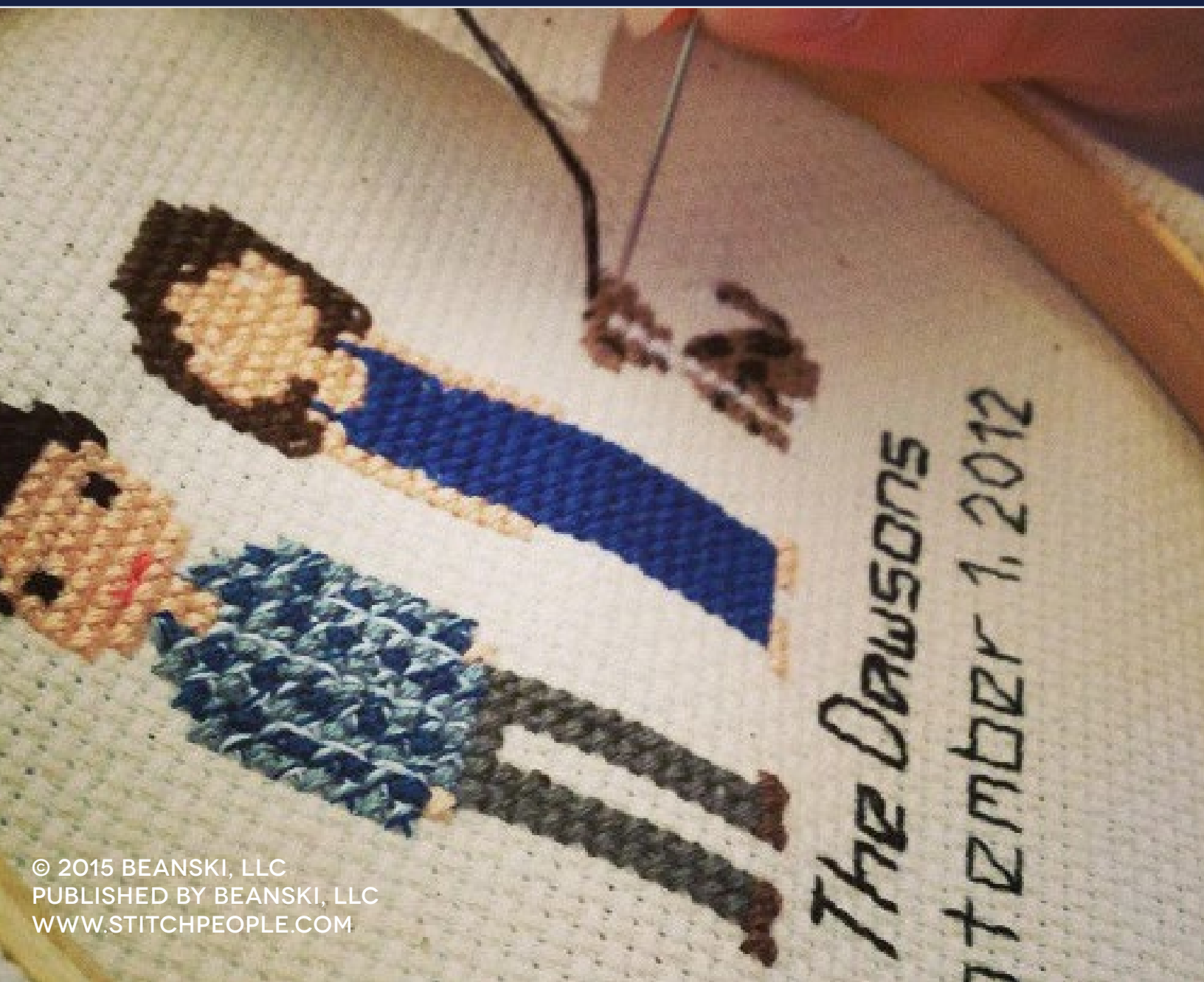# CROSS-STITCH 101

A BASIC GUIDE TO BEGINNING CROSS-STITCHING

BY STITCH ♥ PEOPLE

CREATORS OF "DO-IT-YOURSELF STITCH PEOPLE"

CROSS-STITCH 101

Thank you so much for downloading this guide! I'm so excited you've decided to learn to cross-stitch. Cross-stitching is a wonderful art that has existed for thousands of years and is a beautiful tradition to become a part of. Creating needlework art to hand down to future generations and to give as gifts is relaxing, fun, and extremely satisfying.

