is smaller than a size 18 tapestry needle.

That same "rule" applies to canvas mesh, too - the higher the mesh count, the finer the mesh. Match needle size to canvas mesh size, so finer needles go with finer mesh canvas and larger needles go with larger mesh."

She also provides a very helpful image (displayed on the right) that correlates canvas mesh size with needle size for the beginner.

Source: Johnson, Ellen. "Choosing The Right Needle For Your Needlepoint Canvas." Serendipity Needleworks, 13 May 2018, <https://www.serendipityneedleworks.com/choosing-the-right-needle/>.

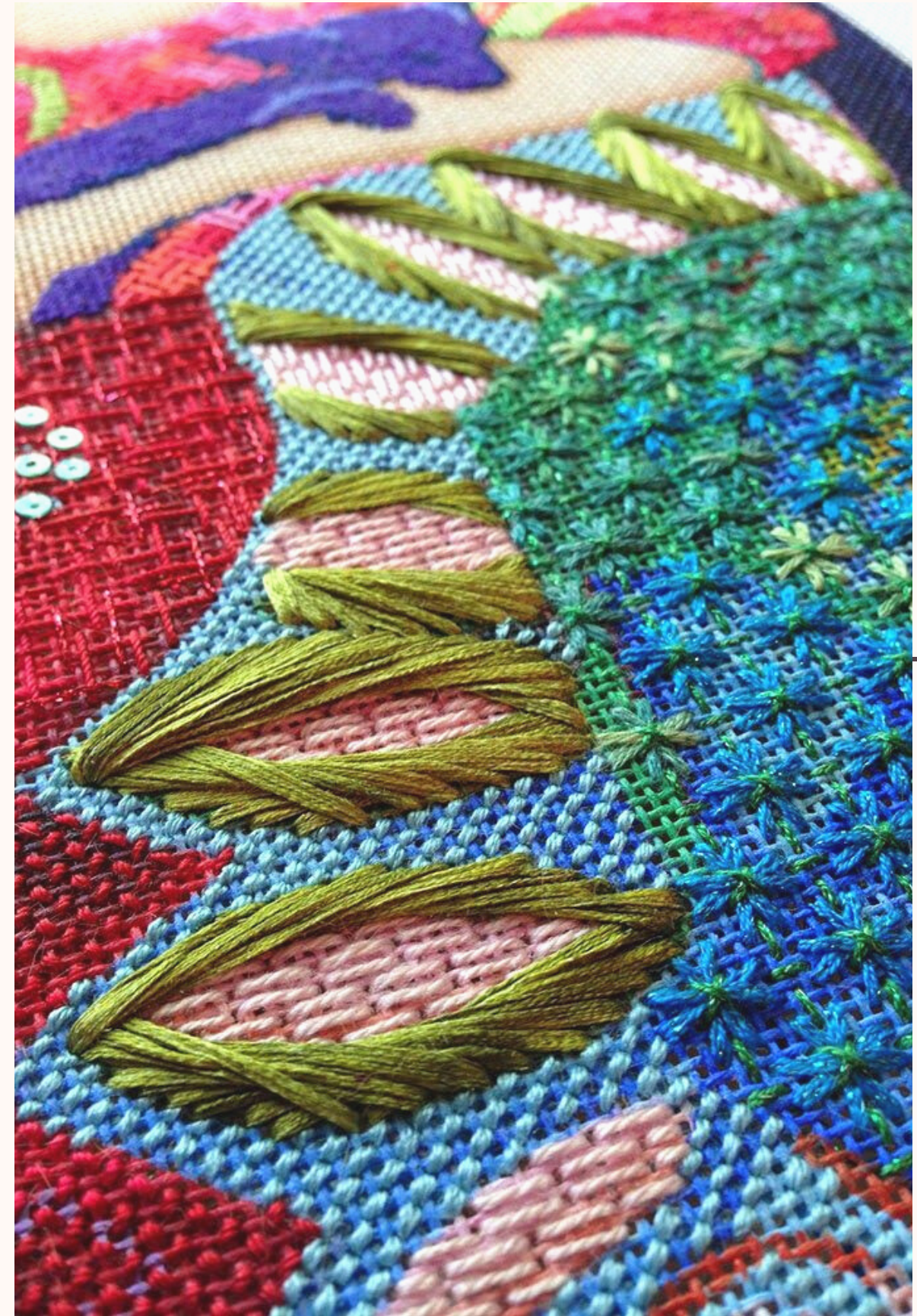


Canvas Mesh Size	Tapestry Needle Size
#8 - #10	size 16
#10 - #12	size 18
#12 - #14	size 20
#14 - #18	size 22
#22 - #24	size 24 - 26

www.serendipityneedleworks.com

Let's Begin!

