

LESSON TWO

» Continental Stitch

Design area: Leaves and Stems block B, center motif

Thread: Pearl Cotton

Strands: 1

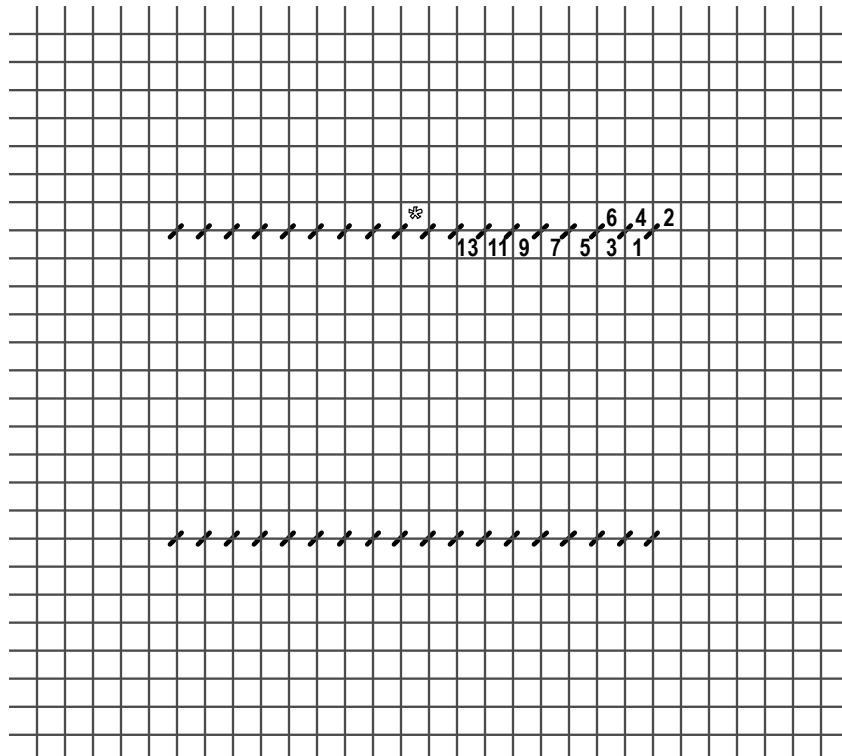
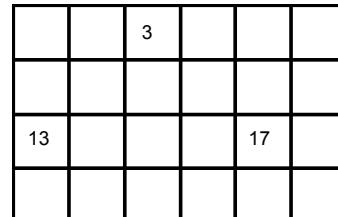
The fundamental stitch in all of needlepoint is a diagonal stitch over one canvas thread intersection. There are a number of different ways to accomplish this, including the Continental stitch shown on this page and the Basketweave stitch discussed later.

Because the Continental stitch distorts the canvas, it is best limited to creating straight and curved lines and not for filling areas.

Horizontal rows are worked right to left, while vertical rows are worked top to bottom.

Before working this stitch on your design canvas, practice it on your doodle cloth.

Select a horizontal thread, place a waste knot near it, and come back up to the front of the canvas 8-10 threads away. Then work a short row from right to left as shown in the diagrammed sequence at right. Once you feel comfortable with the Continental Stitch, return to working on the design canvas.



The Continental stitch is used to create the stems in the Leaves & Stems blocks #3, 13, and 17 (Block B in the schematic on pg. 5). This block is drawn above. Place a waste knot 7 threads below the line drawn on the canvas (*) and come up at "1" (8 threads below the line on your canvas and 7 threads to the left of the right-hand line). Work the stitch in the sequence shown. After step 6, even numbers have been deleted for ease in viewing. Each stem consists of 18 Continental stitches. When the first stem is done, secure the end of your thread under the back of your stitches and cut it off.

Repeat this process for the second stem, positioning it as shown in the diagram above.

Note that there are two different sizes of the Leaves & Stems block: #13 and #17 are shorter than #3. The placement of the stems with respect to the "top" of the block as

diagrammed above is the same, so you can use the diagram above for both types. Don't forget to rotate your frame to get the correct orientation of the stems in block 3.

