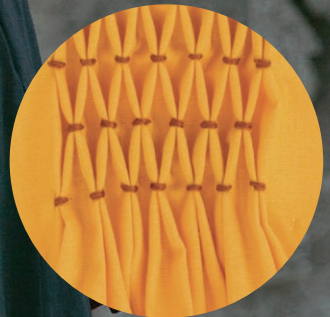
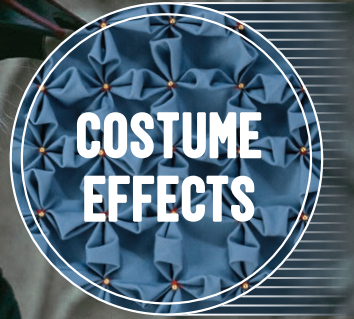


Maggie Hofmann

SMOCKING

secrets



20 STITCH PATTERNS
to Create Unforgettable Texture

Cosplay, Garment, Home Dec & More

COSTUME EFFECTS

SMOCKING

secrets

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20 STITCH PATTERNS
to Create Unforgettable Texture

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Humble Bundle

The background of the page is a close-up, textured image of blue fabric, possibly a quilt or a similar patterned material. In the center, there is a large white rectangular box containing text. In the bottom right corner, there is a light blue circle with a dark blue outline, containing additional text.

DEDICATION

*For anyone who is in the midst of a
lifelong love affair with fabric*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Thank you to all the cosplayers and
photographers who contributed
their work to this project.*

*All costumes were
made and modeled
by the cosplayers.*

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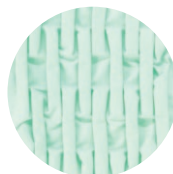
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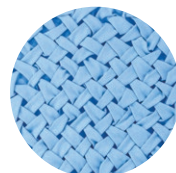
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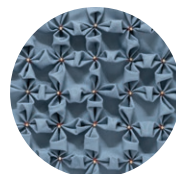
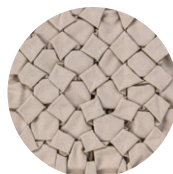
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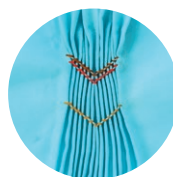
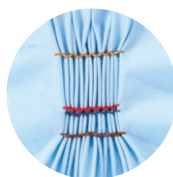
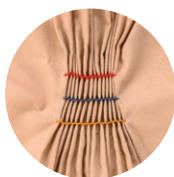
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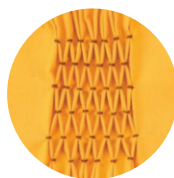
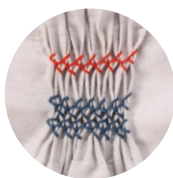
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COSPLAY AND SMOCKING

A Perfect Match



WHAT IS COSPLAY ANYWAY?

Cosplay (a combination of the words costume and play) has existed in some form for several decades both as a hobby and career, but truly exploded into the mainstream during the last several years, becoming a vast community of creativity and innovation. Thousands of people around the world use cosplay as a creative outlet, often learning advanced costume construction skills to bring their favorite fandoms to life.

When developing our toolboxes of cosplay skills, it's impossible to be an instant expert in all of the skills required to pull off a complicated costume. Luckily, there are many creative educators who enjoy developing tutorials and reference materials based on their own experience to help others learn new techniques!

When planning costume projects for myself, I'm constantly reminded that there is no "right" way to do a project, only the one that is right for that particular person on that particular project. Ultimately, try not to get boxed in by expectations of what you should do; instead consider different options that may be a better choice for your project. Costume making is a process of building skills, and each new project will be more successful than the last as you level up. With that mindset, in this book we'll explore fabric smocking as an addition to your creative toolbox that can add incredible details to your next build.



COSPLAYER • PaisleyandGlue

COSTUME • Original design based on
Maleficent from *Sleeping Beauty*

Sleeves featuring arrow smocking

Photo by Alexandra Lee Studios

COSPLAYER • Archaic Costumes

COSTUME • Sabrina from *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*

Sleeves and skirt featuring shell smocking

Photo by Dan Arango





WHY CHOOSE SMOCKING?

In the search for the perfect technique, cosplayers sometimes struggle with how to add embellishments that are appropriate for our costumes as well as visually-stimulating. This is especially true when making costumes that may not have a lot of references available (the eternal struggle of cosplayers everywhere: “but what does the back look like?”). As we will see, unique sewn details such as smocking can add fascinating textures, historical accents, and visual effects to key areas of a costume.

At first glance, the intricacies of smocking make it look like a complicated process. I’ve often heard cosplayers exclaim over smocked details while also saying “I could never do that.” Luckily for all of us, smocking is actually quite an easy technique to master, requiring more patience than anything else after learning the basic stitching skills. Additionally, there are no end of variations that can be achieved to bring your costume to the next level (far more than can demonstrated in this book). Whether for your next photo shoot or entering in that big competition you’ve been eyeing, smocking might just be what’s missing from your next build!

LET'S TALK SMOCKING!



COSPLAYER • Lady Kitz Cosplay

COSTUME • Design by Hannah Alexander based on Daenerys from *Game of Thrones*

Cape featuring arrow smocking

Photo by Alexandra Lee Studios

Smocking is an ancient technique of fabric manipulation that has endured in various forms. We will be focusing on two of the more common forms, North American and English smocking. In North American smocking, the fabric to be smocked is pinched together along a grid and stitched in a pattern to form three-dimensional, raised designs that can be incorporated into a variety of garments. In contrast, English smocking is stitched on a pre-pleated piece of fabric that will ultimately create a decorative area of embroidered pleats in the final garment.

Both kinds of smocking can be adapted and used in various forms of costume making, either as full pieces or embellished elements within larger designs. We will be focusing on some of the more common patterns found within the techniques of North American and English smocking, but there is no end to the possible variations and combinations. I encourage you to try using smocking in your costumes in unconventional ways. Who knows? You may end up with a masterpiece!



COSPLAYER • The Wizard Tailor

COSTUME • Original design based on Merlin from
The Sword in the Stone

Panels featuring lattice smocking

Photo by Kerstin VanHuss

NORTH AMERICAN SMOCKING

COSPLAYER • Jobie Lee

COSTUME • Yasha Nydoorin
from *Critical Role*

Bodice featuring lattice
smocking

Photo by Topher Oriel

HISTORY

North American smocking (also called either American or Canadian smocking) can be found in antique garments as far back as the late eighteenth century but really hit its heyday in the 1960s with pillows and other interior decorating. In general, North American smocking is not seen as often in everyday clothing as English smocking, however, I think it has incredible applications in costume and cosplay creation!

TIP

Ideas for North American Smocking

Small pouches, yokes, sleeves, inset costume details, armor pieces, hats, appliqués, and cloaks

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

North American smocking is worked (that is, stitched) from the back of the fabric, usually in a matching thread. After marking a grid and stitch guide on the back of the fabric, the stitcher pulls the axis points together according to the pattern. This stitching technique creates a repeating, three-dimensionally raised design on the front of the fabric. Unlike English smocking, North American smocking generally doesn't allow much stretch, making it a good choice for projects that need a solid base. It can be incorporated into seams or appliquéd as a separate element within the garment.

Note

CHECKING DESIGN PLACEMENT

When incorporating a smocked piece into a larger garment, consider the final measurements of the design versus the smocked dimensions. Sometimes a smocked design will look strange if it's cut off mid-motif!

COSPLAYER • Eveille Cosplay

COSTUME • Design by Sunset Dragon based on Ysera from *World of Warcraft*

Sleeves featuring arrow smocking; smocking creates gathers in these extra-full sleeves.

Photo by Alexandra Lee Studios





GETTING STARTED

GATHER SUPPLIES

- Amount of fabric needed for desired final size. See How to Plan Yardage Needs (page 20).
- Hand-sewing needle (such as a Sharps)
- Thread to match fabric (50-weight cotton or polyester)
- Clear quilting ruler or smocking template (C&T Publishing)
- Fabric marking tool of choice
- Iron with a steam setting

CHOOSE A PATTERN AND GRID SIZE

The first step will be to decide how big to make your grid and pattern to give the desired look. I'd recommend practicing on a small scrap piece of fabric to decide what size to make the grid. The grid can be any size you want, but generally any smaller than $\frac{3}{4}$ " (unless your fabric is very thin) and any larger than 2" will likely not give you very successful results.



COSPLAYER • Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay

COSTUME • Original design based on Loki from the Marvel Cinematic Universe

Appliqués featuring arrow smocking

Photo by Sam Saturn

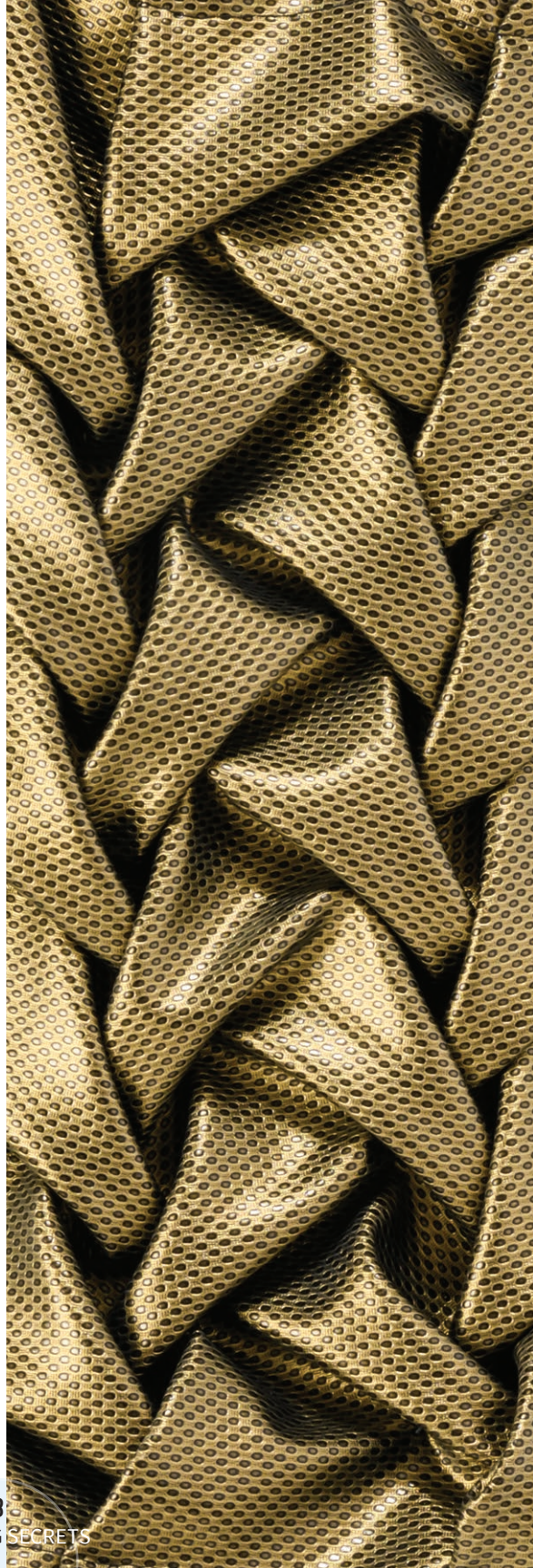
SELECTING FABRICS

Different fabrics will give you dramatically different effects when smocked. For example, a fabric that has a stiff hand will create a bouncier, more 3D design. A thinner, more lightweight fabric will give a softer, less defined shape to the final result. Stiffer/thicker fabrics will likely look better on a larger grid while a thinner fabric will likely be more successful on a smaller grid. However, a soft fusible interfacing can be added to lightweight fabrics to give them a stiffer hand for smocking.

To add even more interest to your smocked pieces, you can add beads, embroidery, and various painting techniques. You also can try using unconventional fabrics like Ultra-suede or lightweight faux leather to give interesting textural effects to your project!

TIP *Using an Iron*

Try using an iron to press part or the entire smocked design flat to give a whole new effect.





Three different fabrics (vinyl, polyester silk, metallic jacquard) using the same braid stitch guide and a 1½" grid

HOW TO PLAN YARDAGE NEEDS

North American smocking is stitched on flat pieces of fabric and then incorporated into the normal construction process of the garment. To ensure the amount of fabric to be smocked will equal the required amount after the design is worked, you will need to do some planning.

The worst thing is to spend the time on a fabulous design and then end up with a piece that is too small for your project. I strongly suggest working up a small sample to calculate the amount of fabric needed and to test the scale and pattern!

COSPLAYER • Zephyr Makes Things

COSTUME • Original design based on Mollymauk Tealeaf from *Critical Role*

Doublet featuring many hand-sewing techniques, including flower, bones, and honeycomb smocking.

Photos by Biomechanical Photography





In North American smocking, you will need about twice the amount of fabric as the smocked area. The following equation can help you calculate a more precise ratio, and you can use it to calculate both width and length of yardage needed. In each tutorial, I note my sample measurements before and after stitching but I still recommend doing a small sample to make sure you like the scale of the pattern.

$$(\text{Sample measurement before smocking} \div \text{sample measurement after smocking}) \times \text{target measurement} = \text{fabric requirement}$$

Example: The sample of the Hearts design (page 55) started with an 18" × 18" square of fabric. The sample compressed the fabric to 9" in width and 10" in length. So if you needed 36" of smocked fabric, you would need 72" of yardage in width and 65" in length (which would also likely mean you would need to seam two pieces of fabric together at some point).

TIP *Adapting Your Design*

North American smocking can be adapted to a specific project, incorporating variations such as radiating grids to make finer or larger smocked patterns. Again, a sample is highly encouraged to determine "proof of concept" before starting on your project!



COSPLAYER • Momma Sammu

COSTUME • Original design by NoFlutter
based on the Red Queen from *Alice in Wonderland*

Sleeves featuring flower pattern smocking

Photo by KP11 Studios

PREPARING AND MARKING THE FABRIC

1. Prewash your fabric if necessary and press with a hot iron with a steam setting, taking care not to warp the grain of the fabric.

Note

NOTE ON THE SAMPLES IN THIS BOOK

My samples were stitched on good quality quilting fabric that had been starched. The grid size that was used is specified in each pattern, as well as the overall yardage reduction.

2. Cut the fabric, making sure to add extra seam allowance to allow for edge fraying (you can also use an overlocker or pinking shears on the edges of your fabric to minimize fraying while you smock).

3. Using a clear quilting ruler or my new smocking template, Smocking Stencils (C&T Publishing), mark a grid or dot system on the back of the fabric with a marking tool that won't easily rub off and also won't show through to the right side of the fabric. I usually use a pencil on light-colored fabrics and a white fabric-marking pencil on darker fabrics. You can choose whether to mark just the axis point or each horizontal and vertical line of the grid.

TIP

For Heavyweight or Dark Fabrics

Try using a silver permanent marker to mark the dots. Check to make sure the ink won't bleed through to the other side!

4. Referring to the stitch guide in the instructions for your chosen design, use your marking tool of choice to join the axis points to prepare for stitching.

Note

HOW TO READ THE NORTH AMERICAN STITCH GUIDES

The colored solid lines on the stitch guides refer to where 2 points will be pinched together and stitched. The dotted lines with arrows refer to a connecting thread which connects a group of points but is not pulled tight.



• Using my Smocking Stencils (C&T Publishing)

Photo by Lauren Herberg



STITCHING TECHNIQUE

The stitching technique is similar for most patterns. You will use the needle to take up a stitch of just a few threads at an axis point of the pattern grid and then join to other axis points according to the pattern. This will create a group of small, pinched folds that puff up and arrange the fabric on the opposite side, forming the design.

Make sure not to pull the connecting threads too tightly or the pattern won't turn out on the front. The connecting threads should stay roughly equal to the distance between axis points.

TIP *Keys for Successful Stitching*

- Use a long, sharp needle.
- Loop the thread through the eye of the needle and knot it together at the end so you're stitching with 2 strands.
- Use a long length of thread. Even a 36" length is not too long when doubled.
- Try using thread wax on the thread to keep the thread gliding smoothly through the fabric.

When moving between pinches of folds, end the section by either making a knot or taking 2 stitches directly on top of each other. Don't cut the thread unless specified. By leaving the thread chain between the pinches, you will keep the fabric from stretching the pattern out of alignment after the design is finished. Try to pull the connecting threads so they are flat against the fabric but don't cause any excess tension between the pinches.

TIP *Give It Time!*

Generally, it will take 2–3 complete rows of stitching until you start to see the design appear on the front, so don't get discouraged if it doesn't look like much at the beginning!

FINISHING

1. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use steam to set the finished design.
2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired.

METHODS FOR FINISHING

Cut and Sew

For garments that call for a smocked pattern to cover a section of the garment entirely, you can simply smock a piece of fabric until the pattern piece fits within it. Then trace your pattern piece onto the smocking and stitch around the traced lines to keep the folds in place when you cut out the pattern. Cut the fabric and stitch into the garment as normal. Avoid pressing the smocked pattern flat with the iron as you construct the garment.



COSPLAYER • Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay

COSTUME • The Button Knight, an original design and character

Lower sleeves featuring braid smocking

Photo by Alexandra Lee Studios



Insertion

Smocked panels of any size can be inserted within a larger pattern piece as visual interest. Smock a section of fabric and trace the desired size onto the smocking. Stitch around the edges of the traced lines to keep the folds in place and cut, making sure to add seam allowance. The smocked sections can be inserted using reverse appliqué techniques or pieced into a larger pattern piece using quilting techniques.

COSPLAYER • Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay

COSTUME • Original design based on Princess Bubblegum from *Adventure Time*

Skirt with inserted panels of lattice smocking

Photo by Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay



Appliqué

Smocked sections of fabric can also be appliquéd directly onto garments. After smocking the fabric to be appliquéd, carefully cut around the desired motif, leaving a seam allowance to turn under. The appliquéd sections can be hand-stitched in place or top stitched with a satin stitch.