Now that you have collected your materials and have a better understanding of them, we can begin stitching.





Let's Begin!

Basic Stitching

Now that we have all of our materials we are ready to get started! This will walk you through three of the basic stitches that should put you in a great place to start creating.

Video demonstrations of all three of these stitches are on pages 13-15.

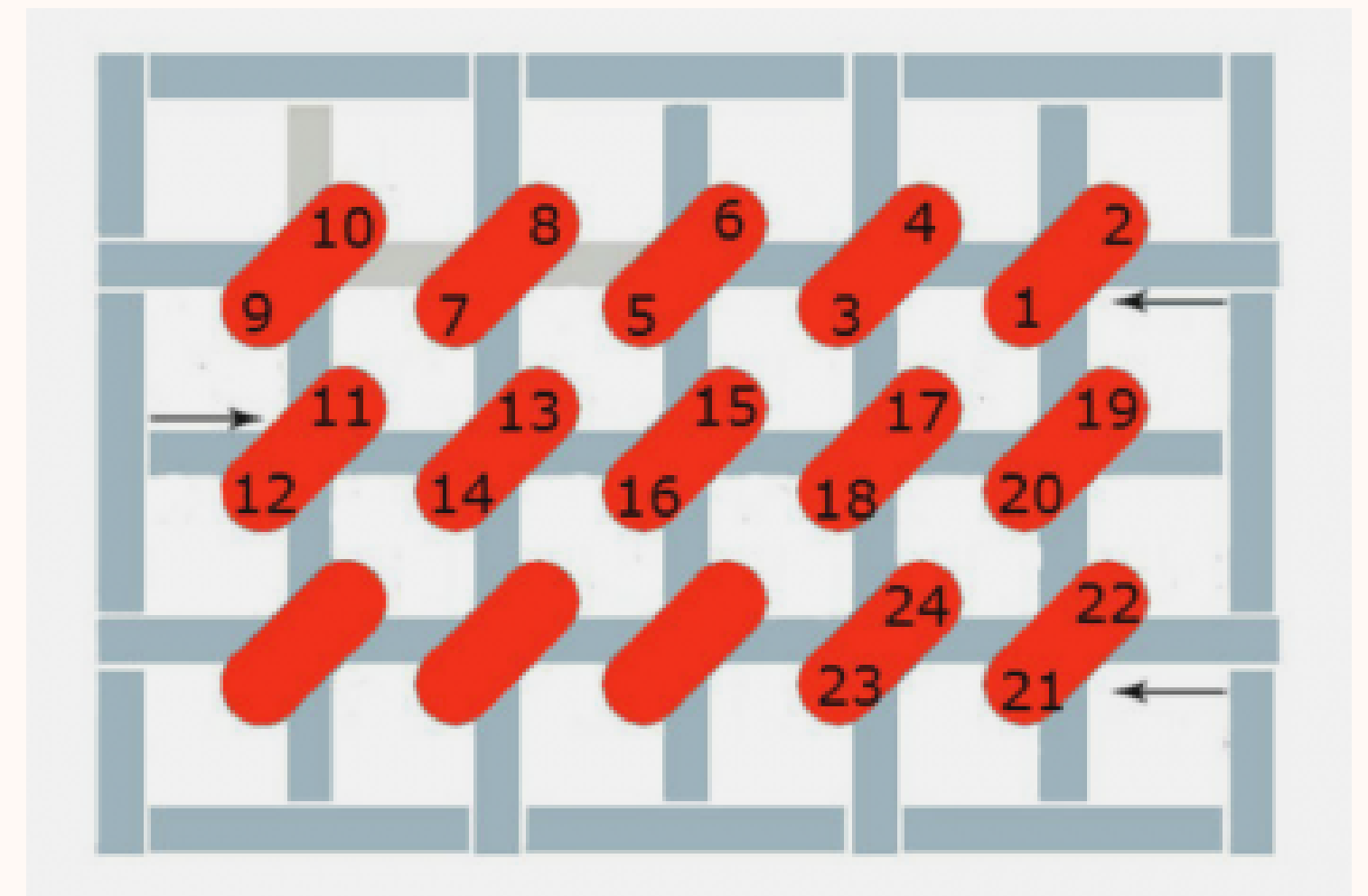
- 1) Start by making sure the edges of your canvas are taped to avoid it fraying.
- 2) Start with the background color of your canvas until you get the hang of the stitches.
- 3) Cut a large piece of string, usually around 18 inches in length and thread your needle.
- 4) Finally start stitching!

Continental Stitch

This is one of the easiest stitches to learn and what you should start off trying. It is great for background areas and vertical or horizontal lines.

