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## Conservation Stitching Guide

### WHIP STITCH

The whip stitch is the simplest and most useful stitch. It is composed of a straight stitch (usually seen on the surface) and a diagonal stitch (usually used to travel beneath the surface).

#### Spacing:

The ideal spacing for a whip stitch is  $\frac{3}{16}$  –  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch (3-5 mm).

#### Uses:

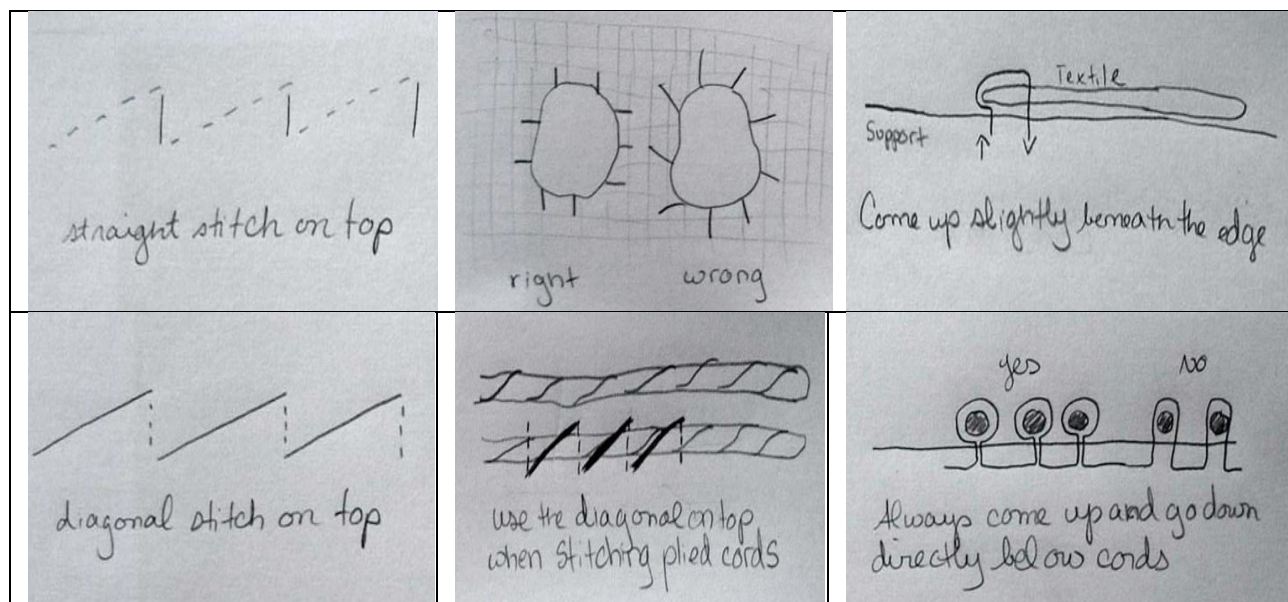
Outside edge; perimeter of a loss; cords and fringe

#### Notes:

When tacking an edge or a hole, the length of the stitch varies according to the condition of the area. It should catch two or three threads on the textile; fewer if the textile is thick, more if the area is weak. Varying the length of the stitches makes them less visible. It also prevents a line of stress caused by always catching the same thread on the textile.

The whip stitch is usually best done by coming up outside the textile and going down into the textile. The needle should come up just under the textile to make it less visible. This is especially true when stitching down cords. Because cords are composed of twisting threads, the whip stitch should be inverted so that the diagonal stitch is on the surface and seats into the twist of the cord.

When stitching an edge or the perimeter of a hole, the stitch always follows the grain of the textile, either up and down or side to side. Stitching around a hole should never look like the rays of the sun. Whenever possible, all stitches should be seated into the weave structure rather than sitting on top.





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## RUNNING STITCH

The running stitch is a simple under/over stitch, in which the length of the under and over part of the stitch varies according to need.

### Spacing:

Varies according to use.