COSPLAYER • Sarcasm-himé

COSTUME • Original design based on Crowley from *Good Omens*

Appliquéd snake detail featuring arrow smocking

Photos by Elemental Photography and Design



COSPLAYER • Cowbutt Crunchies
Cosplay

COSTUME • The Machine Queen, an
original design and character

Skirt featuring lattice smocking

Photo by Alexandra Lee Studios

North American Smocking

TUTORIALS

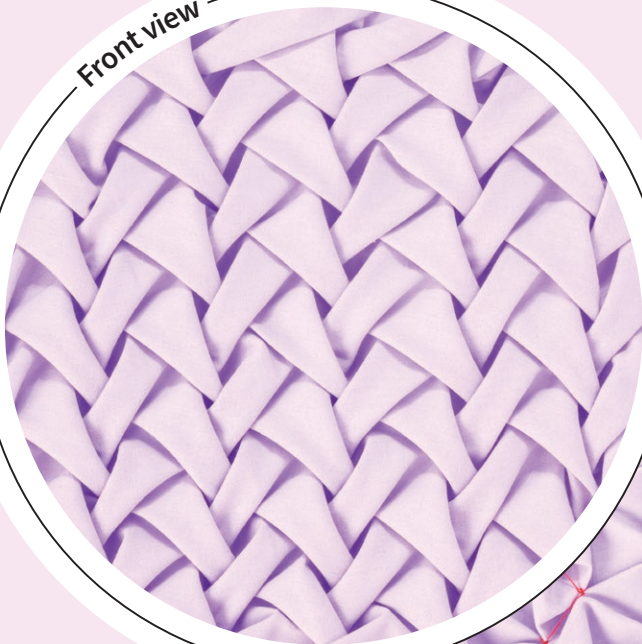


MATERIALS

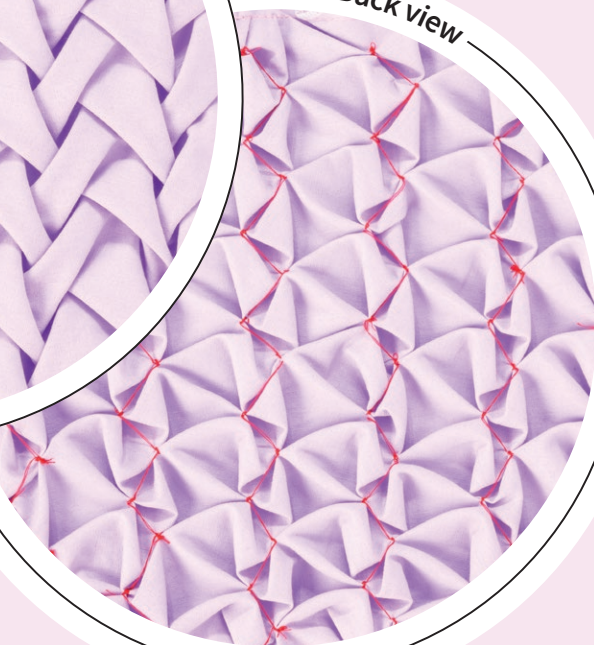
- Amount of fabric needed for desired final size, using equation (page 22).
- Hand-sewing needle (such as a Sharps)
- Thread to match fabric (50-weight cotton or polyester); use a doubled strand.
- Clear quilting ruler or my Smocking Stencil (C&T Publishing)
- Fabric marking tool of choice
- Iron with a steam setting



Front view



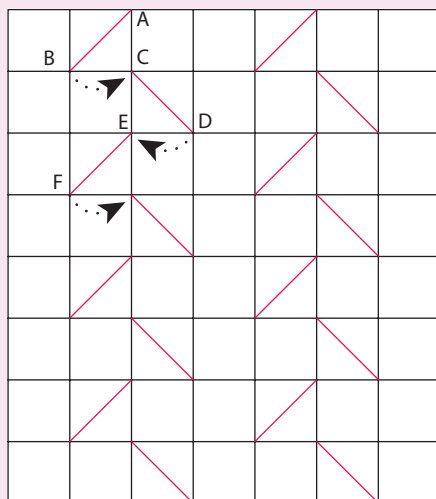
Back view



BRAID

Skill Level: Beginner friendly

The braid design gives the impression of a design that is braided like bread or baskets, creating an organic design. This could be a really cool pattern to use on a lightweight Ultrasuede or pleather.



Braid stitch guide

INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

Refer to North American Smocking, General Instructions (page 14) for making a sample, planning yardage, preparing fabric, and marking a grid.

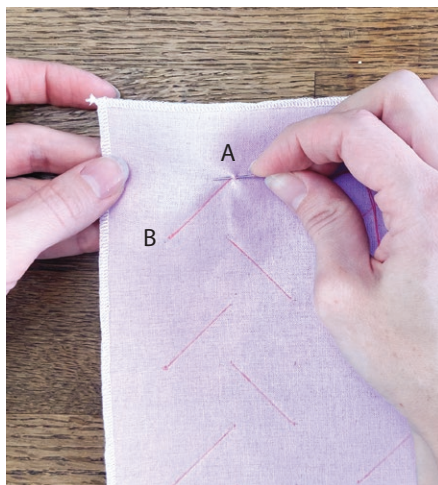
Note YARDAGE AND GRID NOTES

My example started as 18" × 18" and ended at 10" × 10" with a 1" grid and a 1" border.

STITCHING

1. Start in the upper left corner of the fabric. Knot the thread and take 2 stitches on top of each other through axis point A.

2. Take a stitch through axis point B and draw it in to meet the first stitch at A. Take another stitch or knot the thread to secure the 2 axis points. Do not cut the thread.

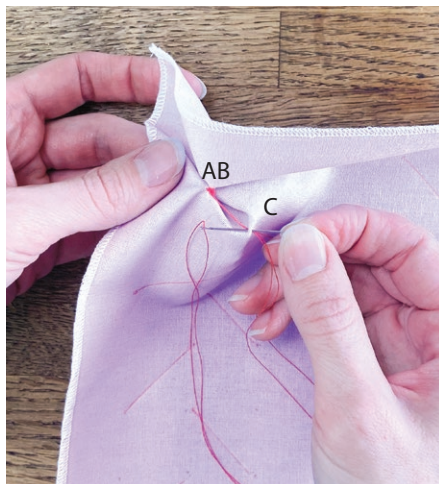


3. Take a new stitch at axis point C. Pull the connecting thread between the 2 points so it is flat but not pulling the 2 axis points (AB and C) together. This will give some structure to the back of the design to hold the shapes together. Take another stitch on top of the first to knot it.

Note

LENGTH OF CONNECTING THREADS

Make sure not to pull the connecting threads too tightly or the pattern won't turn out on the front. The connecting threads should stay roughly equal to the distance between axis points.



4. Take a stitch at point D to meet point C. Take another stitch on top or knot the thread to secure. Do not cut the thread.

5. Stitching the axis points in alphabetical order, repeat Steps 1–4 until you have reached the end of the column. Move to the top of the next column and repeat Steps 1–4 until the entire piece is smocked.

FINISHING

1. Flip the fabric over and manually arrange the smocked design into its final shape if needed. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use the steam to set the design.

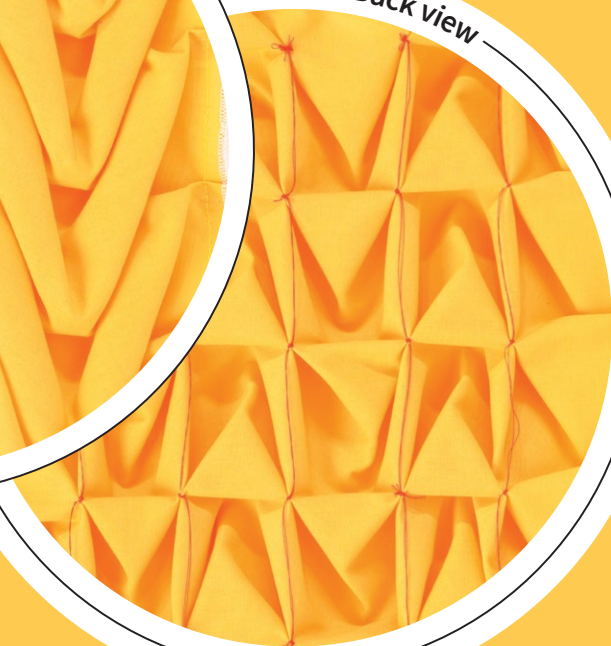
2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired. See Methods for Finishing (page 26).



Front view



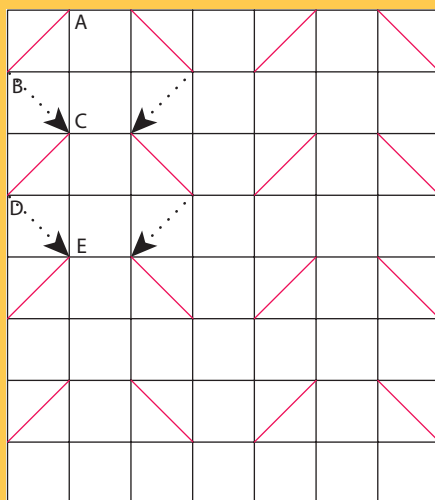
Back view



SERPENTINE (WAVES)

Skill Level: Beginner friendly

The serpentine design (sometimes known as Waves) gives a very cool, undulating raised wave design to your fabric and could be a great choice for an aquatic or sci-fi costume.



Serpentine stitch guide

INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

Refer to North American Smocking, General Instructions (page 14) for making a sample, planning yardage, preparing fabric, and marking a grid.

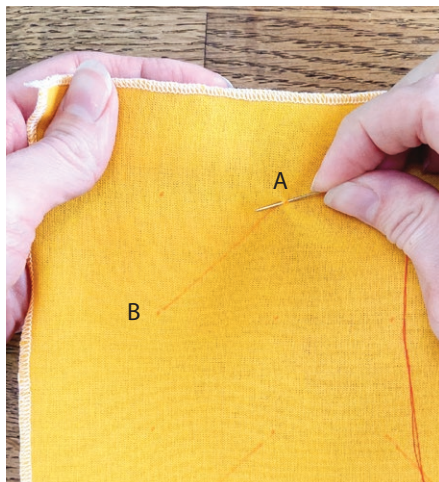
Note YARDAGE AND GRID NOTES

My example started as 18" × 18" and ended at 10" × 12" with a 1½" grid and a 1½" border.

STITCHING

1. Start in the upper left corner of the fabric. Knot the thread and take 2 stitches on top of each other through axis point A.

2. Take a stitch through axis point B and draw it in to meet the first stitch at A. Take another stitch or knot the thread to secure the 2 axis points. Do not cut the thread.



3. Take a new stitch at axis point C. Pull the connecting thread between the 2 points so it is flat but not drawing the 2 axis points (AB and C) together. This will give some structure to the back of the design to hold the shapes together. Take another stitch on top of the first to knot it.



4. Take a stitch at point D and pull it to meet point C. Take another stitch on top or knot the thread to secure.

5. Stitching the axis points in alphabetical order, repeat Steps 1–4 until you have reached the end of the column. Move to the next column and repeat Steps 1–4 until the entire piece is smocked.

FINISHING

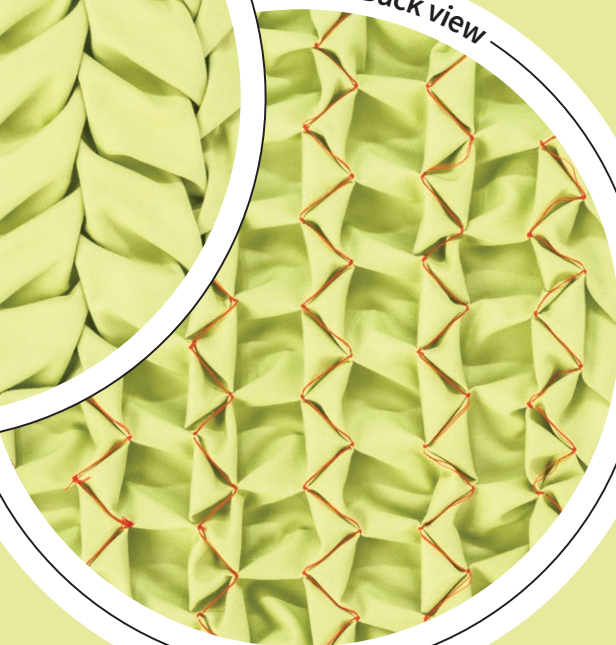
1. Flip the fabric over and manually arrange the smocked design into its final shape if needed. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use the steam to set the design.

2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired. See Methods for Finishing (page 26).

Front view



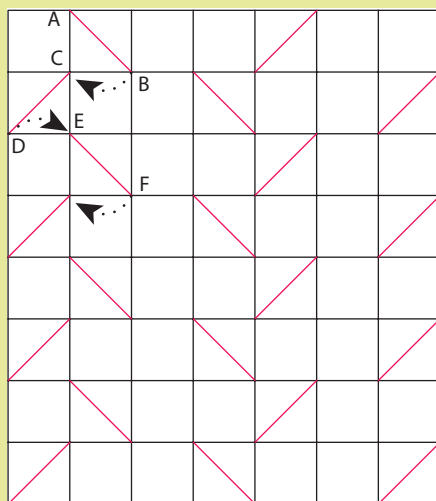
Back view



LEAVES

Skill Level: Beginner friendly

The leaves smocking pattern is a nice choice for designs that call for naturalistic shapes that have an organic aspect.



Leaves stitch guide

INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

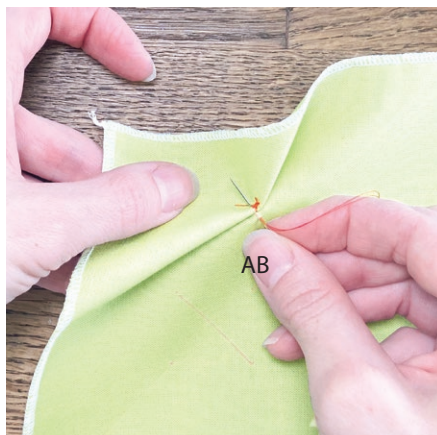
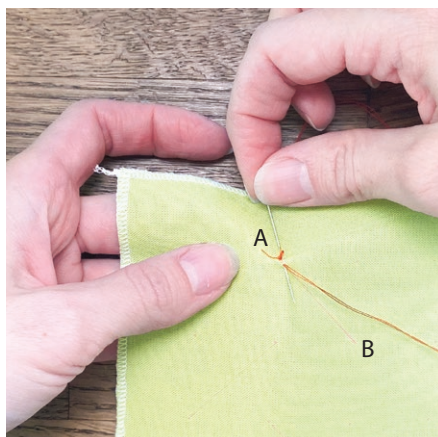
Refer to North American Smocking, General Instructions (page 14) for making a sample, planning yardage, preparing fabric, and marking a grid.

Note YARDAGE AND GRID NOTES

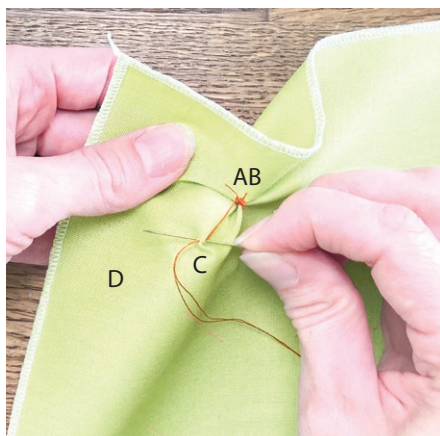
My example started as 18" × 18" and ended at 11" × 11" with a 1" grid and a 1" border.

STITCHING

1. Start in the upper left corner of the fabric. Knot the thread and take 2 stitches on top of each other through axis point A.
2. Take a stitch through axis point B and draw it in to meet the first stitch at A. Take another stitch or knot the thread to secure the 2 axis points. Do not cut the thread.



3. Take a new stitch at axis point C. Pull the connecting thread between the 2 points so it is flat but not drawing the 2 axis points (AB and C) together. This will give some structure to the back of the design to hold the shapes together. Take another stitch on top of the first to knot it.



4. Take a stitch at point D and pull it to meet point C. Take another stitch on top or knot the thread to secure. Do not cut the thread.

5. Stitching the axis points in alphabetical order, repeat Steps 1–4 until you have reached the end of the column. Move to the top of the next column and repeat Steps 1–4 until the entire piece is smocked.

FINISHING

1. Flip the fabric over and manually arrange the smocked design into its final shape if needed. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use the steam to set the design.

2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired. See *Methods for Finishing* (page 26).



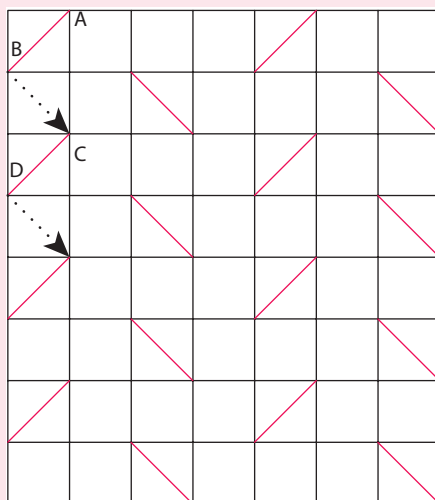
Front view

Back view

CRISSCROSS BONES

Skill Level: Beginner friendly

The crisscross bones design is similar visually to lozenge in that it makes rectangular tubes on the fabric but the design travels at angles down the fabric. The edges are less precise than Lozenge (page 46), giving the approximation of a herringbone pattern.



Crisscross Bones stitch guide

INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

Refer to North American Smocking, General Instructions (page 14) for making a sample, planning yardage, preparing fabric, and marking a grid.

Note

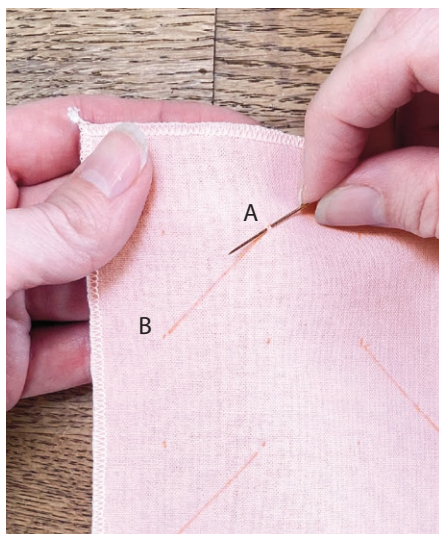
YARDAGE AND GRID NOTES

My example started as 18" × 18" and ended at 10" × 13" with a 1" grid and a 1" border.

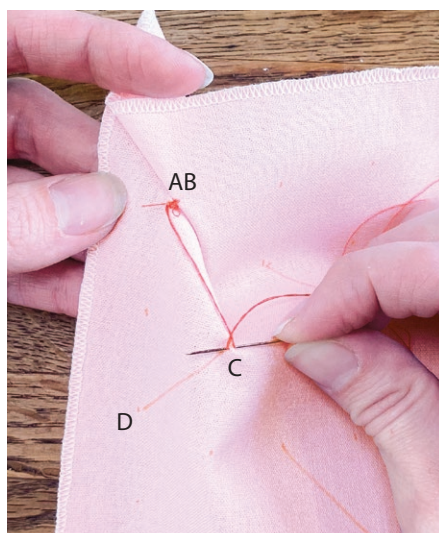
STITCHING

1. Start in the upper left corner of the fabric. Knot the thread and take 2 stitches on top of each other through axis point A.

