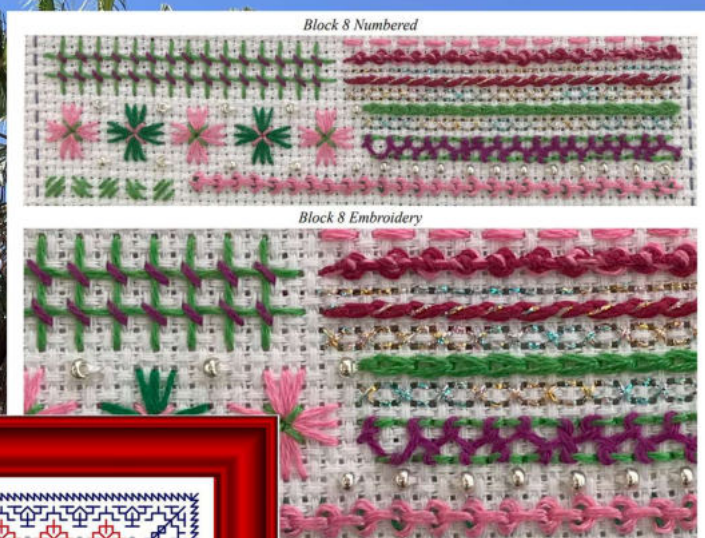




Blackwork Journey Blog

September 2025

'Stitch Along' 2025
Block 8 & 8a



Moving forward, looking ahead and planning for Christmas!

Once the summer months are over and the children have gone back to school and university, it is time to take stock and plan the next few months leading up to Christmas. The weeks will fly by and I like to check work in progress and prepare talks and workshops for the coming months well in advance. Many readers also like to stitch their Christmas gifts well in advance so this month I have been looking at quick stitching projects using some of the alphabets from 'Freebies' on the Blackwork Journey website.



For example, FR0058 letter R is for

This letter is inspired from an antique French alphabet by Sajou who worked in Paris in the late 1800's. Sajou was one of the three great French embroidery houses of the 19th century. Alexandre & Co and Rouyer were the others. The alphabets were often presented in small blue booklets containing tiny charts for the embroiderer to enjoy.

Owning some of these original booklets is like holding a piece of history. These letters can be stitched just as they are or they can be developed further by adding a border and details using four-sided stitch

Recycle, reuse!

Look through your stash for fabric and threads rather than buying more! These projects only require a small piece of fabric.



To stitch the letters without pulled thread borders you will need:

Material:

Zweigart 28 count evenweave, or 14 count, 8 x 8 inches.

Design area: 4.14 x 4.14 inches.

Stitches: 58 x 58.

Thread: DMC stranded cotton DMC 823 Navy blue - dark, one skein, or colour of choice.

Tapestry needle No.24. Small embroidery ring

Stitches used: Cross stitch, two strands

Method:

Fold the fabric into quarters to find the centre point. Work from the centre of the letter working outwards using TWO strands of cotton for the cross stitch. Alternative colours DMC 814 Garnet or DMC 909 Emerald green are two suitable colours for a vibrant embroidery.

Alphabet with four-sided stitch border:

Design area: 5.43 x 5.50 inches.

Stitches: 76 x 77

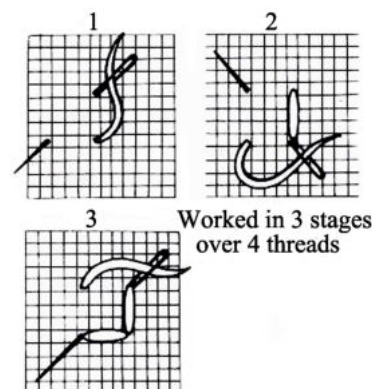
Material: Zweigart 28 count evenweave, or 14 count, 9 x 9 inches

Thread: DMC stranded cotton DMC 823 Navy blue - dark, one skein, or colour of choice.

DMC Cotton P rle No.12 white or one skein of white or pastel DMC stranded cotton.

Stitches used: cross stitch, four-sided stitch.

