

Chicken Scratch Embroidery

(Snowflake Embroidery, Depression Lace or Gingham Lace)

FABRIC

Chicken Scratch is a type of embroidery worked on gingham fabric. It is a variation of gingham embroidery. Using certain stitches, thread or floss creates a lacelike design on gingham fabric when finished. Gingham fabric usually comes in 4, 8 or 16 squares to the square inch. If possible, use gingham fabric with a true square check. Fabric that comes in $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch checks or $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch checks is most often used for Chicken Scratch.

STITCHING

There are three stitches used in Chicken Scratch embroidery. The double cross stitch, the straight running stitch and the woven circle stitch can create a wide variety of looks, depending on color and number of strands of embroidery floss used in the design. Stitch with one, two or many colors of floss. When using just two colors, one is usually white and the other a darker version of the darkest gingham check. For $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch checked or $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch checked gingham, use 2, 3 or 4 strands of 6-strand embroidery floss.

Experimenting before you start the final project will let you judge the best look for your design. Use an embroidery crewel needle size 6 or 7 for stitching. An embroidery hoop is needed to keep the fabric smooth and the stitches even.

To create the laciest effects, use dark floss on the white squares for the double cross-stitch or white floss on the darker squares. Use the running stitches on the shaded squares.

To create Chicken Scratch embroidery, you have many choices. You can outline the total design in one color and use another color to fill in or use all one color in a design to create a totally different look with the same design.

GETTING STARTED

Count the number of squares in your design, and then count the squares in the fabric. Add to this figure at least 2 inches beyond the design and then consider the finishing technique. Add more inches if you need to have more room around your design for completing the project.

If the fabric ravels, then finish the edges with a machine zigzag stitch or a hand-overcast stitch.

Find the center of your design and the center of the fabric. Place the fabric in the embroidery hoop. Begin with the double cross-stitches that outline the design, followed by any that fall within the design.

The second set of stitches will be the running stitches that go back and forth across the design, and then go from top to bottom. The woven circle stitches are the last set of stitches to complete to the design.

While working on the design, it may be necessary to loosen and reposition your work many times. Never leave your work in a tight hoop when you are not working on the project. This can cause creases impossible to remove when the project is completed.

TO BEGIN STITCHING

Cut a 20 to 25-inch length of embroidery floss. Separate the strands by carefully holding one end and pulling your fingers gently through the floss to separate the strands. You may use 2, 3 or 4 strands. Separate the floss as required, thread your needle and stitch.

If the project is going to be washed frequently, it is recommended that the floss be knotted at the end. Knots are hidden on the wrong side of the work.

Using the center of the fabric as a reference point, start at an upper corner, embroidering the outline of the design first. If floss is not knotted, leave a 1-inch tail on the backside of the fabric. You can catch the floss tail in the first few stitches on the wrong side of the project.

Be sure to cross all stitches in the same direction. Do the double cross stitches in the same sequence each time.

After the outline stitch, start to fill in the design with stitches. Do all the double cross stitches first, and then do the straight running stitches.

Stitch the running stitches on the shaded squares so that the ends of the stitch always point to a white square. Work all of the running stitches by passing the needle over a shaded square and under a white square, then back over the next shaded square, etc. Do all the running stitches in one direction, and then complete the running stitches in the remaining direction. For example, if you start going across the design from right to left, complete all the running stitches in that direction before going up and down the design. It may be necessary

to turn the design upside down to work stitches.

The woven circle stitch is the last stitch to be completed. A circle is formed by using white floss and weaving the needle underneath the four running stitches that surround a white square. Bring needle up at the end of a running stitch, and after weaving under the four running stitches, end by inserting needle at the starting point (see diagram). Do not pull the circle too tightly, as this will prevent the white square from showing inside the circle.

Keep the tension of the floss even, making smooth stitches. To prevent shadow-through (the shadow of the thread showing through to the right side), do not carry floss across a large unworked area on the back of the design.

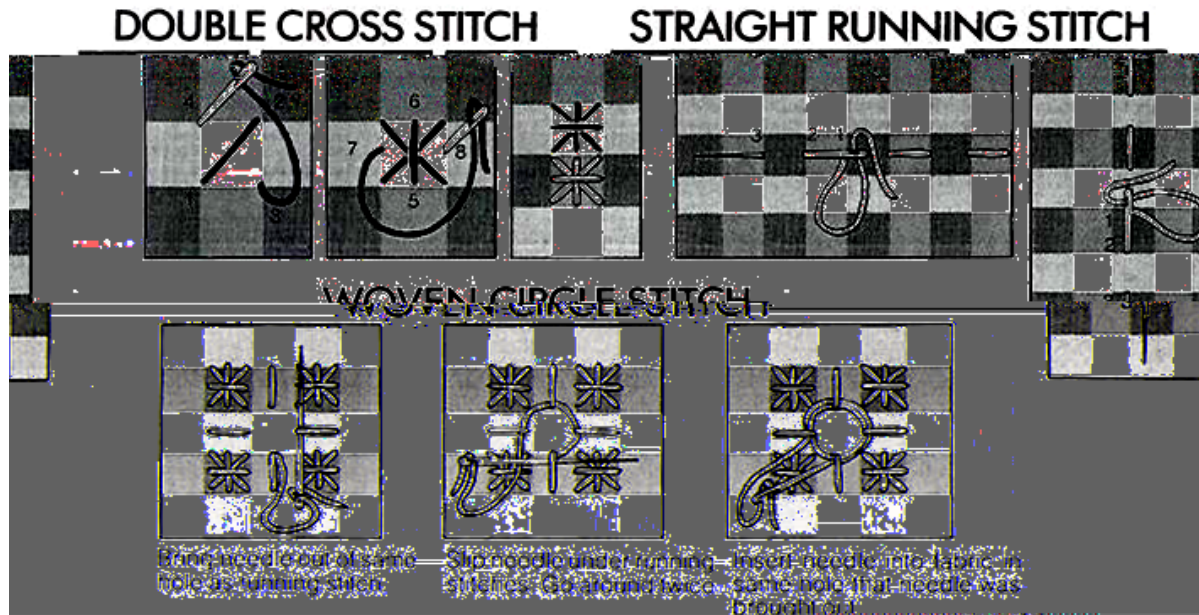
If a mistake is made, use the needle to pull stitches out one stitch at a time, taking care not to disturb other stitches.

READING THE CHART

Chicken Scratch is worked by following a chart (see attached example). Each square on the chart represents one square or check of the gingham fabric. Most charts are shaded to look like gingham fabric. Symbols

are placed in the squares to represent the stitches and sometimes are colored to represent different color embroidery floss. If not in color, then symbols may sometimes represent different colors of the floss to be used. A charted design will always have a “key.” The key will tell you what each symbol represents.

HOW TO DO THE STITCHES:



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