This stitch is going to move you from right to left across a canvas. You are going to start in the bottom left box (labeled 1 in the picture to the right) and come from the back up through 1 and down through 2. You will then pull your string up through 3 and back down through 4. Continue this pattern until you hit the end of the row. To switch direction, you will flip the canvas over and continue doing the same stitch. 11 is going to be where you start you second row.

***If you ever make a mistake don't worry! Just reverse the stitches you made until you remove the error and then continue forward.**



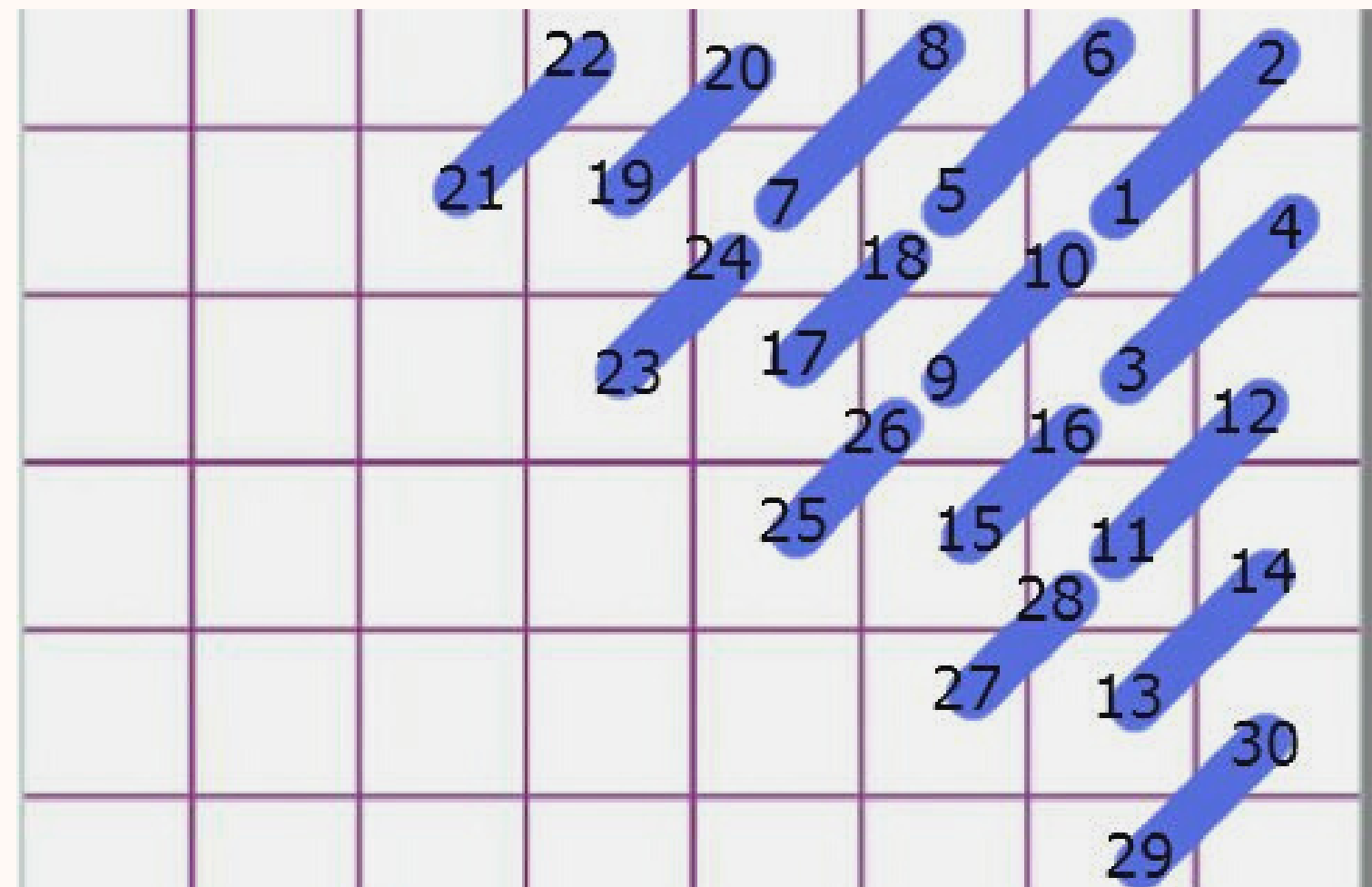
Let's Begin!

Basketweave Stitch

This is the most common stitch used in needlepoint. It gives a higher coverage than the basic continental stitch, therefore allowing you to move faster through the canvas. This is great for large areas, but is a little more difficult than your continental stitch. This stitch is also known for being able to handle wear and tear.

