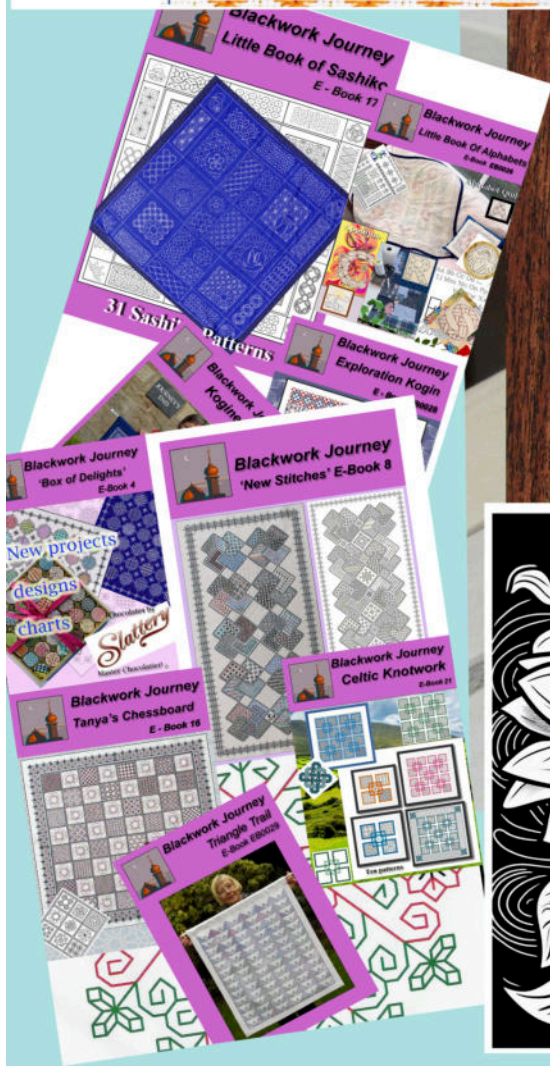
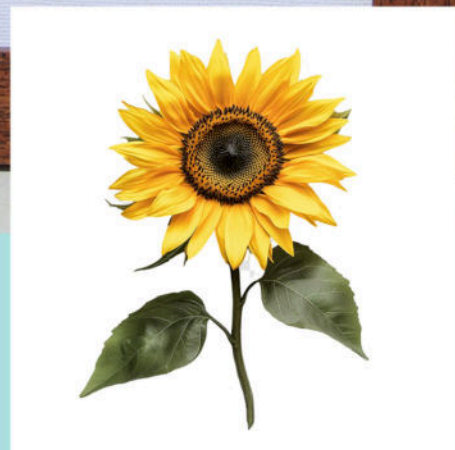




Blackwork Journey Blog

July 2025



Celebrate July with new challenges and news from readers around the world!

New designs for the Summer with PR0084 “Celebrate Summer”.

This is a free style blackwork pattern based on a design I initially created for a Sashiko panel. The panel features two sunflowers drawn and stitched on pre-washed calico. I used this basic idea to create a line drawing which I filled with blackwork patterns worked in yellows, oranges, browns and greens from my stash. I mixed and matched the different threads taking one strand of one and one of another to create different combinations.



The idea was to add depth at the base of the flower and the leaves and lighten the flower at the top. Some specialist stitches were added for texture.

The fabric chosen was Zweigart 28 count evenweave measuring 10 x 12 inches. This pattern would have been difficult to recreate on Aida fabric, but a simple outline design could also be worked on calico or medium weight cotton using specialist stitches from “Stitch Along” 2025 and worked as a freestyle embroidery design.



Extracts from PR0084 Celebrate Summer worked on Zweigart 28 count evenweave.



Taking one idea and working it in different techniques raises challenges but can be fun to develop. Two members of my local church “Knit and Natter” group are working on a sunflower sashiko panel based on the double sunflower design and I am delighted to see their progress.

I have also started on my own sunflower sashiko project, but time is limited with teaching and preparation, so I am not making quite such good progress, but it is suitable to slip into a suitcase and take with me on my travels! I always have a piece of needlework in my bag and it is surprising how much you can achieve in just a few spare minutes.

Working with groups across the world

I often receive requests from groups in the UK and overseas to work directly with me or to use one of my patterns for a group project. I am always pleased help whenever possible, which has provided me with the opportunity to work with groups I would not been in contact with under normal circumstances.