Let's go over the basics to teach you how to start on the right track with cross-stitching.

MATERIALS

Generally speaking, your materials will remain basically the same for all cross-stitch projects. You can order them online, pick them up at your local craft store, or, you can purchase a cross-stitch starter kit from StitchPeople.com where we've taken all of the guesswork out of getting started! **Use the coupon code crossstitch101 at checkout for 10% off your kit, and remember there is free shipping included with your purchase (within the USA)!**

- Aida Fabric: This is a special type of fabric used for cross-stitching. It has an open weave, which allows you to see the holes that are utilized in cross-stitch projects. Aida fabric has a number that determines the size. The number represents how many "squares" of the weave can fit into an inch. Thus, the smaller the number, the larger the fabric. Size 11 Aida fabric will fit 11 cross-stitches in an inch. Size 28 Aida fabric will fit 28 cross-stitches in an inch. Thus, the size 28 fabric creates smaller stitches, as more can fit into a single inch.

- Embroidery Floss: The type of thread used for cross-stitching is called floss. There are many brands, but I personally prefer DMC as it is commonly found at craft stores and has a wide variety of colors. Embroidery floss is a loose "rope" of 6 individual threads. The pattern(s) you use to cross-stitch will specify how many threads of floss to use for your project.

- Embroidery Hoop: The size will depend on your work. I recommend a 5" wooden hoop for Stitch People projects.

- Needle: I prefer to use regular embroidery needles with a sharp point. This allows me to go "outside the lines" of the Aida fabric. However, as you're beginning, you may wish to use a crewel needle which has a rounded tip.

- Scissors

- Pencil

- Pattern (You can purchase one, or make your own family portrait pattern with Stitch People!)

THREADING THE NEEDLE & SECURING THE FLOSS

First, remember that embroidery floss is made up of six threads, or strands, but you will likely only use 1-3 strands at a time.

Back Side of Portrait
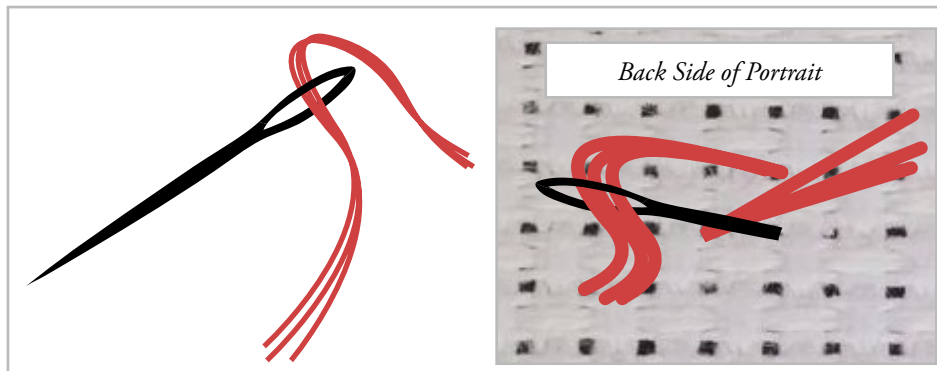
Begin by threading the needle. Remember to be careful to ensure that all three strands of embroidery floss are pulled equally through the eye of the needle.

Then, the cleanest, easiest, and fastest option to securing the thread is to leave the ends of your embroidery floss loose as you begin to stitch (do not tie the ends of the threads into a knot, as the knot may pull through the holes of the Aida fabric). Simply secure the loose ends on the back of your portrait as you continue to stitch, using the loops you'll create naturally while stitching to hold the loose ends down.