2. Take a stitch through axis point B and draw it in to meet the first stitch at A. Take another stitch or knot the thread to secure the 2 axis points. Do not cut the thread.



3. Take a new stitch at axis point C. Pull the connecting thread between the 2 points so it is flat but not drawing the 2 axis points (AB and C) together. This will give some structure to the back of the design to hold the shapes together. Take another stitch on top of the first to knot it off.



4. Take a stitch at point D and pull it to meet point C. Take another stitch on top or knot the thread to secure. Do not cut the thread.

5. Repeat Steps 1–4 until you have reached the end of the column. Move to the top of the next column and repeat Steps 1–4 until the entire piece is smocked.

FINISHING

1. Flip the fabric over and manually arrange the smocked design into its final shape if needed. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use the steam to set the design.

2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired. See Methods for Finishing (page 26).



Front view

Back view

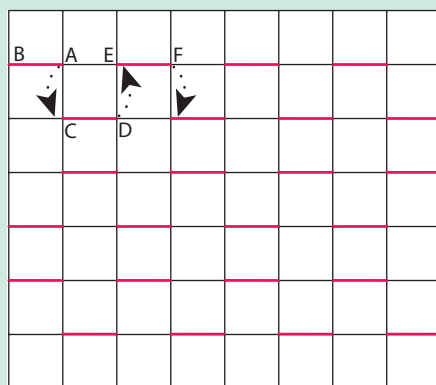
LOZENGE

Skill Level: Beginner friendly

The lozenge design gives a uniform, structured appearance to the fabric similar to a series of raised tubes. It could be an interesting choice for a futuristic costume using a metallic fabric.

Note **YARDAGE AND GRID NOTES**

My example started as 18" × 18" and ended at 9" × 16" with a 1½" grid and a 1" border.



Lozenge stitch guide

INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

Refer to North American Smocking, General Instructions (page 14) for making a sample, planning yardage, preparing fabric, and marking a grid.

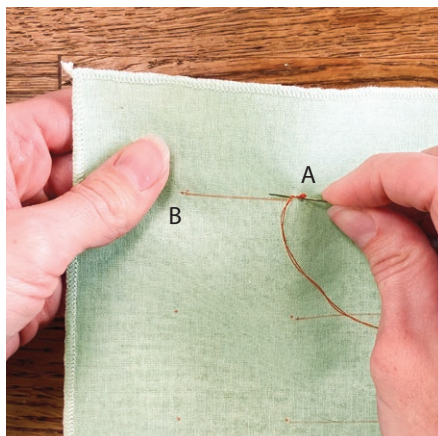
Note

PATTERN DIRECTION

The raised lozenge pattern forms perpendicularly to the drawn pattern on the back of the fabric, so keep that in mind if you're working with a fabric with a directional pattern or texture!

STITCHING

1. Start in the upper left corner of the fabric. Knot the thread and take 2 stitches on top of each other horizontally through axis point A.
2. Take a stitch horizontally through axis point B and draw it in to meet the first stitch at A. Take another stitch or knot the thread to secure the 2 axis points. Do not cut the thread.



3. Take a new stitch at axis point C. Pull the connecting thread between the 2 points so it is flat but not drawing the 2 axis points (AB and C) together. This will give some structure to the back of the design to hold the shapes together. Take another stitch on top of the first to knot it.



4. Take a stitch at point D and pull it to meet point C. Take another stitch on top or knot the thread to secure.

5. Stitching the axis points in alphabetical order, repeat Steps 1–4 until you have reached the end of the row. Move to the start of the next row and repeat Steps 1–4 until the entire piece is smocked.

FINISHING

1. Flip the fabric over and manually arrange the smocked design into its final shape if needed. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use the steam to set the design.

2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired. See Methods for Finishing (page 26).

TIP *Pressing Makes a Difference*

Lozenge lends itself well to being carefully pressed flat with an iron. Pressing the design flat will give the impression of flat, interwoven bands, which could be part of some cool applications in costume making!

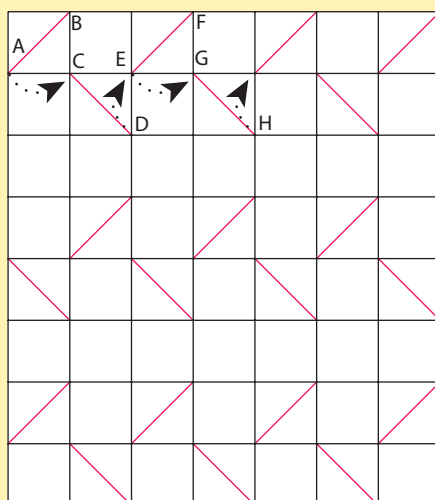
Front view

Back view

SHELLS

Skill Level: Beginner friendly

The shells pattern creates lines of nesting curves and gives the appearance of a gentler-looking version of the arrow pattern. This could be interesting in an armor look that is organic in nature, especially if used with an unconventional fabric like a metallic or lightweight vinyl.



Shells stitch guide

INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

Refer to North American Smocking, General Instructions (page 14) for making a sample, planning yardage, preparing fabric, and marking a grid.

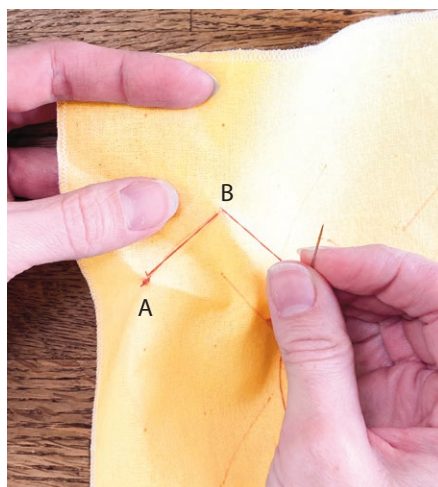
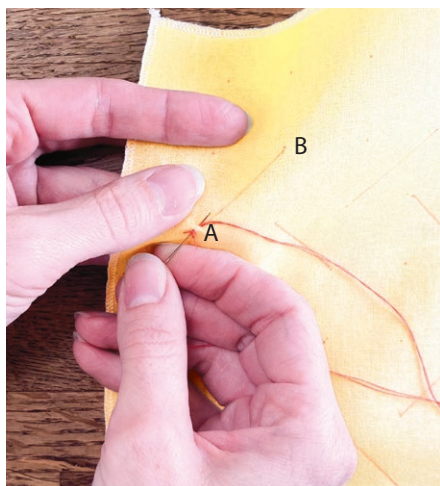
Note

YARDAGE AND GRID NOTES

My example started as 18" × 18" and ended at 12" × 10" with a 1" grid and a 1" border.

STITCHING

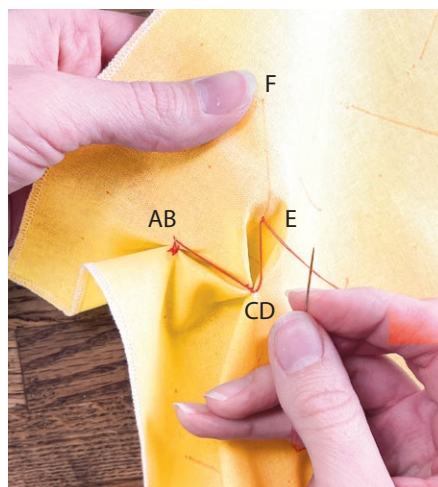
1. Start in the upper left corner of the fabric. Knot the thread and take 2 stitches on top of each other through the corner of axis point A.
2. Take a stitch through axis point B and draw it in to meet the first stitch at A. Take another stitch or knot the thread to secure the 2 axis points. Do not cut the thread.



3. Take a new stitch at axis point C. Pull the connecting thread between the 2 points so it is flat but not drawing the 2 axis points (AB and C) together. This will allow the puffy shell shape to form on the front of the fabric. Take another stitch on top of the first to knot it.

4. Take a stitch at point D and pull it to meet C. Take another stitch on top or knot the thread to secure. Do not cut the thread.

5. Stitching the axis points in alphabetical order, repeat Steps 1–4 until you have reached the end of the column. Move to the top of the next column and repeat Steps 1–4 until the entire piece is smocked.



FINISHING

1. Flip the fabric over and manually arrange the smocked design into its final shape if needed. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use the steam to set the design.

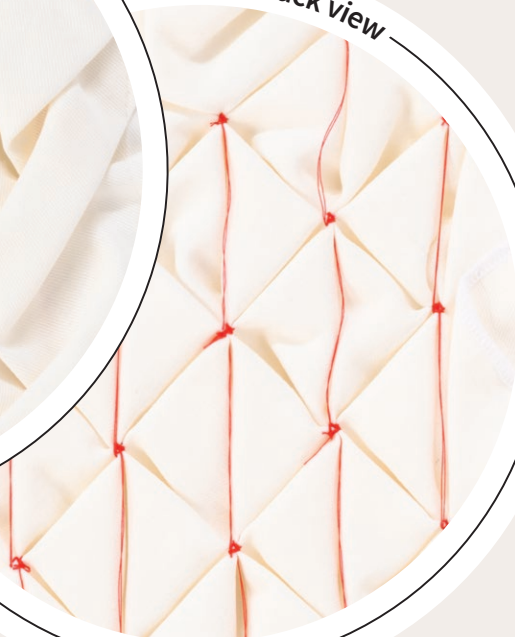
2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired. See Methods for Finishing (page 26).



Front view



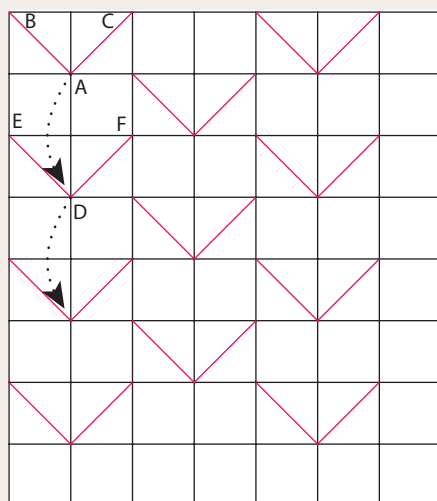
Back view



ARROW (DRAGON SCALE)

Skill Level: Intermediate

Arrow smocking (often known as Dragon Scale) is one of the more popular smocking patterns within cosplay and costume making, for obvious reasons! The dynamic pattern lends itself to many characters and fandoms and has been heavily featured in several popular television shows and movies.



Arrow stitch guide

INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

I. Refer to North American Smocking, General Instructions (page 14) for making a sample, planning yardage, preparing fabric, and marking a grid.

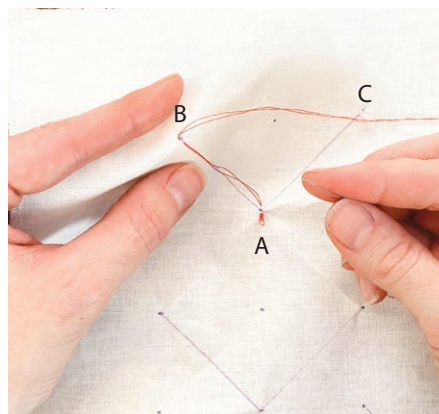
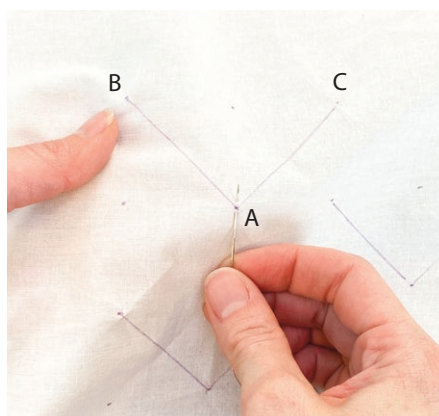
Note YARDAGE AND GRID NOTES

My example started as 18" × 18", ended as 12" × 7" with a 1½" grid and 1" border.

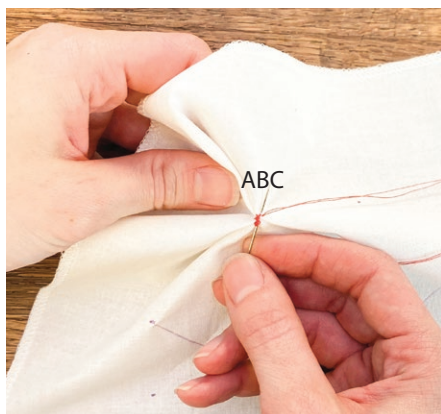
STITCHING

1. Start in the upper left corner of the fabric. Knot the thread and take 2 stitches on top of each other through axis point A.

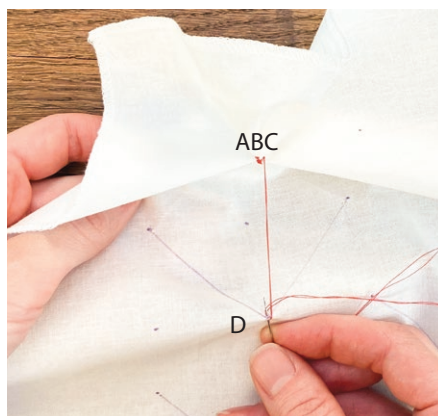
2. Take a stitch through axis point B and draw it in to meet the first stitch at A.



3. Take a new stitch at axis point C and draw it to meet the other 2 stitches at AB.



Take another stitch on top or knot the thread to secure. Do not cut the thread.



4. Take several additional stitches through all 3 points (ABC) and knot the thread.

5. Take a new stitch at point D at the bottom of the V directly **below** and pull the thread *slightly* between the 2 points. This allows the “puffy” arrow to form on the front of the fabric.

6. Stitching the axis points in alphabetical order, repeat Steps 1–5 until you have reached the end of the column. Move to the top of the next column and repeat Steps 1–5 until the entire piece is smocked. After the second column, you will be able to see the arrow design forming on the front.

FINISHING

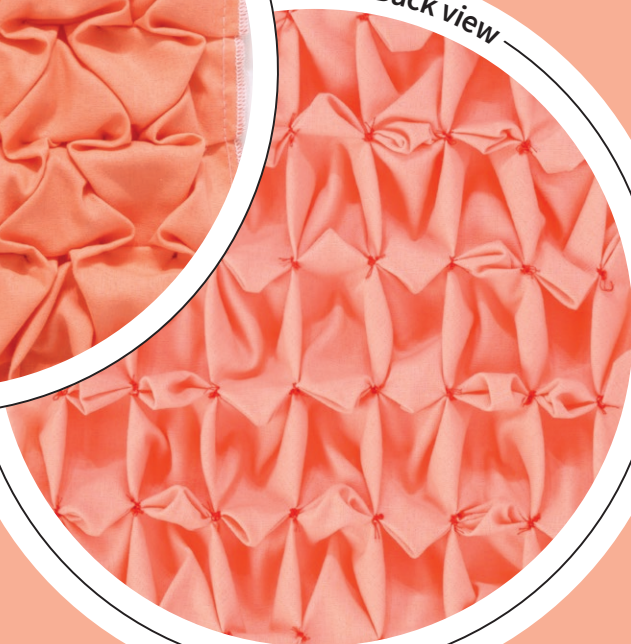
1. Flip the fabric over and manually arrange the smocked design into its final shape. You may need to coax the fabric into the correct shape, especially if your fabric is lightweight or soft-bodied. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use the steam to set the design.

2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired. See Methods for Finishing (page 26).

Front view



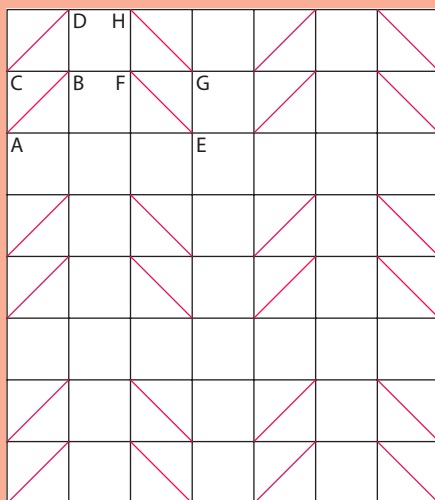
Back view



HEARTS

Skill Level: Intermediate

The hearts design is a sweet pattern that gives the impression of alternating, nesting hearts traveling down the fabric.



Hearts stitch guide

INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

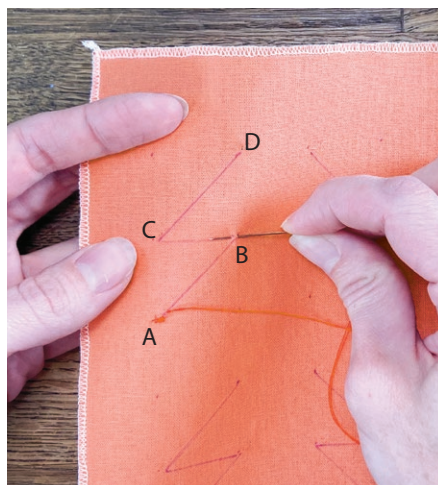
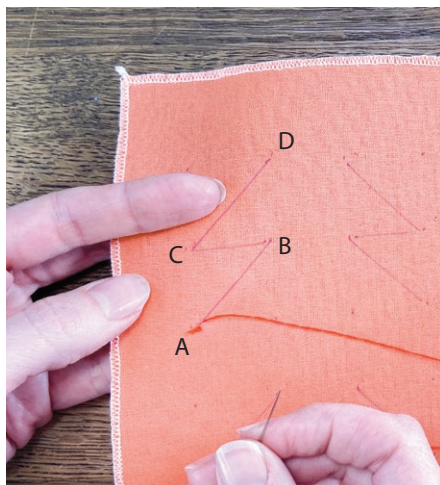
Refer to North American Smocking, General Instructions (page 14) for making a sample, planning yardage, preparing fabric, and marking a grid.

Note YARDAGE AND GRID NOTES

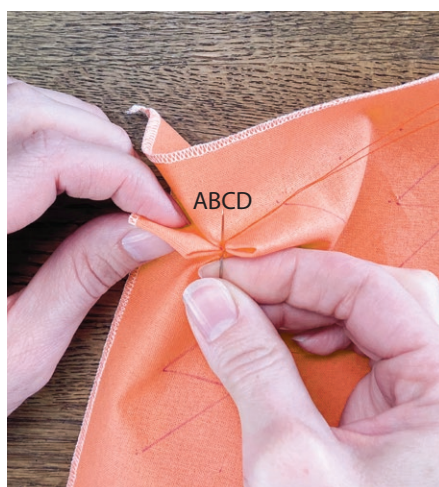
My example started as 18" × 18", ended as 9" × 10" with a 1" grid and 1" border.