For example, the Covid pandemic led to one my large projects being translated into Spanish and being worked worldwide by members of Bordados con el Alma, a large Spanish embroidery group. Since I do not speak Spanish I worked with Manu Soto, a professor in Buenos Aires and Elsa Wind, an amazing translator in Spain and watched with interest as the project developed. I have also worked with groups in South Africa, taught in Kenya, America and Canada and held Zoom sessions in places such as Sri Lanka in the middle of the night!



Embroidery worked by the ladies of Simcoe County Embroidery Guild, Ontario

Blackwork Journey Blog, July 2025

Donna Van Nispen contacted me recently from Ontario and I would like to thank her for her e-mail and photographs. It is always good to see completed work and to hear how people reacted to the different projects.

Hi Liz,

Last fall I wrote to you about teaching a mini course on blackwork using your simplicity pattern. What fun we had. I am so proud of the ladies. Some want to continue on in the fall.

Blackwork converts!

Your pattern was so easy to follow.

Thanks from the Simcoe County Embroidery Guild, Ontario

When learning a new technique, the secret is to start with a small project to build up your confidence before moving on to larger designs and this is where free projects can be helpful using threads and fabric that you may already have in your stash. It enables you to try out ideas without incurring unnecessary expense and to find out whether it is a technique you would like to follow further. There are many free designs on the Blackwork Journey website to explore.

Embroidery kits with multiple threads can be very expensive whereas blackwork embroidery uses a limited number of skeins of embroidery floss and are more economical. I would not buy cheap embroidery fabric or thread but use a recognised brand, especially for larger projects which will often become your heirlooms for the future. I usually use Zweigart evenweave and Aida fabric and recognised brands of floss such as DMC and Anchor. Cheap fabric and threads cannot be guaranteed to give satisfactory results, so I suggest you check both fabric and threads carefully first!



Sashiko embroidery is another area where you can save a considerable amount of money by learning how to draw your own designs rather than buying pre-printed kits. Whilst it takes time to learn how to draw the patterns it is very satisfying when you produce your own unique design.

“Sashiko 365: Stitch a new sashiko pattern every day of the year” by Susan Briscoe is just one example where the cost of the book is far outweighed by the learning experience.

As a designer and teacher, I am always looking at ways of encouraging students to explore their own creativity, but without the knowledge of basic embroidery stitches, how to create patterns and take an idea from paper to fabric it can be difficult to know where and how to start.

Confidence building comes from learning the basics and developing your skills to your own level and you will often be surprised just how much can be achieved this way.

I am also teaching more workshops on practical embroidery stitching as fewer schools are teaching basic textile skills. Skills learned from the older generation may not be passed on to their children as they did in the past. I also find it concerning that students doing textile courses at universities know how to experiment and explore creative textile arts but sometimes lack the essentials to create finished hand stitched projects. If their aim is to work in the fashion industry a practical knowledge of hand stitching would be very useful.

Newly acquired skills can be used in multiple projects from clothing to household goods, pictures and wall hangings large and small and when I teach, I always take a large display of my projects so that people can

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Japanese Sashiko and Kogin designs can be explored in the same way by building up blocks of pattern. Each technique provides different challenges and new learning opportunities.



Extract from EB0011 Koginesque

If you have any queries, please contact:
lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

Happy stitching,

Liz

examine my work, ask questions and see how they have been used! Working endless samples is not productive but learning how to use what you stitch is far more practical!

Starting small and building up to larger designs has always fundamental to many of the Blackwork Journey designs. This applies especially to the blackwork patterns found on my site but also to Japanese Sashiko and Kogin designs which can be found in “Charts”, “Projects” and “E-books” on the site.

Some of the blackwork patterns suitable for beginners are:

EB0004 Box of Delights, EB0006 Pandora's Box, EB0008 New Stitches, EB0012 Tiny Treasures, EB0015 Islamic Inspiration and EB0029 Triangle Trail.

These projects and many more use small “bites” of blackwork to build up the designs.



Block 6. Keep Calm

Block 6 is worked in oranges, yellow and greens. **Threads:** Three shades orange, yellow plus 2 shades green, or colours of choice. Use one strand of floss for the lettering, 2 strands for cross stitch and other stitches. Using one strand of floss gives a more delicate effect. Experiment with different thicknesses.



