Guide to Fabric, threads and needles

The eye of a needle!

The Working Environment by Liz Almond
NEEDLE, THREAD AND FABRIC – MAKING CHOICES!

Knowing which threads and needles to use for specific fabrics is important and this PDF aims to provide some basic information on the subject, based entirely on what I have found works for me!

So what is the fabric count?

The fabric count is the number of threads within a specific area. If there are a lot of threads, holes or blocks of thread within a specific length, then the thread count will be high and the design worked on a higher count fabric will be smaller. If there are fewer thread counts in a specific length, then the design will be larger.

How to count the threads:

If you have problems seeing the threads, I suggest you use a magnifying lens. Start by measuring 2.5 cm or 1 inch across the fabric and then use a pin to count how many threads, holes or blocks of thread there are within the 2.5 cm. This will give you the thread count. It is possible to buy a ruler designed for this purpose to identify the most common thread/stitches to inches. These usually cover 11, 14, 16, 18, 22, 28, 32 and 36 count fabric.

Do not assume that because the fabric says it is a specific count, that it is actually correct, so it is suggested that you check the count. There should be the same number of warp and weft threads to the inch if the design is to be even.

To find the correct size of material to use for a project consult the Fabric Calculator in Blackwork Journey. The calculator is in both centimetres and inches. Just follow the instructions, add the information and it will calculate the size of the fabric required.

Fabric Calculator in inches
Fabric Calculator in metric measure

The chart will frequently show a design area in inches or centimetres. The calculator will give the minimum fabric size required, although you may wish to add additional material for mounting or framing.

For example, CH0326 Bedazzle:

**Bedazzle**

- **Author:** Elizabeth Almond
- **Copyright:** Elizabeth Almond
- **Grid Size:** 124W x 124H
- **Design Area:** 8.57" x 8.57" (120 x 120 stitches)

The design area is 8.57 x 8.57 inches (120 x 120 stitches). Using a 28 count evenweave fabric and adding the information required, the fabric required should be 13 x 13 inches. If you wish to add extra inches around the design, indicate this in the ‘How much extra fabric on either side?’ section of the calculator.

Adding the correct information takes the guesswork out of fabric sizing!
**Fabric, Thread and Needle Guide**

An evenweave fabric is the most commonly used fabric for counted thread embroidery and has the same number of threads in each direction.

It can be used for cross stitch, pulled and drawn thread work. Canvas can also be suitable for counted thread techniques such as cross stitch, but is less suitable for pulled or drawn thread work because of the stiffness of the canvas. Depending on the fabric count, evenweave is both easy to see and use. Select a fabric count you can see to work on easily. When using a dark fabric, a white cloth placed on your knees will help to emphasise the holes.

Evenweave fabric may be made of cotton, a cotton mix or 100% linen. They each have their advantages and disadvantages, but I have underlined the fabrics I use most frequently from the Zweigart range. The Zweigart website carries the full range of colours available, but there has been a reduction in the lines carried over the past few years.

http://www.zweigart.de

**Zweigart Cotton Evenweave**
- 18 Count Davosa
- 20 Count Bellana
- 22 Count Fine Ariosa
- 22 Count Oslo
- 25 Count Colmar
- 25 Count Lugana
- 27 Count Linda
- 28 Count Brittney
- 28 Count Jazlyn
- 28 Count Trento
- 28 count Trentino
- 32 Count Lucan
- **32 Count Murano**

**Zweigart Linen Evenweave**
- 18 Count Floba
- 20 Count Cork Linen
- 25 Count Floba
- **25 Count Dublin Linen**
- **28 Count Cashel**
- 28 Count Marne Linen
- **28 Count Quaker Cloth**
- 30 count Linen Band
- **32 Count Belfast Linen**
- 32 Count Floba
- 35 Count Floba
- 36 Count Edinburgh Linen
- 40 Count Newcastle Linen
- 55 Count Kingston Linen

**Zweigart Canvas**
- Cordova Canvas
- Mono Canvas - Antique
- Mono Canvas - White
- Rug Canvas
- Sudan Canvas
- Tapestry Canvas - Antique
- Tapestry Canvas - White
- White Interlock Canvas

*Extract from the Zweigart website. It is easy to navigate and lists all the products, colours and materials currently available.*
**DMC Products**

DMC also produce a wide range of embroidery fabrics using the name Charles-Craft-Fabric as well as their own.

