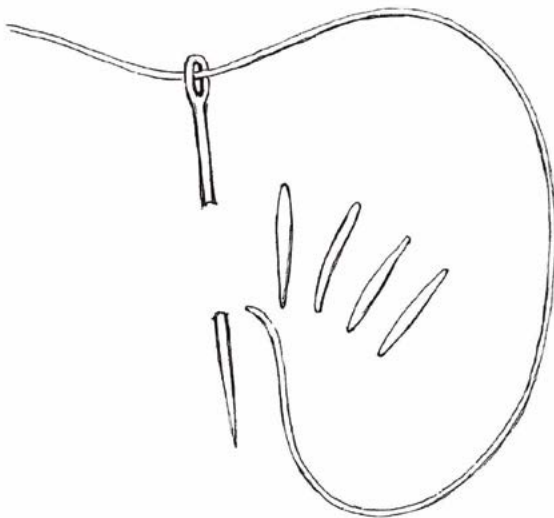


# *Favourite stitches*

## N°1 STRAIGHT STITCH



CAROLINE ZOOB DESIGNS





Straight stitch is the simplest form of stitch and I use it for a great deal of my work. Single, isolated stitches are made by taking the needle up through the fabric and down again. They can be any length (tiny ones are called 'seed' stitches and make a pretty filling), and worked at any angle. They are not really intended for continuous lines.

If you look at the little patch of meadow grass in the picture opposite, you will see that the bulk of

the grass is made by straight stitches, worked in single thread in quite a random fashion, some vertical, some at angles, some really quite long. By building these up in layers, possibly using two or even three threads in very close shades of green, you can give the effect of a meadow or patch of grass. It is a good idea to weave some of the stitches under other stitches, rather than always working them on top of each other.



*By building these up in layers you can give the effect of a meadow or patch of grass*

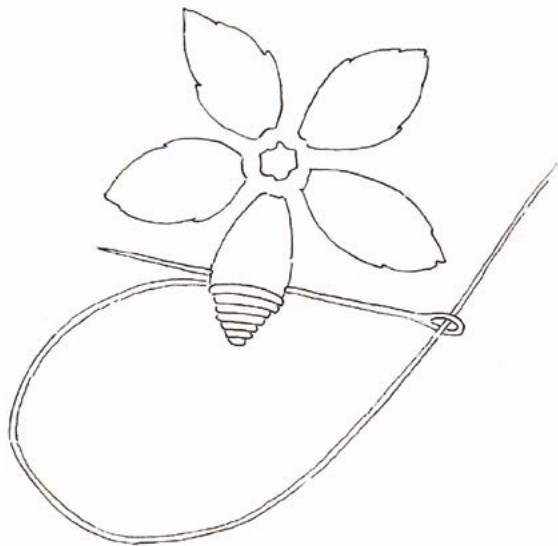


The bird's wing feathers above are worked in rows of overlapping v-formation straight stitches. You can also create patterns and lines using straight stitches, as below. ❖



# Favourite stitches

## N°2 SATIN STITCH



Satin stitch, despite what people often think, is not complicated although it requires practice. You are simply bringing your needle up on one side of a shape, taking it down on the opposite edge, and repeating. The tricky bit is keeping the stitches parallel and close together but not crowding or overlapping, so that when the shape is covered, it has a smooth, satiny appearance. →

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There are various key requirements for successful Satin stitch:

- \* Clearly defined edges to the shape you are covering.
- \* A hoop. **Some stitches are really hard to do well** without a hoop, and Satin stitch is one of them.
- \* Even stitch tension. You don't want your stitches to be loose or too taut.
- \* Consistent stitch

direction. Whatever angle your stitches take, keep it consistent, and if it changes through the shape, work it very gradually, never allowing the stitches to crowd or overlap each other.

Using single strand thread, work the stitches over the shape being covered, almost as though you are wrapping them around it. Make sure you work over and under the shape, so that the back of your work is the same as the front. It uses more thread but gives a smoother result. If you have a large