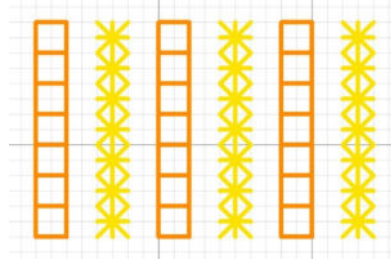
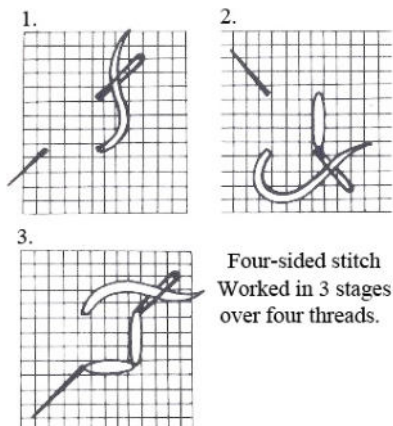
Block 6 Numbered



Block 6 Embroidery.

Instructions:

Start two rows above the previous block with **Rows 43 and 44**. Alternating rows of four-sided stitch and eyelet rows. This is a pulled thread design. If the design is worked on evenweave fabric the stitches can be 'pulled' tight to open up the pattern. On Aida less 'pull' is used and the pattern is treated as an embroidery stitch rather than a pulled work stitch.



Four-sided stitch and eyelet stitch are worked in columns. Two blocks or eight threads are left between each column. Both stitches can also be used as filler patterns to cover large areas easily.

Row 45. Lettering - use one strand for backstitch, two strands for cross stitch. Colonial knots (2 strands) for dot and full stop. Work the back stitch round the cross stitch for a neater outline.

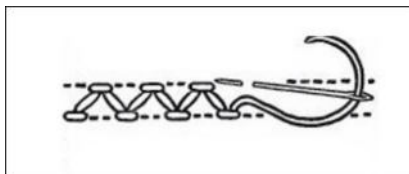
Rows 46 and 47. Shaded blackwork and cross stitch patterns (2 strands).

Row 48. Detached Herringbone and back stitch band.

Row 49. Star stitch variations in floss and metallic thread. Work from the outside to the centre.

Row 50. Chevron stitch in two colours.

Chevron stitch



Row 51. Narrow chevron stitch with diamonds.

rsnstitchbank.org/stitch/chevron-stitch

Mary Corbet Needle n Thread. www.needlenthread.com

This completes Block 6

Simple Stitches Block 6a has similar patterns but includes a useful back stitch alphabet over 4 blocks or 8 threads worked in one strand of floss.



Block 6a embroidery.

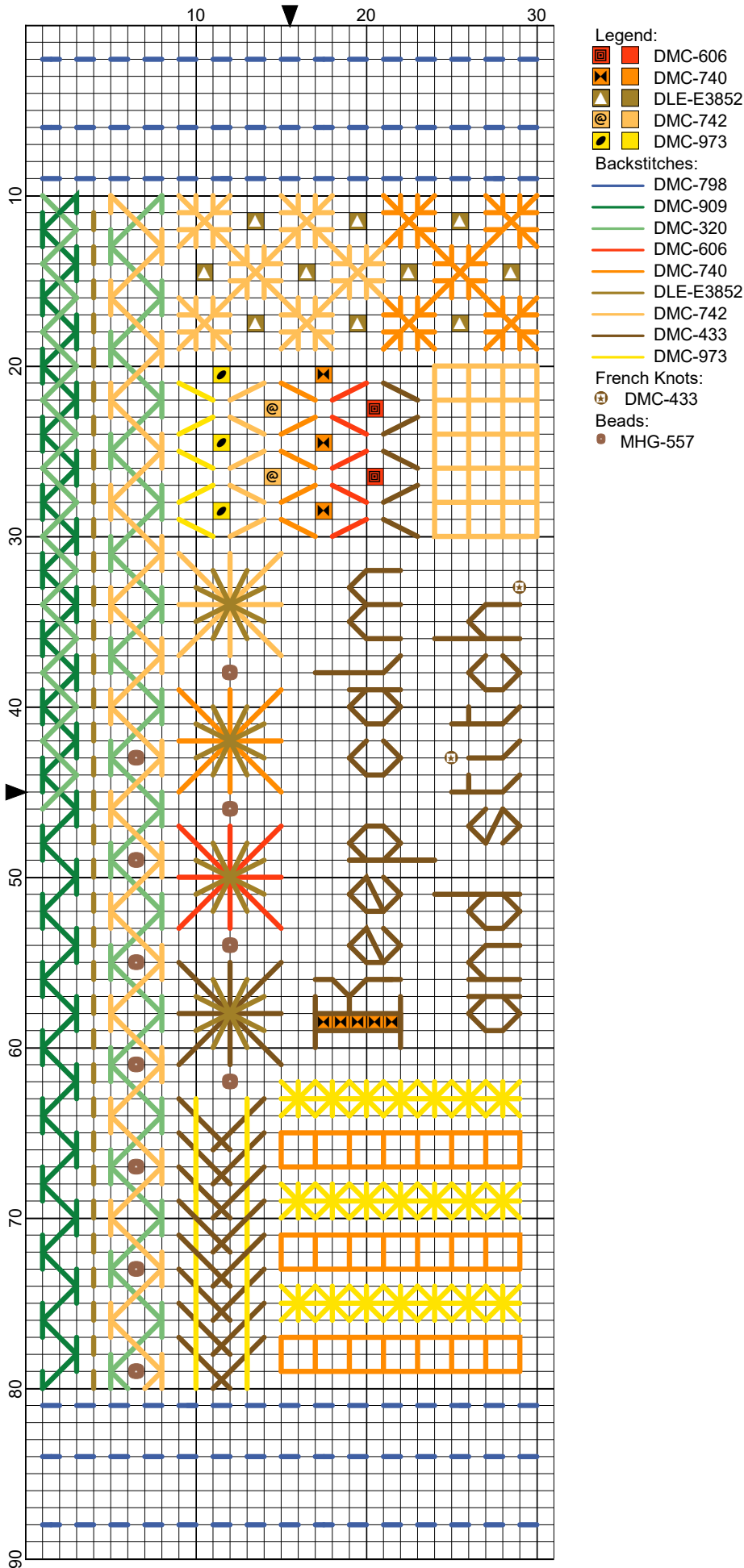
Help! My rows of embroidery are twisting out of shape. How can I correct them?