Until you secure the loose ends of the floss with the stitching, keep a thumb or index finger on the ends of the floss until they are otherwise secured so the ends of the floss do not pull through the Aida fabric.

DEFINE THE CENTER & BEGIN TO STITCH

When you start to stitch, you should first define the center point of the fabric, and use that center point to orient the rest of the pattern to the fabric. The easiest way to find the center point is to fold the fabric in half length-wise and width-wise, and lightly mark the center point with a pencil on the back of your fabric. (Note: it typically doesn't matter which side of the Aida fabric is the "back" as both sides are usually identical.)

Center Point

The size of the fabric will vary depending on the pattern or Stitch People portrait you choose to make, so if you have purchased fabric separately from the pattern, you'll have to cut it to size (look at the dimensions of the finished work provided with the pattern, and cut your fabric to be 2"-3" larger on all sides). Most patterns, however, come with fabric, pre-cut to the perfect size.

Cross-stitch art consists of creating repeating X shapes in varying colors to achieve an overall picture. Each X is created by making two diagonal stitches, one over the other.
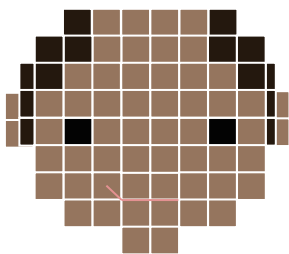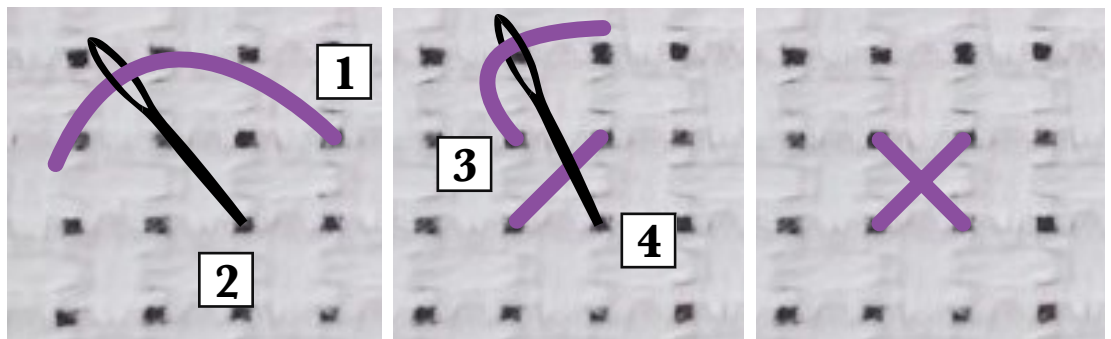

For the sake of this guide, let's talk about how to start cross-stitching by using the example of a Stitch People pattern - a generic male head/hairstyle. Let's talk about how to complete the face pattern to the left. We'll start from the neck and work up.