With this stitch you will be going diagonally back and forth across the canvas. Start with your needle on the back side of the canvas and poke it through box 1 (as shown in the picture to the left) and then go down through 2. Then move to the diagonal row below where you started to the right of 1 and come up through 3 and down through 4. Repeat this pattern as shown to the left.

*Once you get the hang of this stitch it will move faster than any of the other types of stitches.

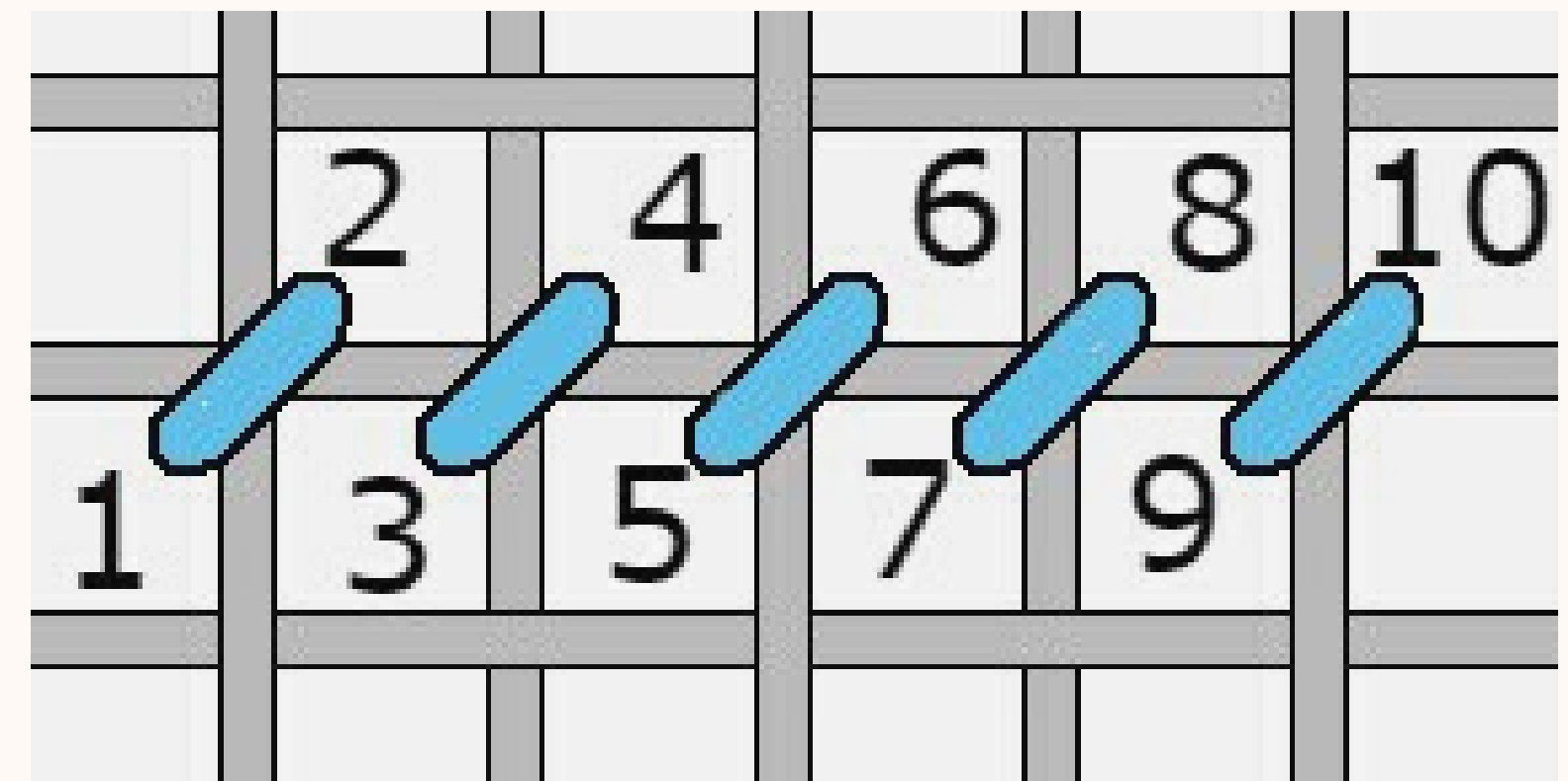


Half Cross Stitch

This stitch is easy to learn, but does not cover much of the canvas, so should be used for small areas or just when you are learning.

Start at the left side of your canvas at box 1 (depicted on the right) and come up through the back of the canvas and back down through 2. You will continue repeating this pattern until the end of the row and then flip the canvas over and continue down the next line. This stitch does end up looking very meticulous and neat, it just takes a long time to cover larger areas.

