

# Getting CRAFTY

Trends in Crafting





# Cross-Stitch: Old Craft, New Attitude

Most of our grandmothers had a cross-stitched sampler somewhere on their walls.

Colorful threaded Xs marching across fabric to create a homey saying or scene are common. Modern cross stitch, however, often combines this older art with a more snarky attitude.

## FABRIC

Most cross-stitch is done on a fabric called aida, which is sized based on the number of squares to the inch. For your first cross-stitch, consider getting an aida with larger squares (fewer to the inch) so you keep your sanity and your eyesight. Cross-stitching can also be done on linen or even-weave, but those squares tend to be smaller. Aida is stiff and all of these fabrics tend to fray, so bind the edges of a cut piece with masking tape or sew it with a zig zag stitch or serger.

## THREAD

Think of this as the paint for your canvas. You won't be using regular sewing thread, though. You'll use a type of thread called floss. Floss comes in skeins in every color of the rainbow. Each skein is a coil of floss that consists of six strands. Depending on your cross-stitch pattern, you'll use all six strands at once or split it into fewer strands.



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## CHART OR PATTERN

This is the map you'll use when you're stitching. It tells you what kind of stitch to use and which color. Each color will have a symbol or, well, a color, assigned to it on the pattern. There should be a legend to help you out. Each square on the pattern represents a single cross stitch.

## HOOPS OR FRAMES

Before you start working, you'll stretch the fabric into a hoop or frame, depending on whichever is easiest to hold. Plastic hoops are more expensive than the bamboo hoops you see in stores, but they

hold the fabric better.

Consider starting out with a plastic hoop for working and a bamboo hoop for framing or finishing.

## NEEDLES

You're not going to use regular sewing needles, either. You can use embroidery needles or tapestry needles for your project. Both have larger eyes, but tapestry needles have blunted ends and embroidery needles have sharp ends. Needles are also sized; the larger the number, the smaller the needle (and the eye). Your pattern can tell you what size needle to use,

but it usually corresponds to the size of the fabric. More squares per inch means a tinier needle to make those squares. Tapestry needles with their blunt points may be more friendly to the beginner.

## GET STARTED

Start stitching from the center of your fabric. Before you put it in the hoop, fold it in half one way and then the other way, pinching and creasing at the center. When you unfold the fabric, place a pin in the center and put it in the middle of the hoop or frame. Cross stitch is usually worked from left to right and usually

doesn't include knots.

Find the color you need to start and the number of strands, then thread your needle as you would for sewing but don't make a knot. Starting from the back, bring your needle up to a hole in the front, leaving about an inch in the back. Hold it as you go, you're going to stitch over it to secure it. Pass the needle diagonally over the square and down through the hole at the corner. Make several more of these stitches in a row, then work back the other way, closing the X. To end, pass the needle under three completed stitches on the back and trim it off.



# Knitting Vocabulary

Knitting is another old skill that's experiencing a boom right now.

If you're ready to figure out the ins and outs of knitting and purling, learn these words before starting out.

**Alternate:** Meaning every other row.

**Arm Knitting:** Where the knitter uses their arms instead of knitting needles. Arm knitting is best done with very bulky yarns and with larger projects, like blankets.

**Backstitch:** A technique for seaming that doubles back on itself to strengthen a seam.

**Bind off or cast off:** Ending a row of stitches.

**Blocking:** Any method of setting the stitches and gauge of a garment, including wet blocking and steam blocking.

**Circular knitting needles:** Two separate needles attached with a cord, allowing you to knit larger pieces in the round. It also works well for large, flat items that are too wide for regular, straight needles.

**Dropped stitches:** Oops! This refers to stitches that have fallen off the needle during the knitting process.

**Frogging:** Undoing stitches by ripping them out. You then continue from a previous row.

**Gauge:** Refers to the number of stitches per inch. Yarn, needle size and stitch pattern all affect gauge. The bigger the yarn and the bigger the needles, the less tension your stitches will have.



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**Intarsia:** Colorwork knitting that creates blocks of color without strands hanging in the back.

**Knitwise:** Inserting your working needle in a way that puts the leading leg of your yarn on the right side of your needle.

**Lifeline:** Yarn or string inserted into a previous row to hold those stitches in place in

the event you need to frog your work.

