

BACK LACING

When finishing a completed piece of needlework into a frame, one of the best ways to get your piece onto a mounting board is by using back lacing. This is the process of sewing the fabric onto the mounting board by using thread pulled from side to side. This will give your fabric a nice, taut finish that will elevate your framing with a more professional look.

Materials Needed:

Completed cross stitch

Cotton backing fabric of a similar color to your cross stitch fabric

Sewing thread (any color, it will not be seen)

Cardboard or backing board

Needle

Scissors

Frame

Also needed (optional):

Ruler or tape measure

Pen or pencil to mark fabric

Duct Tape or other strong tape



To begin back lacing, start by preparing your mounting board. You can buy mounting board that is meant for this very purpose, which is often pre-cut to standard frame sizes, is acid-free, and intended to help preserve the life of your work. But you can also use cardboard if that is all you have available to you. Some cardboard is also acid-free which, again, will help preserve heirloom pieces from deteriorating over time.

Cut your mounting board to the size needed for your frame. Keep in mind that **you do not want the mounting board to fit tightly into the back of your frame** because once the fabric is added, there will be extra bulk. Leave approximately 1/8 inch on each side of the mounting board for your fabric.

Prepare your fabric by pressing it with an iron. Always use a lower heat and iron from the backside so that if any burning occurs to the floss, it will not be seen on the front. If there are a few stubborn wrinkles that's okay. The process of lacing will hide most light wrinkles as the fabric is pulled taut. Finish preparing your fabric by trimming it to give it a fresh, sharp edge. Make sure you have at least an inch to work with on the backside of your mounting board.

Next, cut a piece of cotton fabric the same size as your cross stitch fabric. You may press this fabric if you would like, but it will not be seen.

Once your fabric is pressed, you need to determine the margins for framing.

Place your cross stitch (face-up) on top of the cotton backing fabric. Then, turn both fabrics over together.

Calculate your margins by using the follow formula:

1. *size of cross stitch fabric – size of cardboard = excess fabric for margin*
2. *excess fabric ÷ 2 = margin per side*

(Width and height margins must be calculated separately if your piece is oblong.)

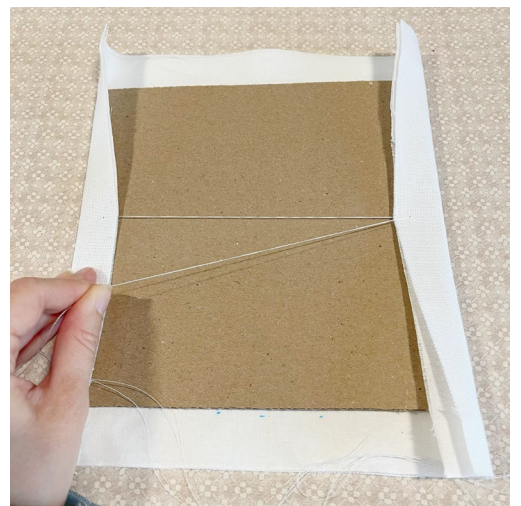
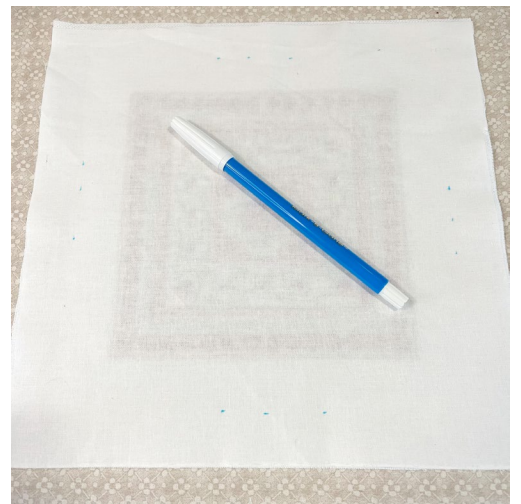
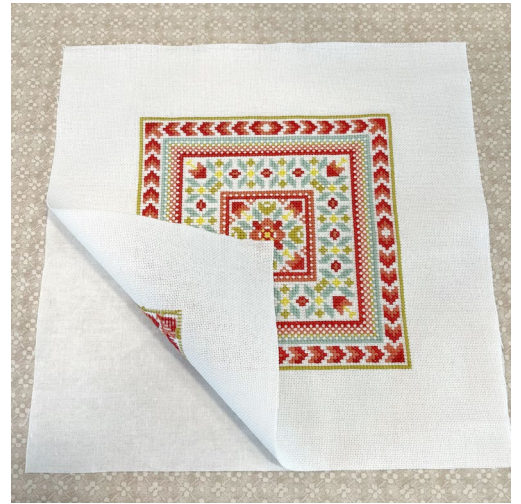
Once you know how large your margins are for each side you can mark them out on the back of your backing fabric. Then place your cardboard centered inside those margins. You can simply eyeball the margins if you do not have a measuring tool.

It's time to start lacing!

