



## How To Guide - Fully finishing your needlecraft project

You've loved working on your needlecraft project and have just put in the final stitch – what should you do with it now? There are so many lovely ways that you can fully finish your cross stitch or embroidery project, either transforming it into something useful and decorative, or simply displaying it for you, and others, to admire and enjoy. Whether you chose the design specifically as a gift for someone special, or because you were drawn to it for yourself, we have collected some ideas, along with illustrations, to help you to decide how to transform your beautiful piece of needlework into a unique, hand-crafted, fully-finished object.



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# Before you begin

## Preparing your needlework

If your project has been underway for some time, it may have picked up a few marks from repeated handling or random spillages. If it has, you may decide to wash it before you begin your transformation. Be sure that you did not stitch with hand-dyed threads or onto hand-dyed fabric before washing, as the colours may run, transferring to other areas of your work and causing unwelcome stains. Personally, I prefer to avoid any risk of a washing disaster and have never laundered a needlework piece before fully-finishing it, but I know that many people like to. Even if there are no visible marks, a lot of online information advises that oils from your hands during the repeated handling will have stained it and should be washed away before fully finishing. All I can say is that I have not found that to be an issue for me. If you do decide to wash it, treat it gently and follow any manufacturer instructions for the fabric and threads.

Whether you have washed it or not, making sure the finished piece is ironed is a good idea – when it is fully finished, you will be glad that you ironed out any creases or folds. Pressing it through a towel will help to avoid flattening both stitches and any beading, and steam may help to achieve a crisp finish but, again, always follow manufacturer guidelines.

Applying interfacing to the back of your needlework can help to protect the back of your stitches, particularly if it is destined to be a cushion, and can give additional robustness to the stitched piece. Both iron-on and sew-in interfacing is available, in a range of different weights and colours and, again, if you have decided to apply it, follow all manufacturer guidelines. I would always recommend checking the back of your stitching for loose or long threads and trimming close to the fabric any that you find. This will ensure they do not show through once your interfacing is in place and, of course, you won't be able to make any such adjustments to the back once you have attached your interfacing.

Finally, trimming away excess fabric is a handy thing to do before beginning your final finishing. It will be easier to manipulate, orientate and fold your needlework if you are not also having to manage too much unstitched aida or linen. Trim away excess fabric carefully, with sharp fabric scissors, leaving a generous margin. *Just to emphasise that:* don't trim too closely to your stitching – you really don't want the whole thing to unravel before you've been able to transform it into something useful or beautiful or, hopefully, both.

### **What might I need?**

Clearly, what you might need will depend on what you are hoping to create, but here are a few ideas for the sorts of items which could be useful when crafting your fully-finished item. Please don't be alarmed by the number of items – you won't need all of these for any of our finishing ideas.

- Large fabric scissors, small needlework scissors, old scissors for cutting zips
- Sewing machine
- Air-erasable fabric pen
- Pins (dressmaking pins, sequin pins), needles
- Strong thread
- Double-sided sticky tape, masking tape
- Fabric glue
- Tacky glue
- Toy stuffing
- Wadding/fleece
- Small gauge jewellery wire
- Coloured felt
- Mountboard, cardboard, foamcore board
- Trim, different sizes and colours (ricrac, chenille trim/yarn, cording, lace, pompom)
- Ribbon (metallic, satin, velvet, organza)
- Buttons, sequins, bows, beads, bells
- Fabric for backing pillows
- Zips, charms

So, we have prepared our completed piece of needlework, ready for it to be fully finished, and we have collected some crafty supplies.

Now, what shall we make?



## Hang it on the wall

Simple but effective, hanging your work on the wall might be the perfect place for it to live. It also works very well if you are giving the piece as a gift.

**In a hoop:** framing in the hoop you used to stitch it can be the perfect solution and is particularly effective if the work is the right shape. You could wrap the hoop in co-ordinating ribbon or thread, or decorate it by sticking pompom or beaded trim to the outer edge. Concealing the back of your stitching with a circle of felt, either stuck or stitched into place, finishes the piece beautifully. Attach a loop of ribbon or lace for hanging and you're done - stand back to admire!



For detailed instructions on how to frame your needlework in a hoop, please visit our “How to Guide on Starting and Finishing Hoops”.