Four-sided stitch



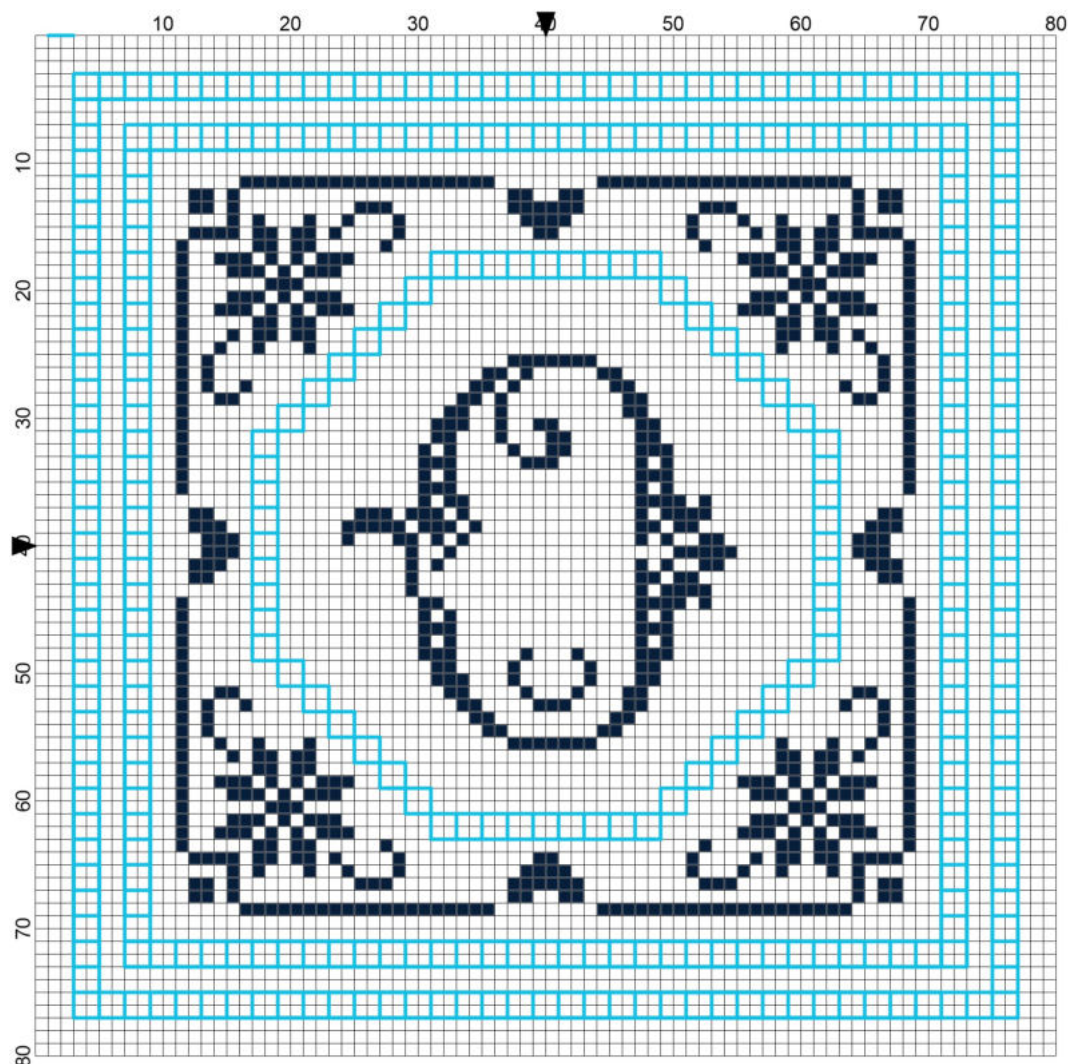
Four-sided stitch

This stitch is worked from right to left and may be used as a border or a filling.

It is worked over 4 x 4 threads on evenweave fabric, pulled firmly or, on 14 count Aida over 2 x 2 blocks, pulled gently.