STITCHING

1. Start in the upper left corner of the fabric. Knot the thread and take 2 stitches on top of each other through axis point A.
2. Take a stitch through axis point B but don't pull the points together yet.



3. Take a stitch through C and D and carefully draw all 3 stitches to meet with A. Take a few additional stitches through all the folds to make sure they are secure. Knot the thread and clip the excess.

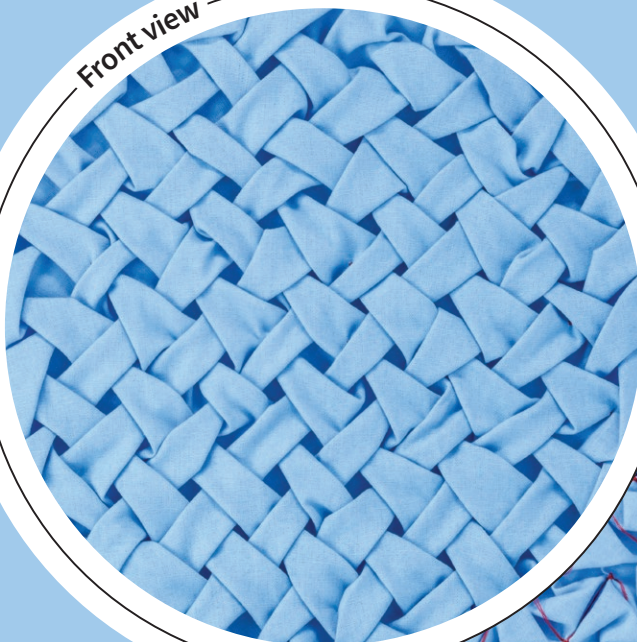


4. Move to the next group of axis points. Stitching the axis points in alphabetical order, repeat Steps 1–3 until you have reached the end of the column. Move to the top of the next column and repeat Steps 1–3 until the entire piece is smocked.

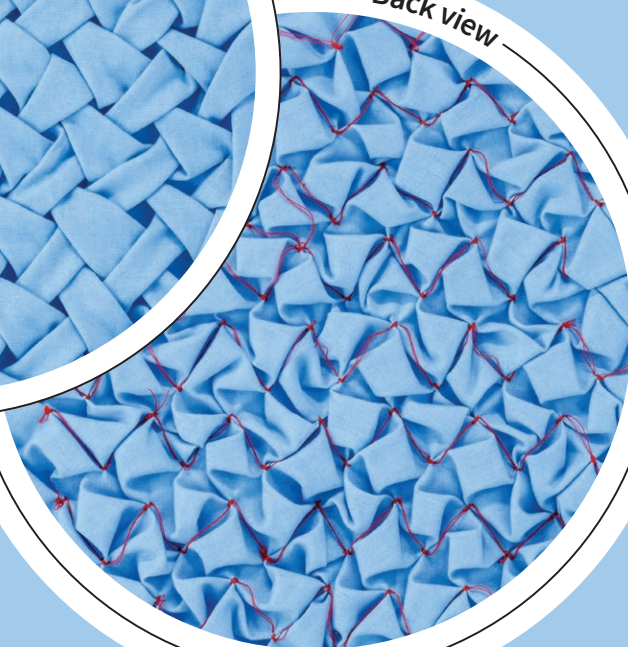
FINISHING

- 1.** Flip the fabric over and manually arrange the smocked design into its final shape if needed. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use the steam to set the design.
- 2.** Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired. See *Methods for Finishing* (page 26).

Front view



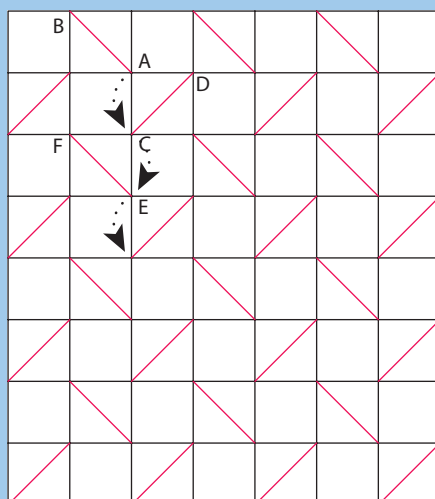
Back view



LATTICE

Skill Level: Intermediate

Lattice smocking gives the appearance of a woven design such as could be seen in a basket or open-weave fabric, making it a great choice for pieces where you want a strong design element.



Lattice stitch guide

INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

Refer to North American Smocking, General Instructions (page 14) for making a sample, planning yardage, preparing fabric, and marking a grid.

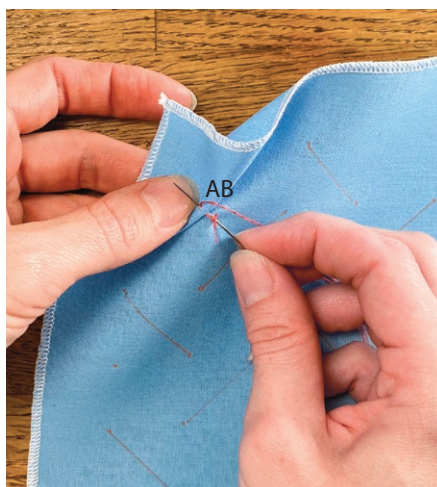
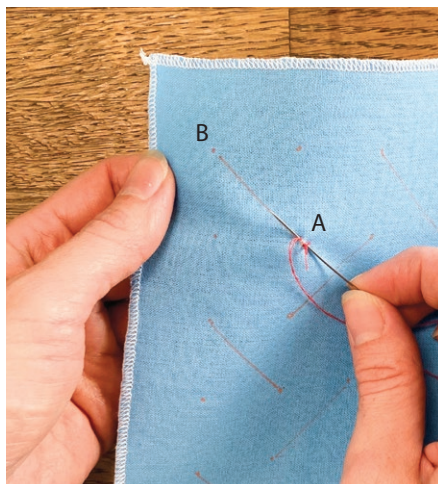
Note

YARDAGE AND GRID NOTES

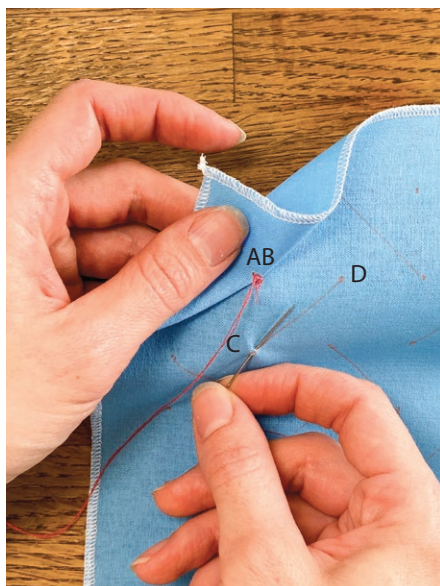
My example started as 18" × 18" and ended at 9" × 9" with a 1" grid and a 1" border.

STITCHING

1. Start in the upper left corner of the fabric. Knot the thread and take 2 stitches on top of each other through axis point A.
2. Take a stitch through axis point B and draw it in to meet the first stitch at A. Take another stitch or knot the thread to secure the 2 axis points. Do not cut the thread.



3. Take a new stitch at axis point C. Pull the connecting thread between the 2 points so it is flat but not drawing the 2 axis points (AB and C) together. This will give some structure to the back of the design to hold the shapes together. Take another stitch on top of the first to knot it.



4. Take a stitch at point D and pull it to meet point C. Take another stitch on top or knot the thread to secure.

5. Stitching the axis points in alphabetical order, repeat Steps 1–4 until you have reached the end of the column. Move to the top of the next column and repeat Steps 1–4 until the entire piece is smocked.

FINISHING

1. Gently stretch the fabric and pull it into shape (the design should solidify at that point). Arrange the folds manually if needed. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use the steam to set the design.

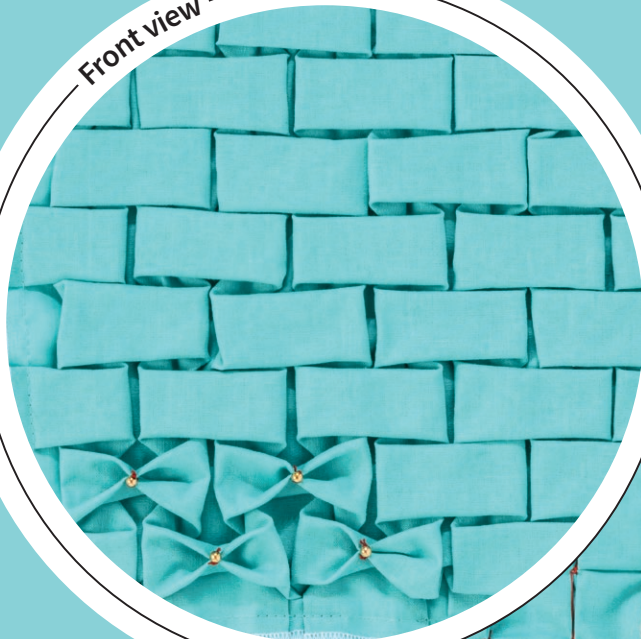
2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired.

TIP *Pressing Makes a Difference*

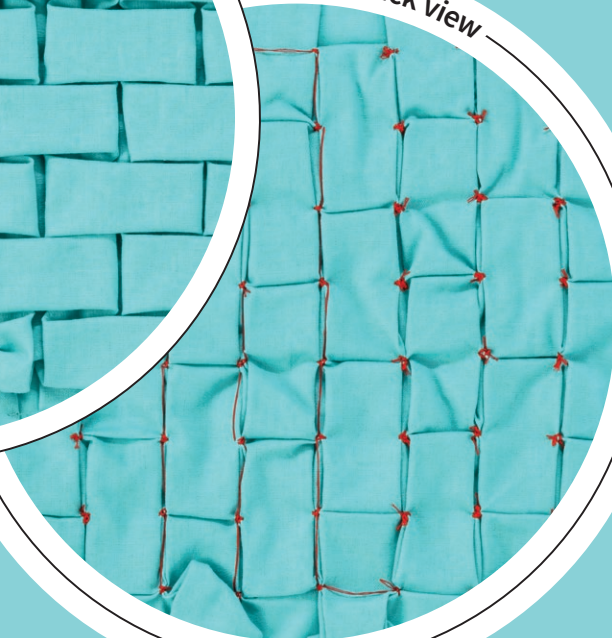
The lattice pattern is a great one to experiment with pressing—try pressing it completely flat with an iron after finishing the stitching!



Front view



Back view

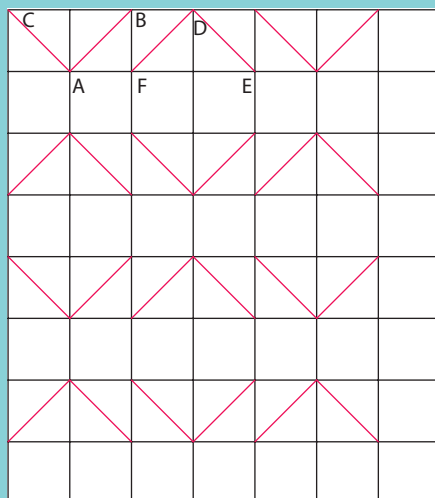


The design has been pressed flat to create bricks, and a portion has been converted to the bows variation.

BRICKS OR BOWS

Skill Level: Advanced

The bricks smocking design gives a very uniform, graphic rectangular shape to your fabric. With one extra step, the bricks can be transformed into a dainty bow motif with an optional bead detail.



Brick or Bows stitch guide



INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

Refer to North American Smocking, General Instructions (page 14) for making a sample, planning yardage, preparing fabric, and marking a grid.

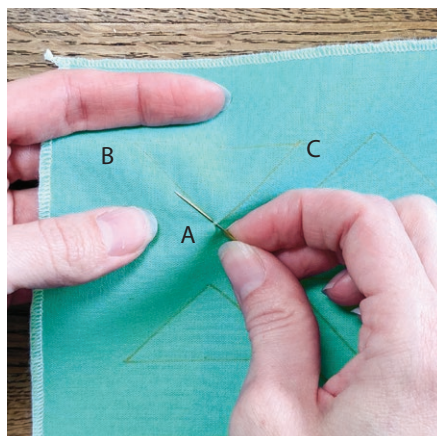
As you plan your grid, keep in mind that each triangle makes up one corner of a brick, so, it takes 4 triangles to form each brick. The brick rows will be formed in the direction of the center point of the triangles.

Note YARDAGE AND GRID NOTES

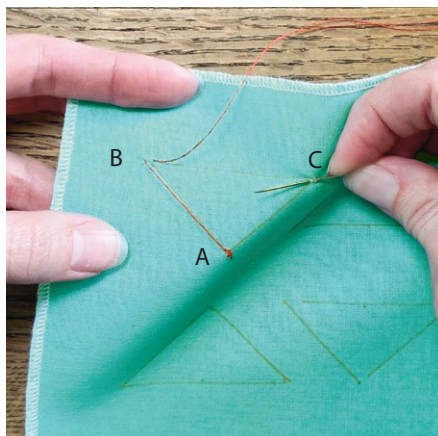
My example started as 18" × 18" and ended at 9" × 9" with a 1" grid and a 1" border. At this size, each finished brick ends up 2" × 7/8".

STITCHING

I. Start in the upper left corner of the fabric. Knot the thread and take 2 stitches on top of each other through axis point A.



2. Take a stitch through axis point B and then through point C.



3. Pull in the thread so that points A, B and C meet and take a few additional stitches through the points to secure. Knot the thread and clip the excess.



4. Move the needle to axis point D, the next triangle shape in the row. Stitching the axis points in alphabetical order, repeat Steps 1–3 until you have stitched the entire pattern.

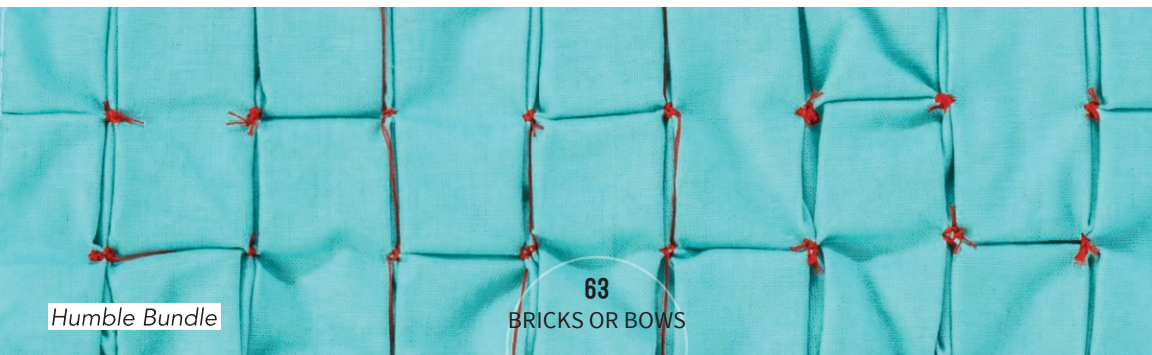
BOWS VARIATION

Optional: Pinch each brick in half and stitch in place, using a small bead to cover the stitches. This will form a pattern of bows instead of bricks.

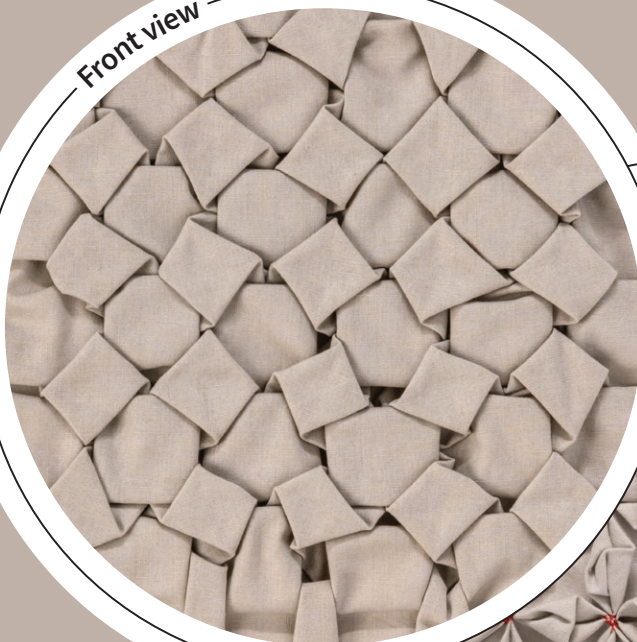
FINISHING

1. Flip the fabric over and manually arrange the smocked design into its final shape if needed. To get a really clear bricks design, you'll need to use a steam iron directly on the fabric to press the design flat.

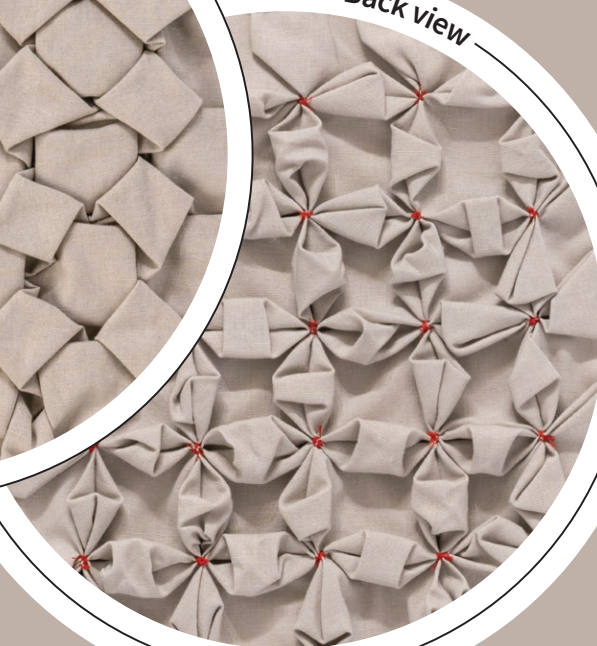
2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired. See Methods for Finishing (page 26).



Front view



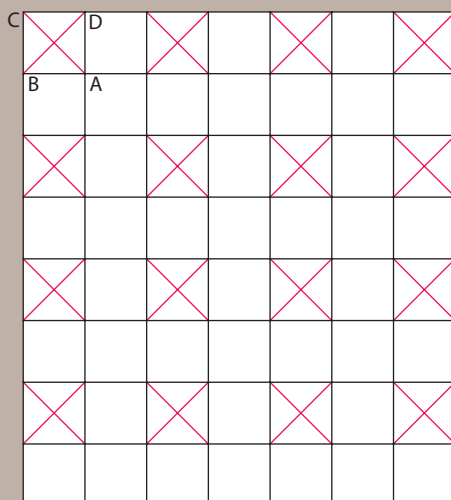
Back view



BOXES AND DIAMONDS

Skill Level: Advanced

*Boxes and Diamonds can be a graphic, geometric pattern. Or you can make it a distinctly different design by pinching the smaller diamond shape into a bow and adding a beaded element, as seen in *Bricks or Bows* (page 61).*



Boxes and Diamonds stitch guide

INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

Refer to North American Smocking, General Instructions (page 14) for making a sample, planning yardage, preparing fabric, and marking a grid.