**In a frame:** perhaps you’ve found the perfectly sized, coloured and shaped frame in a charity shop – you could frame your needlework yourself, making a really professional looking finish for your stitching. If you cut a piece of foam core board to the exact size of the aperture, wrap your needlework around it, and then pin in place with short sequin pins along the edges, adjusting as you go, you can centre and straighten your work on the board. It should then fit perfectly into the frame. A piece of felt stuck to the front of the foam core board before you wrap the stitching around it will give the needlework a slightly “fuller” look, eliminating any wrinkles and smoothing the edges a little. If the frame originally had glass, I usually discard it (carefully), and just leave the piece framed without it. Apply masking tape around the back of the board to hold down the spare fabric. If there is room, you could then reinsert the frame’s original backing board and clip it into place, but if not, I like to neatly tape a piece of card over the back, to conceal the taped fabric. If you need a wire to hang it, small gauge jewellery wire can be wound several times across the back, between two small eyelet screws.



**In a shadowbox frame:** these frames have more space between the back board and the glass, making them perfect for tapestry/needlepoint/canvas pieces (please see our How to Guide on Tapestry for more information on definitions here). Needlework projects with surface stitch embroidery (e.g. French knots, raised eyelets, couching) are unsuitable for a frames with glass which sits against the surface of the stitched work because it will squash and distort the stitches, but shadowbox frames are perfect. Also, it's really simple to pop things in them – these four animal portraits from my kitchen wall were stitched with tapestry wool onto plastic canvas, and I simply painted white the back board of the shadow box frame and stuck them onto it.



**As a wallhanging:** this method of display is commonly used with quilts, but works equally well with smaller, stitched pieces. There are all sorts of quilt hangers available, in different widths and with a range of decorations. I chose this simple heart one for my stitched lady, to match her skirt and the flowers, then backed the piece with quilting fabric and attached ribbon loops and heart buttons.



## Create something useful and beautiful

**A cushion:** I really like this option for fully finishing your stitching. If your stitched piece is in wools on canvas (tapestry/needlepoint), like the cushion on the right, it will be beautifully robust and will work perfectly as a throw cushion on the sofa or bed. But cross stitch works just as well – the piece on the left is stitched with DMC thread on Aida and, although not as durable as the tapestry, has held up really well for a number of years. You could theme the fabric choice to either your stitched piece or your room's colour scheme, or both, and add a fun pompom trim around the outer edge, or piping around the stitched piece. I patchworked together a range of co-ordinating fabrics for the front of the pink cushion, to reflect the pink shapes in the stitched heart. There are all sorts of ways to personalise a cushion with your needlework, to make it a special and unique hand-crafted piece. I stitched my initials and the year into the tapestry on the right, and then used leftover bridesmaid dress fabric to make the cushion, so it holds very warm memories for me.



**A coaster:** This is a really simple and perfect finish for small cross stitched pieces. The needlecraft can just be cut to size and then popped into an acrylic coaster, so that it is protected from spills but can still be enjoyed and admired.



**A magnet:** Why not cover a magnetic bulletin board, or your fridge, with your small cross stitched designs? Cut a circle of firm card to match the size of your stitched piece, put a running stitch around the edge with strong thread, pull tight on the back and knot, and then stick a smaller circle of card to the back, to cover the gathered fabric. I then put this under a heavy book for a few hours, to make sure it is firmly stuck, and then cut a piece of magnet to size and stick that to the back. I really like this as way to keep little stitches on show, but where they can also be used in a practical way, to hold up notes of lists to help you stay organised in style.



**A bookmark:** Clearly, this is both size and shape dependent, but if your small design is long rather than square or round, or a row of little motifs, this works really well – and, if you are a reader, you end up with something you can definitely use! There are all sorts of ways of fully finishing a bookmark: I like to iron double-sided interfacing onto the back of the cross stitch, then iron co-ordinating fabric (or more aida) onto the other side of the interfacing, trim to shape and stitch a line (of cross stitch or on the sewing machine) around the outer edge to secure together all the layers. I find this gives sufficient stability without adding too much unhelpful depth. I have also experimented with fraying the aida and sewing felt onto the back, hemming the aida (although this can be a little bulky between the pages of the book), blanket stitching around the edge, and using pre-edged aida banding. Personalisation is easy to add, and a handmade, specially designed bookmark could make a perfect gift for a reader in your life!



**On top of a tin or box:** Perhaps you've found a small tin or box with a plain top – is it just asking to have a piece of needlework added for decoration?! Gathering or lacing the piece around firm cardboard or mountboard, with a layer of fleece underneath, will give a lovely rounded, soft look to the stitching. Apply strong glue to attach it firmly to the top, and the join can be concealed with cording, trim or lace – just remember to poke in the both ends, and perhaps try not to begin and finish your trim application at the centre front, just in case! I painted the little round box on the left white, to give added brightness to the sweet sunflower mouse, and matched the strong black of the tin on the right of that image to the blackwork behind the flower.



