

Class: Cross Stitch 101, Instructor: Mom

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Grasping new concepts has always been a problem for me. Imagine my fear as I saw an 18” x 18” square of blue and white gingham cotton fabric lying next to a needle and some white embroidery floss on the dining room table.

The instructor began. “This year the 4-H theme is sewing. Since you’ve never sewn anything, I’m going to teach you how to sew an apron. When you’re finished, you will hand stitch 5 rows of cross stitching near the bottom edge. It will make the apron look pretty.”

Was it too late to get out of this class? Maybe I could get Dad to write me a note saying he needed me outside?

The expert in cross stitching asked me sit down and pay attention. She showed me how to split the floss into 2 sections and then thread the needle. She added a knot in the end of the thread. So far, I was keeping up.

In pencil, she had drawn an X in a blue square. The teacher demonstrated the cross-stitching technique. From the bottom, poke the needle through the fabric coming up in the bottom left-hand corner of the blue square and pull the floss snugly. Diagonally, cross the square and poke the needle down in the upper right-hand corner, pulling the floss snugly again. That makes half a cross stitch. Skip the white square. Start again in the bottom left-hand corner of the blue square and repeat the process. She continued to make ten half X’s in a row, then stopped.

The directions became more difficult. Now she showed me how to complete the cross stitch. Make the second cross stitch starting in the lower-right corner, across the white floss, to the upper left-hand corner, remembering to pull the floss snug, not tight. When you get to the end of the ten cross stitches, your needle will need to be at the back of the fabric. Finish by making a knot in the floss and cut the floss.

The instructor drew ten X’s in the next row and told me to copy the row she had just finished. My fingers were all thumbs. When I made a mistake, the professor simply pulled out the floss, rethreaded the needle, and I continued with the needlework. Over the coming weeks, I would spend a lot of time in Cross Stitch 101 class practicing the cross-stitching technique.

Mom made it look so easy, but of course, she’s been doing needlework for years. She always had a project in the works. Whether she was cross stitching stamped tea towels or a tablecloth, there was always floss laying around the house. In the evenings, while Dad sat on one end of the couch reading the paper, she sat on the other end working on her needlework projects. In her later years, she cross stitched quilt squares for a queen size quilt.

Yes, I did sew a blue and white gingham apron, almost by myself. Yes, I did cross stitch five rows of X’s by myself. My apron earned a blue ribbon at the 4-H county fair. The instructor was pleased with her pupil.

The lessons she taught me, oh so many years ago, are still evident today. Yes, I too, always have a needlework project that I am working on. Thanks, Mom for being a good instructor!