You may choose to stitch in "rows" or with individual X stitches. In the examples below, we'll complete the two, bottom stitches of the portrait to the left that represent the neck. The first example completes the two stitches in rows. The second example completes the two stitches in X's.
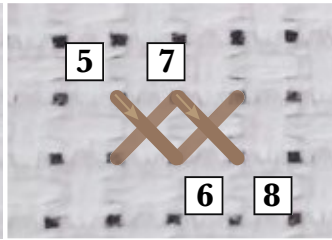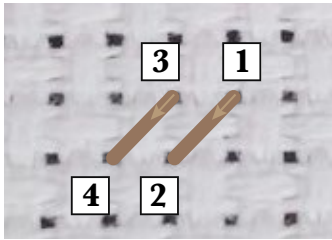
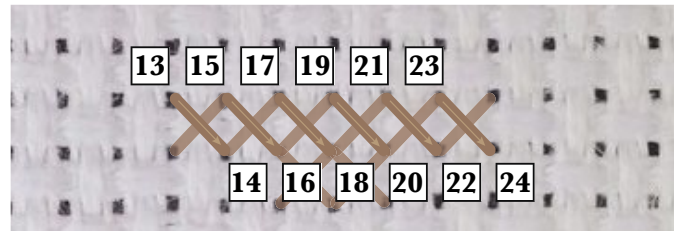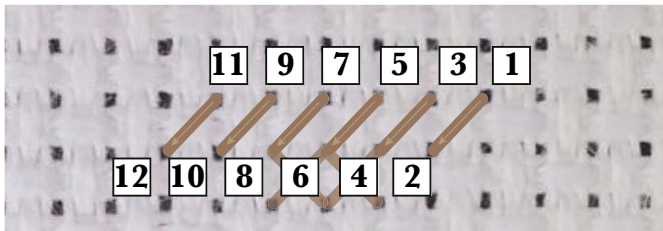## STITCHING IN ROWS   STITCHING IN X'S
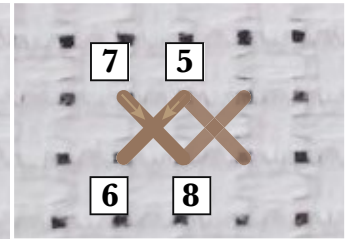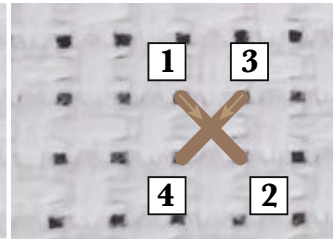
*As you stitch, remember to **be consistent** while creating the X shape. Keep the same direction of diagonals on the bottom, and the same direction of diagonals on the top. Also, keep the same tension throughout all your stitches - don't pull them too tight. Stitches should lay flat, but not distort the hole in the Aida fabric. The best way to achieve a beautiful, consistent look to your portrait is to be sure the stitches are uniform.*

You've completed your first row! Let's move up to the next row above the neck that is six stitches long. As demonstrated on the previous page, there are two ways you can systematically work away at creating your portrait.

For the first method, let's complete all bottom diagonal stitches of the X and then work the other direction, completing all the top diagonal stitches of the X. The second way to complete this row would be to complete each individual X shape, moving from one X to the next.

STITCHING IN ROWS
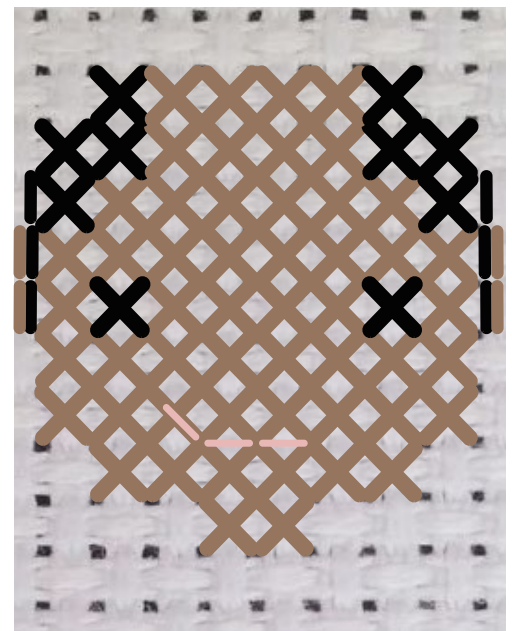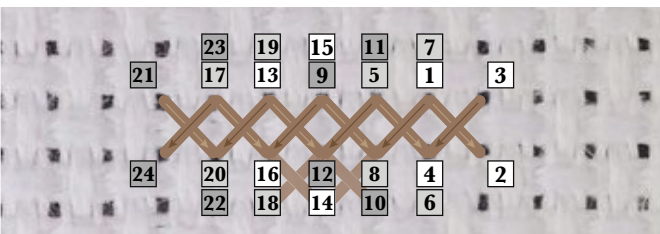
STITCHING IN X'S

There is no right or wrong way to complete a row, <u>as long as you're consistent with which leg of the X is on top and bottom, and as long as your tension remains steady.</u>

Continue stitching, row by row until you are finished with a particular section or a particular color of embroidery floss (for example, the skin color). Then, choose what element you'd like to complete next (hair, eyes or lips) and move right along until your portrait is complete *(see right)*.