**A greetings card:** A unique, hand-crafted greetings card is always a pleasure to give, and seems to be popular to receive too. I stitched this for the Dr Who enthusiast in my life, layering co-ordinating card to frame it and then fraying the edges of the evenweave. I have found that double-sided tape is sufficient to attach the stitched piece to your mount, and the mount to your greetings card.



## Create something beautiful, but not necessarily useful

**A small cushion:** For a smaller piece of needlework, this is a sweet finish. You could pile the little cushions on a chair, or pop them in a large bowl to display on a table. Seasonal collections of designs would look lovely arranged like this, and you could swap them over as the seasons change. The cushions can be trimmed in different ways with, for example, ricrac, ribbon, buttons, beads and chenille yarn, and the stitching can be inset into co-ordinating fabric for your cushion front. I like to construct the cushion by stitching the needlework and the backing fabric, right sides together, around all four edges. A slit is then cut in the back, the piece is turned right sides out through the slit and stuffed. The slit can then be stitched together and concealed by a patch of felt (invariably heart shaped for me) sewn over the top. If you wanted to hang the little cushion as an ornament, perhaps for your Christmas tree, you could add a loop of cording or ribbon during the stitching up process.



**An ornament:** Perfect for your Christmas tree, but you could also hook one of these over a doorhandle, onto a notice board, or gift it to someone special. I really like that this way of creating an ornament conceals everything inside, disguising how it is made. Round shapes are easiest to finish in this way, as you simply gather the needlework over a cardboard circle, just as for the magnet finish. I like to pad the cardboard first with a piece of fleece, as this gives a lovely smooth, cushioned appearance to the stitched piece. Having gathered and secured the front of the ornament, I repeat that process for the back, but with a piece of co-ordinating quilting cotton. Pop in a hanging loop of ribbon (if it matters which way up the design hangs, make sure you position it at the top!) and whipstitch the two together. I use strong thread for the gathering and the whipstitch, as it is helpful to be able to pull on the thread quite strongly during the making phases and you don't want it to break if possible. The ornament can then be finished with a trim, which also conceals the whipstitching around the edge. I like to use cording, chenille yarn and mini pompoms here, but there are many options, and you can match colour (or use an accent colour) and size as you like. If you leave a small unwhipstitched area either side of your hanging loop, you can conceal the end of your trim by tucking them into the gaps. Differently shaped ornaments can be made in mainly the same way, except that the gathering doesn't work for squares or rectangles, so lace those across the back to achieve a smooth, neat front. They can then be sandwiched together and stitched up in the same way as circular ones.





**Displayed on an easel:** I like to choose this finishing technique for stitched pieces that are slightly larger than ornament ones. The simplest way is to lace your fabric across the back of an artist block. You could then attach a piece of felt or fabric to conceal the lacing. My Jane Austen cross stitch is finished like this, and it is one of my favourite stitched projects. It sits on a small white easel – very simple and effective, and I love the way in which the classic literary quotation mixes with the contemporary, gallery-style feel of the finish. The round edges of the block give the piece a lovely soft appearance, and the depth of the block adds an extra three-dimensional quality to your stitching.



You can also finish your piece to display in this way, but with the addition of a layered background, colour co-ordinated to tone with and highlight your stitching. A piece of cardboard, padded with fleece, can be used to lace your stitching over. Then, if you lace a co-ordinating (or accent) fabric onto a slightly larger piece of card (I don't include fleece for this piece), you can stick the two together (back of stitched piece onto front of co-ordinating piece) with strong glue. (Line them up carefully, it really shows if they are off-centre or not straight.) I did this with a set of seasonal stitched pieces and I swap them over as the year passes.



## Create needlecraft accessories

I really like to make things that I use for needlecraft out of pieces of needlework – it feels very appropriate!

**A scissor fob:** These are perfect for tiny pieces of cross stitch or canvas work – just join two pieces around the edges, fill with a little stuffing, insert a loop of cording or ribbon and stitch up the gap. You could add a tassel made from thread or beads for decoration. I have also made circular fobs using the same method as used for a magnet, but with the addition of a ribbon loop for attaching it to the scissors.



