



Cross stitch for children

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'Cross stitch is not really that complicated, all you need to know is how to do an X !'

Why teach needlework ?

Teaching children embroidery is fun and easy !

Embroidery requires little equipment, can be done at a table, or sitting cross legged on the floor. Besides compared to many other craft projects, it's not messy and does not need special protection for clothes, or furniture. Finished pieces makes wonderful little gifts to bring home to mommy and daddy, while cards and other items can be sold at school bazars, or given as *welcome*, and *go-away* presents for class mates and teachers.

Needlework gives you a creative outlet, it's colorful and fun, you get a sense of accomplishment and pride when you are done.

Needlework is a traditional skill which teaches patience, perseverance, dexterity and even math.

Most children can start with their first embroidery project when they are 4 or 5 years old.

First project

From personal experience I would recommend starting by letting the child make a simple running stitch bookmark of their name on 11 or 14 ct aida, using a blunt needle and size 8 or 5 perle cotton. This small project will help them feel comfortable with using a needle, and is also the perfect time to teach them to thread their own needle and make knots.

Children are very conscious of their own identity, so stitching their name is almost always a favorite first project for both boys and girls.

As a second project I usually draw, or let the child draw a simple motif outline, which they then stitch and make into cards by fraying a little the corners of the aida and gluing it in place on card stock with double sided tape.

From there on most children will be curious to start on small cross stitch projects.

Materials

- Aida 11 or 14 ct
- Size 5 or 8 perle cotton
- Blunt needles
- Scissors
- Pencils

After several tries with different threads and cloth, I found that perle cotton is much more child friendly and less wasteful than regular embroidery floss. Most embroidery floss is meant to be divided, and even if you use the whole strand it tend to separate and get tangled when handled by small fingers.

Aida is my first choice for children as it is easy to use, and holds it shape. Also, you do not need an embroidery hoop for small project - another good reason why cross stitch and running stitch embroidery is an economical option.

Cross stitch

- If you are going to use a pattern for cross stich copy one page for each child and instruct them to 'mark' off on the paper when they have done a stitch, this will help them to remember their place.
- Cut a piece of aida that is at least 5-10 cm larger then the project, and explain to the child that it is important to start in the middle of the cloth, and not on the bottom as it might fray and then they would lose their hard work.
- Always wash you hands before sewing.

Tips

- Start from the beginning to teach your child/class to treat the material with respect and never let the threads get all tangled up. For one it saves time and helps to avoid waste, but most of all it helps to keep the 'magic' of needlework by keeping your work, and materials beautiful.
- Begin with small projects that can be finished in a couple of hours, or sessions. Do not let it get boring !

- Another useful tip is to not present too many options, especially for young children or groups of children. Let them design their own, or give them a few patterns to choose from. It is always better to start and finish a small card, then to have a lot of un-finished projects.

About the patterns

The free patterns for beginners are copyright free, you can share them, copy them, and sell items made from them.

If you would like me to design something special for you, or your school I can be contacted at this email: virginielykins@yahoo.com

The small motifs can be used for cards, bookmarks, pin cushions, needle books, ornaments, key chain ornaments, etc....