Follow the above method and then work two bands of four-sided stitch round the outside of the motif. Consider whether a band of four-sided stitch can be added round the letter (optional).

Note: All the letters can be framed with four-sided stitch, but not all the letters can have an internal border of four-sided stitch.



FR0055 letter O is from 'Freebies' on the Blackwork Journey website

Mount the finished design in an 8 inch square frame or make into a scented sachet, brooch pillow or use as a card.

Many of the free designs can be used for simple gifts. Check the fabric and threads in your stash and see what you can create!

Designing your own charts?

I have been asked which software programmes I use to create the charts for Blackwork Journey. Using graph paper and drawing the design is laborious, but there is software available if you want to design your own charts.

Consider using **PC Stitch for Windows** or **WinStitch for Apple**.

PC Stitch

This is an easy-to-use programme and there is a free download to enable you to try it out at no cost or obligation. This software is the full version and you can 'test drive' every PC Stitch feature.

PC Stitch - <https://www.pcstitch.com>

WinStitch

You can download a free demo version of WinStitch from the official Ursa Software website or <https://ursasoftware.co.uk>.

This demo allows you to view and print sample charts and import/export PC Stitch files, but creating and printing your own designs requires the full version of the software.

How to get the demo:

- Visit the Ursa software website and navigate to their demo or downloads page.
- Download the winstitchdemo.exe file by clicking the download link.
- Run the downloaded file by double-clicking it and follow the on-screen instructions to install the demo version.

Then:

- Open and view the sample charts.
- Open and print PC Stitch pattern files from versions 4 to 7.
- Design, import and amend your own designs.
- Save your work for later use with the full programme.

However, the demo does not allow you to:

- Print your own new designs that you create within the demo version.
- Save your own created motifs.

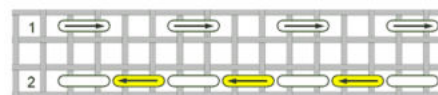
The demo version is a great way to try out all the features of the programme before purchasing the complete version.

All the Blackwork Journey designs are charted using PC Stitch Pro, but if I am using an Apple computer then I use WinStitch.

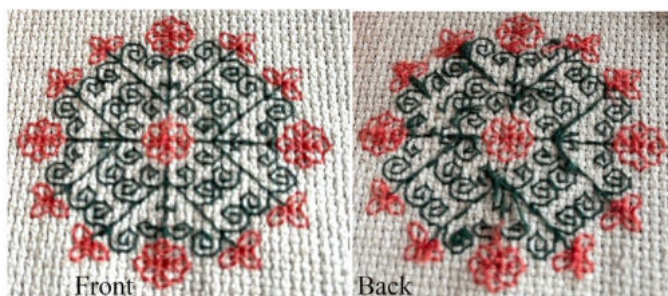


Star pupil! Using a free design FR0006 'Persian Flower' worked in Holbein stitch by Hanane and taught by Maureen in Canada. In Holbein Stitch the front and the back should look the same but unless the design is to be reversable back stitch will create the same effect.

Holbein Stitch worked over 2 threads (evenweave) or one block (Aida).



