



Tips and Tricks for Blackwork Embroidery

Welcome to your Raven Blackwork pattern! If you're new to blackwork, it is one of the oldest decorative embroidery techniques in existence, and is very easy to pick up and start. I hope you love it as much as I do!

What materials do I need?

Textile - I always stitch on 14 count Aida, which is designed for cross stitch and is readily available in all craft stores.

You can also use other "evenweave" fabrics, such as Hardanger or embroidery linen. These fabrics have a much higher thread count (usually 28+), so you should stitch over double threads on these fabrics.

Thread - Traditionally blackwork was done with silk, however most of us now stitch with stranded DMC floss. DMC floss comes in 8-yard skeins, and is actually 6 threads twisted together. The pattern will tell you how many individual threads to use for your design.

Hoop or Frame - Always choose a hoop 1-2 inches larger than the finished design. Hoops are measured by their outside width, so a 10 inch hoop really only has 9 inches of stitching space.

Needle - Choose a tapestry needle with a blunt tip.

Basic Instructions:

Blackwork traditionally employs two types of stitching – outlines and fills.

The outline is worked first to map out the piece. I like to use long, single stitches between the anchor points of my outline, and this is also how my patterns are designed. I find it gives a sharp finish.

Technically it is incorrect, but I haven't been arrested yet. *If you prefer, the traditional method is to use Holbein or running stitch for the outlines.*

Fills are used to fill the sections of the outline. For all my fills, I use a simple backstitch. Simply put, you copy what you see on the grid, using backstitch to replicate the shapes. Stitch one repeat at a time.

You will find that when you reach the end of a section, the repeat likely will not fill the entire shape. When this happens, you need to fake it a little. To make it appear as if the fill continues right to the edge, you'll need to finish some of your stitches in places where there aren't holes. Use your needle to poke a new hole where you need it, and this will be hidden underneath the outline stitches.