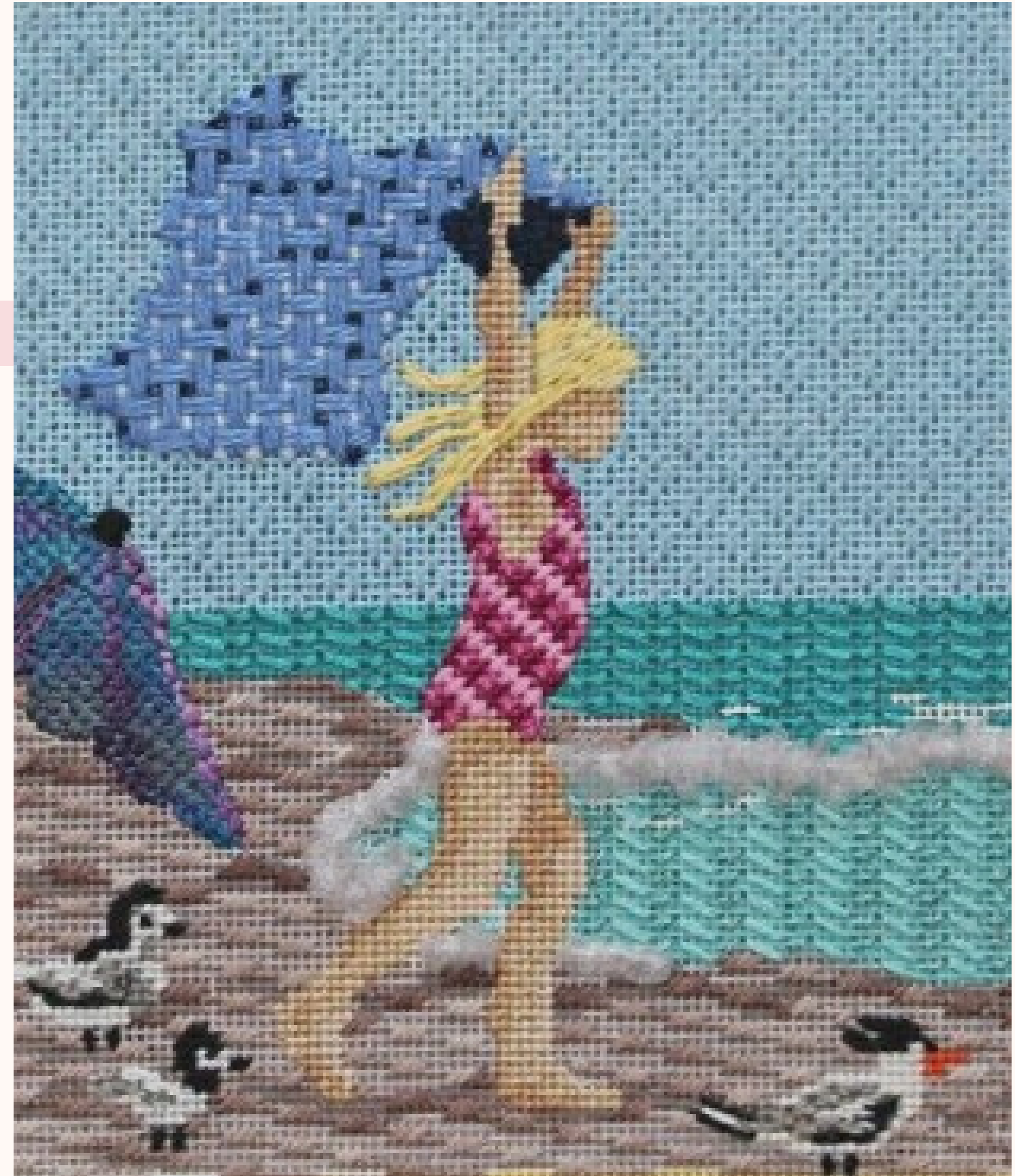
*While Half Cross and Continental look very similar in these images, you are skipping more boxes when moving to the next box in continental and that's why it's faster, but leaves half cross stitch looking neater.