*Satin stitch  
worked at an angle*

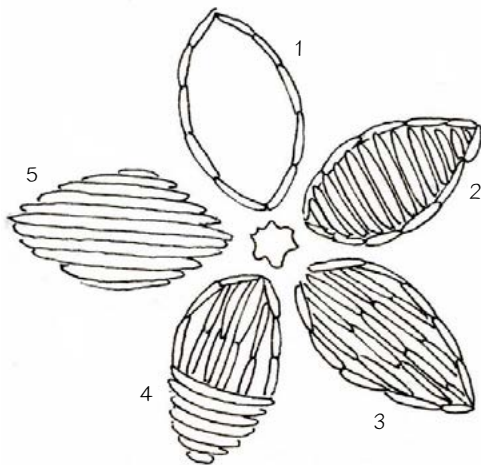


area to cover, you can divide a shape up into sections and stitch each one separately, even using different colours, and stitching at different angles, as shown in this kingfisher's wing (above), embroidered in flat silk in the mid 19th Century. Dividing the area to be stitched in this way enables you to play with thread colours to create effects of light and shade. ❖

# Favourite stitches

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## N°3 PADDED SATIN STITCH



Padded Satin stitch is simply Satin stitch, with a layer of stitching below to create a raised pad over which to stitch your final layer of stitches. →

CAROLINE ZOOB DESIGNS



The purpose of padding is to give a raised effect to the shape you are embroidering. There are three stages to working Padded Satin stitch.

\* Outline the shape in Split stitch (see petal 1). Remember, the edge is really important, so make this as neat and firm as possible. If you are stitching over a printed line, make sure your Split stitch works to the outside edge of this.

\* Decide which way your top stitches are going to run before you fill your outline. This is because the top layer stitches must run at right angles to the padding stitches (see petals 3 & 4).

Create the pad by filling the outlined petal, working inside edge to inside edge, with ordinary Satin stitch (see petals 2 or 3).

If you want, you can increase the thickness of the pad by using two strands of thread for your outline and padding. However, the top layer should always be stitched in single strand thread.

#### \* Top layer stitches.

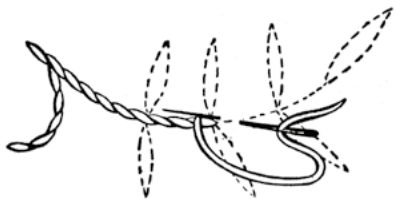
Always work the top layer by starting in the middle of your shape. Work one side first, and then go back to the middle and work the remaining side. Bring your needle up immediately beside the outside of the edge on one side and take

the thread across the shape to the opposite outside edge. Push the needle through and bring it back under the shape. Bring it up close to the previous stitch and repeat. A tip here is to lay the thread across the shape, immediately next to the stitch you have just made, to see if it is lying close but not overlapping, and that there is no gap.

The top layer stitches can be worked at an angle, but this can be harder, so perhaps wait until you have had some practice at achieving a smooth finish. ❖

# Favourite stitches

## N°4 STEM STITCH



Traditionally, Stem stitch is worked from left to right along a line (see left) with the needle brought up just to the side of the line, giving a slightly rope like or serrated effect. If you stitch it in this way but bring the needle up on the line, it is called Outline stitch, and the line is cleaner.

What follows, however, is my slightly different way of working Stem stitch, which I call the 'Nudge'. The final effect is very similar to Outline stitch. I like it because you don't work from left to right, and the needle goes down onto the line from above the fabric, rather than coming up from the reverse. This gives you much more control, particularly when working a curve or precise outline. →

CAROLINE ZOOB DESIGNS



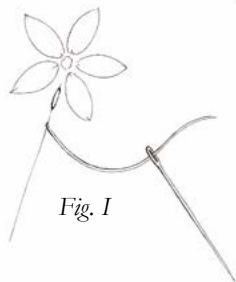
Have the line you are stitching facing you north to south. Make your first stitch. Bring the thread up on the line, a stitch length further on from your first stitch (Fig. I). Take your needle and gently nudge the previous stitch aside (Fig II), half way along its length, so that you can put your needle back through the fabric on the line (Fig III), and pull through. Repeat. The final effect is that of Outline stitch, but it is just a different way of working it, and even seasoned stem stitchers have found it useful.

On a straight line, you can nudge from either side of the stitch, although it is best to be consistent.

If the line is curving from the left, then you nudge the from the inside of the curve to the right, keeping the stitches on the curving line. Around sharp curves, use smaller stitches to maintain a fine line.

This stitch is perfect for fine curving lines of text, and delicate curving stems. It is also a good filling stitch, worked in very close rows.

I often mix this stitch and Split stitch when working lines, splitting for the straight bits, and nudging my way around the curves. ❖



*Fig. I*



*Fig. II*



*Fig. III*



# Favourite stitches

## N°5 SPLIT STITCH



Split stitch is one of the best stitches for creating a continuous line. It is also useful as a fill, and indeed much medieval embroidery is worked in close rows of split stitch. You can vary the colours to create shading. →

CAROLINE ZOOB DESIGNS





*Fig. I*

Traditionally, the stitches are split from underneath, (Fig. I) as the needle emerges from the fabric. I prefer to split them from above, having first pulled my working thread right through the fabric (see Fig. II).



