Start Embroidery with a Small Sampler

A beginner hoop setup and original five-stitch botanical motif

A sampler small enough to finish

This original embroidery exercise uses one 180 x 180 mm cloth square and a compact line-drawn sprig. The maker practises five common hand stitches on a single design: running stitch, backstitch, stem stitch, chain stitch and satin stitch. The finished decoration is personal practice, not a certified craft tool or toy.

Read the motif before threading

The pattern includes a small upright plant with two leaves, a curved stem, a simple pot and a broken arch. Each path on the motif is labelled with a number that corresponds to one stitch technique. Do not trace the numerical labels onto your fabric. Transfer only the outlines and guide dots. The design is original vector artwork drawn for this guide.

A compact, flexible material list

Use a 180 x 180 mm stable medium-weight cotton cloth, embroidery floss, a small embroidery needle suited to the fabric and thread, a 12 to 15 cm hoop if available, scissors, fabric-safe transfer tool and optional soft backing fabric. Avoid cheap, flaking coated materials that may stain fingers. Use an accessible needle size that you can thread and control without undue force.

Needle and thread safety

Needles are sharp and loose thread is an entanglement risk for small children and pets; store both in a closed container when idle. If the hand or wrist becomes uncomfortable, stop. Keep the hoop away from heat and open flame. Never leave needles on furniture, and check the work carefully before displaying or giving it as a gift.

What the printout promises

This is a digital step guide with 1:1 design references, not a physically embroidered reference sample. Print a 50 mm calibration line to check your printer; different pens and fabric can change transfer accuracy. The five diagrammed stitches have not been experimentally verified by the publisher.

Common beginner adjustments

If a line puckers, your tension may be too tight or the fabric may be insufficiently supported. If satin stitches look uneven, shorten spans and practise the direction on a spare offcut. If chain loops collapse, bring the needle farther ahead before tightening. Small inconsistencies are normal in a learning sampler.

Using the stitch key

The line sheet labels five techniques 1-5. These are teaching labels, not part of the transferred artwork. Practise each type on a spare margin before stitching the main path. The printable worksheet invites you to mark start and finish times, thread count and which stitch you want to revisit.

Originality and limitations

The sampler motif, layout, explanatory key and manuscript are newly drafted originals. They are not copies of a third-party embroidery pattern. No physical needlework, washing, rubbing, colourfastness, frame fit or durability test has been performed by the publisher.

Measure and plan

Prepare the cloth square

Cut a 180 x 180 mm piece of stable woven fabric, following its grain rather than pulling it diagonally. If washing is appropriate for the fabric, prewash and dry before cutting. The included sheet PATTERN 1 marks the full-size square and an approximately 130 x 130 mm central working area, leaving a generous margin for hooping and later handling.

Understand the five stitch jobs

Running stitch (1) makes a dotted line with small gaps; backstitch (2) creates a solid geometric outline; stem stitch (3) forms a curved central branch; chain stitch (4) forms a linked decorative border; satin stitch (5) fills the leaf interiors with adjacent stitches of varying lengths as each leaf tapers toward its tips. They are practice methods, not load-bearing seams.

Plan a suitable palette

Two or three embroidery floss colours are enough. For example, use one dark green for stems and outlines, a lighter green for filled leaves, and a warm accent for the pot or dotted border. Most embroidery floss can be separated into strands. Start with two or three strands and adjust for your fabric count; too many strands can distort fine cloth.

Transfer the motif without deforming it

Print PATTERN 2 at Actual Size. Verify the 50 mm bars and keep the motif proportion unchanged; if the output is scaled, print again. Transfer through a light box, window or suitable temporary fabric marking method. Never use permanent pen that will show through delicate stitching. Test any fabric marker on an offcut first if the care label permits.

Use the hoop correctly

Loosen the outer hoop ring, place the plain fabric over the inner ring and slide the outer ring around it. Tighten gently while smoothing the fabric. It should feel taut but not stretched to distortion. Remove the hoop between sessions when the fabric is prone to marking; never force a warped or cracked hoop.

Why finishing matters

Neatly secure starts and ends on the back through existing stitches or a small discreet knot if suitable. Avoid long loose carries behind the design, where fingers could snag them. When complete, check for missed needles, remove only temporary markings according to the marker instructions and handle the fabric gently.