Troubleshooting

Here are some quick fixes to some tricky parts of needlepoint:

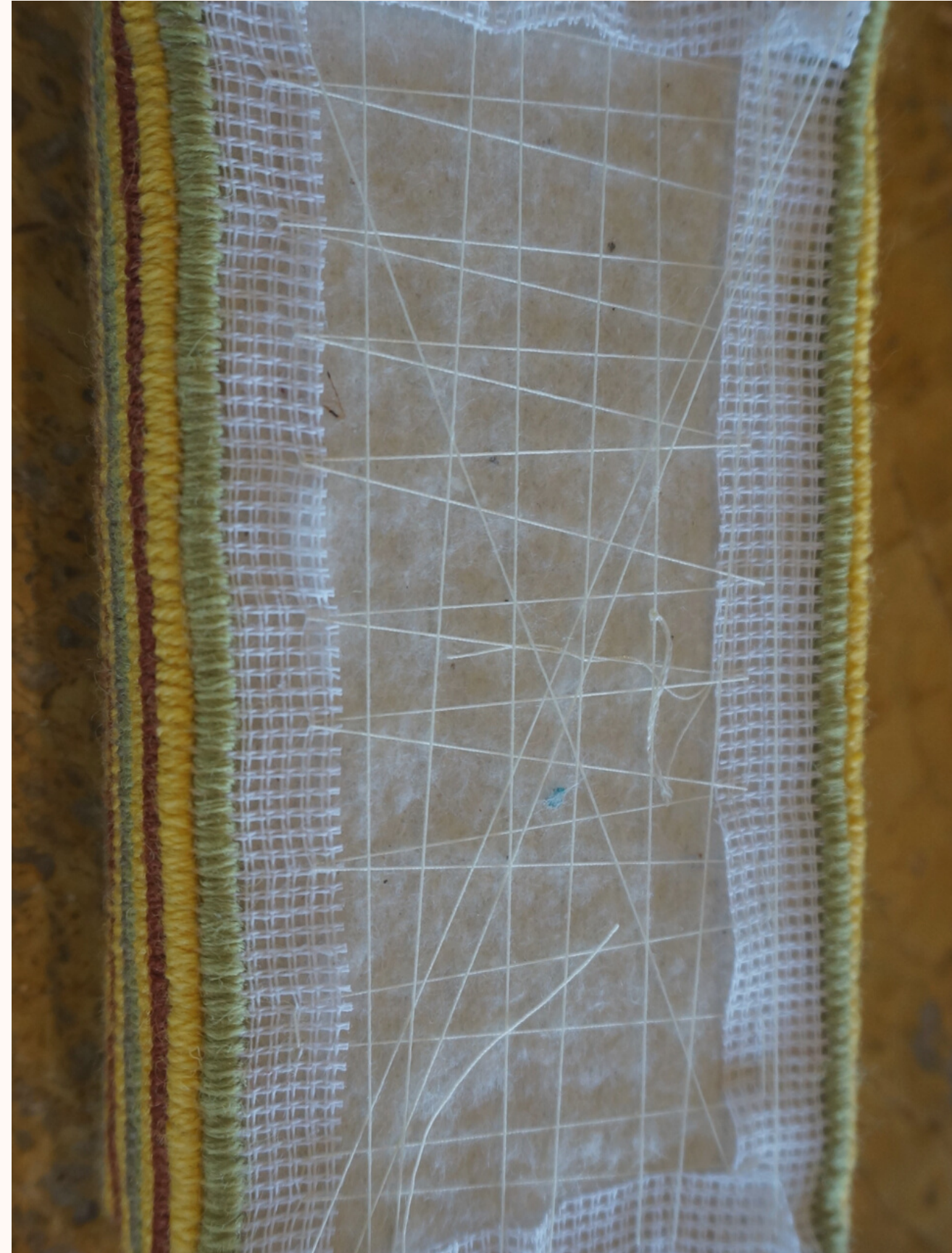
- **Changing color of string or starting new string:** When you switch your color or start with a new string, you can't leave the string just hanging out or the stitches will become loose. Make sure you leave around an inch unused and back the needle and end of the thread on the back side of the canvas. Slide the needle through three to four of your stitches (you are on the back side of them, so it won't be seen on the front). Pull the thread through and knot it. Cut the extra if there is any and start with your next color.
- **Threading your needle:** Wetting the end of the thread is very helpful to get the string through the small hole on the needle.
- **Back side of canvas:** The backside of your canvas will look messy, don't worry you will not be able to see it when it's finished.
- **Moving color sections:** If there is a close section to where you are stitching that is the same color, no need to start a completely new string. You can just move across the canvas on the back side with the string and come out the first box in the next section of your canvas.
- **Other stitching techniques:** Once you mastered the three basic stitches listed in this guide, there are many many more



Getting your work finished

The easiest way to finish your needlepoint project is to bring it to a professional upholsterer or leather worker. It can be very difficult to deal with the raw canvas if you don't have professional experience. Most stores where you buy needlepoint materials will also offer services where you can send in your work to be finished.