**A pincushion:** These can be made from needlework stitched onto fabric or onto canvas. I made the square pincushion on the left with a base, made from a square of foamboard, because I wanted it to have sufficient stability to sit flat on a table. I filled it by piling squares of wadding in decreasing size onto the base, to make it a balanced, regular shape. Stuffed pincushions on canvas have good durability for the constant stabbing of the pins, and can be made very simply, in the same way as a small cushion.



If your stitching is an exact square, with the addition of a line of backstitch around the edge, you could make a quirkily shaped biscornu as a pincushion. You will need a second square, also backstitched around the edge, and then the interesting shape of the biscornu is achieved by matching the corner of one square to the mid-point of the other, and whipstitching the two together around the edges. This will give your biscornu pincushion the uniquely angled shape, making a really fun and distinctive pincushion.



**A needlebook:** This can be created from backing an appropriately sized piece of cross stitch with quilting cotton, perhaps with the addition of a simple inside pocket, and then pieces of felt stitched centrally down the spine of the cover for the pages. I added personalisation to my cross stitch before I began construction, and you could add lace, ribbon or surface embroidery during the making process if you wished. You could attach a lovely vintage button for your closure, or a more modern snap or magnet.

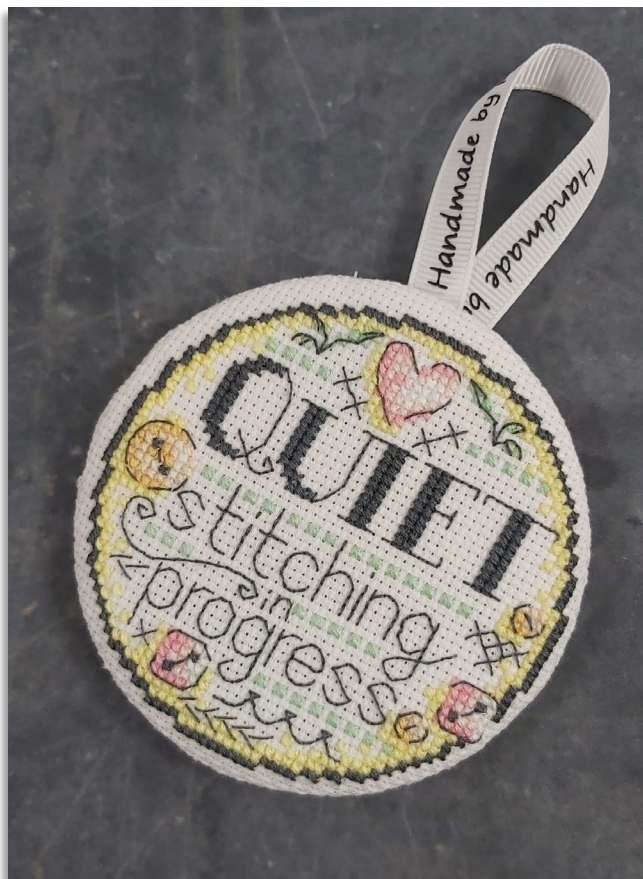


**A project bag or stitching pouch:** Stitched pieces, particularly stitching themed designs, are perfect for adding to a project bag in which to store your next WIP (work in progress). They can be inset into your fabric for the front, with the addition of a border in an accent colour if you wish, and matched to your zip or your lining fabric, or both. You could also use the evenweave or aida on which the piece is stitched as the fabric front of the bag, or experiment with appliqueing stitching to the finished front of a bag. You could add trims and decorative accents if you wish – pompoms and ricrac stitched along seams are really effective. Heavier, fleece interfacing is perfect for giving your bags additional body and stability, and a themed charm (perhaps a stitching related one) could be added as well. I like to insert a zip, but you could add drawstrings or a button closure. (If you do make your bag with a zip, and need to trim the ends once you have stitched it in place, use old scissors and not your fabric or needlework scissors, as cutting through a nylon zip really blunts scissor blades.)



## So, what do you think?

Hopefully we have suggested some ideas about what you could do with your needlework once you have completed stitching it, and also reassurance that it is not difficult and could be fun to craft your stitching into something else. With just the addition of some crafty accessories, such as glue, toy stuffing and cardboard, you could create your own pincushion, Christmas ornament or framed picture. Of course, you could just pop your completed stitching in a drawer or under the bed, but why do that when you could be enjoying it in so many different ways?



If you find any of these instructions unclear or just need a little extra help, don't hesitate to email us at [sales@woolwarehouse.co.uk](mailto:sales@woolwarehouse.co.uk) or give us a call on 01926 88 28 18.