*Fig. II*

Another difference is that I work north to south, rather than west to east. Make a stitch at the far end of your line. Bring your thread up a stitch length further down the line. Now take your needle and 'split' the previous stitch. You split the thread about half way along the stitch. If you split the stitch too near to the hole, the line of stitching will look more like Back stitch. There are many advantages to splitting the stitch from above. More control, and also the ability, at the point where you have your needle through the stitch thread but not the fabric, to manipulate the stitch slightly if, say, it has wandered slightly from

the line, or isn't quite creating the perfect curve you are after.

Even when splitting single strand thread, you will see a resemblance to a very delicate chain stitch. This effect is more obvious when you work it with more strands, and can be a very effective way of stitching a decorative line. ❖



# *Favourite stitches*

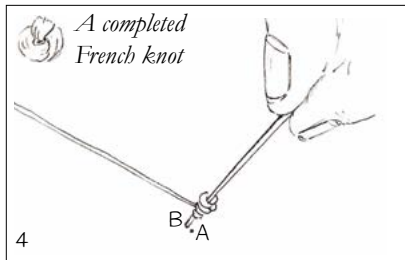
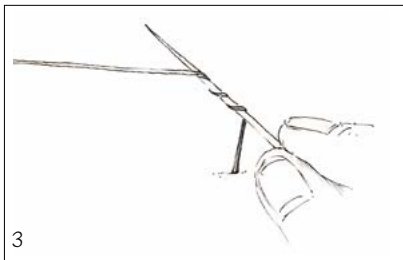
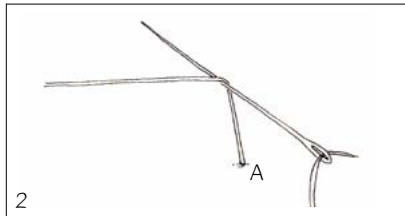
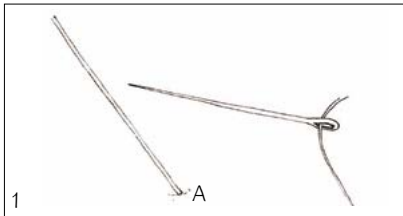
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## N°6 FRENCH KNOT



CAROLINE ZOOB DESIGNS





**1** Use a hoop. Bring your needle up at (A) and immediately hold the thread in your left hand, keeping it taut. You get used to holding the thread between your left thumb and forefinger, while hooking your little finger over the hoop!

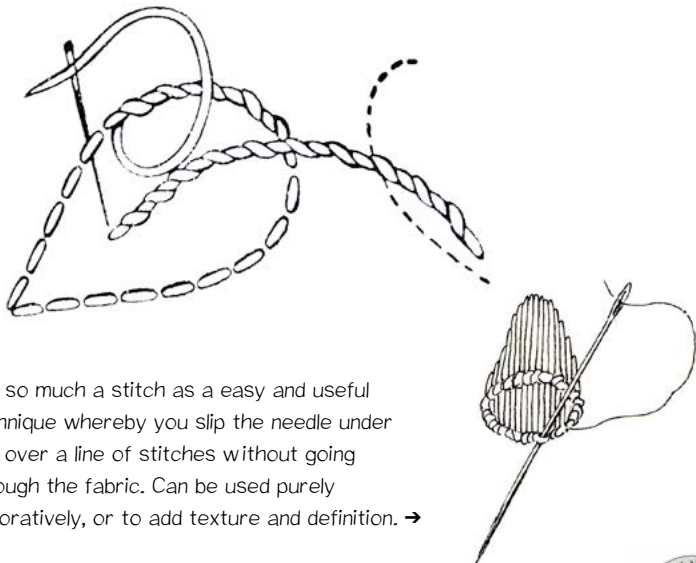
**2 & 3** Holding the thread taut in your left hand, lay the needle against the inside & wrap the thread two or three times around it.