**Live stitch:** Unworked stitches that are still on the needle.

**Niddy noddy:** An H-shaped tool that allows you to easily wind skeins of yarn.

**Purlwise:** Inserting your working needle so that your leading leg is on the left side of your needle.

**Roving:** Yarn that is not com-

pletely twisted or plied during spinning. It's often used to create extra bulky projects, like those blankets you've seen on social media.

**Slip stitch:** A stitch slipped from the non-dominant needle to the working needle without being worked.

**Stitch:** This can refer to two things. Individual stitches are made with the needles. Stitch

patterns are formed from individual stitches.

**Wale:** A column of stitches.

**Worsted:** One of the most popular yarn weights for knitters. It's usually weight 4 yarn and is great for scarves and more.

**Yarn over:** A method of increasing stitches in your work that creates a small eyelet in the fabric.



# Quick Crafts for Kids

During the long weeks of quarantine or homeschooling, you probably had a whole lifetime's worth of "I'm bored." Next time cabin fever sneaks up, here are some DIY activities to keep the kiddos out of your hair.

## SCAVENGER HUNT

Have the kids find items that match a color, a letter, a sound and more. If your kids are on the mischievous side, you might want to set some ground rules such as no live animals.

## PAINTING ROCKS

Next time you're at the garden store, pick up some river rocks that are big enough for your kids to work with but small enough for them to pick up themselves. Let the kids loose with craft paint and see what they come up with. Encourage them to make up a story or to paint the rocks in cheery colors and themes. For extra fun, coat them in sealant and hide them around the yard.

## DOODLE ART

Grab some copy paper and markers. Let the kids create a single-line scribble using the black marker, then fill the shape with different colors of markers or crayons for a fun abstract piece.

## DIY STRESS BALL

Fill a balloon part of the way with cornstarch. Tie a knot and let the kiddos decorate their new homemade stress balls. These are great for road trips and fidgety kids.

## RAINBOW RICE

Put uncooked rice in freezer bags, then drop in a few drops of gel food dye. Shake and mash the rice and food coloring together – this is fun for the little ones – and then pour each color onto a baking sheet. Bake to set the dye and you're ready to go. Let the kids make their own pictures and sort the colors.

## MAKE OOBLEK

That's fun word, isn't it? Ooblek is a gooey substance somewhere between water and slime. Make it by mixing two cups of cornstarch with one cup of water and, if you'd like, food coloring. Mix to combine. Your ooblek should be solid if you apply pressure and melt back into a liquid when you let go. If the ooblek is too wet, add a little more cornstarch and mix again. Too dry? Do the same with water.







VESILE YILMAZ

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# Marbled Terra Cotta Pots

Another activity that exploded during the pandemic was keeping houseplants. Here's a way to get crafty and flex that green thumb from HGTV.

## MATERIALS

- 6-inch terra cotta pots
- White spray paint
- Drop cloth
- Two nail polish colors
- A disposable bowl filled with lukewarm water
- Toothpick
- Clear acrylic spray paint

Disposable gloves

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Spray paint your pots with white spray paint. Use thin, even strokes and let them dry overnight.
2. Drizzle your nail polish colors into the bowl of lukewarm water. Make sure your container is large enough to allow

for twisting the terra cotta pot. Start with the lightest color and pour close to the surface of the water to keep it from sinking to the bottom.

3. Swirl the colors with a toothpick to create a marbled effect.

4. Quickly dip the pot and twist it into the bowl before the polish can dry. Use disposable gloves; this can get messy. Have fun creating different designs and patterns.

5. Put the pot on the drop cloth and allow it to dry overnight. Finish with clear spray paint to seal.

If you're looking for some

low-maintenance lovelies to put in your pots, try succulents and cactuses, which need light, well-draining, sandy soil and very little water. You can also look for sansevieria, a tall houseplant that's tough to kill. Spider plants and pothos are more good choices for low-maintenance indoor plants, but be careful if you have small children or pets; pothos can make them sick. Kalanchoes are another good choice, and they also bloom. Calatheas are dramatic in color

and form, but are relatively easy keepers with tall, upright leaves. Begonias are another bloomer that also come in a range of leaf colors for a vibrant pop even when they aren't blooming.

