

Motif, Pattern, Repeat

One consideration when choosing stitches is to determine how well it will fit within a certain space. In general, the stitch should fill the space so that your eye can easily visualize the pattern repeat. Many times we will see a stitch description as “good for small spaces” or “large backgrounds”, but if you understand the concept behind motifs you can adapt many stitches to different sized areas.

A motif is the individual stitch element. Below is a diagram of a Christmas tree for illustration purposes (FIG. A). This can be worked as a single element on its own. You need a space at least 10 threads high by 11 threads wide for this motif to be recognized on its own as complete.

By combining individual motifs, you can establish a pattern. The illustration below shows the motifs lined up in rows, one directly below the other (FIG. B). You can work this as a darning pattern(working back and forth across the row) or in vertical columns, whichever you prefer. The blue line shows the minimum amount for the pattern to keep the its visual integrity; in this case, 4 motifs will be 22 threads high by 22 threads wide. This is a single pattern repeat. You need at least a single pattern repeat so that any compensation around the edges does not distract from the pattern.

Another way to combine motifs is by offsetting them. Below are two examples of offset motifs (FIG C and FIG D). In the first example the motifs are closer together both vertically and horizontally. The pattern repeat here is 28 threads wide by 23 thread high. The full pattern repeat is a set of 5 individual motifs. You can see how the compensation stitches along the blue line do not detract from the pattern, since you have a full repeat in the space. In the second example. I've increased the space between the motifs both vertically and horizontally. While you still have the same pattern repeat of 5 individual motifs, in this case the repeat is 27 threads high by 29 threads wide. Again, the compensation at the left edge by the blue line does not distract from the pattern.

The final diagram shows a stitch pattern without any visual repeat. While the individual motif may be distinguished, there is too much compensation for this to feel like a pattern. By understanding motifs, you can adjust your stitch pattern to fit the space. Have a large area you'd like to keep open? Offset the motifs and make them farther apart. Want more full coverage? Move your motifs closer together. Have a smaller space? Bring the motifs right next to each other; if they don't fit together without gaps, use a contrasting thread to fill the spaces in between them.

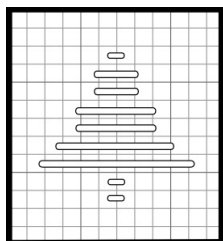


FIG. A

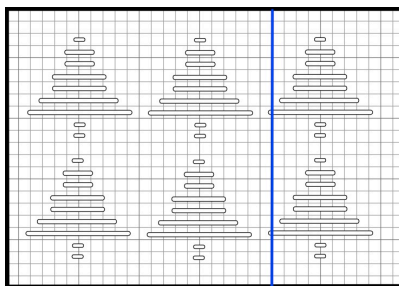


FIG. B

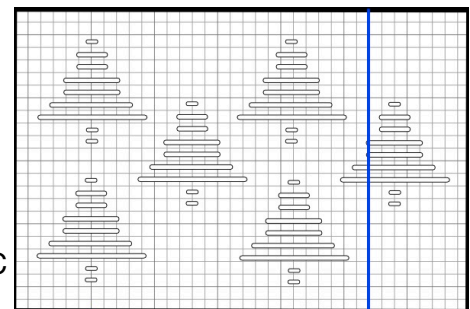


FIG. C

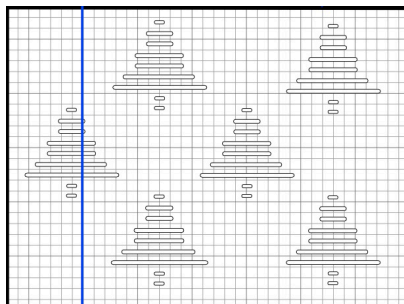
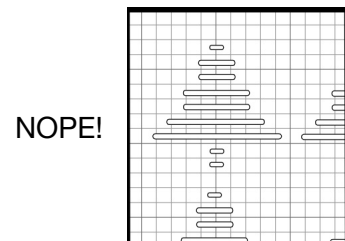


FIG. D



NOPE!