► Basketweave Stitch

Design area: *Guinea Fowl block D and Fish block E; center motifs*
Thread: *Pearl Cotton* **Strands:** *1*

The Basketweave Stitch is one of the most-used stitches in needlepoint. Because it covers the canvas uniformly on the back and the front, it wears well and is particularly useful for items such as furniture that will receive moderate to heavy use.

Basketweave is less likely to distort the canvas than Continental stitch, although both look the same when viewed from the front side of the canvas. The backside of a canvas stitched in Basketweave will look like a woven basket.

Basketweave is worked in diagonal rows, as shown by the sequence of numbers at right. For ease in reading, even numbers have been omitted after number seven. For a right-handed stitcher, the diagonal rows travel upward from lower right to upper left, and downward from upper right to lower left.

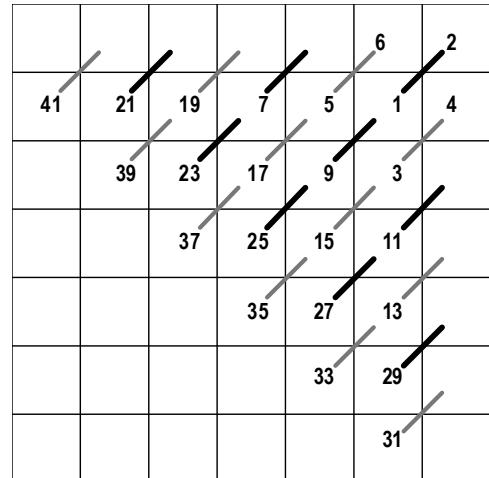
Be sure to practice this stitch on your doodle cloth before attempting it on your design canvas.

Reading the canvas

The key to working Basketweave on mono canvas is the ability to see diagonal rows.² Look carefully at the thread intersections on your canvas and notice that there are two kinds: those in which the horizontal thread ("horizontal-faced") is on top, and those in which the vertical thread is on top ("vertical-faced"). Ideally, Basketweave is worked so that upward diagonal rows are worked on horizontal-faced canvas intersections, and downward diagonal rows are worked on vertical-faced intersections.

Using the diagram above and a strand of pearl cotton, stitch a small square of Basketweave on your doodle canvas in order to understand the stitch placement and to get a sense of how to turn at the end of each row. In order to avoid ridges on the front of your work, always weave the ends of your threads into the back of your work horizontally or vertically, and not diagonally.

The Guinea Fowl and Fish motifs are worked in basketweave as shown in the next sections.

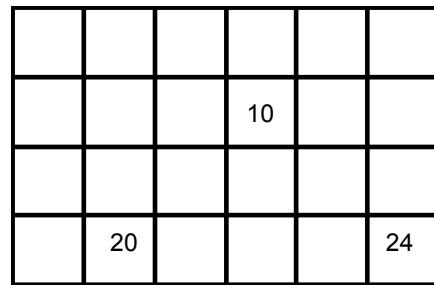


² Hyman, Davie. *The Diagonal Basket Weave*. Self-published, Chesterland, OH, 1994.

The Guinea Fowl Motif

This motif is located in blocks #10, 20, and 24 (see block D of the design schematic, pg. 5). You'll start in block #20, which is diagrammed below.

