

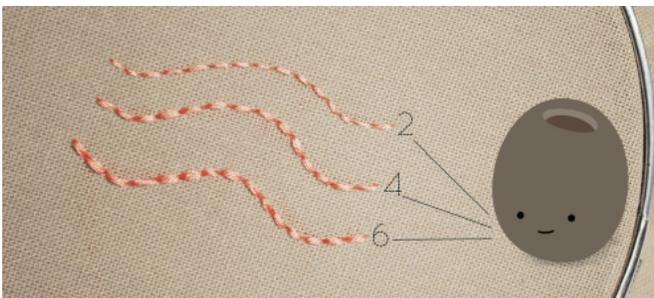


# STRANDS, SEWING, STABBING & STARTING

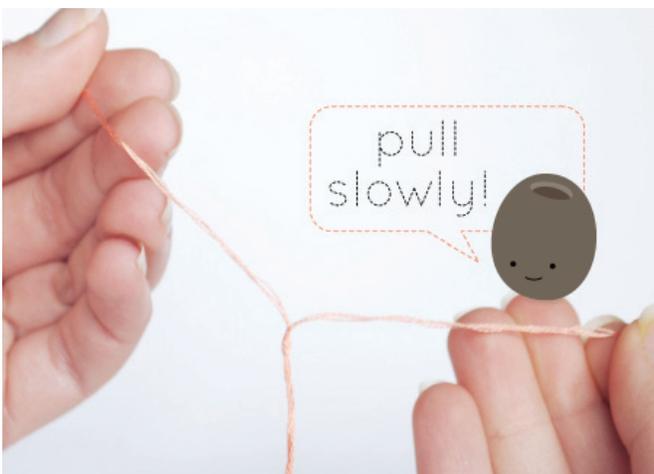
First things first. Cut a length of floss. Unless I know that I only need a very small amount, I'll cut about 24". Much shorter, and you'll make yourself crazy with starting new strands all the time. Longer, and you're asking for tangles.

Before the floss touches the needle, you need to decide how many **strands** you are going to use. This is assuming that you are using regular cotton floss that can be split.

Take a look at what some different number of strands look like. See how the thickness changes? Why is this important?

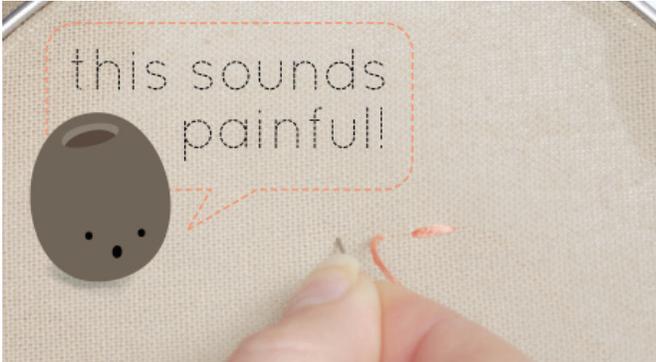


Think of it as using different widths of markers. I love thick, chunky stitching, so I often use all six strands. This is like pulling out the big markers. But there are some times when that just doesn't work. For small areas, lettering, or faces on my designs, fewer strands are more likely to show off the details. Like the fine point markers do.



If you are going to split the strands of floss, separate the number you want at one end, and slowly pull the ends away from each other. Slowly! After you pull them all the way apart, they'll spin and twist and get all excited. When they stop, you're set.

There's this lovely product called Thread Heaven, and running your floss through it first will make separating the strands easier. But guess what? I stitched for years without it, and learned to split the strands just fine.



Next up, there are two methods of stitching embroidery stitches. The first is called **the sewing method**. In this method, you put the point of the needle through the fabric, and bring it back up to the front as one step. Then you pull the floss through.

Although efficient in terms of stitches, I find that it is more difficult to work in a hoop when using this method. Yes, you can lessen the tension, but it's still trickier than having the fabric loose. That said, there are many embroidery stitches that are easier when worked with the sewing method.

My preferred method is called **stabbing**. With this, you poke the needle through, then pull all of the floss to the back.

Then you poke the needle through from the back, and pull all of the floss to the front. It takes longer, but I like that I get to be a little more fussy about where the needle is coming and going.

Finally, let's talk about how you're going to be **starting** out the floss when you're ready to stitch.

Can you use a knot? Yes, yes you can. And sometimes that's the best option. But I don't like it. I'm old-fashioned, and I like to make sure that the back of my work is pretty. Start your stitching without a knot, and just secure the tail with stitches.

Pull the floss from back to front, and leave a tail of about 1".

Flip the hoop to the front, and take your next stitch, making sure that you don't pull the tail through. Now, flip to the back. Check to see that the tail ends up under the stitch on the back.



Flip to the front. Make a stitch. Flip to the back. Get the tail under the stitch. And so on, until the tail is secure. Yes, it's a lot of flipping, but only for about 3 or 4 stitches, depending on the length of the tail.

When the tail is all covered with stitches, it will look like the second photo on this page.



And then after you're all done stitching, take the needle and weave it through the backs of completed stitches. This is also the same thing that you would do when starting a new length of floss near completed stitches!

Starting and stopping this way will keep your backside pretty! Wait...that came out wrong. It will keep your work neat and tidy. Yeah, that's better.