Step-by-step / first half

1. Gather tools and check the light

Clear a dry table and set out thread, needle, scissors, the square fabric and printed pages. Use good lighting. Store spare needles safely before starting and count how many needles are in use.

2. Verify the full-size cloth square

Print PATTERN 1 at 100% and check the printed 50 mm bars. Trace the outside square as a cutting template. The 130 mm centre area is a guide, not a seam or fold line. Cut one 180 x 180 mm piece on the straight fabric grain.

3. Print and transfer the motif

Print PATTERN 2 at 100% and check its reference bars. Transfer the five paths and small dots into the middle of the cloth. Do not transfer stitch numbers or explanatory words; those are a reading key for the printed sheet.

4. Mount the fabric

Seat the cloth in the hoop with the drawing centered. Smooth the cloth and tighten the screw gently. Do not use a hoop that leaves deep impressions or snags threads. Adjust your hands so the needle always moves away from fingers.

5. Thread an embroidery needle

Separate two or three strands of floss and cut a manageable length, about 35 to 45 cm, to reduce tangles; use nearer the longer end for leaf filling and re-thread when needed. Thread the needle without pulling sharply. Secure the free end discreetly on the back; avoid bulky knots under the front image.

6. Practise running stitch (1)

Follow the broken arch. Bring the needle up at the first dot and take it down a few millimetres ahead; leave a similar gap before the next stitch. For a first attempt, try roughly 3-5 mm per stitch and a 3-5 mm gap, then adjust for your cloth and eyesight. Use the same spacing rhythm rather than trying to make every segment mechanically identical.

7. Practise backstitch (2)

Follow the simple pot outline. Take a short forward stitch, bring the needle up a short distance ahead, then stitch back into the endpoint of the previous stitch. Repeat to form a continuous line without large gaps.

Step-by-step / finish

8. Set up stem stitch (3)

For the curving central sprig, make a short forward stitch while keeping the working thread consistently on the same side of the curved line (for example, below the needle when stitching upward). Bring the needle back up near the preceding stitch midpoint; keep lengths moderate around bends.

9. Keep the stem smooth

Continue stem stitch in small increments along the drawn curve. If it twists or looks like a loose cord, reduce the stitch length and control thread tension. Do not pull so tightly that the cloth puckers or the printed guide shifts.

10. Practise chain stitch (4)

At the side border, bring the thread up, insert the needle close to the same spot and bring it up a short distance ahead while holding the working thread under the needle tip. Pull through to make a loop; repeat to form linked loops. Secure the final loop with a small straight stitch just beyond the loop at its base, holding it flat without piercing the loop centre.

11. Prepare satin fill (5)

Outline the two leaf shapes if desired using small split or backstitches; follow the printed leaf edges. Work the long side of each leaf with adjacent short stitches that enter and exit at opposite outline edges. Keep the direction consistent and avoid unusually long unsupported floats.

12. Fill leaves without puckering

Place parallel satin stitches close enough to cover the cloth but not so tightly that they buckle the leaf. For a tapered leaf, shorten the outer stitches as needed. Rework uneven areas rather than pulling completed stitches sharply.

13. Secure thread tails

Turn the hoop over and pass the thread tail beneath several existing stitches on the wrong side, then trim carefully. Avoid long loose loops and avoid sharp knots that might show through the fabric. Remove any unused needles from the work area.

14. Remove or loosen the hoop

If the fabric is ready to rest, loosen the hoop and lift it free without dragging across embroidered surfaces. Carefully remove temporary marks according to the marker instructions and fully dry any moistened fabric. Do not assume every marker washes away safely.