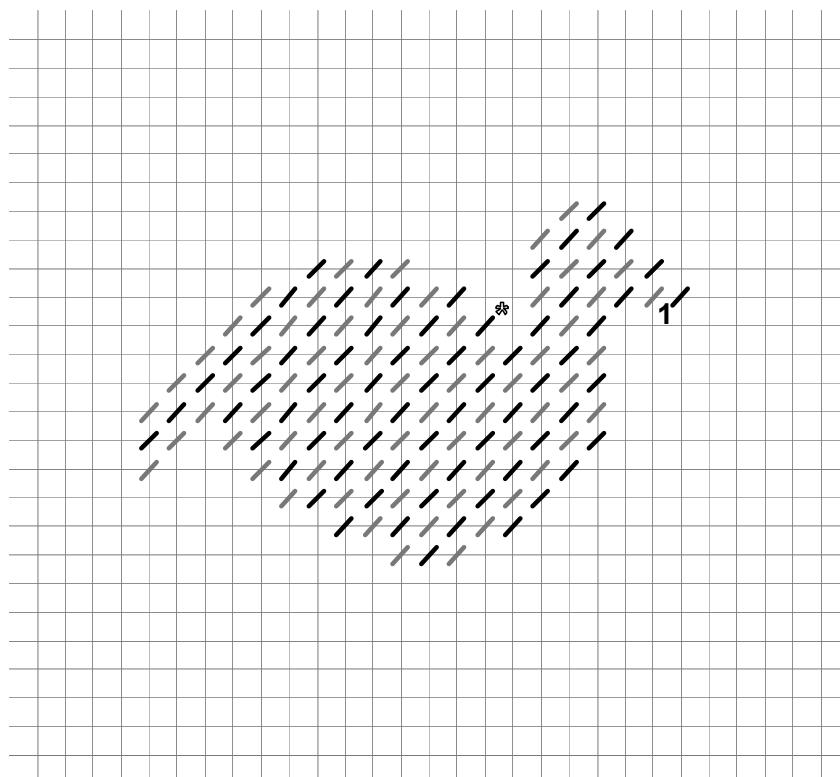
Thread your needle with pearl cotton and place a waste knot 10 threads below the top line of the block, roughly centered between the left and right sides (*, as shown at lower right).



Come up at "1" as shown in the diagram below and work the first row of 4 stitches diagonally up and to the left. The diagonal rows are shown alternately in black and gray; the gray rows are worked downward. The diagonal row below the first row is worked down and to the right. As you work, there may be spots where you need to carry the thread across the back to get to the start of the next diagonal row. These carrying threads will be covered when the background is stitched and will not present a problem.

Note that this diagram assumes that the diagonal row starting at "1" has horizontal-faced intersections. If this isn't the case on your canvas, you have two options:

- o Ignore the recommendation to stitch "up" on horizontal-faced diagonal rows and "down" on vertical-faced diagonal rows. For a small design area, there will be little impact on the appearance of the stitching.
- o Start the first diagonal row at the other end and work it downward instead of upward. The directions of subsequent rows will also be reversed.

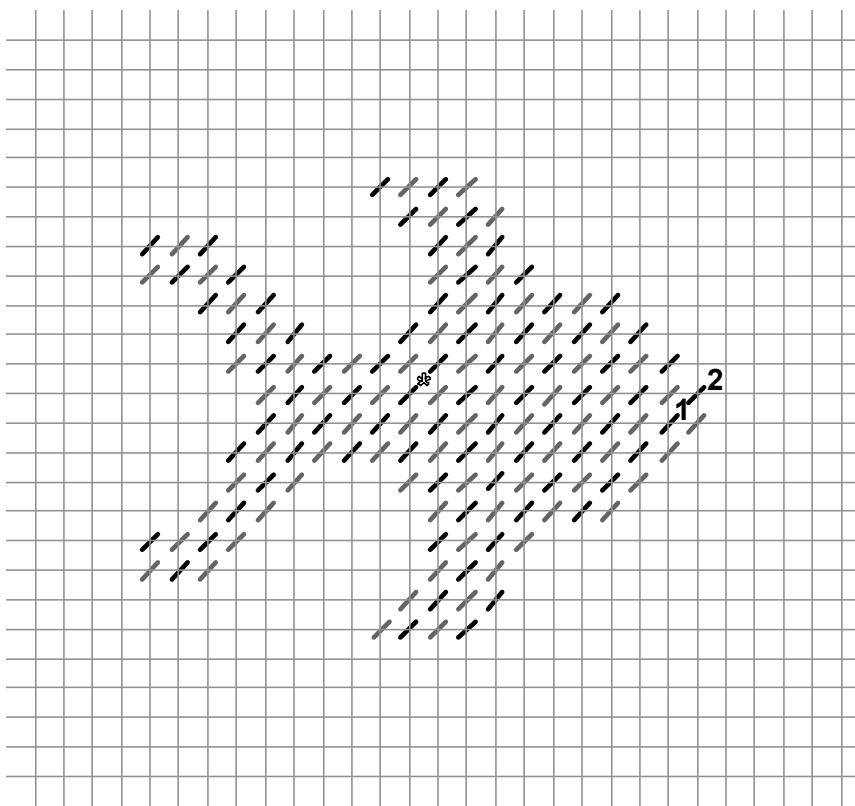
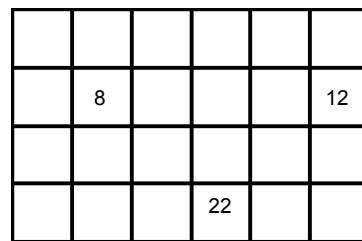