Hanane with her work in progress

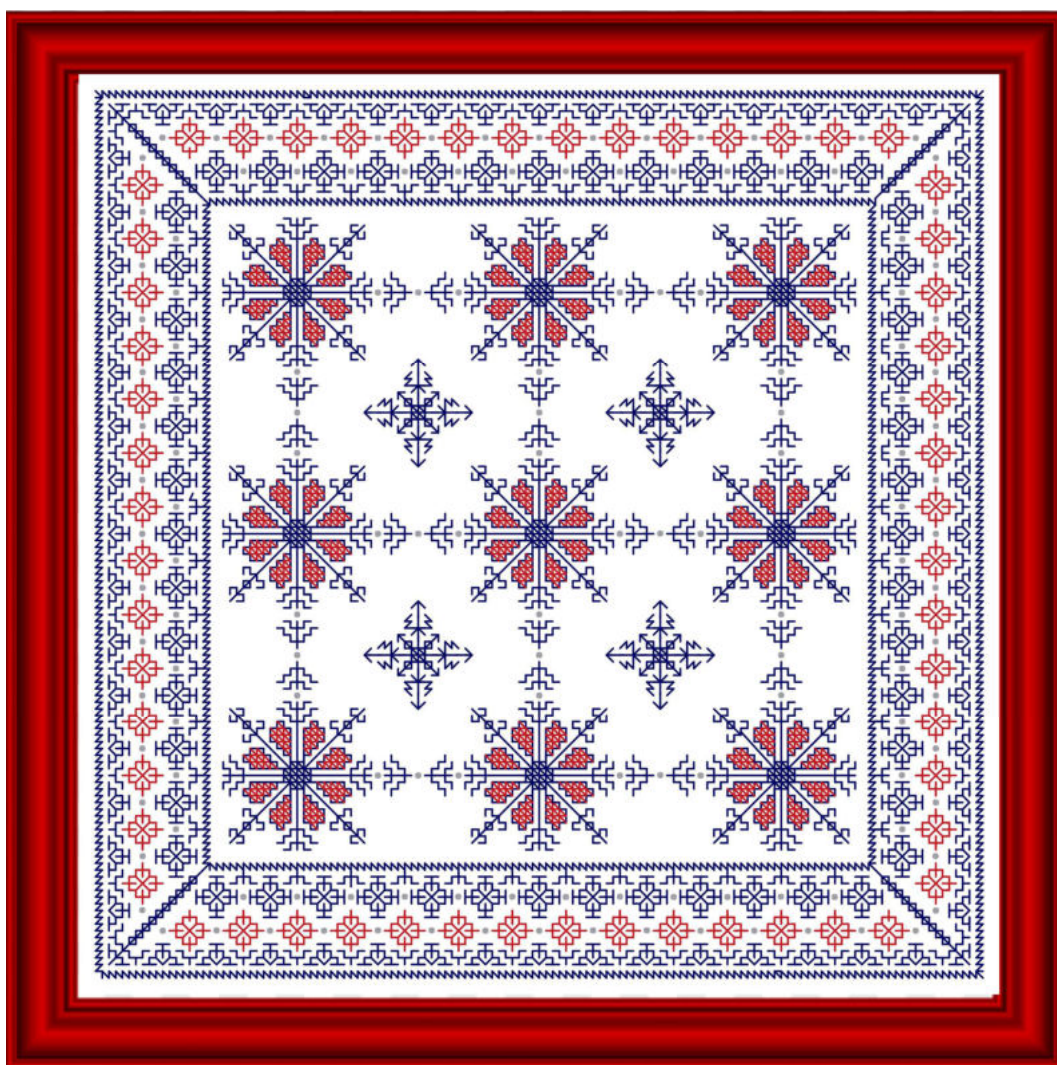


Bordados con el Alma Facebook group and Blackwork Journey working together!

Manu, Elisa and I are co-ordinating a Blackwork Journey design for a large worldwide Spanish speaking group. The chart is CH0391 'Delightful Diamonds'. Photographs of the work in progress have been posted on both Facebook sites, but I thought you might like to look at some of the variations in colour and fabrics used.



New design for September! CH0444 'Moroccan Adventure'



If you want an autumn challenge, then try this traditional counted thread design.

Design Area: 9.43 x 9.43 inches.

Stitches: 132 x 132

Fabric: Zweigart 28 count evenweave, 13 x 13 inches or Zweigart 14 count Aida, 13 x 13 inches

Having visited Morocco recently I decided to design and embroider several pieces in the style of Fessi embroidery. I used the stitch sequence as far as possible to create an authentic design but have great admiration for the women who work these designs freehand and know instinctively where to place the stitch.

Fessi embroidery, also known as 'Tarz al Fassi', is a traditional style embroidery from the city of Fes, Morocco, North Africa. It is known for its intricate, geometric and reversible designs. Fessi embroidery is usually large, with tablecloths and napkins taking months to complete. However, in recent years, artisans have started to create smaller items, such as handkerchiefs, napkins and coin purses for the tourist.

