



Tenango-Otomi Embroidery Style Guide

Painting with Threads from the Heart

The **pattern provided is hand-drawn by Mexican artisans**, reflecting authentic Otomí design and symbolism in **cotton fabric** with a smooth texture that allows the needle to glide easily.

1. Placing the Fabric on the Embroidery Hoop

- Loosen the screw on the **outer ring** of the hoop.
- Lay the fabric over the **inner ring** and place the outer ring on top.
- Pull the fabric gently from all directions to make it **tight and even**, like a small drum.
- Tighten the screw firmly.
- A well-stretched fabric helps your stitches stay **clean, defined, and even**.

2. Selecting and Preparing the Thread

- **Stranded cotton (embroidery floss)** consists of six individual threads twisted together.
- For **Otomi embroidery**, separate and use only three strands at a time. This thickness gives a balanced texture—dense enough for coverage, yet light enough for precision.
- Cut thread lengths from the **tip of your fingers to your heart** - as you are pouring your heart onto your project - to prevent tangling. The standard length is about 18 inches (45 cms).



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3. The lines - Stem Stitch ("Punto de tallo")

- Do **not make a knot** at the end of your thread.
- Instead, secure it with **2-3 small running stitches** in the **opposite direction** of the line you will embroider.
- Bring your needle up through the fabric at the starting point of the line.
- Insert it forward a short distance, then bring it up again **exactly in the same spot where you stitched last time**.
- Continue this rhythm to create **smooth, connected lines**.
- Keep your stitches **even in length**—but when you reach a **curve**, make **smaller stitches** to define the shape more precisely.
- Always keep your **thread to the outside of the curve** and on the **same side** throughout, so the **pattern of the stitch remains even and elegant**.

4. Filling the Shapes - "Pata de gallo" or "Pata tenanga" Stitch

(Inspired by the teachings of artist Gimena Romero and the embroidery masters of Tenango de Doria)

- Begin filling from one edge of the shape.
- Do **not make a knot** at the end of your thread. Instead, secure it with **2-3 small running stitches** in the **opposite direction** of the line you will embroider.
- Stitch in a **straight, parallel line** grab a pinch of fabric exactly in the same spot where you stitched last time, then, work a **layer diagonal line** crossing the first.
- This technique creates **texture, depth, and movement**, allowing the design to "breathe."



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- Maintain a consistent **direction of stitches**; each section should flow naturally.
 - For example, in animals, follow the direction of **fur or feathers**.
 - In flowers, work from the **from the outer petals toward the center**, radiating like petals.

5. The Importance of Direction and Rhythm

- Each color represents joy, balance, or connection with nature—Tenango is truly “**painting with thread**.”
- In Tenango embroidery, the **direction of the stitch** reflects both **intention and artistry**.
- Always work in **one steady direction per section** to preserve harmony and prevent fabric distortion.
- Think of your needle as a **brush**—each stitch is a brushstroke of emotion and tradition.
- Work patiently and consistently; your rhythm becomes part of the design’s harmony.

Observe the **color balance**—how warm and cool tones coexist harmoniously.

Examine the **direction of the stitches**—each follows the natural contour of the drawing.

Appreciate how the **composition of animals, plants, and symbols** tells stories of **life, nature, and spirit** from the Otomí culture.

The result is a vibrant textile that tells stories of **heritage, identity, and imagination**.



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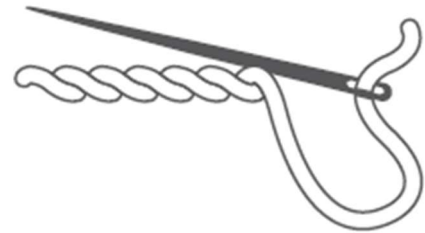
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Stem Stitch - A Rope of Thread

The **Stem Stitch** is a highly versatile and classic linear stitch that creates a textured, slightly *cabled* or *rope-like* line. This distinct twist in the thread makes it superior to a simple backstitch when elegance and smooth curves are desired.

How to Do a Stem Stitch

1. **Bring your needle up** through the fabric at point A (your starting point).
2. **Insert your needle down** at point B (about 1/4 inch ahead along your line), and bring it **back up halfway** between A and B (this is point C).
3. **Loop the thread underneath the needle** (keep it always on the same side).
4. **Pull the needle through.** You've just made your first stitch!
5. For the next stitch, go down at a new point (another 1/4 inch ahead) and bring the needle back up **at the end of your previous stitch**, always keeping the thread on the same side.
6. **Repeat** to keep creating overlapping stitches that look like a twisted rope.



Herringbone Stitch - A Crossed Path of Elegance

The **Herringbone Stitch** is a decorative, crisscrossing embroidery stitch that forms a pattern resembling the bones of a fish or a woven braid. It's often used for borders, fillings, or to add subtle texture and movement to fabric. The



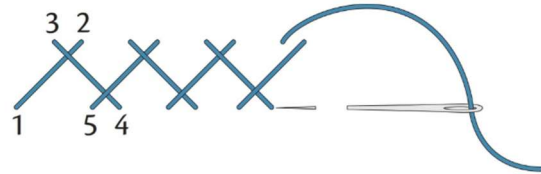
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overlapping "X" shapes create a charming lattice effect that looks both structured and graceful.

How to Do a Herringbone Stitch

1. **Follow your guidelines** visualize two **parallel lines** this will define the height of your stitch pattern.



2. **Start the thread** and bring your needle **up at point 1** on the **left end of the lower line**.
3. **Make your first cross** insert the needle **diagonally across** to the **upper line**, in the same stitch to the right (point 2), and pull the thread through.
4. **Move down and right** bring the needle **up from underneath** the fabric on the **lower line**, to the right of your first lower point (point 3).
5. **Cross again** take the needle **diagonally upward** to the **upper line**, to the right (point 4). You'll begin to see a crisscross pattern forming.
6. **Continue alternating**, repeat this sequence — each new stitch alternates between the upper and lower lines, crossing over the previous stitch to create a neat "X" pattern along the center.