If you would like to attempt to finish your own work, it is very similar to sewing and the needlepoint just becomes the front side of the fabric. Leave about an inch of the unused canvas on all sides to wrap under the needlepoint. This helps avoid the canvas unraveling. Stitch the loose canvas together, like show on the right. Fabric glue can also be used to attach your needlepoint to the other piece of fabric you are backing it with. In general, finishing your own pieces is generally done by advanced needlepointers.





VIDEO 1: HOW TO DO
A CONTINENTAL
STITCH



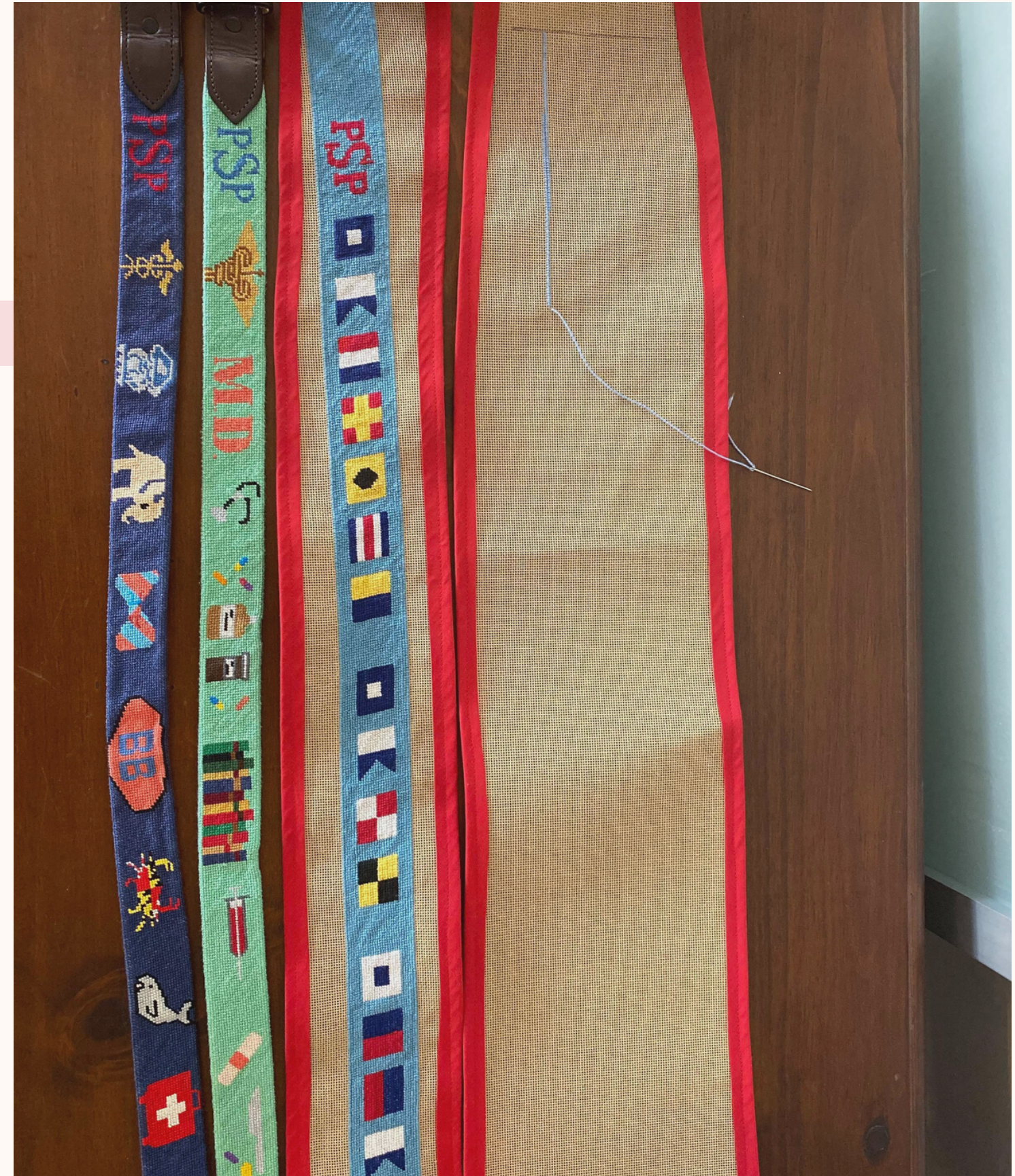
VIDEO 2: HOW TO DO
A BASKETWEAVE
STITCH



VIDEO 3: HOW TO DO
A HALF CROSS
STITCH

My Inspiration

Needlepoint is something my mother has done for years. I have watched her create pillows, wallets, belts, canvases, purses, etc. Some of her work is shown to the right. To be able to complete this project and learn from her in the process was a really unique experience. She helped teach me for the videos I created for slides 13-15! I have started and stopped needlepoint projects multiple times over the past fifteen years, so I'm hoping this guide will pull me back into something I have had in the back of mind for quite some time!