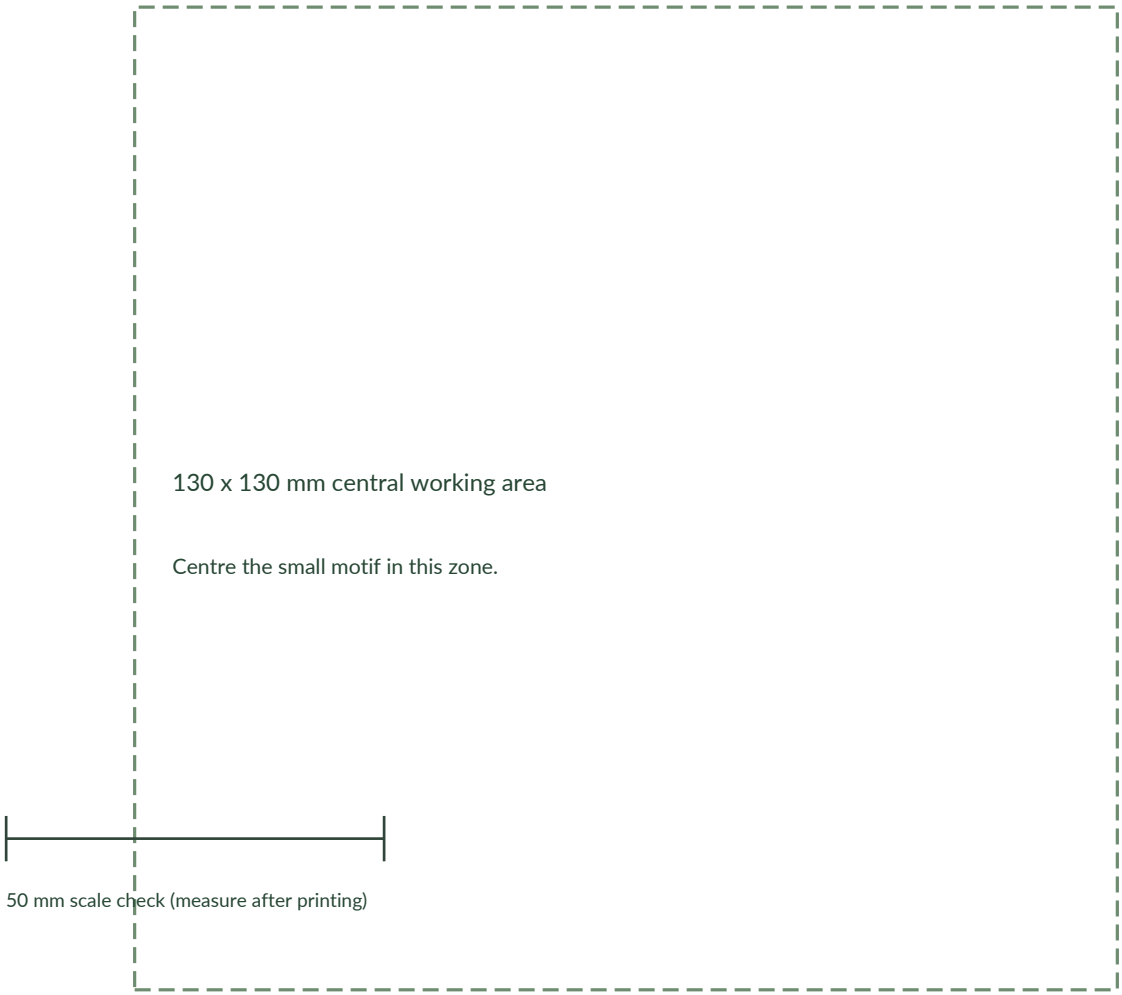
15. Record and display the sampler

Complete the practice checklist on RECORD 2: which stitches felt easy, where tension changed and what to try next. The sampler can be stored flat or mounted decoratively in a suitable frame; do not treat the hoop or threadwork as a child-safe or washable finished product.