As in the case of the Geometric block, there are two different sizes of the Guinea Fowl block: the two on the bottom (#20 and 24) are longer, while #10 is in an interior row and is shorter. The placement of the fowl with respect to the "top" of the block as diagrammed above is the same, so you can use the diagram for both types. Don't forget to rotate your frame to get the correct orientation of the fowl in block 10.

The Fish Motif

This motif is located in blocks #8, 12, and 22 (Block E of the design schematic, pg. 5). You'll start in block 22, which is diagrammed below.

To start, thread your needle with pearl cotton and place a waste knot 12 threads below the top line of the block, roughly centered between the left and right sides (marked by * in the diagram). Come back up at "1", which is 6 threads from the right edge of the block and 13 threads down from the top.



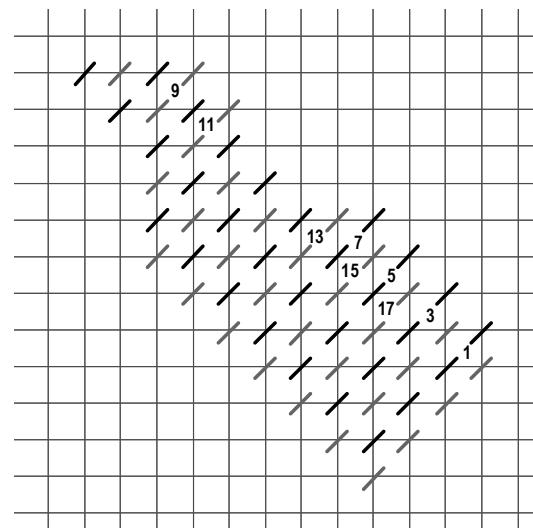
you'll need to skip two diagonal intersections and bring the needle up at "13". The shape of the fins and the tail make it necessary to carry threads across the back of the canvas.

There are other places in this motif that require the same sort of gap in the diagonal row. As you stitch this motif, be careful in starting and extending diagonal rows to ensure proper placement of stitches.

As in the case of the Guinea Fowl motif, these diagrams assume that the diagonal row starting at "1" has horizontal-faced intersections. The same options discussed previously apply here.

The bottom diagram on this page is an enlarged view showing the stitch sequence for the first two rows of the fish. "1" in the diagram is located at the same point on your canvas as "1" in the diagram at left. Alternate rows of basketweave are colored in black or gray. Only the odd numbers are shown, representing holes where the needle comes up out of the canvas. Work the first row of four stitches, and then look carefully at how to turn to start the second row of stitches.