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In the example chosen, notice that the lips are made up of three back stitches on top of the cross-stitches in the skin color (see diagram below for back-stitches). Also notice that the man's sideburns and ears are represented with two parallel back stitches. The sideburns use the holes in the Aida fabric, but the ears should be completed in the weave of the fabric, just outside the holes of the Aida cloth. (This is why the pointed, crewel needle can come in handy!)

TYING OFF ENDS

The easiest way to tie off the end of your embroidery floss is to secure it to your work so the pattern doesn't unravel. Simply tuck the needle under 3-4 loops on the back-side of your portrait, and pull the needle (with any remaining thread) through. With scissors, clip away any excess floss.
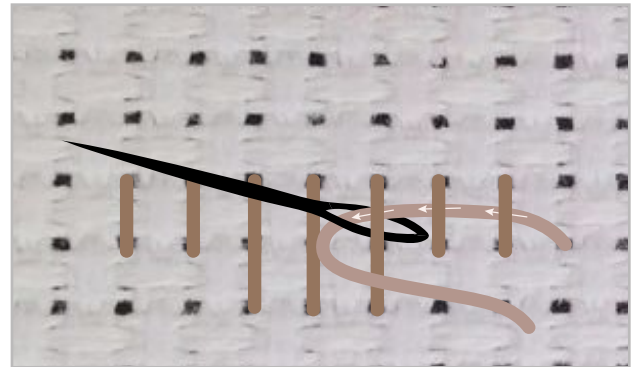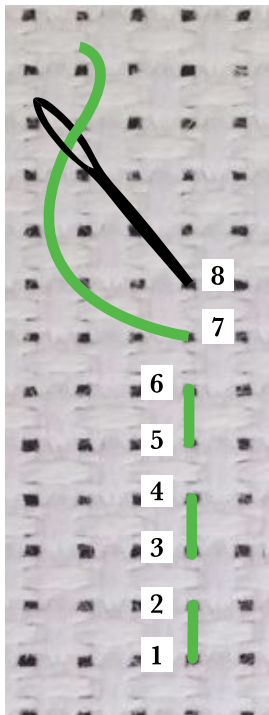
*As you work, keep your focus on the **front** side of your portrait. Because cross stitch consists of many "ins-and-outs" or "ups-and-downs" with the needle, it can be tempting to flip your work from front to back with each stitch you make. Try not to do this. The process of cross-stitching will be much easier for you if you keep your focus on the front of your portrait to allow yourself to see your portrait taking shape with each stitch.*
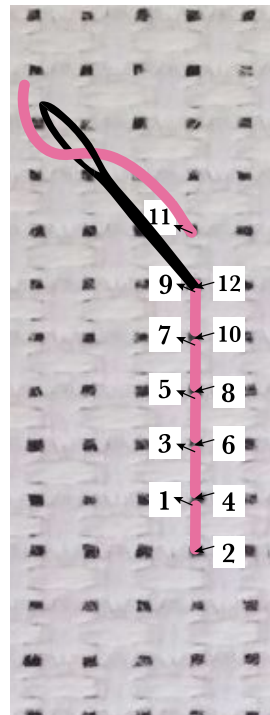
OTHER USEFUL STITCHES

You may wish to use a straight stitch (also called running stitch), or a back stitch to outline a character or element of clothing (like outlining a white pet or white wedding dress in a single, light gray thread), or you may wish to show details in clothing (like the lines between a person's arms and torso, or a collar of a shirt). You may also want to use a French Knot, which is an extremely useful stitch to use for eyes and noses for cats and dogs, as well as earrings, bouquets of flowers, or other small, round-ish details.

STRAIGHT STITCH

BACK STITCH

FRENCH KNOT

Secure thread on back side of fabric. Pull through to front, and twist thread around needle twice.

With thread twisted around needle, pull needle back through fabric, very near where needle was pulled through to front.