STP-MAKE-F057 PATTERN 1 OF 2

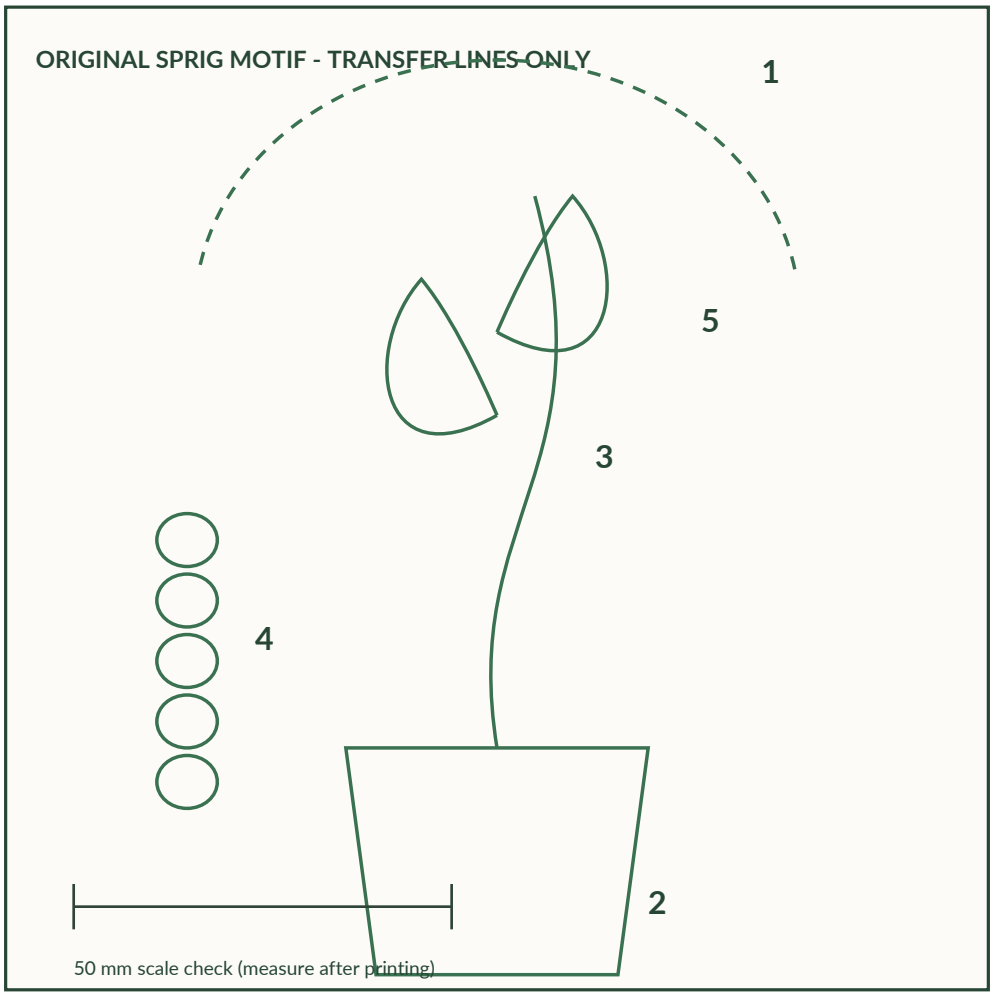
Original 5-stitch sprig sampler; do not transfer the numbered key.

FABRIC SQUARE - CUT ONE



STP-MAKE-F057 PATTERN 2 OF 2

Original 5-stitch sprig sampler; do not transfer the numbered key.



KEY: 1 Running / 2 Backstitch / 3 Stem / 4 Chain / 5 Satin

MAKE / MEASURE / ADJUST

Fabric and hoop

Cloth cut: 180 x 180 mm. Central guide field: 130 x 130 mm. Hoop size used: _____. Fabric and care: _____.

Transfer and print scale

PATTERN 1 bar readings: _____, _____ mm. PATTERN 2 bar readings: _____, _____ mm. Transfer only motif outlines.

Thread choices

Number of floss strands: _____; stem colour: _____; leaf fill: _____; accent: _____.

Needles and clean-up

Number of needles taken out: _____; number returned: _____; any loose thread removed? Yes / No.

What to revisit

Which of running, backstitch, stem, chain and satin stitch should be practised again? _____

MAKE / MEASURE / ADJUST

Stitch checklist

Running [ ] Backstitch [ ] Stem [ ] Chain [ ] Satin [ ]. Mark only after practising the corresponding motif.

Tension and neatness

Which line puckered? Which stitch had irregular spacing? _____

Care

Remove all needles and secure tails. Clean marks only per fabric marker and cloth instructions.

Next sample

Choose a new two-colour variation or repeat a stitch on an offcut; keep the original guide.