**4** Keep the thread taut with your left hand, and with your right hand, turn the needle downwards

and pierce the fabric just to the side of (A) at (B). Keeping hold of the thread in your left hand, slide the wrapped thread right down the needle, before pushing the needle through at (B) gradually releasing the thread from your left hand. ❖

# Favourite stitches

## N°7 WHIPPING



Not so much a stitch as a easy and useful technique whereby you slip the needle under and over a line of stitches without going through the fabric. Can be used purely decoratively, or to add texture and definition. →

CAROLINE ZOOB DESIGNS





There are so many ways in which to use Whipping. It can be a deft way of sorting out a line of wonky stitches, or creating a slightly three dimensional look to a stem. I have used it many times when embroidering tree trunks and branches. If you create the basic shape of a basket using Darning or Weaving stitch (see above centre), you can whip some of the



ribs and edges of the basket. For the bee skep (right) I stitched rows of plain old Back stitch, very close together, and then



whipped them, both with three strands.

You can whip a line of stitches twice. For the Joyeux Noel (left), I stitched the text first in Stem stitch, then whipped it closely in the same white. Finally, I whipped the resulting rope like text with single strand red, to resemble baker's twine. ❖

# Favourite stitches

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## N°8 LONG AND SHORT



Once you get going, it is very similar to Satin stitch in that the stitches are nice and close without overlapping and the aim is to create a nice smooth surface. The difference is in the way you start. Because my kits are printed on antique linen, which even when smooth can have an uneven weave, I always start by outlining in Split stitch any shapes I plan to fill, to give myself a nice clean edge. Try to cover the printed outline, and remember, the Split stitch outline, although ultimately invisible, dictates the shape, so take some time with it. →

CAROLINE ZOOB DESIGNS





As with Satin stitch, once you have outlined your edge, start in the middle of the shape. Bring your needle up on the outside of your outline, in the middle of your shape, and make one nice long (up to 1cm), vertical stitch into the petal. Repeat with a shorter stitch. Continue, working along to the left, alternating long and short stitches. The books tell you that the subsequent

rows of stitches, can all be the same length, but I think you get a more interesting effect if you repeat the long-and-short, even if you are working in the same colour, so that you never have a blunt or obvious line. To join the rows, you either slip your needle between the stitches in the row above, or, as is more 'proper' use Split stitch - but not too near the hole at the end of the previous stitch. So, in working the stag I first outlined his back.

Then, I started my Long-and-Short stitches in the middle of his back and worked to the tail, before going back to the middle and working up to his neck.

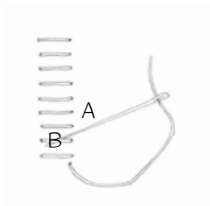
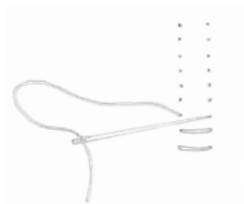
The other thing to consider is whether you angle your stitches as you work, say, from a wider part of the shape to the narrow point of it. For a leaf, angling the stitches is a good idea. But for something like a rosehip, or a daffodil petal, where the veins run top to end in a straight line, I keep the stitches straight. It can also be quite effective to leave some of your shape unfilled, with the long-and-short stitches left 'open' - see rosehips.

As with Satin stitch, be brave at the sides of your shape, keep stitching over the outline you have created, don't leave it just visible at the side of, say, a petal. ❖



# Favourite stitches

## N°9 STEM STITCH BAND



This is a lovely stitch for filling a space, particularly, as its name suggests, something band-shaped. It consists of two stages: creating a ladder-like structure of base stitches and then weaving

between them without taking the needle through the fabric. Completed, each row resembles a row of stem stitch - you are not actually stitching stem stitch. In this guide **First**, fill your shape with

horizontal single straight stitches, like a ladder, about 4mm apart. You want to work in adjacent rows. There are three rows on the front of the little red jumper. It is a good idea to work all →

CAROLINE ZOOB DESIGNS





the base stitches first, with only a hair's breadth between the rows.

### Points to note:

- \*The distance between the base stitches, or rungs of your ladder, dictates the length of your 'stem' stitches.
- \*The number of strands you use for the base stitches will affect the degree to which your band is 'raised'. Different threads behave differently as well. Silk perlée is quite bouncy to start with, but once all snugly woven, does look lovely. The little

jumper used three strands of DMC floss for base and weaving stitches, while Fig 1 is single strand.