To start the second row, you'll need to come up at "9" and then do two stitches downward diagonally. To continue the row and maintain the design shape,



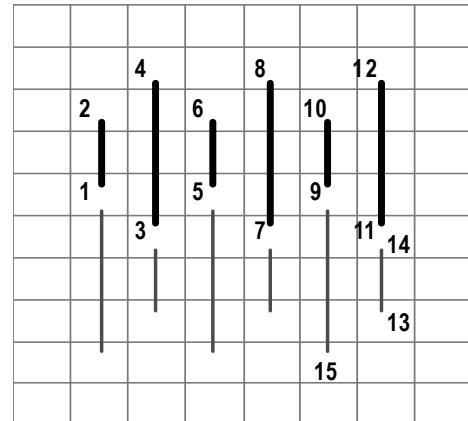
► Parisian Stitch

Design area: *Guinea Fowl block D, background*

Thread: *Paternayan Medium yellow-orange #726 Strands: 2*
Paternayan Dark yellow-orange #725

The Parisian Stitch is a straight stitch in which long and short stitches alternate. It has a pronounced vertical feel and a moderate texture, which is suitable for both backgrounds and design areas.

As shown at right, it is worked in horizontal rows with the long stitch over 4 threads and the short stitch over 2 threads. Each row interlocks with those above and below it. The short stitches nestle up to the long stitches of the row above, while the long stitches touch the short stitches of the row above. It can be worked from left to right or vice versa.

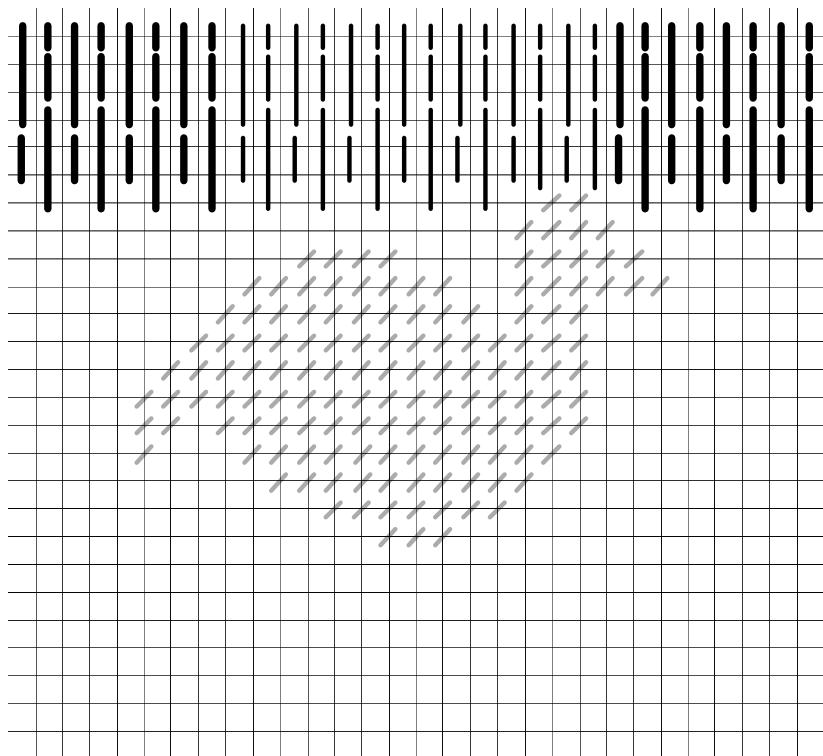
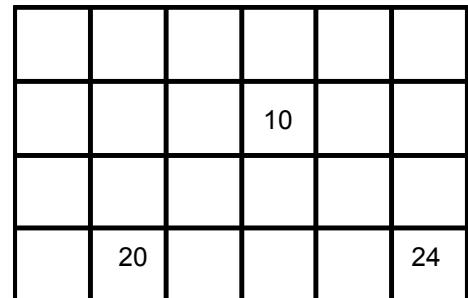


The Parisian Stitch is used as the background for the Guinea Fowl blocks, #10, 20, and 24. All of the non-Geometric blocks (B, C, D, and E of the design schematic, pg. 5) are two toned: they have a central strip that is darker or lighter than the strip on either side of it.

The entire Guinea Fowl block is diagrammed below; the existing stitches of the Guinea Fowl are shown in gray. The thicker black lines are done with dark yellow-orange Paternayan (8 stitches wide); the thinner black lines in the center are worked with medium yellow-orange Paternayan (13 stitches wide).