Complete List of Sources

“Basic Needlepoint Stitches.” Basic Needlepoint Stitches, <https://www.needlepoint-for-fun.com/basic-needlepoint-stitches.htm>.

“Choosing The Right Type Of Canvas For Your Project.” Willow Fabrics, <https://www.willowfabrics.com/canvas-types/>.

Colorsheets, Viviva, and Shovava. “What Is Needlepoint? Learn the DIY Basics to Begin This Fun and Colorful Craft.” My Modern Met, 9 Sept. 2018, <https://mymodernmet.com/what-is-needlepoint/>.

DeBrule, Althea. “Everything You Need to Know to Choose Needlepoint Thread.” The Spruce Crafts, The Spruce Crafts, 20 Oct. 2019, <https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/needlepoint-yarns-and-threads-2479757>.

“How to Finish Needlepoint: NeedlePoint Kits and Canvas Designs.” Custom Needlepoint at NeedlePaint.com, <https://www.needlepaint.com/blog/category/how-to-finish-needlepoint/>.

Johnson, Ellen. “Choosing The Right Needle For Your Needlepoint Canvas.” Serendipity Needleworks, 13 May 2018, <https://www.serendipityneedleworks.com/choosing-the-right-needle/>.

Needlepoint Basketweave Stitch, <https://www.needlepoint-for-fun.com/basketweave-stitch.htm>.

Needlepoint Continental Stitch, <https://www.needlepoint-for-fun.com/needlepoint-continental-stitch.htm>.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. “Needlepoint.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 4 Sept. 2019, [https://www.britannica.com/art/needlepoint#:~:targetText=Needlepoint as it is known,the foundation for the embroidery](https://www.britannica.com/art/needlepoint#:~:targetText=Needlepoint%20as%20it%20is%20known,the%20foundation%20for%20the%20embroidery).

“The English Needlepoint.” Ghorbany, <https://ghorbany.com/inspiration/the-english-needlepoint>.

Photo Sources

Slide 1

<http://needleknowledge.com/embroidery-stitches/needlepoint-stitches-stitch-variations/>

Slide 2

<https://www.brooklyncraftcompany.com/products/bargello-needlepoint-workshop>

Slide 4

<https://www.123stitch.com/item/Needle-Bling-Designs-Cobblestones-Needlepoint-Pattern/18-1340>

Slide 5

<https://picclick.com/Big-Lot-Persian-Wool-Needlepoint-Tapestry-Crewel-Yarn-181194322212.html>

<https://www.etsy.com/nz/listing/492584261/dmc-perle-cotton-thread-perle-cotton-5>

<https://mountainmeadowwool.com/products/wyoming-series-blends-crewelneedlepoint-yarn-2>

<https://www.ebay.com/itm/Planet-Earth-Opal-Silk-Metallic-thread-needlepoint-needlework-Patriotic-Set-/283547846367>

Slide 6

<http://www.needlepoint-for-fun.com/needlepoint-canvas.htm>

<https://www.willowfabrics.com/fabric-canvas/zweigart-aida-evenweave-linen-fabric-canvas/zweigart-needlepoint-tapestry-rug-canvas/zweigart-white-mono-de-luxe-royal-canvas.html>

<https://www.willowfabrics.com/fabric-canvas/zweigart-aida-evenweave-linen-fabric-canvas/zweigart-needlepoint-tapestry-rug-canvas/zweigart-antique-10-hpi-penelope-double-duo-canvas.html>

<https://www.amazon.com/Zweigart-3-75-Mesh-Canvas-44x36/dp/B07CNF7QGZ>

Photo Sources

Slide 7

<https://www.serendipityneedleworks.com/choosing-the-right-needle/>

Slide 8

http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-_E4a--Ax90g/U4vbK1J5Y_I/AAAAAAAAAFtA/3wrbgo8KyXw/s1600/chairbottom.jpg

Slide 9

<https://www.needlepoint-for-fun.com/basic-needlepoint-stitches.htm>

<https://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-the-difference-between-needlepoint-and-cross-stitch.htm>

Slide 10

<https://www.needlepoint-for-fun.com/basic-needlepoint-stitches.htm>

<https://www.needlepoint-for-fun.com/basic-needlepoint-stitches.htm>

Slide 11

<https://www.needlepoint-for-fun.com/needlepoint-stitches-for-background.htm>

Slide 12

<https://www.needlepaint.com/blog/category/how-to-finish-needlepoint/>