CH0442 'Fes Adventure'

This is the first Fessi embroidery in the series.

'Stitch Along' 2025 Block 8 & 8a
been added at the end of the Blog

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

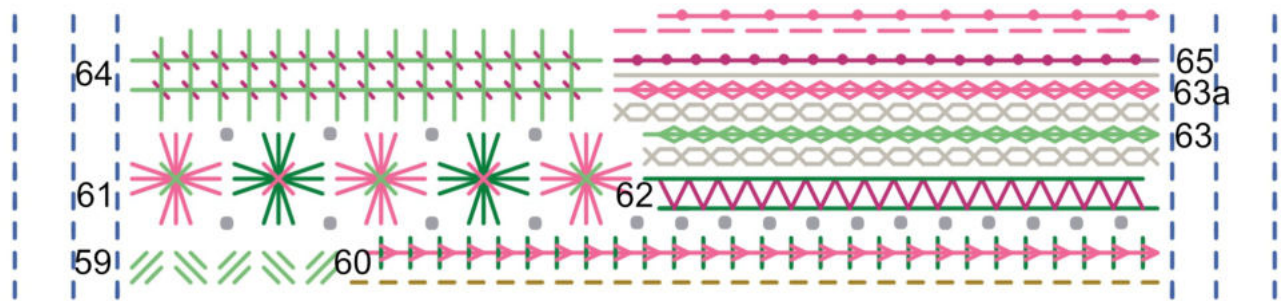
Happy stitching,

Liz



Block 8.

Block 8. is worked in greens, pinks and purples or colours of choice. **Threads:** Two strands for cross stitch, decorative bands 2-3 strands, metallic thread and beads.



Block 8 Numbered



Block 8 Embroidery



Extract from Block 8

Instructions: Practice rows 60, 62 and 65 on a piece of spare fabric before adding them to sampler. Start one row above the previous block with **Row 59**. Complete cushion stitch from Block 7.

Row 60. Raised chain band. Very attractive band stitch can be worked in different widths. Foundation: row of straight stitches over 2 x 2 blocks.

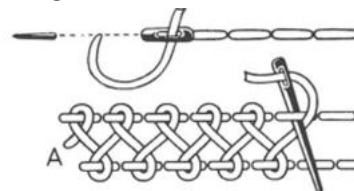
Using a second colour work a 'chain' stitch over each straight stitch. Pull gently!



Row 61. Maltese cross, tied with diagonal cross.

Row 62. Interlaced band. Work two rows of staggered back stitch two blocks apart I one colour. Using two strands weave the second thread through the running stitches following the diagram.

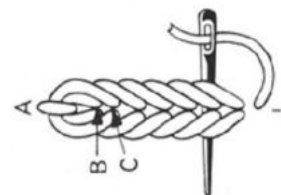
Interlaced band



Row 63. Reverse chain stitch and cross stitch and back stitch bands.

Start with a small straight stitch. Bring the needle up at A two blocks away. Slide under the straight stitch. Come down at C two blocks away and slide under the previous chain.

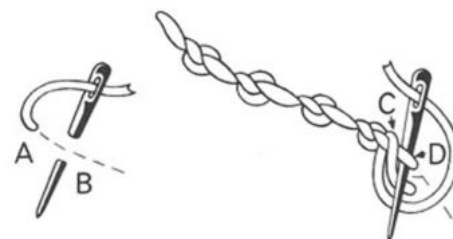
Reverse chain stitch



Row 63 a. Work the second row of reverse chain stitch and whip it with another colour to create a 'cord' effect.

Row 64. Laid stitch tied with a diagonal stitch. Lay the horizontal threads first and then the vertical threads. Tie them down with a small diagonal stitch (split the blocks).

Row 65. Double knot stitch (Palestrina stitch) and back stitch and running stitch bands. This stitch must be practised first. Pick up a small stitch either side of the line. Slide under from right to left and slide under the thread at D. Pull gently keeping the thread down. If the thread is pulled upwards the knot tightens the wrong way.