Start with two strands of the darker color and place a waste knot so that you can start the top row of stitches from either the left or the right side. Work each of the dark areas from top to bottom, remembering to lay the thread as you stitch.

Using two strands of the medium color, finish the central strip to complete the block.



Compensation

The Parisian Stitch is the first “complex” stitch in this project. A complex stitch has more than one type of element that must repeat to complete the pattern. The Parisian stitch has two different elements: a long and a short stitch.

This is also the first point in this project where the stitches of the background meet the border of a shape: either the shape of the block, or the irregular shape of a motif. Where this happens, there may not be enough bare canvas threads to complete the normal stitch sequence.

For example, take a look at the top row of stitches in the preceding diagram. Notice the short vertical stitches over one thread. These are compensating stitches – they would normally be part of a row of Parisian stitches, but the border of the block has cut off the top of the row.

When two design areas meet, elements of a stitch may need to be shortened, modified, or eliminated. This on-the-fly adjustment is known as compensation. As your stitches approach a design boundary, envision where your needle and thread would go normally, and then back up your needle to shorten a stitch, or delete a stitch as needed.

The best approach is to start stitching in an area where you will be able to fit a complete row of stitches. This makes it easier to see the overall pattern and to compensate as needed. Compensating the Parisian Stitch is relatively simple because all of the element are straight stitches and simply need to be shortened.

When two areas meet and the stitches in each area differ in directionality, sometimes it's not clear if compensation is needed or not. That's the case in this block, where a vertical stitch (Parisian) meets a diagonal stitch (Basketweave). If you're uncertain about whether or not to put in a stitch where they meet, it's best to wait until you finish the area to go back and see if it's needed. If you decide to put in a stitch, consider if it would be best to use only a single strand of the wool rather than two. Two strands may be more coverage than is needed.

Other compensating stitches, such as the short ones at the top and bottom of this block, can be worked as a row once you've put in the first complete row of stitches.

Selecting a scissors

In this project, you will be using a scissors to cut yarn off the skein, and to cut off ends of buried threads. Although in principle any scissors could be used, you will have the best experience if you work with scissors that

- Are small - less than 4" – so that they can be easily controlled when cutting in small areas.
- Have finger holes large enough to accommodate your hand
- Have blades made of stainless/surgical steel so they won't rust
- Have smooth and sharp blades that cut tightly and cleanly with the first cut (you don't want to masticate the thread with your scissors!); and
- Have fine, sharp tips for close cutting of finished thread ends

Don't be misled! Many scissors are labeled "embroidery scissors", but don't satisfy these criteria.

Your first pair should have straight blades. As you continue your studies, you may want to look at specialized scissors, such as those with blades and handles that facilitate cutting in tight places, or others designed to cut specific types of stitching materials.

Selecting a needle

Needlepoint requires a tapestry needle, which has a blunt tip that allows the needle to glide between the threads of the canvas without getting caught on them. Tapestry needles come in sizes from 13 to 28, with smaller needles having a larger number.

Always select a high-quality stainless steel needle that will not rust or tarnish. Both can rub off on your canvas and leave permanent stains. Don't ever leave a needle parked in the threads of a canvas, particularly in a design area. If you put the project away and don't return to it for a time, you risk not only staining, but also unsightly distortion of the canvas.

The size of the needle used depends on the yarn, the canvas mesh, and a stitcher's dexterity.

- Larger needles (i.e., lower sizes) have larger eyes; you should be able to put the yarn through the eye without great difficulty.
- Larger needles spread the canvas threads to reduce the wear on yarn during stitching, however they may also distort the canvas. Smaller needles drop through and don't distort the canvas. The balance between these two factors will guide your selection of needle size.
- Larger needles may be easier to control for beginners or for those with arthritis in their hands.

This project calls for a size #20 needle; as your skills improve, you may find that you prefer the smaller #22 needle. For any given combination of project and yarn, you'll need to determine for yourself what size needle works best for you.