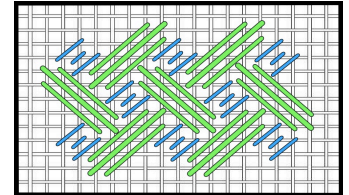


Deconstructing the Stitch

Diane Snyder

Stitch diagrams are a great reference for choosing and executing different stitch patterns. As a visual representation, it is easy to see which direction the thread moves and how many canvas intersections the thread covers. For many of us, a quick glance at the diagram is enough to set our needles off and flying. But sometimes it is worth taking the time to pay attention to things we would otherwise take for granted. Establishing reference points and patterns can be helpful with both executing the stitch and with compensation within and around other areas of the painted canvas.



To the right is a diagram for a composite stitch pattern based on a woven stitch. This can be stitched with two different colors of the same thread or given a little texture with two different threads in the same color family. So, what can the diagram tell us? Let's break it down:

First, look at the groupings. The long green stitches are in groups of 3 and move diagonally over 4, over 5, over 4. The smaller blue stitches are in groups of 3 and move diagonally over 2, over 1, over 2. Immediately, this tells you that if you have a section with 4 stitches that your pattern will be off. Similarly, if you have oblique, horizontal or vertical stitches you will again be off.

Next, look at the direction. The long green groups slant in the same direction within one row, but change direction on the alternating rows. However, the small blue group slants in the same direction (lower left to upper right) in every row. If you end up with two consecutive rows of green slanting in the same direction, or blues slanting in opposite directions, once again the pattern is off.

Now let's look at some other reference points. Knowing how the groups of stitches relate to each other horizontally, vertically and diagonally can help with placement.

We'll start with the green stitches.

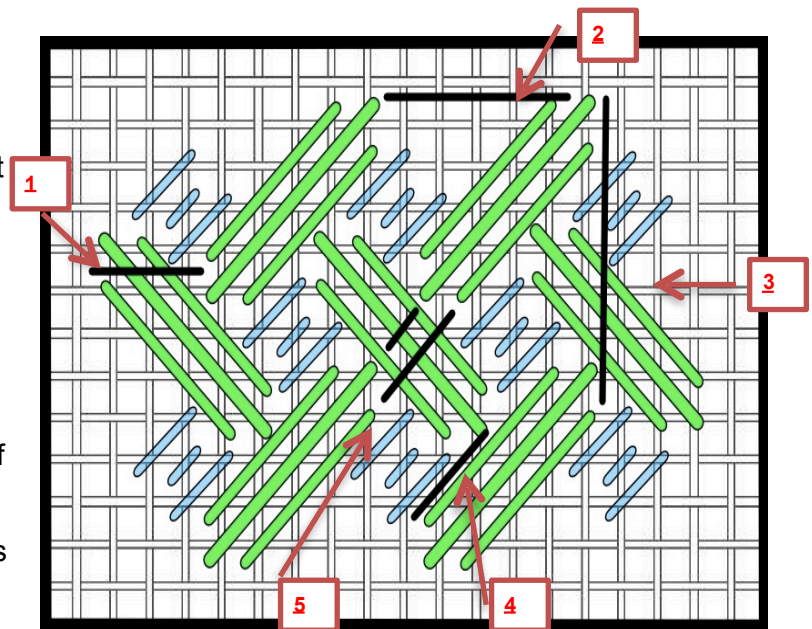
1: From the bottom of the top upper stitch in a group, count over 3 canvas threads to begin the lower stitch in a group. This works for moving both left and right.

2: There are 5 canvas threads between the top of the middle stitch to the top of the first stitch in the next group.

3: There are 7 canvas threads from the top of the middle stitch to the top of the lower stitch every other row.

4: There are 2 diagonal intersections from the bottom of the middle stitch to the bottom of the upper stitch in the row below.

5: There is 1 diagonal intersection between the bottom of the middle stitch and the top of the middle stitch on every other row. There are two diagonal intersections between the bottoms of each side stitch to the top of the corresponding side stitch on every other row.



Now for the blue stitches:

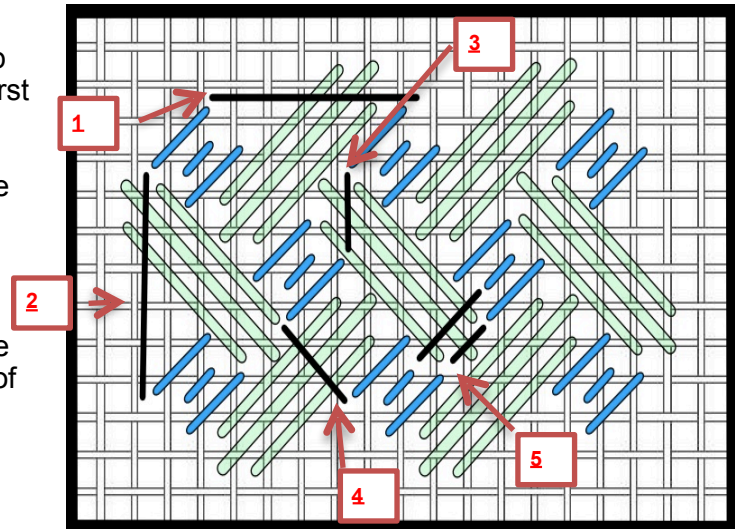
1: There are 6 canvas threads from the top of the first stitch in a group to the top of the first stitch in the next group on the same row.

2: There are 6 canvas threads between the bottom of the first stitch in a group to the bottom of the first stitch in a group on every other row.

3: There are 2 canvas threads between the bottom of the top stitch in a group to the top of the bottom stitch in a group on the next row.

4: There are 2 diagonal intersections between the bottom of the third stitch in a group to the bottom of the top stitch in a group on the next row.

5: There are 2 diagonal intersections between the middle stitches of each group on subsequent rows. There is 1 diagonal intersection between the corresponding side stitches of each group on subsequent rows.



There are more reference points that can be established by looking at how both groups of stitches relate to each other as well. Knowing these references can be helpful if you are trying to compensate around a painted element and, for example, have only a clear diagonal path; you can use the diagonal reference points to place stitches. If you pick up a project after a long interval of not stitching, reference points can quickly establish where to begin again without having to rip out stitches to get to a starting point. Hopefully, you will find this useful.

By Diane Snyder. This article originally appeared in our August 2017 newsletter.
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