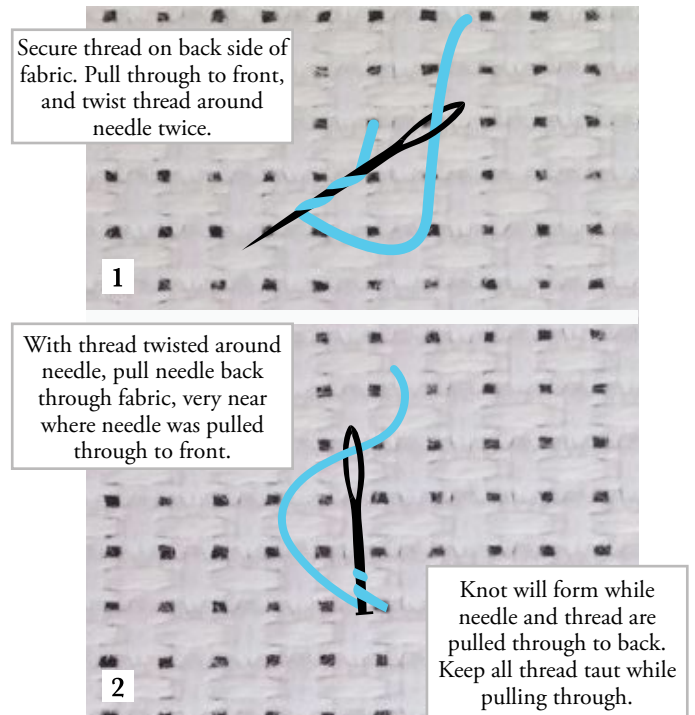Knot will form while needle and thread are pulled through to back. Keep all thread taut while pulling through.

For Earth Day, we released a free pattern of (can you guess?) the earth! It's a relatively simple pattern you can use to teach yourself to cross-stitch. Lets discuss some of its characteristics and what you'll need.

First, refer to the materials you'll need on the first page of this guide. If you don't have everything you need to get started, and you're intimidated by looking for everything at a craft store, think about purchasing a cross-stitch starter kit from us! We've got all the materials together to make it easy for you to get started. **Use the coupon code crossstitch101 at checkout for 10% off your kit, and remember there is free shipping included with your purchase (within the USA)!**

Next - take a look at the pattern to figure out how much fabric you'll need to work with.

This pattern, from the far left edge of the earth, to the far right edge of the text, is 87 "squares" or "columns" wide and 38 "squares" or "rows" high. If you use size 14 Aida fabric, how many inches will this pattern be, when finished? (Remember size 14 Aida fabric means 14 squares can fit in one inch).

87 squares wide / 14 squares per inch = 6.2 inches, 38 squares high / 14 squares per inch = 2.7 inches.

So the finished work will be almost 3 inches tall by just over 6 inches wide. If I were you, I'd cut the fabric to be around 7 inches tall by 10 inches wide.

Once you have the fabric ready, choose your favorite color for the text, and your favorite hues of blue and green for the earth. Choose which color you'll start stitching with (you can begin stitching the text first, the land areas, or the water areas of the earth). Then, separate that color of floss into groups of three strands. For this pattern, I'd recommend using three threads of floss for each element of the pattern.

You're almost ready to begin! Go ahead and fold your cut fabric it in half width-wise and length-wise to find the center point of your fabric, noting that the magenta dot on the pattern indicates the center point (but, of course, stitch that square the correct color of gray/black/whatever color you choose to use for the text). You may wish to lightly mark this center point on your Aida fabric with pencil.