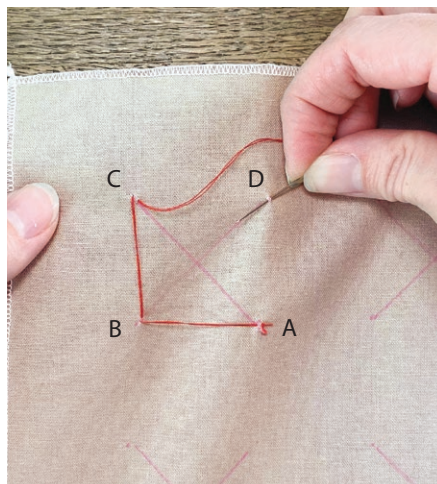
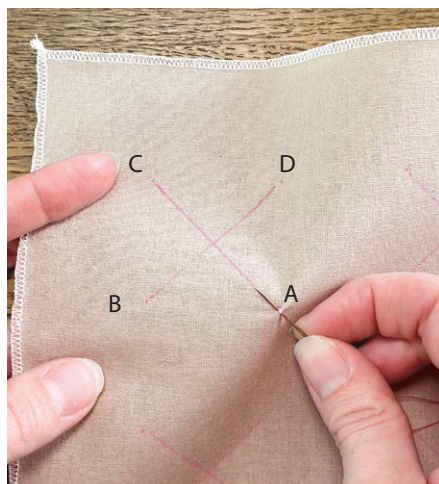
Note

YARDAGE AND GRID NOTES

My example started as 18" × 18" and ended at 9" × 9" with a 1½" grid and a 1½" border.

STITCHING

1. Start in the upper left corner of the fabric. Knot the thread and take 2 stitches on top of each other through axis point A.
2. Take a stitch through axis point B, then at C and D, respectively. Do not knot off the thread.



3. Carefully pull the thread so that points A, B, C, and D meet. Add stitches around the folds so that the center of the design is secure. Clipping the thread is optional.



4. Move to the next section in the row and repeat Steps 1–3 until the entire pattern is stitched.

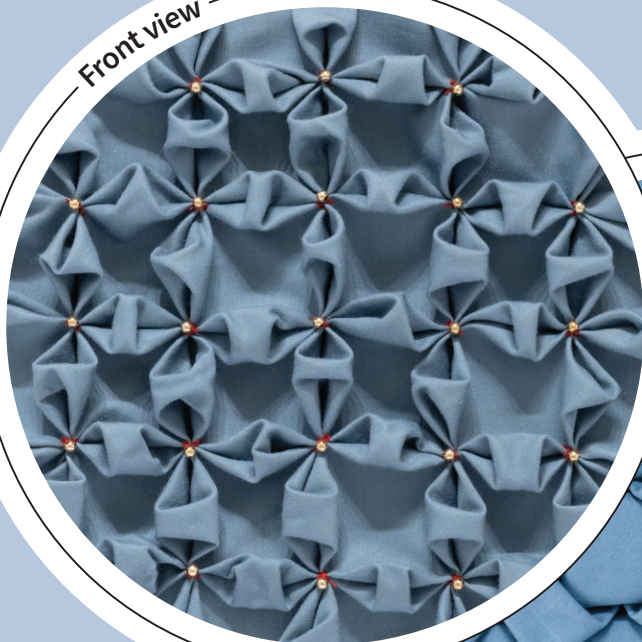
FINISHING

1. Flip the fabric over and make sure all the boxes and diamonds are formed correctly. It may take a little work to arrange the pattern. You will need to push the edges of each box in toward the back to make the right shape appear. As you push the design into the correct shape, the back will form the pattern Flowers (page 67). Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use the steam to set the design.

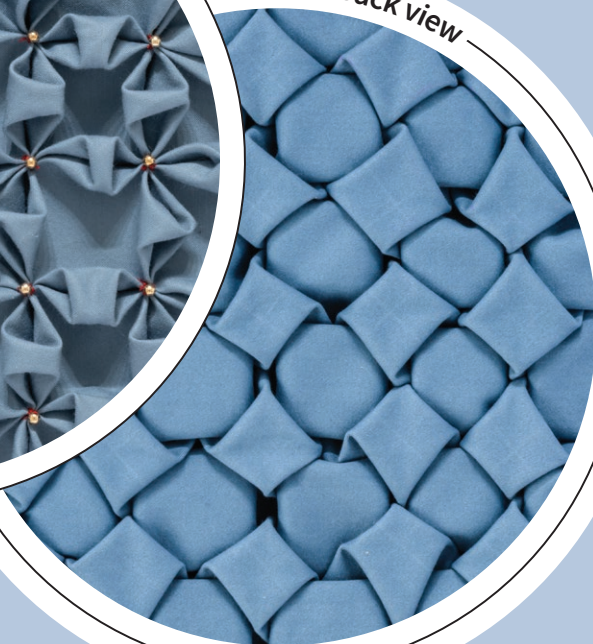
2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired. See Methods for Finishing (page 26).



Front view



Back view



FLOWERS

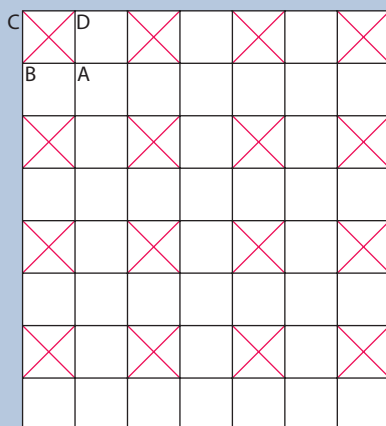
Skill Level: Advanced

The flowers design is another option for an organic design that can be decorated with beads or small buttons to give more interest to the design. Unlike most of the other North American techniques, the stitching is done on the right side (or front) of the fabric. It actually uses the same pattern as Boxes/ Diamonds, but in this case, what is normally the back of the design in North American smocking becomes the front.

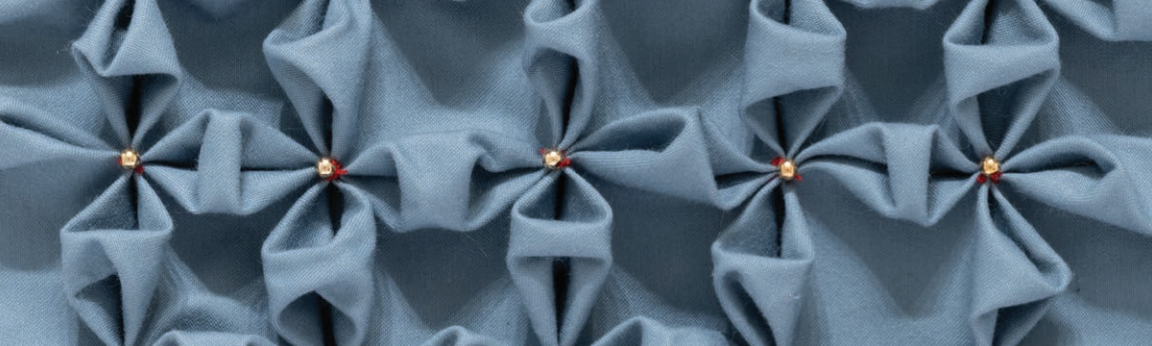
Note

MARKING

Since the stitched side is the “right side” in Flowers, use disappearing pen or chalk to mark the grid or axis points.



Flowers stitch guide



INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

Refer to North American Smocking, General Instructions (page 14) for making a sample, planning yardage, preparing fabric, and marking a grid.

Note YARDAGE AND GRID NOTES

My example started as 18" × 18" and ended at 9" × 9" with a 1½" grid and a 1½" border.

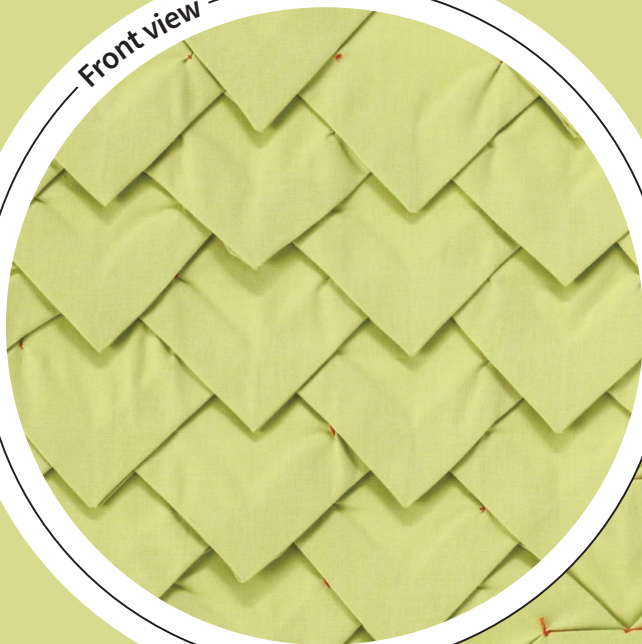
STITCHING

1. Refer to the stitching instructions for Boxes and Diamonds (page 64).
2. After the smocking stitching is completed, stitch beads or small pearls into the centers of the flowers to make the stamens and hide the smocking stitches (test the beads before stitching to make sure the steam from the iron won't damage them).

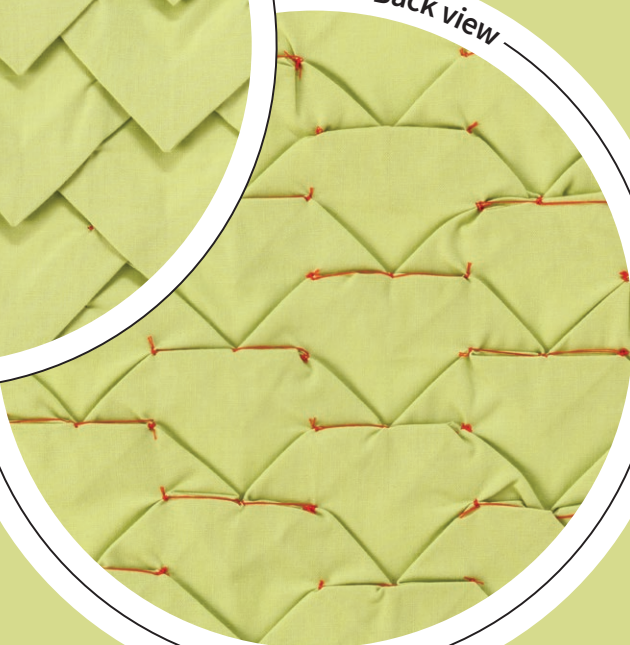
FINISHING

1. Flip the fabric over and manually arrange the smocked design into its final shape if needed. Holding an iron [above](#) the fabric from the right side, use the steam to set the design.
2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired. See Methods for Finishing (page 26).

Front view



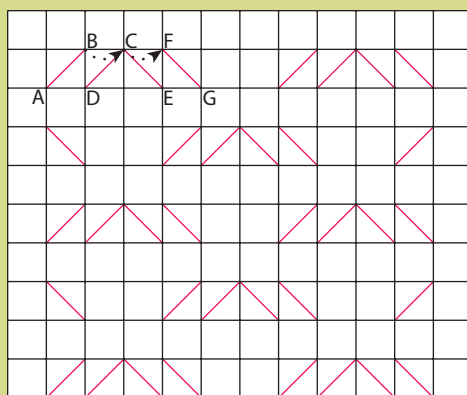
Back view



SCALES

Skill Level: Advanced

Scales is one of the few that should be pressed flat to get the correct shapes and pattern. So it's important to choose a crisp fabric that presses cleanly and holds a crease well. This would be a great option for costumes that call for a dragon scale or other reptile patterns.



Scales stitch guide

INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

Refer to North American Smocking, General Instructions (page 14) for making a sample, planning yardage, preparing fabric, and marking a grid.

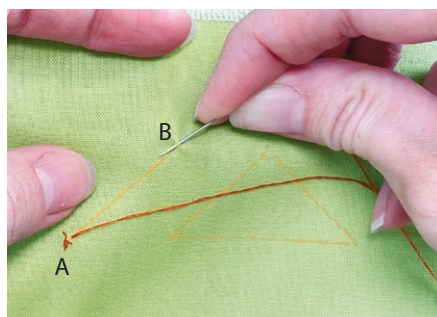
As you plan your grid, keep in mind that the scale pattern will be formed in the open space between the triangles. The tip of the scale will be in the same direction of the center point of the triangle.

Note YARDAGE AND GRID NOTES

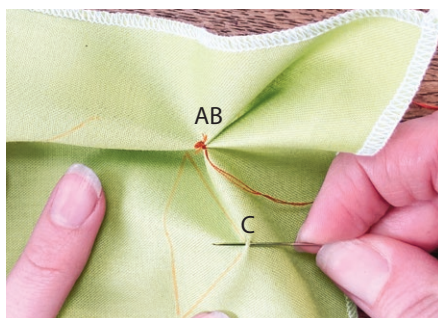
My example started as 18" × 18" and ended at 9" × 11" with a 1" grid and a 1" border. At this size, the scales from center tip to tip are about 1¾" long.

STITCHING

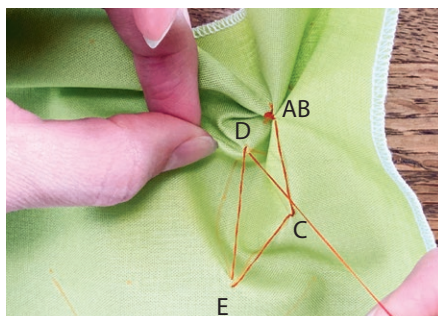
1. Start in the upper left corner of the fabric. Knot the thread and take 2 stitches on top of each other through axis point A.
2. Take a stitch through axis point B and draw it in to meet the first stitch at A. Take another stitch or knot the thread to secure the 2 axis points. Do not cut the thread.



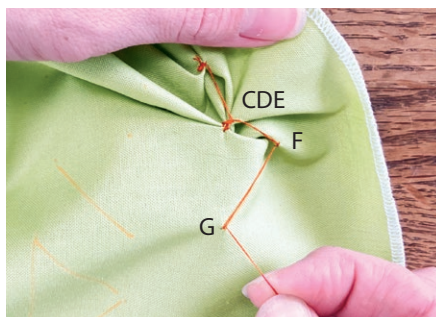
3. Take a new stitch at axis point C. Pull the connecting thread between the 2 points so it is flat but not drawing the 2 axis points (AB and C) together. This will give some structure to the back of the design to hold the shapes together. Take another stitch on top of the first to knot it.



4. Take a stitch at point D and then point E. Pull points C, D, and E together and stitch around the folds to secure the 3 points together.



5. Take a stitch at point F, leaving the connecting thread between the last points flat but not pulling. Take a stitch at point G, pulling G to meet F. Take another stitch, knot off the thread, and clip.

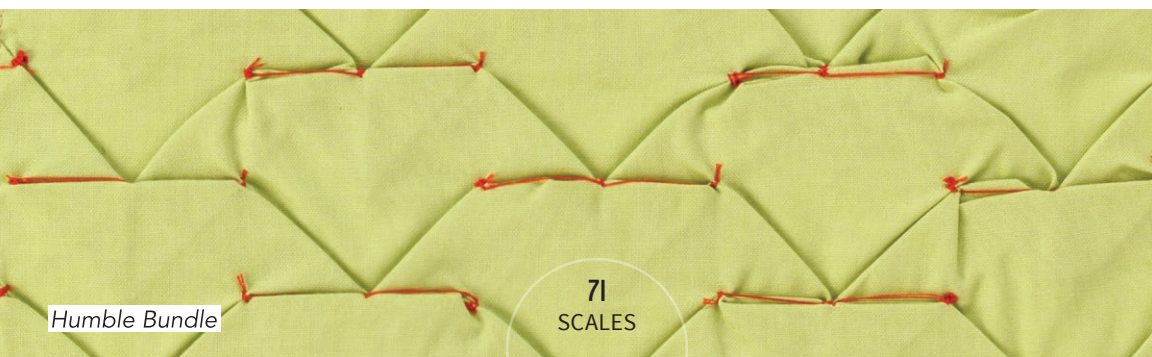


6. Move to next section of stitches in the row and repeat Steps 1–5 until the whole pattern is stitched.

FINISHING

1. Flip the fabric over and manually arrange the smocked design into its final shape if needed. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use the steam to set the design.

2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired. See Methods for Finishing (page 26).



ENGLISH SMOCKING

COSPLAYER • Pro of Pros and Cons Cosplay

COSTUME • Juliette from Sakizo Artworks,
an original design and character

Skirt featuring honeycomb smocking

Photo by Noah Smith Images

HISTORY

English smocking is a much older technique and was used as a method of decorating smocks (hence the name!) and chemises that featured gathered yokes, necklines, and sleeves. There is evidence that English smocking was present as early as the Middle Ages and was seen in all class levels of clothing, as it was a practical way to gather fabric and reduced the need for closures. It saw a popular resurgence in the second half of the twentieth century as an heirloom handicraft used in handmade clothing, especially women's blouses and children's clothing.

Dress featuring smocking and cross stitching circa 1925 from the personal collection of Gail Brassard

Photos by Maggie Hofmann



GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

English smocking is worked from the front onto fabric that has been evenly pleated by hand or by a pleating machine. Because the design is worked from the front (usually with embroidery floss), the stitches become a decorative element and can be stitched in different colors to add further interest.

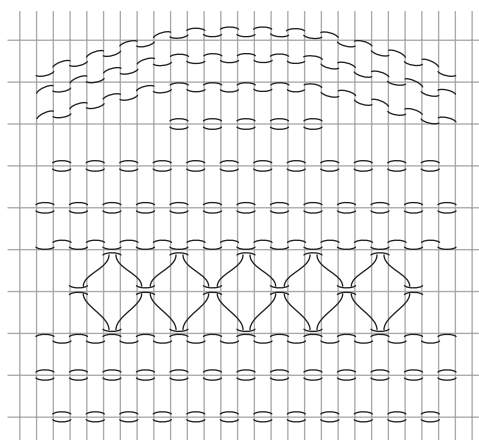
After the decorative stitches are added, the pleating stitches are released and the stitches that remain hold the fabric together in the desired pattern. The technique allows for some stretch, making it useful for garments such as chemises and period shirts with gathered necklines and sleeves. English smocking also can be used successfully as wide waistbands attached to voluminous pants or skirts, eliminating the need for a waistband.