### Uses:

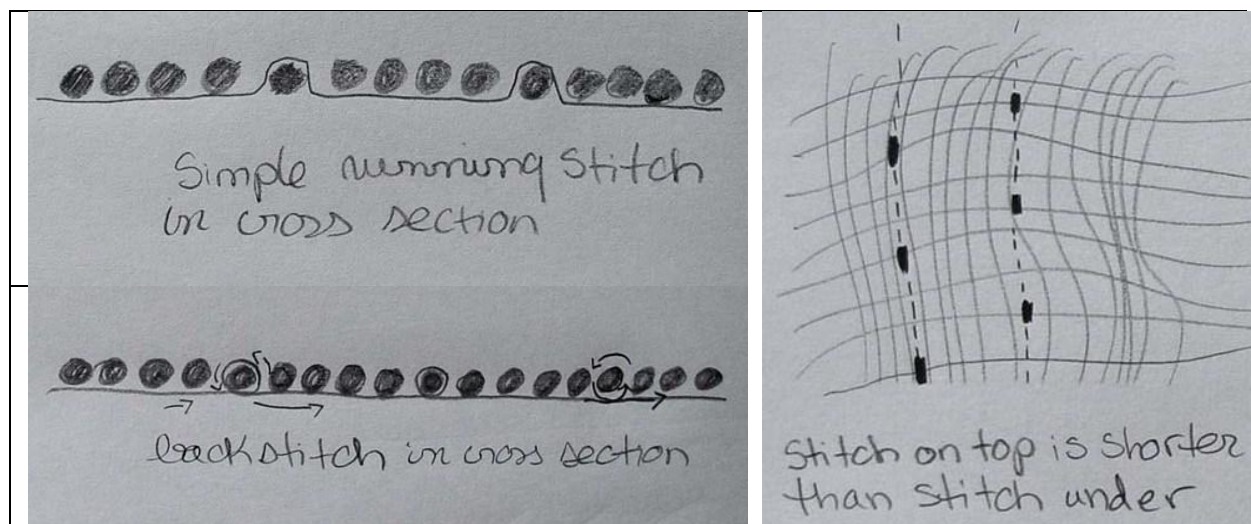
Running stitch is used to connect a sound area of textile to a support beneath. It is useful for traveling within the body of the textile and for vertical lines of stitching.

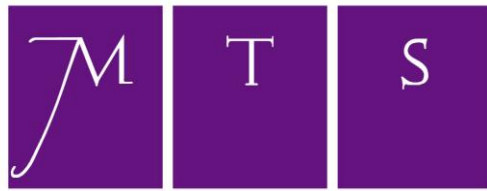
### Notes:

A balanced running stitch is one in which the under and over stitches are of equal length. Usually an unbalanced running stitch is preferred, in which the over stitch is one or two threads long and the under stitch is 1 inch (2.5 cm) long. When used to stitch the body of a textile down between other repairs, the distance between stitches varies as you travel around.

A running stitch is oriented vertically on textiles that are going to be hung so that the textile can move as it fluctuates with environmental conditions. The running stitch should not be pulled so tight that it causes puckering. Seating the stitch well within the weave structure will also minimize puckering.

Variation: a backstitch is a common variation on a whip stitch in which the stitch on the top is taken back in the direction you came from. Backstitches are much firmer than running stitches and don't allow the textile to slide as much. They also prevent the entire row of stitches from coming out if the repair thread is broken or cut.





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## HERRINGBONE STITCH

The herringbone stitch is a zig-zag stitch, in which two staggered rows of stitches are sewn at one time, with a diagonal connecting stitch between.

### Spacing:

Stitches are approximately 1 inch (2.5 cm) apart on the diagonal. The spacing between herringbone stitches is often determined by the length a given curved needle can travel in one stroke.