Double knot stitch

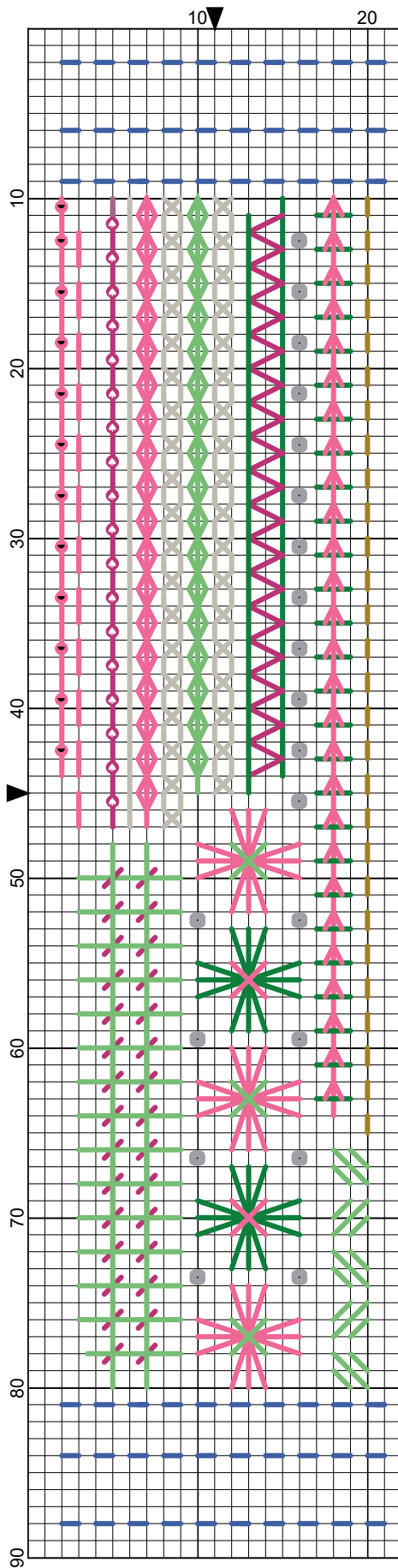
There are two rows of double knot stitch.

rsnstitchbank.org/stitch/double-knot-stitch

www.needlenthread.com/2007/04/palestrina-stitch-video-tutorial.html

This completes Block 8.

Block 8



Backstitches:

- DMC-798
- DMC-553
- DMC-718
- DMC-603
- DLE-E168
- DLE-E3852
- DMC-909
- DMC-320

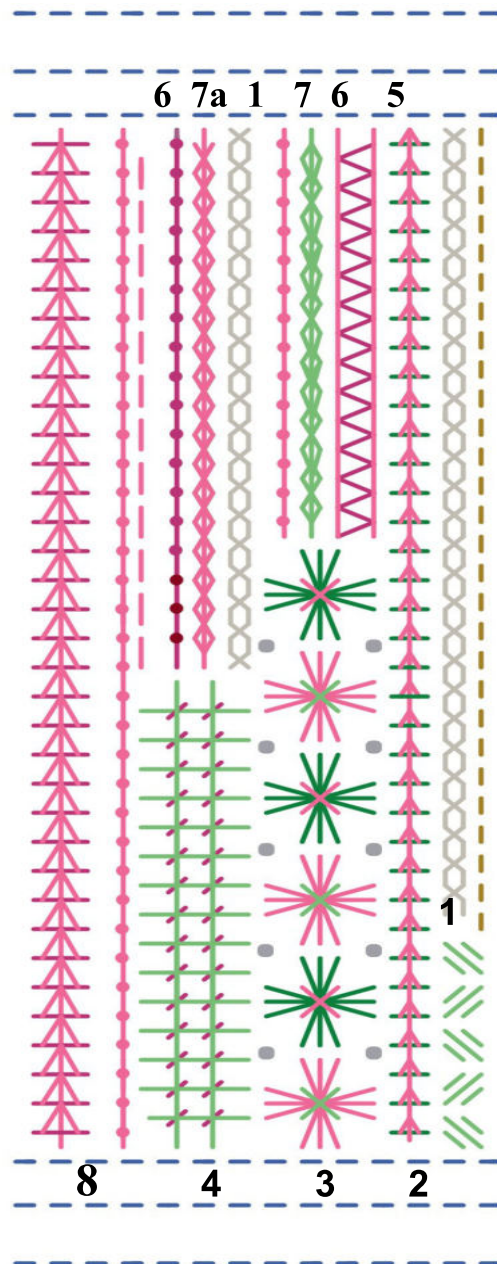
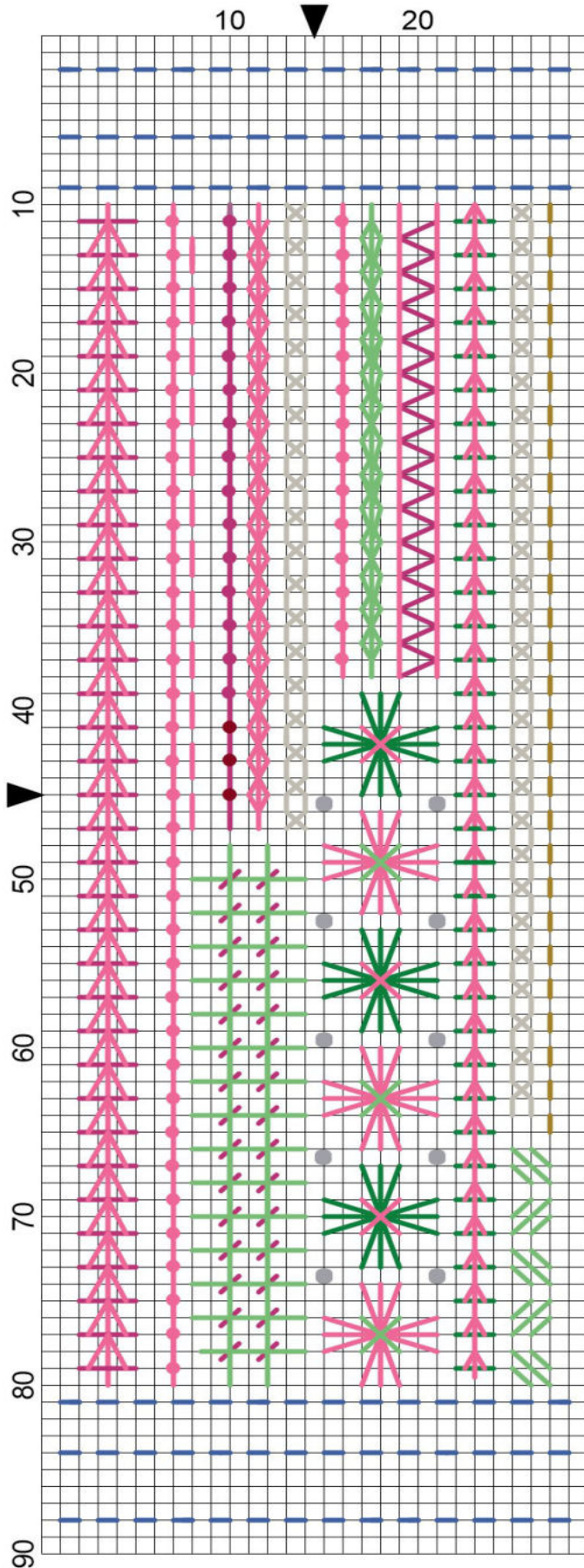
French Knots:

- DMC-718
- DMC-603

Beads:

- MHG-2022

Block 8a Simple Stitches



- Row 1.** Cross stitch and back stitch band.
- Row 2.** Raised chain band.
- Row 3.** Maltese cross, tied with diagonal cross.
- Row 4.** Laid stitch tied with a diagonal stitch.
- Row 5.** Interlaced band.
- Row 6.** Reverse chain stitch.
- Row 6a.** Reverse chain stitch whipped.
- Row 7.** Double knot stitch.
- Row 8.** Raised chain band over 3 x 2 blocks.