THE STITCHES OF BOBBIN LACE

This guide is designed as a reference or manual to some of the many complex as well as simple manipulations of bobbin lace and to establish a graphic system of recording them in terms of the two basic motions.

In the same way that the “0” and “1” are the only symbols recognized by the computer, and transformed by software into unlimited instructions, so the TWIST and CROSS are the only motions recognized by the most complex stitches of bobbin lace.

The manipulations forming these complex stitches or crossings are diagrammed in terms of the three basic stitches; the HALF-STITCH, the WHOLE-STITCH and the LINEN-STITCH each described by units of the TWIST and CROSS motions. The detailed manipulations are visually interpreted through a unique graphic system which not only defines the complex stitches, but clearly illustrates their structure.

These diagrams are meant not only to clarify the manipulations of a complex crossing, but to provide for a system of classification and identification. With basic stitch structures understood, exploratory work is possible towards the design of new stitches.

Beginning with a particular diagram, explorations can proceed by altering the basic stitches specified as well as the manipulation of threads ` between these stitches.

In working and studying these stitches, threads of contrasting colors will aid considerably in understanding them.

This guide is divided into the following categories:

CROSSINGS: The basic methods by which various numbers of pairs or braids can cross.

GROUNDS: Patterns developed by subsequent grouping and regrouping of bobbin sets to form repeated stitches.

STITCHES: Complex crossings which can be a significant element all by themselves or used in repeated sequences to form complex grounds.

EDGES: Methods for creating decorative edges or borders on a worked piece.


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**INVISIBLE ADDING OF THREADS** | 56 |

* Stitches developed by authors
THE BASICS
THE BASIC MOTIONS

ALL BOBBIN LACE IS FORMED BY COMBINATIONS OF ONLY TWO MOTIONS, the TWIST and the CROSS, generally working two pairs together.

Working two pairs together, holding one pair in the palm of each hand:

A TWIST is always a counter-clockwise motion where the right bobbin is laid over the left bobbin of the same pair.

Working both pairs, rotate both hands in a counter-clockwise direction so the bobbins in each hand cross. Keeping the bobbins in their new position, return your hands to the starting position, completing the TWIST motion.

A CROSS is always a clockwise motion worked with two adjacent pairs of bobbins. The two inner bobbins of these two pairs are crossed in a clockwise direction transferring or exchanging one bobbin of each pair. Transfer the two inner bobbins of your two pairs to opposite hands, dropping the left bobbin over the right bobbin.
THE BASIC STITCHES

Specific sequences of the BASIC MOTIONS working with two bobbin pairs forms the BASIC STITCHES. The three basic stitches are:

HALF STITCH: The motions CROSS-TWIST define the Half-Stitch. This stitch will generally follow a TWIST motion from a previous stitch. After forming an initial TWIST, working two bobbin pairs, make a CROSS-TWIST motion completing a Half Stitch. Note that one bobbin of each pair has been exchanged.

WHOLE STITCH: The motions CROSS-TWIST-pin- CROSS-TWIST defines the Whole Stitch. If the Half Stitch is followed by another Half Stitch, the Whole Stitch is formed. A pin is generally set into the working surface after the first Half Stitch to keep the stitch in place. Note that when the Whole Stitch is completed the bobbin pairs have exchanged hands.

LINEN STITCH: The motions CROSS-TWIST-CROSS defines the Linen Stitch. These motions in sequence with adjacent pairs give the appearance of a weave. When the stitch is completed the bobbin pairs have crossed and exchanged hands. It should be noted that, with the exception of the Linen Stitch, all stitches begin following a TWIST motion. Note: When working from a starting position, it is a good practice to give all pairs an initial TWIST.

As a guide in study and exploratory work, the basic motion and stitch characteristics should be noted. This is of particular importance when working with contrasting threads in terms of color and/or texture. By becoming familiar with these characteristics control of specific threads is easily accomplished.

TWIST. A TWIST will exchange the threads of a pair. When two pairs are worked, the inner and outer pairs will exchange.
**CROSS.** The CROSS can only be worked with two pairs. It will exchange the inner threads of these pairs.

**HALF STITCH.** One thread of each of the pairs is exchanged.

**WHOLE STITCH and LINEN STITCH.** Both threads of each pair are exchanged as the pairs cross. An additional TWIST between the two CROSS motions (see the ROSE GROUND) will keep the pairs from crossing, each pair entering and leaving on the same side.

\[ \text{EVERY STITCH REQUIRES TWO BOBBIN PAIRS (4 THREADS).} \]

\[ \text{TWO BOBBIN PAIRS ENTER EACH STITCH INDEPENDENTLY AND JOIN TO MAKE THE STITCH.} \]

\[ \text{TWO BOBBIN PAIRS THEN LEAVE THE STITCH, IN THE SAME OR IN A DIFFERENT COMBINATION, EACH AGAIN, INDEPENDENTLY.} \]

**PICOT**

The picot is a small loop used as a decorative element on the edge of a braid. An extended bobbin pair is given 4-6 twists.

A pin is placed under the outer thread and then rotated causing the thread to loop around the pin and then the pin is inserted adjacent to the worked design.

Pull the looped thread down so it forms a loose loop and lies under the twisted length.

Now loop the second thread around the pin. Make a final twist with the pair and work it back into the design. Adjacent picots are separated by a single whole stitch.

**GROUND CLASSIFICATION**

Most of the common grounds can be classified into one of four basic structural types as illustrated by the following diagrams.

Each dot represents one of the BASIC STITCHES or combinations of one or more of these stitches. Each arrow indicates a bobbin pair showing the direction of the pair.

All the stitches (dots) of a particular ground need not be the same, as repetitive sequences are common.

The stitches and/or stitch combinations which are most commonly used are:

- **The basic stitches**
  - **HALF STITCH**
  - **WHOLE STITCH**
  - **LINEN STITCH**

Examples of basic stitch combinations:

- **BRUSSELS STITCH** (Whole Stitch-Whole Stitch)
- **ROSE STITCH** (Half Stitch-Twist-Half Stitch)