![DMC Products](http://www.dmc-usa.com/Products/Fabrics/Charles-Craft-Fabric/Monaco.aspx)

Whilst they do not carry the same range of fabrics as Zweigart, they are readily available and of a very high quality. I especially like the Monaco range which I found easy to handle.

http://www.dmc-usa.com/Products/Fabrics/Charles-Craft-Fabric/Monaco.aspx

As you explore different fabrics you will soon discover the ones that are most suited to your needs.

There are other manufactures of materials, but always choose a good fabric. Many hours will be spent on your embroidery, so your choice is important!
Quick Reference Guide to fabric, threads and needles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fabric</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Thread</th>
<th>Needle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evenweave</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Stranded cotton (3 Strands)</td>
<td>No.24</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pearl cotton No 12</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Coton a Broder No 12</td>
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<td></td>
<td>27/28</td>
<td>Stranded cotton (2-3 strands)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Pearl cotton No 12</td>
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<td>Coton a Broder No 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aida</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Stranded cotton (3 Strands)</td>
<td>No 24</td>
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<td>Coton a Broder No 16</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Stranded cotton (2-3 strands)</td>
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<td>Pearl cotton No 12</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Stranded cotton (2 strands)</td>
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<td>Pearl cotton No 12</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Stranded cotton (1-2 strands)</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Pearl Cotton No 5</td>
<td>No 20</td>
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<td>Pearl Cotton No 8</td>
<td>No 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Binca</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Stranded Cotton (6 strands)</td>
<td>No 20</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Soft Embroidery Cotton</td>
<td>No 18</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tapestry wool</td>
<td>No 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canvas Interlock, Mono single thread or Double Thread Canvas</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Soft Embroidery Cotton (Single or double)</td>
<td>No 18</td>
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<td>Tapestry wool(Single or double)</td>
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<td>16 &amp; 18</td>
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<td>Stranded cotton (5 strands)</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Coton a Broder No 16</td>
<td>No 24</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stranded Cotton (3-4 strands)</td>
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These are the needles and thread quantities I use with specific fabric counts. The information will vary to suit the individual.

For general sewing:

Sharps

These needles are the most popular needle for general sewing:
Size 2, 3 and 4 suitable for medium to heavy fabrics
Size 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 suitable for light to medium fabrics
Size 11 and 12 suitable for fine fabrics or creating small delicate stitches

**Embroidery and Crewel**

Embroidery needles have a long eye which makes threading the needle so much easier when using multiple strands of thread. The most popular sizes used to embroider are size 7 and 9. Because of their large eye these needles are suitable for general sewing. They are ideal for people who have difficulty seeing the eye of a needle.

**Tapestry and cross stitch**

These needles have a large eye and a blunt round point designed for the use in needlepoint, petit point, countered cross stitch and plastic canvas work.

Size 13, 14 Suitable for use when stitching on Binca or 6hpi Aida fabric.
Size 16, 18, and 20 Suitable for tapestry
Size 22, 24, 26 and 28 Used in cross stitch and petit point.

Eyesight will determine which needle is used. Use a needle you can see to thread and if necessary use a magnifying lens!

Just to recap, the needles I use are sharps, embroidery and crewel needles which have points and are used where the fabric has to be split and tapestry and cross stitch needles which have a blunt end.

With metallic threads it may be necessary to use a needle with a larger eye than usual to reduce the friction on the thread. The needle should pass comfortably through the fabric!

I hope this helps to resolve some of the difficulties when choosing different fabrics, threads and needles.

Happy stitching!

**Liz**

*In the town of Szentendere, Pest, Hungary I visited a little museum which displays an exhibition of the Micro Art of Nikolai Syadristy. This picture of a needle’s eye with its camels was taken through a microscope and gives a new dimension to a simple tool!*