This is a widespread problem, especially when working over a large area or when the fabric is not in a frame. It may be more obvious when using evenweave fabric. Achieving straight lines of stitches is not as easy as it looks. It depends on tension and control and that comes with practice!

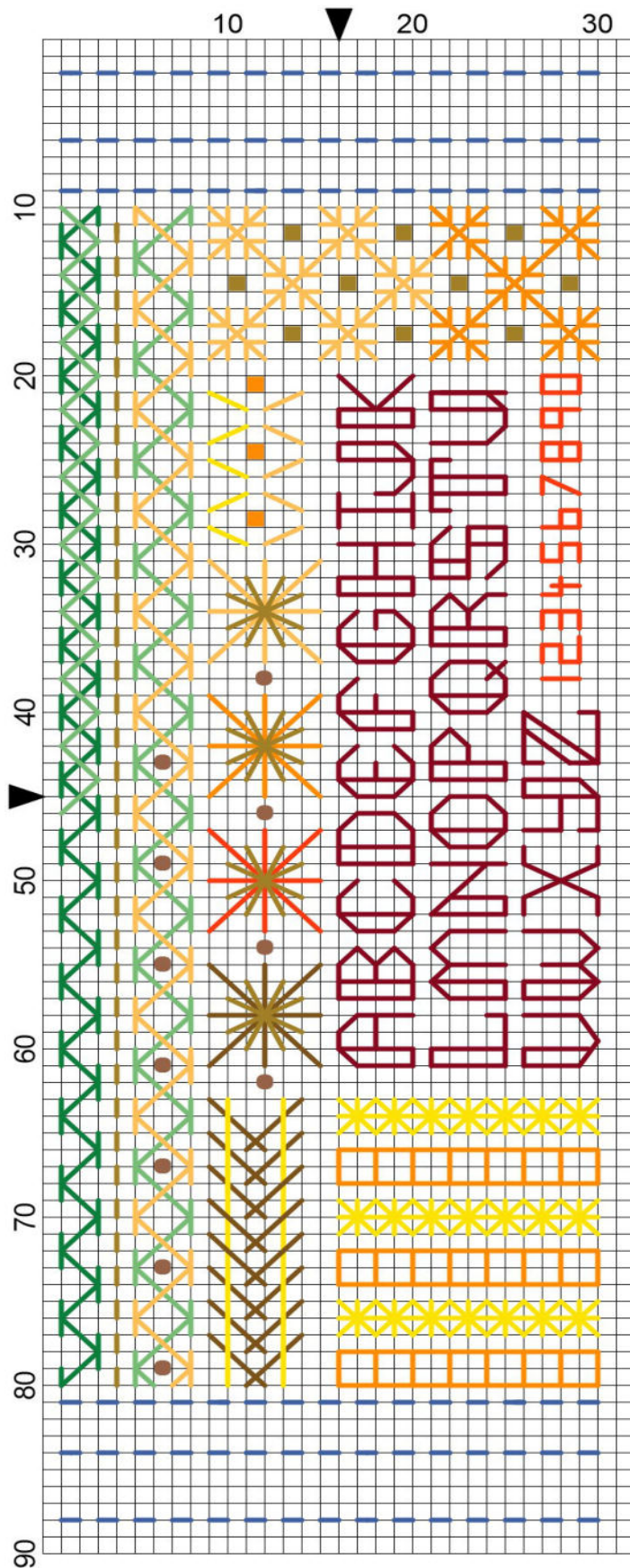
If the rows of embroidery are beginning to twist and you are using colourfast threads as recommended place the embroidery face down on a soft towel, lightly steam with the iron and 'pull' into shape. Leave it to dry naturally.