GETTING STARTED

DRAW OUT THE PATTERN

Since English smocking is worked on a pre-pleated fabric, it is easy to combine different patterns and stitches to create unique patterns and decoration. I recommend drawing the pattern out on a piece of paper so you can figure out how many pleats you will need for your design.

Prepping the fabric for English smocking begins with a grid of dots, similar to North American smocking, but generally, the grid will be much smaller in scale, sometimes as small as $\frac{1}{4}$ " but usually not bigger than $\frac{1}{2}$ ". A larger grid of dots will take up more fabric by creating deeper pleats and the final smocked design will be much bulkier.



Smocking pattern made by the author for sleeve smocking featuring cable, diamond, and honeycomb smocking. See the stitched garment to the right.



COSPLAYER • PaisleyandGlue

COSTUME • Original design

Sleeves featuring cable, diamond,
and honeycomb smocking

Photo by Allen Castillo

MAKE A SAMPLE

Sometimes English smocking is stitched on the fabric after the pattern piece is cut; this helps you make sure the pattern is centered correctly and to avoid cutting through the design later. This means that you'll need to do a little work after planning your smocking design but before cutting to figure out how much additional fullness needs to be added to your garment pattern.

It's a good idea to mock-up a small sample on scrap fabric to make sure that the pleats are the correct size. A sample is also the best way to calculate how much yardage loss you will have.

PLAN YARDAGE NEEDS

Make a sample for the most accurate calculations. Unlike North American smocking, yardage loss occurs only width-wise in English smocking. A good rule of thumb for fabric loss is to add 3 times the amount of width of fabric to the section to be smocked. Example: if you wanted to add smocking to a 6" section of the garment, you would need to add another 12" of fullness to the pattern in that section for a total width of 18" wide.

Note CHECKING FULLNESS

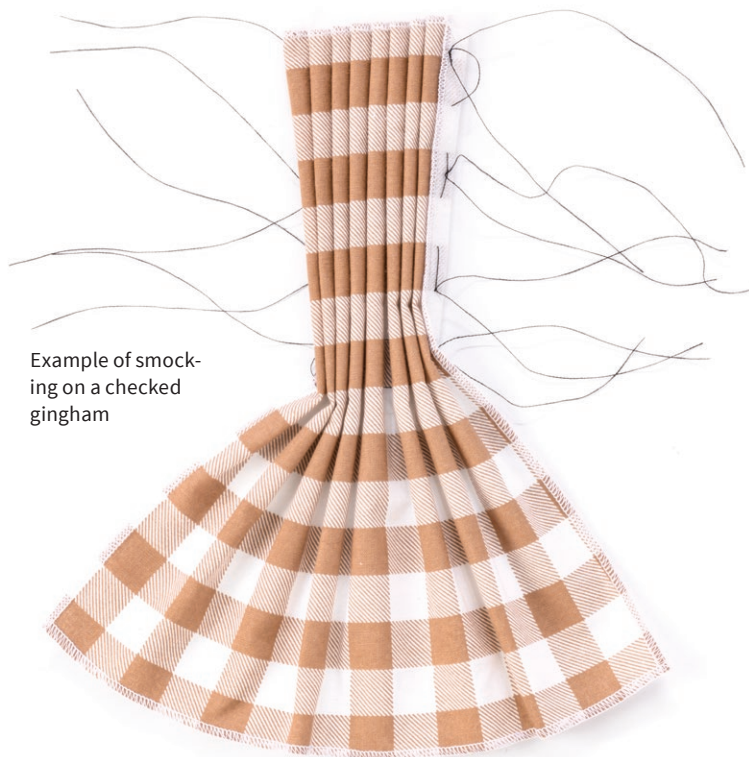
If you're using a pattern that includes gathers or other kinds of ease, there may already be enough fullness included in the pattern for your smocking.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT FABRICS

English smocking is best used on lighter-weight fabrics that won't become too bulky when pleated. Lighter-weight fabrics such as sheer linens and cottons are more suited toward small pleats. If you are planning larger pleats, a heavier-weight fabric like wools or suiting wovens can be used but will be bulkier in seams.

TIP *Adding Pattern to Smocking*

Patterned fabrics like stripes or checks can be very interesting additions to a smocked garment. By using the pattern of the fabric within the design, you can start with a striped fabric that suddenly becomes a narrower stripe or even a solid color when it is smocked. Using stripes or checks also can be a time-saver, since you can often follow the fabric pattern when stitching the pleats instead of drawing a grid!



Example of smocking on a checked gingham



A red-and-white striped fabric becomes a solid red fabric.

PREPARING FABRIC FOR ENGLISH SMOCKING

1. Prewash if necessary and press the fabric using an iron with a steam setting, taking care not to warp the grain of the fabric.
2. Trace and cut the pattern piece out of the fabric (including any extra width you've added to be smocked), leaving extra seam allowance on all sides. Serge or use pinking shears on the edges to prevent fraying while smocking.



Photo by Jacqueline Collins

Pleating machine for English smocking

3. Mark the grid of dots on the back of the cut fabric. You can mark the fabric by hand, or use a commercially available heat-transfer dot paper. The paper can help expedite the pleating process but can be hard to find. There is a product under the brand “Creative Smocking Dots” that seems to be available in person or online at a few independent sewing supply stores.

Note

USING A PLEATING MACHINE

You can use a pleating machine, which easily pulls thread through the fabric, but they can be expensive and are not generally necessary for the occasional smocker.

If you are marking the grid of dots by hand, mark on the back of the fabric. Start marking from the middle of the fabric to center the grid on the fabric and mark the number of pleats required for the pattern.

TIP

Mark an Extra Row

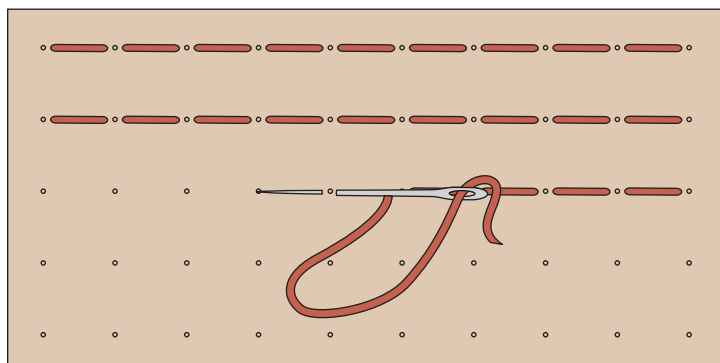
Mark at least 1 extra row of dots to the top of the design to help maintain the pleat integrity after working the design. This makes it easier to cleanly insert the smocked fabric into the garment.

4. Now that the dot grid has been marked, it's time to pre-pleat the fabric to prepare it for the decorative smocking stitches. The pleating stitches will eventually be removed after adding the decorative smocking stitches, but it's important to start with even, precise pleats to ensure that your final product is perfect.

HAND-PLEATING TECHNIQUES

DOT-PICKUP METHOD

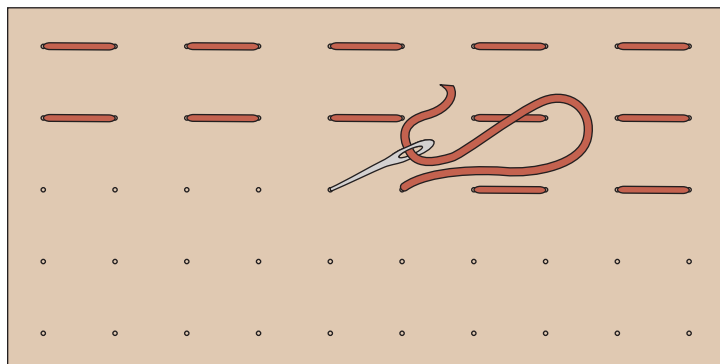
Use a long, sharp needle and a strong thread to work the pleating stitches through the fabric on either side of each dot. Leave the threads unpulled until all pleats are stitched. If necessary, use thread wax to prevent knots from forming while stitching. This method will use the least fabric and is good for creating less-bulky designs, especially on lightweight fabric. But the pleats are slightly less stable and harder to pull together than using the next method.



Dot-pickup method

DOT-IN DOT-OUT METHOD

Using a long, sharp needle and a strong thread, work the needle in one dot and out the next. This method will use more fabric and create deeper pleats. However, it is also easier to pull the pleats together as the pleating thread will be in the middle of each pleat. This is a good choice for a polyester or thick fabric that resists creasing.



Dot-in dot-out method

PULLING THE PLEATS TOGETHER

1. On one edge of the grid, tie threads together in pairs to secure the lines of stitching, then pull the opposite thread tails so there is a scant $\frac{1}{8}$ " space between each pleat. The width of the pleated section should be slightly less than you ultimately want, as the smocked design will naturally spread once the pleating stitches are removed.
2. Secure the threads, by tying together in pairs as in Step 1 or by wrapping the excess thread around small safety pins embedded in the fabric.

BLOCKING SHAPED PANELS

For larger sections of pleats, such as around an entire neckline or waistline, you'll likely want to block the pleats, which means arranging them into shape before smocking so that your panels will retain the correct shape after stitching. To make sure the smocking is not distorted by the body's natural curves, arrange the pleats into radiating lines that are more closely gathered around the top of the garment (such as the neckline or waistline) and gradually open up as the pleating lines descend. Using this method will ensure that the smocking is not distorted by the body's natural curves.

1. To block the pleats, lay the paper pattern piece over a pinnable surface and arrange the fabric to be smocked on top, pulling the pleats into shape to match the pattern piece.
2. When you are satisfied with the shaping, tie off the pleating stitches and smock the piece according to the following instructions, maintaining the shape of the pattern piece.

STITCHING TECHNIQUES

For reference when reading the stitching instructions, the top of the pleat is referred to as a peak and the base of the pleat is called the valley.

The trick in English smocking is to stitch in the correct direction around the pleats in accordance with the pattern you've drawn; the different stitch techniques are dependent on precise stitches.

Each smocking stitch should be between a quarter and third of the depth of the pleat. Any more than that, the design won't spread open; any less and it won't have the dimensionality that is so distinctive in smocking.

I strongly recommend you use a cotton or silk embroidery floss (using 2–4 strands together) to allow your design to show clearly on your fabric. Color choice is up to you, but a colorful design using multiple thread colors can add incredible depth and interest to your project! Regular skeined embroidery floss (found at any fabric or craft store) works perfectly, but you could choose a bulkier thread to add more depth to the design if desired.

TIP *Last-Minute Count*

Do a last count of your pleats compared to your pattern before starting the decorative smocking embroidery to make sure your math was correct!



COSPLAYER • Sophia Khan

COSTUME • Original design

English-smocked neckline, cuffs, and waist
band featuring cable and diamond smocking

Photo by Christa J. Newman

STARTING A STITCH

1. Count the pleats in both your pattern and the fabric to find the center of each. Mark the center on the fabric with a pin or tailor's tack. Knot the end of the thread and bury the knot inside the center pleat peak so it won't show from the front or irritate the skin.
2. Use the lines of pleating as a guide to make sure your stitches are moving in a straight line. Stitch the pattern according to your plan from the center all the way to the end of the pattern.
3. When you reach the end of the pattern, flip both the fabric and the pattern 180° and stitch the other side of the pattern from the center to the end of the pattern. Stitching from the center to either end ensures that the pattern will be centered on the fabric.

TIP

Stitching Tension

Keep your stitching tension consistent throughout the pattern to maintain consistency.

ENDING A STITCH

When you're done with the row, bring your thread to the back of the fabric within a pleat peak and make another knot in the thread, burying the knot inside a pleat.

FINISHING

PRESSING

After you finish the decorative rows, use the steam from an iron (hold the iron above the pleats and do not press flat!) to set the pleats.

After the fabric cools, you may remove the basting stitches except the top line of pleating stitches. Keep those in place until you sew the smocked piece into the garment to keep all the pleated fullness in place. Admire your handiwork!



COSPLAYER • Alchemical Cosplay

COSTUME • Original design based on Granmamare from *Ponyo*

English smocking featuring beading

Photos by Jacqueline Collins

ADDING THE SMOCKED PIECE TO YOUR GARMENT

After you finish smocking your pattern, you're ready to incorporate it into your garment! Generally, the smocking design will be along the top of a pattern piece and you'll have to decide how to treat the end of the pleats above the design. Here are some options that will prepare the top pleats to be stitched flat into a seam:

- The top can be cartridge-pleated onto a seam edge to maintain the full depth of the smocking. Cartridge pleating involves hand-stitching just the top edge of each peak to a band or seam edge so the pleating doesn't collapse. This is especially useful at waistbands to reduce bulk in a waistband and is often seen in period dresses.
- Press the pleats to one side and topstitch at the seamline to keep pleats in place while constructing the garment.
- Press the pleats into box pleats and topstitch at the seamline to keep pleats in place while constructing the garments.

Alternatively, you can finish the smocking by adding a hand-stitched band to the backside that will keep the pleats in place and maintain the dimension (see detail on the following page).



Detail of Alchemical Cosplay hand-stitching a band to the backside of her smocked piece to finish.

Photo by Jacqueline Collins

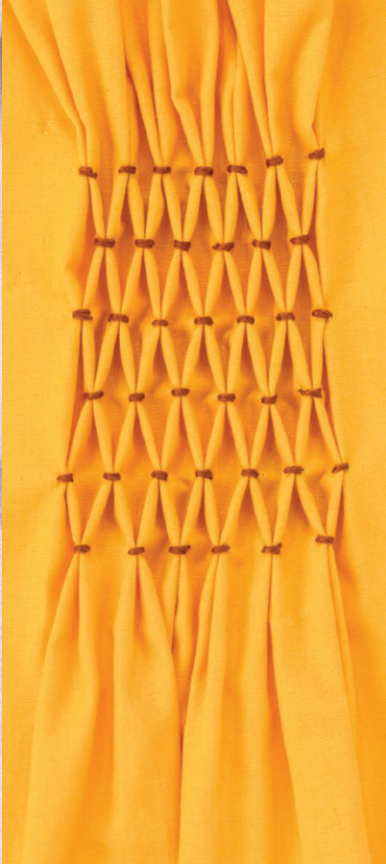
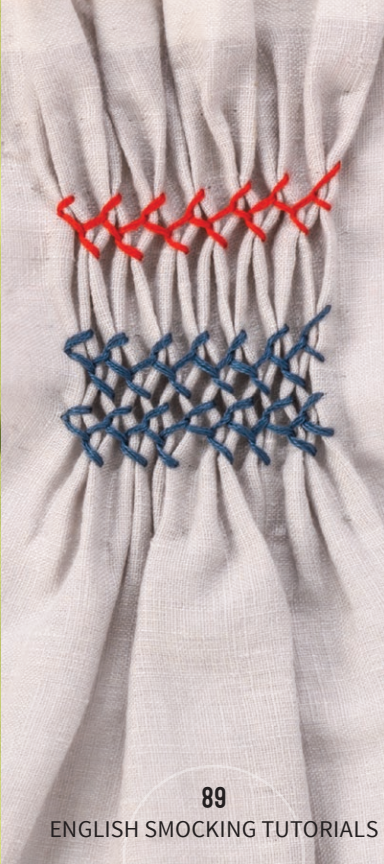
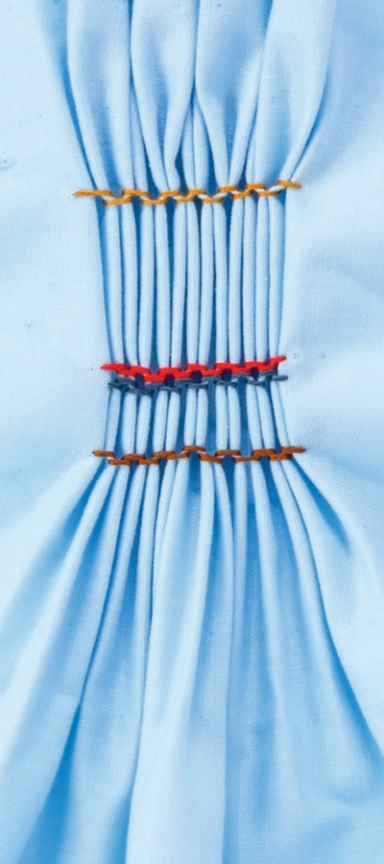
English Smocking

TUTORIALS

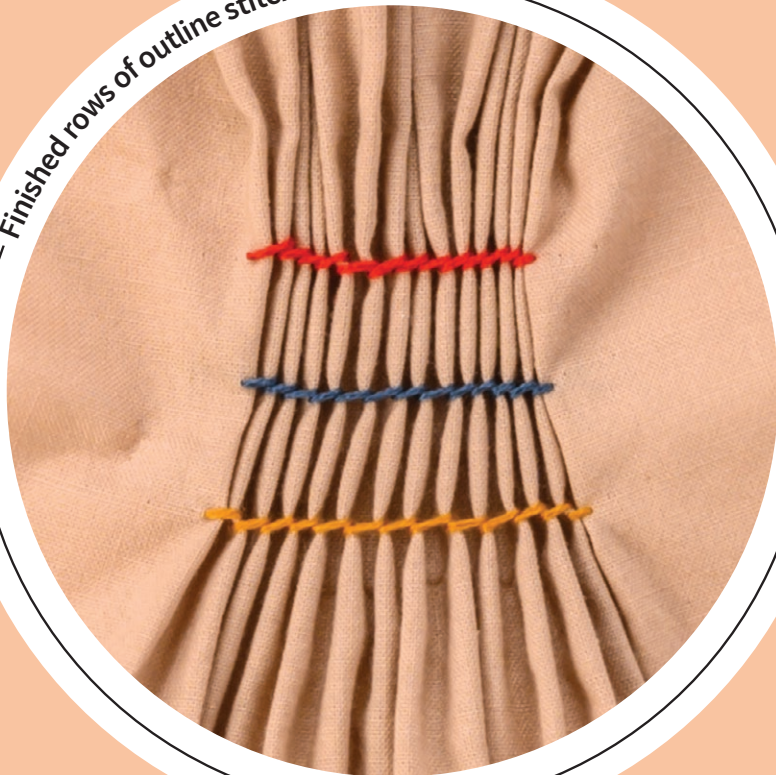
MATERIALS

- Amount of fabric to be smocked.
See Plan Yardage Needs (page 76).
- Hand-sewing needles for pleating and embroidery
- Strong thread such as quilting or upholstery thread (or a doubled strand of 50-weight thread)
- Embroidery thread for decorative smocking stitches (cotton or silk)
- Clear quilting ruler
- Fabric marking tool of your choice
- Small safety pins (optional)
- Iron with a steam setting





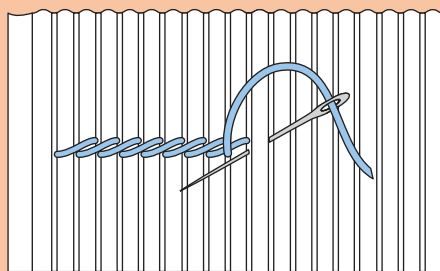
Finished rows of outline stitching



OUTLINE

Skill Level: Beginner friendly

The outline design is the most basic stitch in English smocking and is often used to finish off the top and bottom of a design.