**Next** bring your thread up at (A), ignore the very bottom of the ladder and loop your thread over the first rung of the ladder (B) and loop it, nudging it along to the right of the ladder so the edges of the rungs are hidden by your top stitch. It is important to get this far right edge nice and neat. I turn the ladder so that I am working left to right, and if you want a nice taut band, you can use your left hand to pull the working thread downwards, gently, which helps to keep your

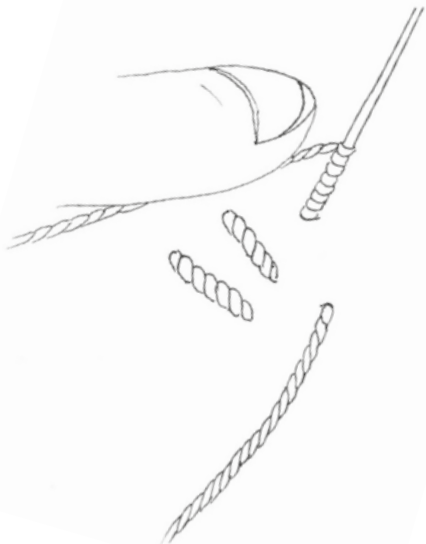
weaving stitches nice and firm. I don't loop over the top and bottom 'rungs', I ignore the first one and just take the thread down over the top one, and feel this gives a more defined edge.

I think it is a great stitch for knitted clothes, and for baskets, and it might also work for garden paths, wicker hurdles in the veg patch or a length of silk ribbon at the end of a bow. You can also use alternate colours for weaving the rows, which will give you a striped band. As with all stitches, it is a matter of experimenting. ❖

# Favourite stitches

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## N°10 BULLION KNOT



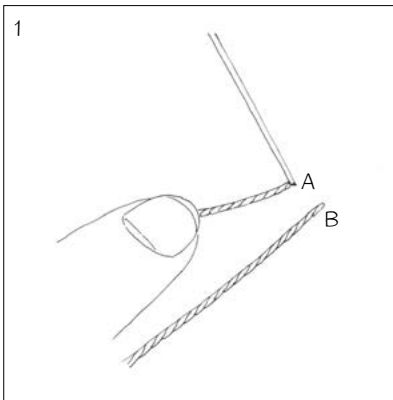
There is no doubt these can be fiddly. You must use a milliner's needle, long needles whose shank and eye are the same width. Bullion knots can be long or short, single or multi-stranded.

There are various ways of making a bullion knot, but this is the one I find most straightforward.

You need a longish thread. →

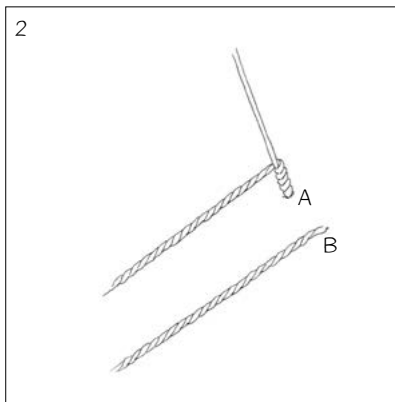
CAROLINE ZOOB DESIGNS





### No 1

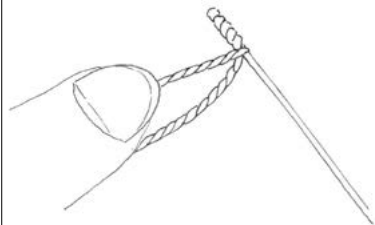
Bring your needle up at (A) and take it down at (B), but do not pull the thread through, leaving a loop, your 'working thread' on the surface of your hoop. The distance between (A) and (B) is the desired length of your bullion knot.



### No 2

Now bring your needle up at (A) again, in the same hole, but only bring half the needle through. Holding the needle behind your hoop with your sewing hand, and the thread in your left, wrap the thread on the surface at (A) around the needle, pushing the thread down the needle but not overcrowding the wraps or making them too tight. Remember, you will eventually bring the needle up through the fabric and the wraps, to create the knot, so if you make the wraps too tight, the knot can tangle. →

3

**No 3**

Angle the needle and wraps downwards between (A) and (B) to check the knot will be the desired length. If you plan to curve your bullion knot, such that it will be longer than the distance between (A) and (B), perhaps because you are creating a long cactus dahlia petal, then take that into account when wrapping the needle. You may need to use a tinycouching stitch to hold the knot in place over the curve.

**No 4**

Holding the wraps firmly on the needle between the thumb and forefinger of your non-sewing hand, start to pull the needle up through the fabric. You will see the long knot starting to form. Keep pulling through nice and gently, now using your needle in your sewing hand to tease the wraps along the thread until they make a nice long knot. Once you are happy with the knot, take the needle down at (A) again, fix your thread and continue. ❖

4