You learn from your mistakes! Next time will be easier.

Block 6



Block 6a Simple Stitches



Row 1. Four-sided and eyelet rows.

Row 2. Alphabet, back stitch, 1 strand of floss.

Row 3. Blackwork and cross stitch, 2 strands.

Row 4. Herringbone and back stitch band.

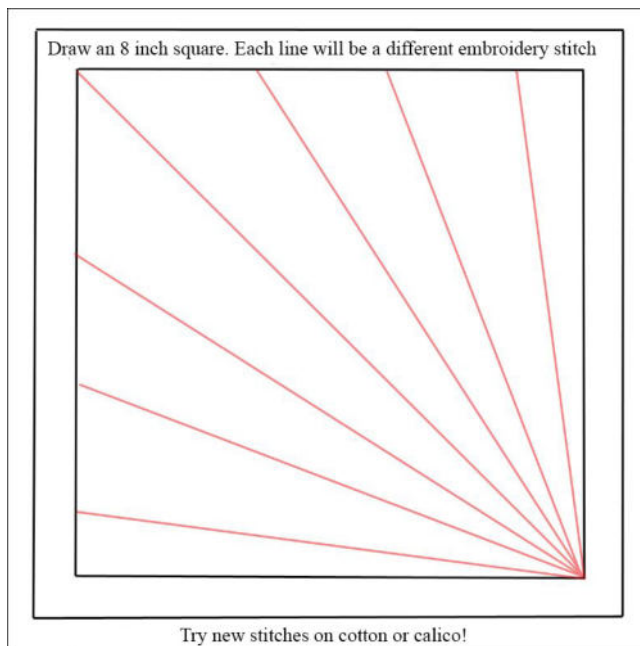
Row 5. Eyelet stitch variation. Diagonal stitch and cross stitch.

Row 6. Chevron stitch over 4 blocks, two colours.

Row 7. Chevron stitch.

'Stitch Along' 2025 Project 2 Practice your stitches!

Taking your stitches from Zweigart Aida to cotton or calico is another step towards using the stitches. Go through your stash and find a piece of plain medium weight fabric **10 x 10 inches**. Select a variety of threads - stranded floss, crochet cotton, cotton P rle No. 8 etc., crewel needle and small embroidery ring.



Draw an 8-inch square with a 7-inch square inside. lightly draw seven lines as shown in the diagram. Each line will be a different stitch from the 'Stitch Along' project. The 8-inch line is worked in sashiko running stitch or back stitch whipped.

Choose stitches such as wheatear stitch, fly stitch, herringbone stitch with a flatter stitch such as chain stitch, reverse chain stitch whipped in between.

Stop the stitch before the corner is worked and work the final inch in back stitch. The design can be as simple or as complicated as you choose to make it.

Two different examples have been included to give you an idea how to use your stitches.

Pattern A is a more complicated design using a selection of textured stitches, but **Pattern B** is a simple spiral using just four stitches - Fly stitch, reverse chain stitch whipped, double knot stitch and stem stitch whipped with lazy daisy flowers. Any of these patterns can be used.



Pattern A



Pattern B

Look through Blocks 1 – 6, decide which stitches you have enjoyed working. Design and stitch your own small sampler. Use the finished piece as a pocket for a calico shopping bag, small picture, or the central square of a cushion.

Happy stitching, *Liz*