For those with truly black thumbs, head to the crafts store and invest in fake plants. Fake succulents are trendy and, with some varieties, you can barely tell the difference between the fake and the real. Stick them in decorative vase fillers or aquarium gravel.



# How to Sew a Face Mask

If you've got a sewing machine sitting around in your closet, now would be a good time to break it out and get to sewing some face masks to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Patterns are everywhere, just be sure to pick one that fits your materials and your skill level with the machine.

## WHY MASK UP?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that COVID-19 spreads mainly through respiratory droplets. These droplets can land on nearby people, infecting them. To reduce the spread of the virus, the CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in crowds, and many states and cities have now mandated the use of face coverings.

Wear a face covering that covers your nose and mouth and make sure it fits snugly against your face. Wash your face covering after every use.

## MATERIALS

Most DIY masks are made from cotton fabric, either quilting cotton (no stretch) or knits (stretchy), with elastic ear loops. You want the fabric to be thick enough that it doesn't easily let light through when you hold it up to a bulb. One



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study shows that two layers of quilting cotton turned out to be the best in terms of stopping COVID-19 transmission, but more work needs to be done.

## USING YOUR SEWING MACHINE

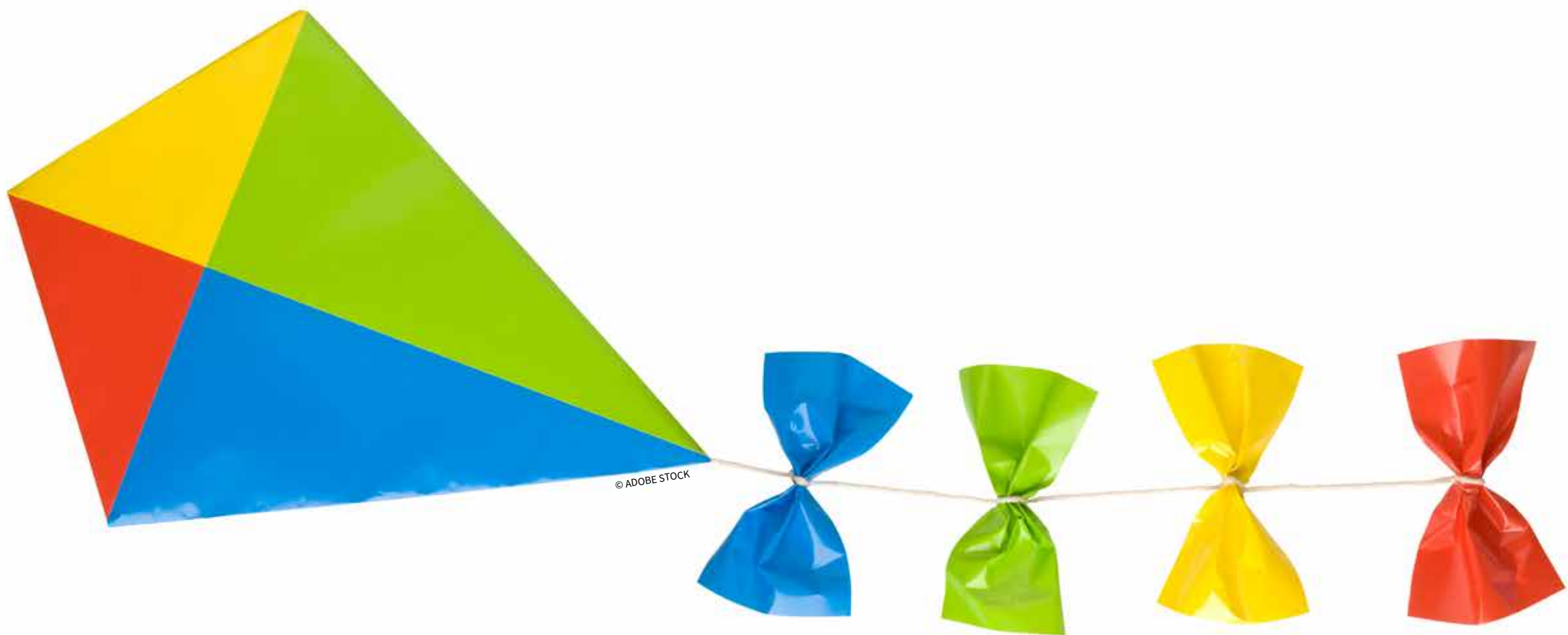
If you haven't gotten your

machine out in a while, you're going to need to do some maintenance first. Remove any old thread and bobbins and replace it with new. Dust the machine well, including the bobbin case and the area in and around the feed dogs. Pick out any dust or fluff that's stuck

with a needle or a stiff brush. Try to avoid blowing the dust deeper into the mechanism.