For the lacing, I like to use basic sewing thread which is much cheaper than floss and allows you to work in much longer lengths. Cutting an extra-long piece of thread—I use 200 inches at a time—fold it in half and thread both ends through a needle. This will give the thread extra strength as you tighten the lacing.

If a design is oblong, I like to work the longer side first.

Starting at the center of one side, attach your thread to the fabric using loop start. Make sure to insert the needle at least $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch in from the edge of the fabric and grab both the cross stitch fabric and cotton backing fabric, otherwise the fibers of the cross stitch fabric may pull loose while working the lacing. Now, insert your needle into the fabric at the middle of the opposite side and pull your thread tight. Return to the starting side and insert your needle up through the fabric roughly $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from your starting point. Repeat this process all the way down to the end of your cardboard tightening the lacing as much as possible whilst being mindful of the fabric, then tie your thread off with a knot.

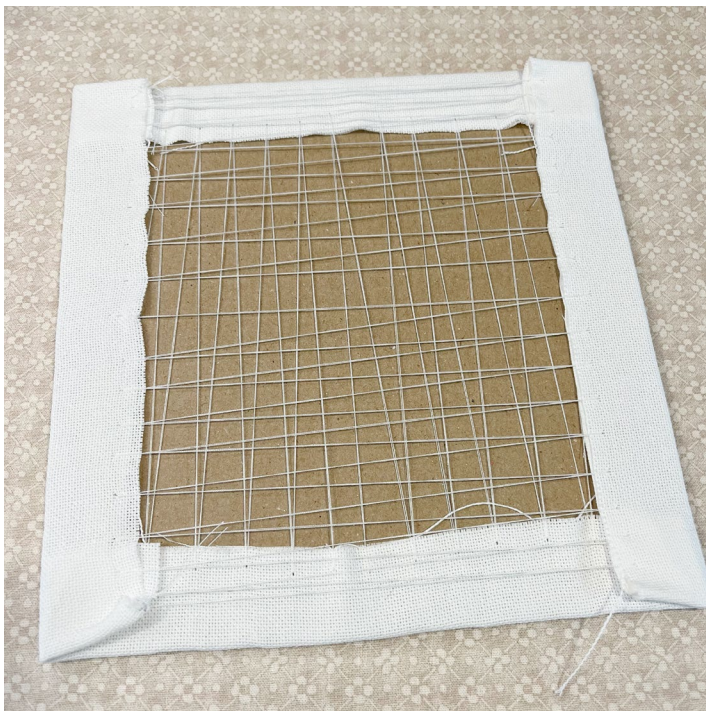
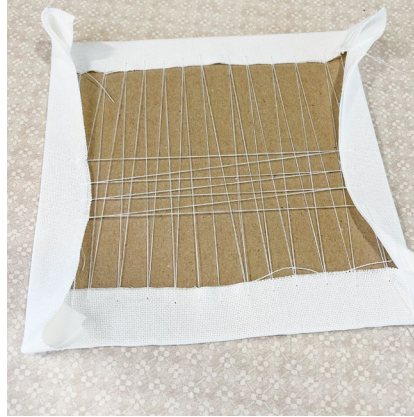
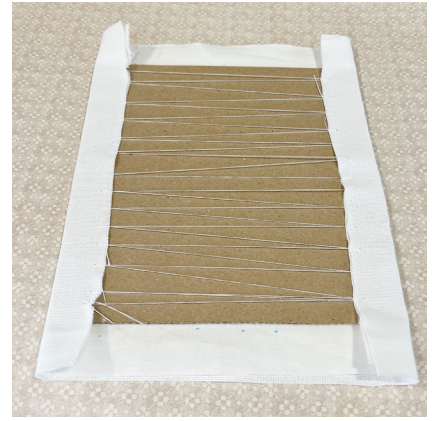
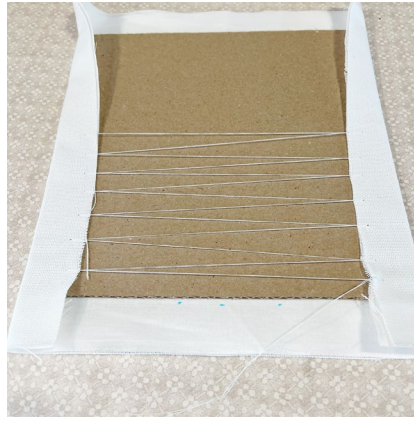


It should resemble shoe or corset lacing with a back-and-forth stitch that works its way down the length of opposite sides.

Now, return to the center, attach a new piece of thread, and work your way up to the top using the same process.

Once this entire direction is laced, turn your project and begin at the center of your other two sides.

When you reach a corner, nicely fold the fabric in and continue lacing through all layers of the fabric until you reach the edge of the cardboard.



When placing your finished piece into a frame, do not be surprised if the back will no longer fasten into the frame. I like to use duct tape to secure the back of the frame in place. You may also remove the glass to create extra space, if you would rather.