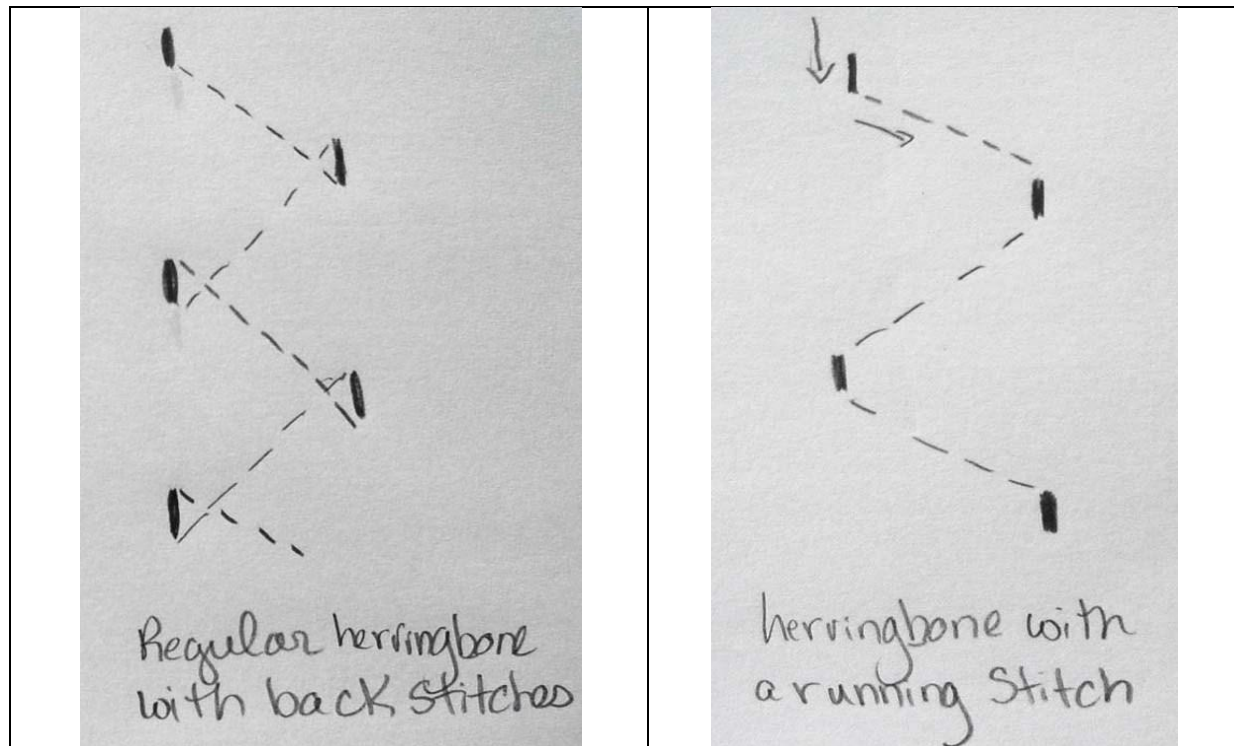
### Uses:

Herringbone is used to stitch down large areas of textile to a support. The back stitch locks in place and holds more effectively on heavy or thick textiles.

### Notes:

The length of the backstitch on the surface will vary according to each textile, but generally it catches one or two threads. The needle travels diagonally beneath the support fabric for approximately one inch before coming up to the surface and making another backstitch. The needle then returns to the first row and makes another backstitch. When worked in right angles, the stitches will be one inch apart diagonally and one inch apart vertically.

Variation: The over stitch can also be taken as a running stitch, or as a horizontal stitch. A horizontal stitch is chosen if the grain of the textile allows the stitch to seat better horizontally. Horizontal stitches should not be used for herringbone on textiles that are going to be hung.



## LAID-COUCHING STITCH

Laid-couching stitch is a two-part stitch, composed of a line of thread that is couched to the support at intervals along its length.

### Spacing:

Lines of laid-couching stitching are very visible and should be used sparingly. Spacing between couching stitches is generally  $\frac{3}{16}$  –  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch (3-5 mm) apart.

### Uses:

Laid-couching stitch is used to secure large areas of loose threads, such as unraveled weft or fringe.

### Notes:

The laid lines are first placed at equal intervals, varying from  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 inch apart (1 to 2.5 cm). A ruler may be needed to insure that the lines are on grain, parallel, and equally spaced. To minimize visibility of laid-couching stitching, fewer lines should be used.

Using the same thread or a new thread, each laid line is whip-stitched to the support. The couching stitches should fall between elements of the textile and not cross the textile if possible. Closer spacing of the couching stitches will provide better support and reduce visibility.

Variations: An alternative to laid-couching for securing small, stable fringe is to sew each individual fringe down. Two or more rows of stitching could be used in which the odd and then the even fringes are sewn. This can become time consuming, however it is invisible compared to laid-couching.

Groups of unraveled weft can be secured using hidden rows of running stitches that run in the warp direction. These running stitches are taken through the bundle of weft itself, going over and under a few weft threads at a time. At the end of the row, a stitch is taken into the support and the process repeated. This invisible stitch can be used as closely spaced as necessary.