In addition to any old thread, you'll want a new, sharp needle. Make sure you use the size and brand recommended by your manufacturer. On older machines, you may also need

to lubricate the mechanism. You can do this by opening the case, usually by removing a couple of screws. Newer machines may not need lubrication, so check your manual for the proper instructions. Only use sewing machine oil and not other kinds of oils.



# Go Fly a (Homemade) Kite

Sunny summer days beg for outside activities. What's more carefree than flying a kite that you made yourself? Make a pretty mosaic kite in this activity from Good Housekeeping.

## MATERIALS

- A roll of clear adhesive shelf paper
- A ball of string
- Straws, two for the width and three for the length

- Scissors, for the tissue paper shapes
- Tissue paper
- Ribbon

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Tie the straws together at the center with sting. You should have a plus sign made from four straws with a ball of string in the middle to secure it.
2. Cut the adhesive paper into a diamond shape. Peel the backing off and place sticky side up, then fit the straws to the diamond and press down.
3. Cut and stick tissue paper shapes all over the contact paper. Go for a stained glass look or create a whole scene.
4. Cut a second diamond from clear adhesive

paper that's the same size as the first and stick over the top.

5. Loop string around each corner, then tie them together to make the bridle. Add a ribbon tail.

## KITE SAFETY

Even a little kite like this can turn into a safety hazard. Don't fly kites near people, roads and especially power lines. You also want to avoid electric signs and any sort of aerial antennae or satellite dish. Don't fly kites in stormy weather or in very strong winds. Watch out for dogs, rocks and holes while running with your kite. If the kite gets stuck in a tree or on

wires or a telephone pole, cut it loose and call the appropriate authorities.

It's less of an issue with a little kite like this one, but if you want to fly a larger kite, wear gloves while handling them and never leave them unattended. Don't let children fly large kites alone and check your lines for fraying and wear before flying.

Believe it or not, there are even FAA rules regarding kites. You can't fly a kite that weighs more than five pounds and you can't have a line longer than 500 feet. There may also be local ordinances, probably again pertaining to the bigger kites. But check before you go flying.



# Revamp your Old Furniture

If quarantine has you looking at your furniture with revulsion, save some money and try out some trendy new finishes.

Here are some tips for giving your old furniture a brand new look.

## STEP 1: CLEAN IT

Remove your furniture to a well-ventilated work space that's also well-lit. Give it a good scrubbing with some oil soap and water, making sure you get into the nooks and crannies. Take out any drawers and vacuum hard-to-reach spots. If you've got excessive wax build-up, attack it with fine steel wool.

## STEP 2: MAKE REPAIRS

While you're cleaning, look for any spots that need repair. You might need to glue some laminate or tighten or replace screws. Fill in cracks with wood putty. If you're changing out hardware, you want to take the old hardware off now and fill or drill any holes you're going to need or not need.

## STEP 3: SAND IT

This is the hard part. To refinish the piece, you'll first need to remove the old finish. The easiest way is through a combination of chemical strippers and sanding. Start with the coarsest sand paper and



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work up to the finest paper. If you've got a solid wood piece, consider staining it over painting. Once you're done sanding and stripping, it's time to clean it again. Use a damp cloth and a vacuum for best results, and make sure you get up all the dust.

## STEP 4: THE FUN PART

This is where you apply your new finish. Don't be afraid of staining, especially for higher end pieces.

There are great acrylic stains out there that clean up easier than the old oil-based ones, but be aware that they

won't last as long. Other trendy finishes right now are colored stains, chalk paint and distressed finishes that start with a lighter color under a darker color, which is then deliberately scored or dented to show the lighter color underneath.

Research the types of finishes you want to use carefully and get everything you need before starting.

For many of these processes, you have to finish what you start all in the same go or you risk having to start over on the project.