Outline stitch guide



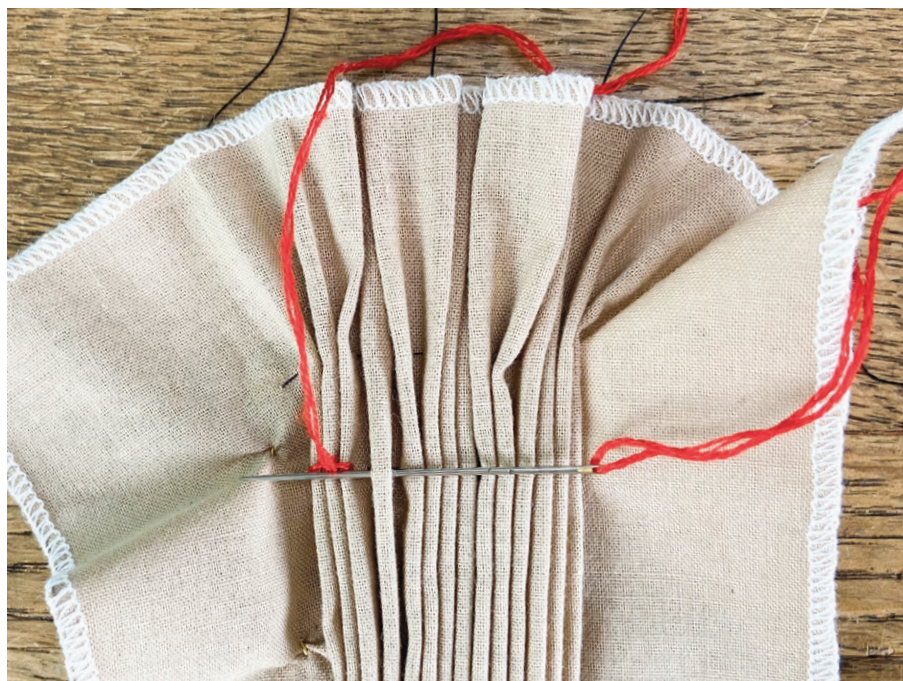
INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

Refer to English Smocking, General Instructions (page 74) for making a sample, planning yardage, marking a grid on the fabric, and pre-pleating it.

STITCHING

1. Using 2–4 strands of embroidery thread, thread the needle and knot the end.
2. Draw the thread through the back of the fabric inside the leftmost pleat, burying the knot in the pleat and coming out to the left of the pleat peak.



3. Holding the thread above the needle, bring the needle into the right side of the second pleat, 1 thread width higher, and out the left side of the same pleat at the same level as the beginning stitch. Hold the needle nearly perpendicular to the pleats.
4. Repeat Step 3 until you get to the end of the pattern.
5. Take a tiny stitch inside the valley of the last pleat to bring the thread to the back of the fabric. Knot the thread inside the pleat and clip off the excess.

FINISHING

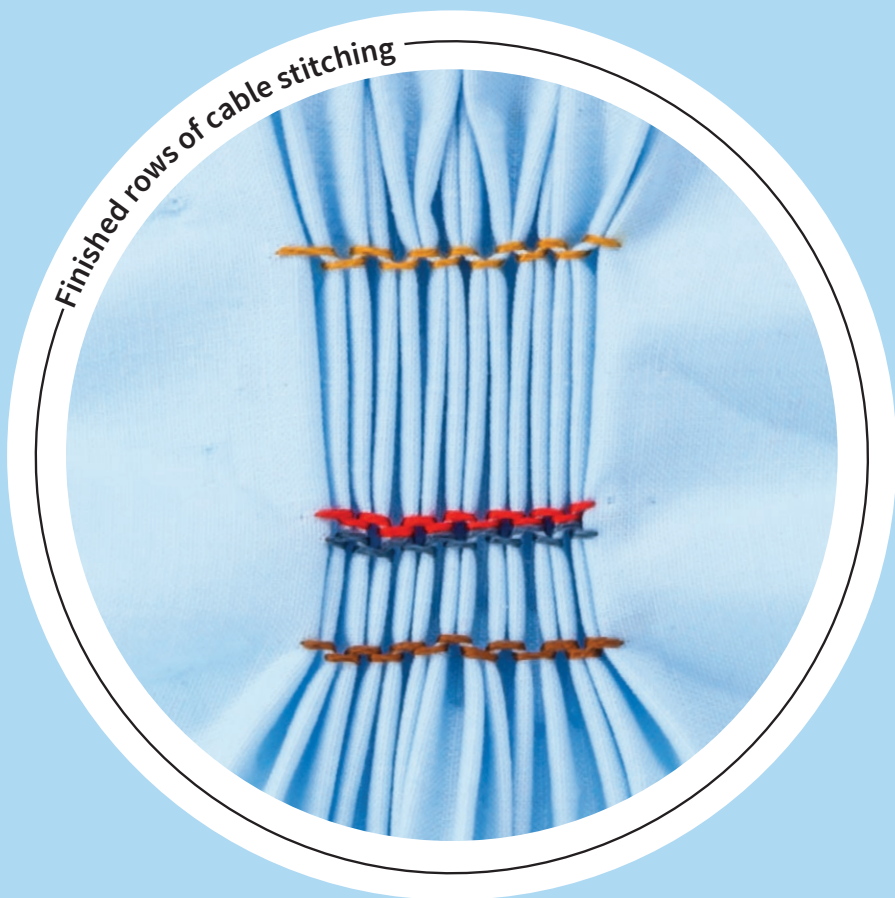
1. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use steam to set the design after you finished the smocking.
2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired (page 86).

TIP

Reversing the Stitch

You can reverse the angle of the stitches by holding the thread below the needle and bring the needle up slightly above the last stitch instead of below. The finished decorative stitch length will then slant down instead of up.



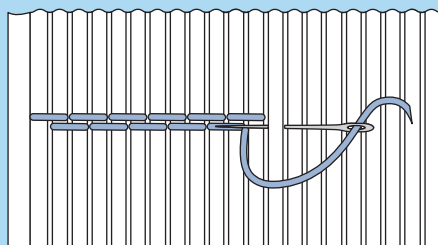


Finished rows of cable stitching

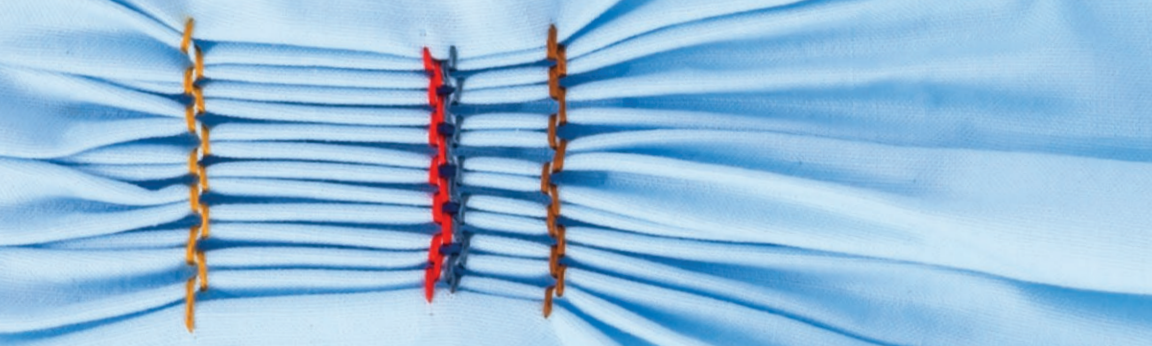
CABLE

Skill Level: Beginner friendly

The cable design is often used to finish off the top and bottom of a design. It can be doubled up using the same or contrasting colors to give a heavier line.



Cable stitch guide



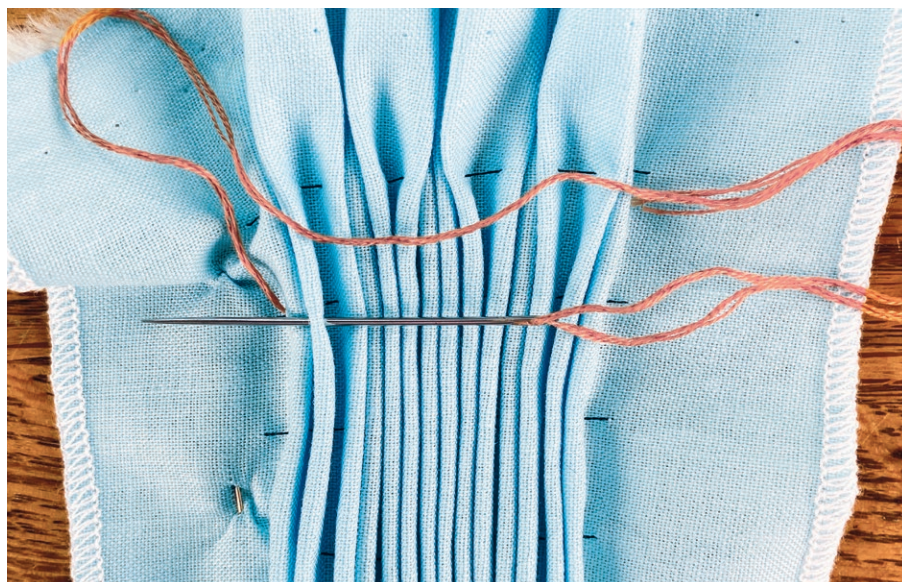
INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

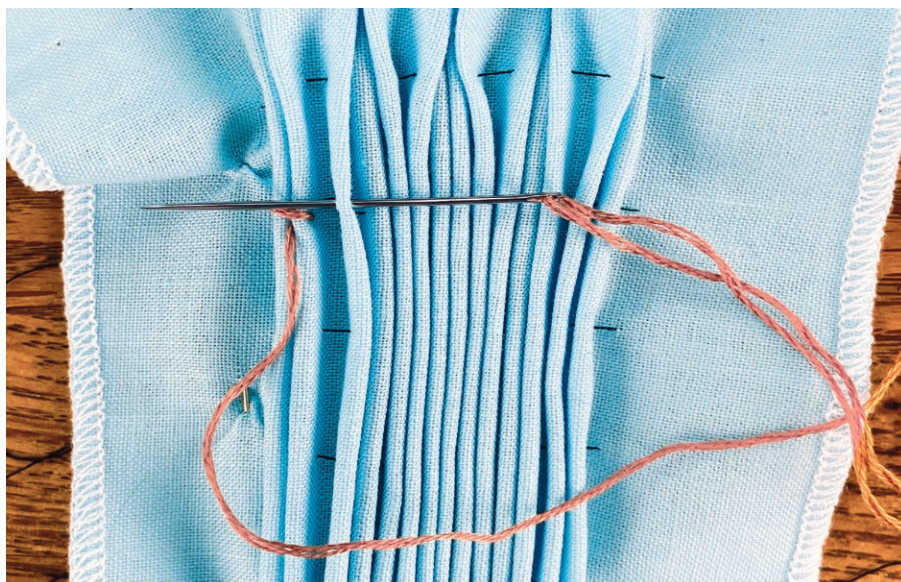
Refer to English Smocking, General Instructions (page 74) for making a sample, planning yardage, marking a grid on the fabric, and pre-pleating it.

STITCHING

1. Using 2–4 strands of embroidery thread, thread the needle and knot the end.
2. Draw the thread through the back of the fabric inside the leftmost pleat, burying the knot in the pleat and coming out to the left of the pleat peak.
3. Holding the thread above the needle, bring the needle into the right side of the second pleat and out the left side below the horizontal stitch you just made. Hold the needle perpendicular to the pleats.



4. Now holding the thread below the needle, bring the needle into the right side of the third pleat and out the left side above the stitch you just made. This completes the first set of cables.



5. Repeat Steps 3 and 4 until you have reached the end of the pattern.

6. Take a tiny stitch inside the valley of the last pleat to bring your thread to the back of the fabric. Knot the thread inside the pleat and clip off the excess.

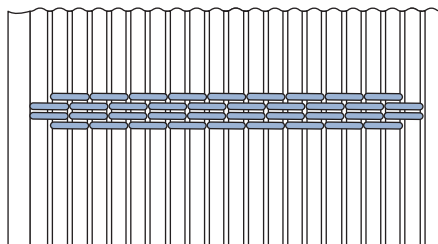
FINISHING

1. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use steam to set the design after you finished the smocking.

2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired (page 86).

Note

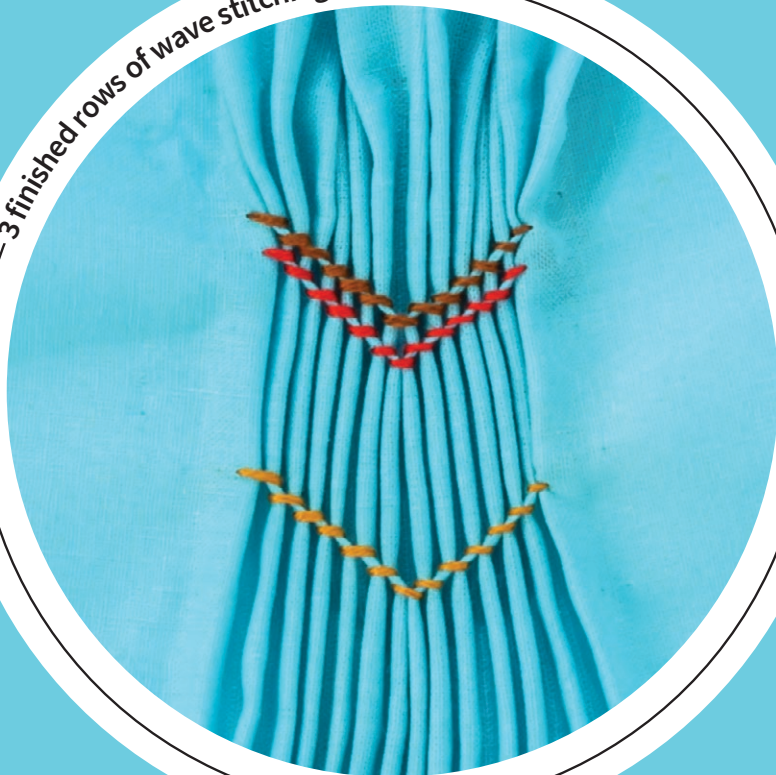
DOUBLE CABLE STITCH



Double cable stitch guide

Create a double cable design by adding additional rows of cable below the first set, reversing the placement of the thread for each new row.

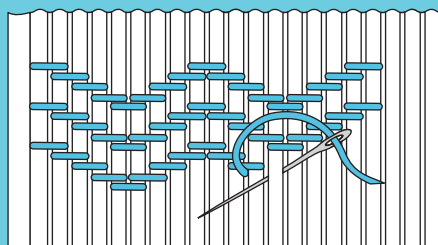
3 finished rows of wave stitching



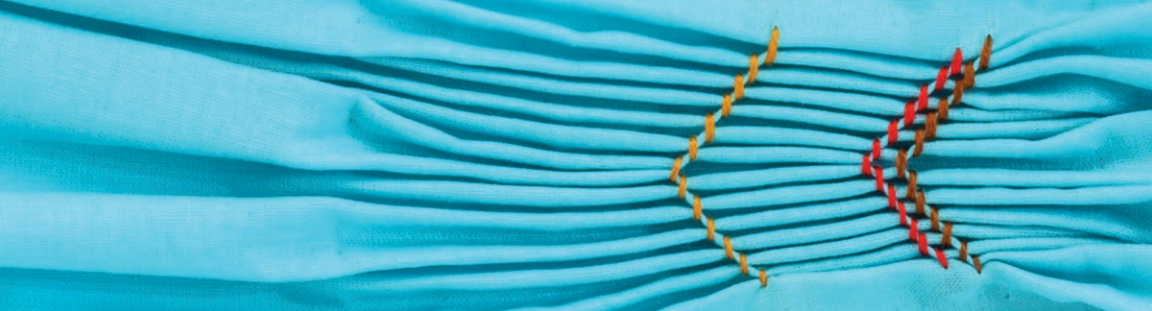
WAVE

Skill Level: Beginner friendly

The wave pattern moves diagonally up and down across the pleats to create a wave or chevron design. You can use single rows or repeating rows in any combination. Based on your design, Wave can be any number of stitches, but generally uses 3–5 stitches in height.



Wave stitch guide



INSTRUCTIONS

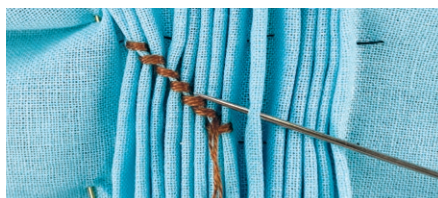
PLANNING

Refer to English Smocking, General Instructions (page 74) for making a sample, planning yardage, marking a grid on the fabric, and pre-pleating it.

STITCHING

1. Using 2–4 strands of embroidery thread, thread the needle and knot the end.
2. Draw the thread through the back of the fabric inside the leftmost pleat, burying the knot in the pleat and coming out to the left of the pleat peak.
3. Holding the thread above the needle, bring the needle into the right side of the second pleat and out the left side below the horizontal stitch you just made. Hold the needle perpendicular to the pleats.
4. Repeat with the third pleat, adding another stitch directly below the first.