Next, place the fabric into the embroidery hoop, making sure it's nice and tight - this makes it very easy to handle!
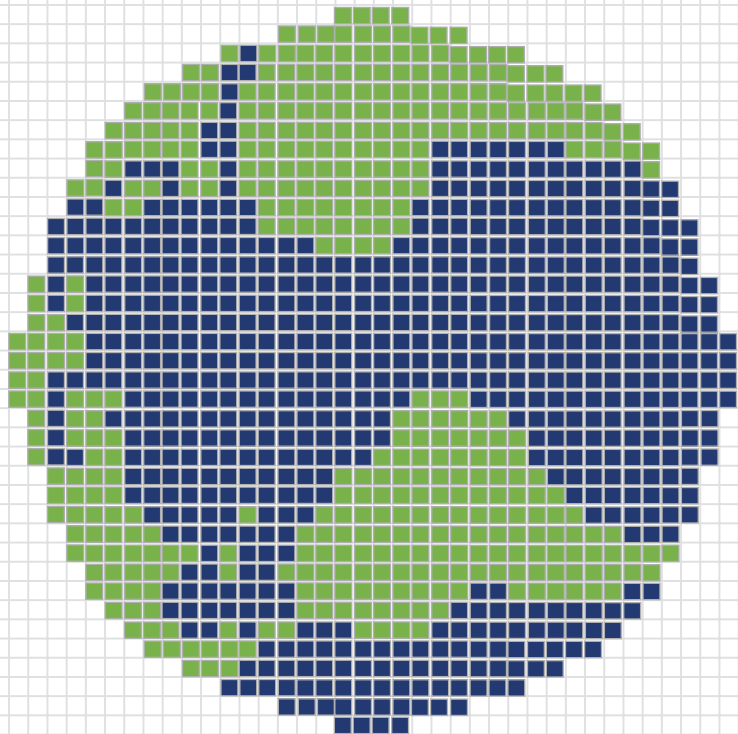
Thread your needle and begin your pattern! Good luck!

If you are worried you may "get lost" in the pattern, many beginners find it helpful to print the patterns, and mark off squares on the pattern as you go to keep your place, using a pencil, pen or high lighter.

Soon you'll be a cross-stitching pro.

STITCH PEOPLE
HAPPY EARTH DAY!

WHERE TO, NEXT?

Interested in doing more cross-stitch? There are thousands of options available to you to move forward. A quick Google search of your favorite topic, followed by "cross stitch pattern" will likely yield amazing results.

My favorite cross-stitch patterns? Stitch People! With "Do-It-Yourself Stitch People", you'll learn to make your own patterns to create heirloom-quality cross-stitched family portraits. And let me tell you - **people LOVE THESE**. They're fun to create, they make great gifts, and people are always surprised and touched when receiving them as a gift.

And let me tell you - making patterns is not difficult at all. It's fun and it gets easier the more you do it. Plus, it's really more of a mix n' match system and the book is full of text, diagrams, patterns and tutorials to hold your hand throughout the whole process.
The book includes:

- 105 Pages, spiral-bound for easy use
- Welcome Letter
- Materials List
- Cross-Stitch 101(Like this guide!)
- Creating Your Pattern (The steps for putting your portrait together)
- Getting Started (A quick review, and some extra helpful tips)
- Designing the Characters (Worksheets, like the one to the right, to help you keep track of your ideas, and thousands of designs for women's hairstyles/heads, women's clothing/bodies, men's hairstyles/heads, men's clothing/bodies, babes-in-arms, various children's body sizes and hairstyles/heads, 16 cat breeds, 38 dog breeds, and various accessories like purses, sports items, bouquets, and glasses)
- 4 Alphabet Styles
- Color Recommendations: Skin Tones, Hair Colors (black, brown, red/auburn, blonde, salt/pepper), denim blue hues, eyes, lips)
- Materials Checklist
- Tutorials for 2 framing options
- 10 Pages of inspiration (photos of 82 unique, completed portraits)

My Character Designs

EXAMPLE PATTERN:

CHARACTER NAME: Mom (Diane)

DIMENSIONS: 10 wide x 31 tall

HAIR STYLE COORDINATES: → *Page #* → *Column*

Page 27 . A . 3 → *Row #*

CLOTHING STYLE COORDINATES:

Top 44 . B . 1

Pants 50 . A . 1

ACCESSORIES:

Scarf, earrings

COLOR CHOICES:

Dk. blue pants, dmc 823

Pink Shirt, dmc 224

Blue scarf, dmc 964

Skin, dmc 945

Shoe style/color? TBD

Hair Color: dmc 898

Eyes: dmc 310

Earrings: White

Mom's Favorite Pearl Earrings!

Think about shoe style? Flats or sandals!