5. When you reach the bottom stitch of the V, move your thread so it is below the needle and complete the stitch.

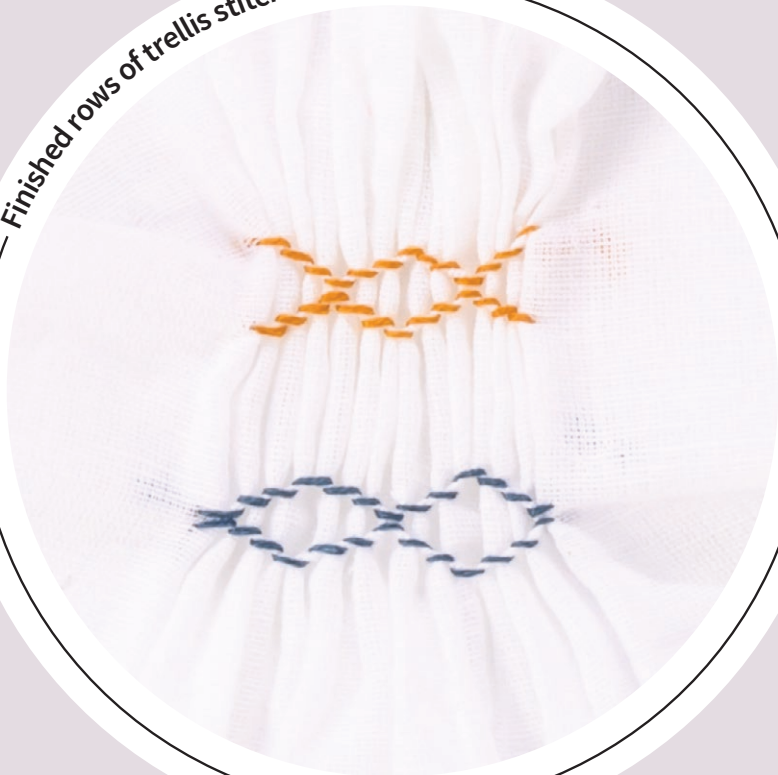


6. Continuing to hold the thread below the needle, make a new stitch directly above the V bottom, mirroring the one next to it.
7. Continue to stitch upward until you complete the stitch at the top of the V.
8. Repeat Steps 3–7 until the pattern is completed.
9. Take a tiny stitch inside the valley of the last pleat to bring the thread to the back of the fabric. Knot the thread inside the pleat and clip off the excess.

FINISHING

1. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use steam to set the design after you finished the smocking.
2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired (page 86).

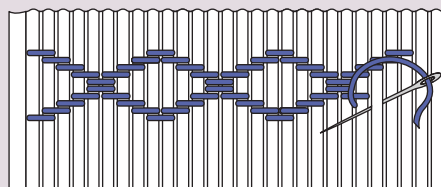
Finished rows of trellis stitching



TRELLIS

Skill Level: Intermediate

The trellis design is made by combining two reversed rows of waves to make a series of attached diamond shapes. You can use single rows or repeating rows in any combination. Based on your design, Trellis can be any number of stitches, but generally uses 3–5 stitches in height.



Trellis stitch guide



INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

Refer to English Smocking, General Instructions (page 74) for making a sample, planning yardage, marking a grid on the fabric, and pre-pleating it.

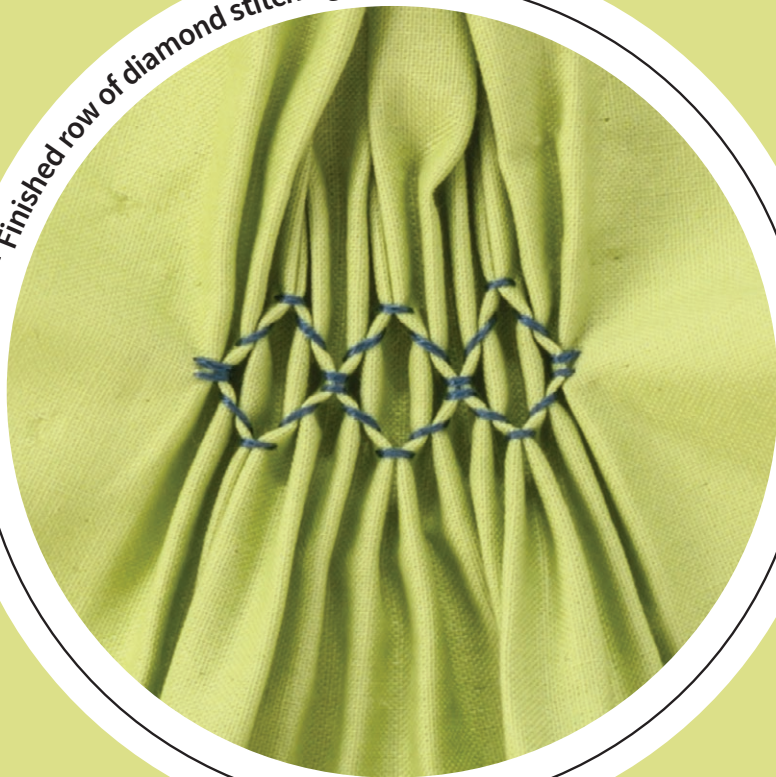
STITCHING

1. Follow Steps 2–8 of Wave (page 96) to complete the top section of Trellis.
2. Measure the height of the top section of trellis and mark that distance below the existing row to establish the starting point for the bottom section.
3. Holding the thread below your needle, stitch upward until you meet the top section.
4. Complete the row and then, while holding the thread above your needle, stitch downward and repeat Steps 3 and 4 until you complete the pattern.
5. Take a tiny stitch inside the valley of the last pleat to bring the thread to the back of the fabric. Knot the thread inside the pleat and clip off the excess.

FINISHING

1. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use steam to set the design after you finished the smocking.
2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired (page 86).

Finished row of diamond stitching



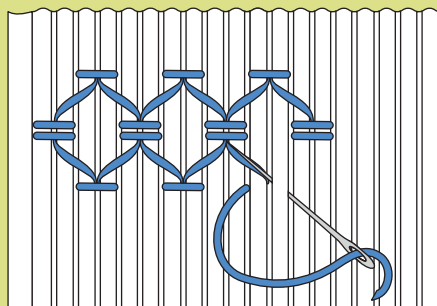
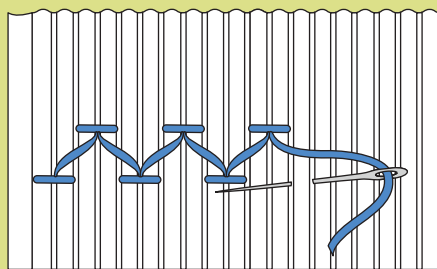
DIAMOND

Skill Level: Intermediate

Diamond stitch creates a small diamond pattern on the pleats with threads that wrap around the pleats at an angle to form the sides.

Note

The stitch guide shows a diamond that is one stitch in height, but you can add diagonal stitches to make larger diamonds.



Diamond stitch guide



INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

Refer to English Smocking, General Instructions (page 74) for making a sample, planning yardage, marking a grid on the fabric, and pre-pleating it.

STITCHING

1. Using 2–4 strands of embroidery thread, thread the needle and knot the end.
2. Draw the thread through the back of the fabric inside the leftmost pleat, burying the knot in the pleat and coming out to the left of the pleat peak.
3. Holding the thread below the needle, take a stitch around the right side of the second pleat and bring the needle out in the valley between the first and second pleat.
4. Angling the thread up at a sharp angle, wrap the thread around the second and third pleat and bring the needle out of the valley between the second and third pleat.
5. Holding the thread above the needle, take a stitch around the right side of the fourth pleat and out between the third and fourth pleats.

6. Angling the thread down at a sharp angle, wrap the thread around the fourth and fifth pleats and bring the needle out to the left of the fifth pleat in line with your first stitch in Step 3.



7. Repeat Steps 3–6 until the pattern for the top section is finished.

8. Repeat the steps for the bottom section, mirroring the top until the pattern for the bottom section is finished.

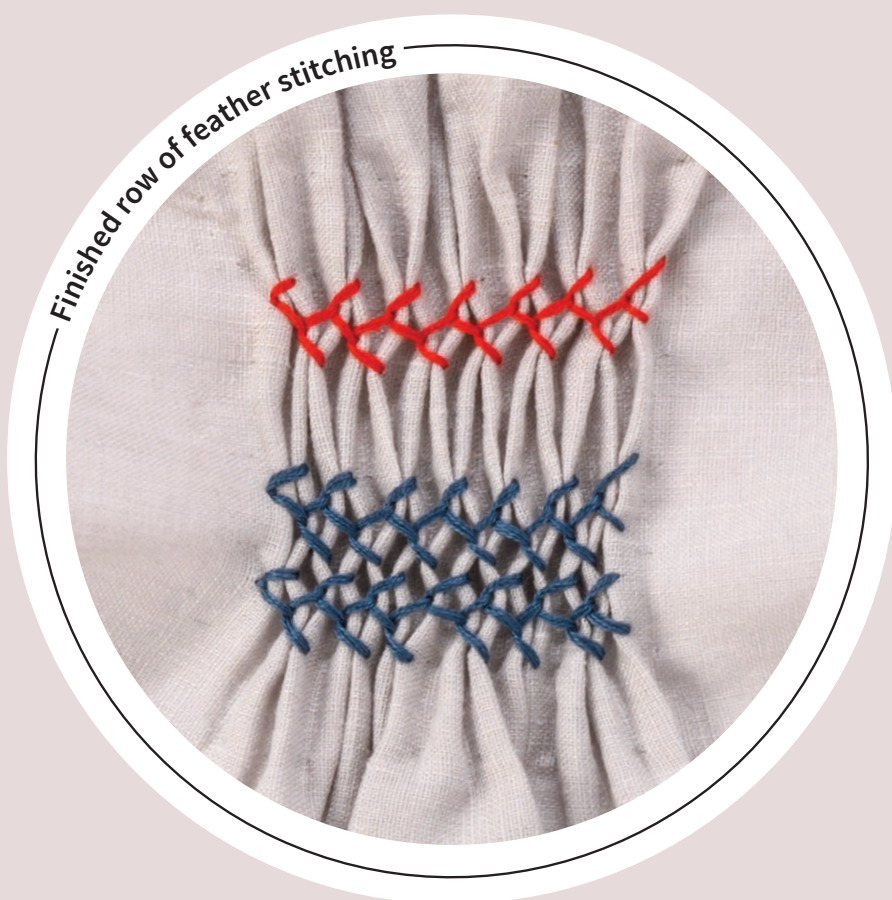
9. Take a tiny stitch inside the valley of the last pleat to bring the thread to the back of the fabric. Knot the thread inside the pleat and clip off the excess.

FINISHING

1. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use steam to set the design after you finished the smocking.

2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired (page 86).





FEATHER

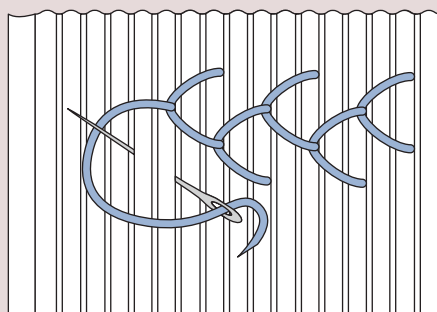
Skill Level: Advanced

This pattern creates a delicate chain design and also fills larger areas relatively quickly.

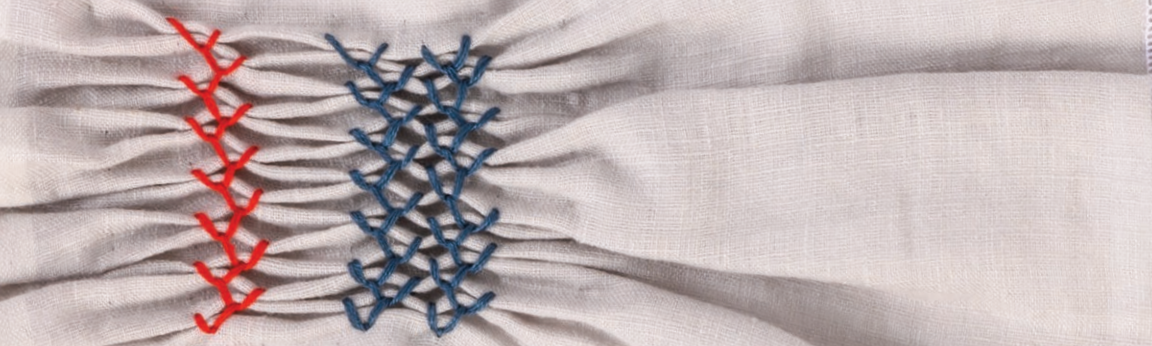
Note

DIRECTION OF STITCHING

Feather is usually worked from right to left, however, left-handed stitchers will likely find left to right easier.



Feather stitch guide



INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

Refer to English Smocking, General Instructions (page 74) for making a sample, planning yardage, marking a grid on the fabric, and pre-pleating it.

STITCHING

1. Using 2–4 strands of embroidery thread, thread the needle and knot the end.
2. Starting from the right edge of the pattern, bring the needle from the back to the right side of the first pleat.
3. Hold the thread across the pleats with your other hand.
4. Bring the needle two-thirds of the way down to the next pleating line and insert the needle into the first pleat at a 45° angle, bringing it out to the left of the second pleat one-third of the distance back to the first pleating line. The needle should catch the loop of thread to complete the first feather stitch.



5. Hold the thread across the pleats with your other hand. Bring the needle into the right side of the second pleat at a 45° angle and out the left side of the third pleat a third of the distance back to the first pleating line. Catch the loop of thread with the needle.



6. Continue working back and forth across the pattern with the feather stitch until you reach the end of the pleated fabric.

7. Take a tiny stitch inside the valley of the last pleat to bring the thread to the back of the fabric. Knot the thread inside the pleat and clip off the excess.

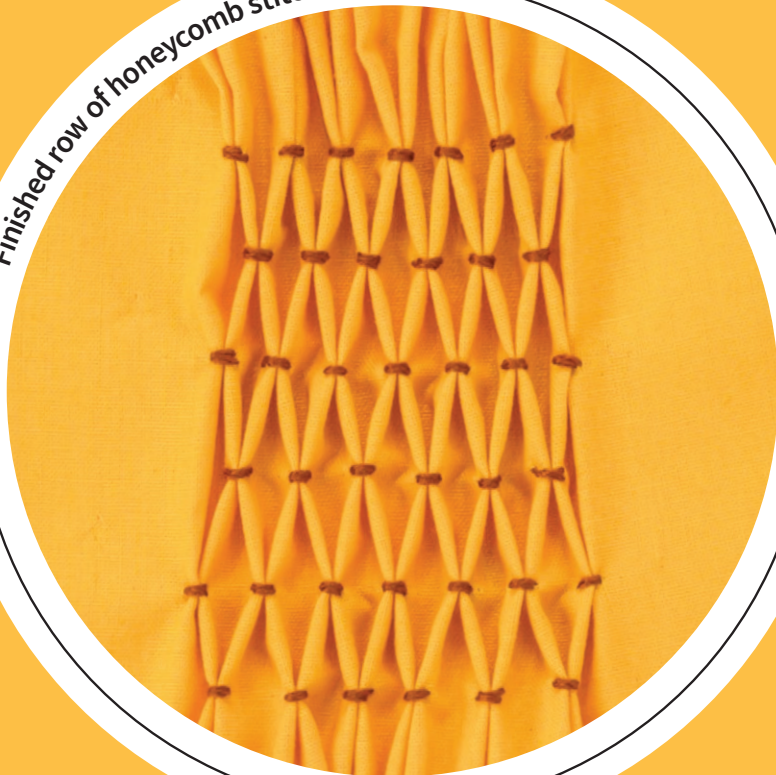
FINISHING

1. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use steam to set the design after you finished the smocking.

2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired (page 86).



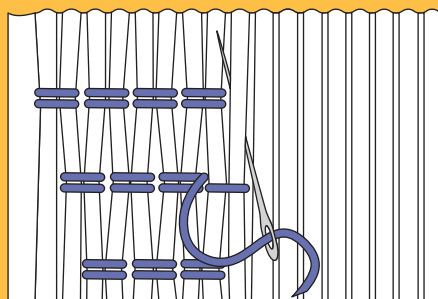
Finished row of honeycomb stitching



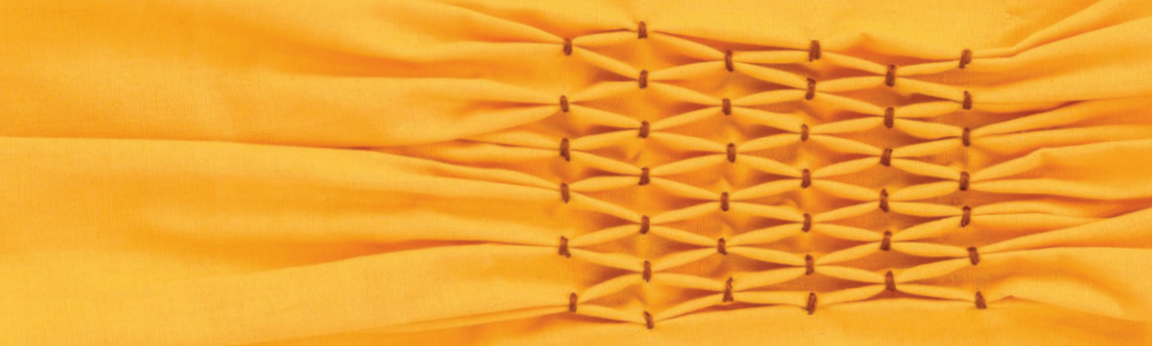
HONEYCOMB

Skill Level: Advanced

In the honeycomb design, the thread moves from stitch to stitch inside the pleats to make staggered rows. Honeycomb allows for the greatest amount of stretch so make sure to keep that in mind when using it on large sections of fabric.



Honeycomb stitch guide



INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

Refer to English Smocking, General Instructions (page 74) for making a sample, planning yardage, marking a grid on the fabric, and pre-pleating it.

STITCHING

1. Using 2–4 strands of embroidery thread, thread the needle and knot the end.
2. Bring the needle from the back to the left side of the leftmost pleat, burying the knot in the pleat.
3. Holding the thread above the needle, take a stitch around the right side of the second pleat and out to the left side of the first pleat.
4. Holding the thread above the needle, slide the needle down into the pleat above the stitch in the second pleat and out the left side of the pleat at the next pleating line (or at the point you determine).
5. Holding the thread below the needle, take a stitch around the right side of the third pleat and out the left side of the second pleat.

6. Holding the thread below the needle, slide the needle up into the pleat below the stitch in the third pleat and out the left side of the pleat in line with your first stitches.



7. Continue the stitching until you reach the end of the pattern line, hiding the knot inside a pleat peak.

8. Offsetting the stitches 1 pleat, move down to the next pleating line or grid point and continue stitching until you have completed all lines of rows in your pattern.

9. Take a tiny stitch inside the valley of the last pleat to bring the thread to the back of the fabric. Knot the thread inside the pleat and clip off the excess.

FINISHING

1. Holding an iron above the fabric from the right side, use steam to set the design after you finished the smocking.

2. Incorporate the smocked section into your project as desired (page 86).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MAGGIE HOFMANN is a veteran award-winning cosplayer with 8 years of experience creating cosplay costumes for herself and others. She has also been a professional theatrical costume maker since 2009 and holds a BA in Drama from UC-Irvine and an MFA in Costume Design from UW-Madison. Her work has been published in several cosplay and theatrical magazines and has been featured on websites such as Cosplay-Central and marvel.com. She creates educational maker sewing and cosplay content online under the name PaisleyandGlue on all social media accounts.



Photo by Naomi Foss Photography





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