

Raised Stitch/Rhodes Stitch

In my research of what is currently and popularly referred to as the Rhodes stitch, I have found it labeled as “Raised Cross” or “Raised Square” in reference materials. “Rhodes” refers to Mary Rhodes, a British needlepoint instructor in the 1960’s to the 1980’s who published several needlepoint books. I have not conducted an in-depth investigation, honestly, to determine if Mary Rhodes was the first to use this stitch, but she may have popularized it’s use and inspired many of the variations that we see today.

This stitch creates a textured background or focal point and is suitable for canvas as well as fabric stitching. There are many ways to alter the look of the stitch. You can use one or two threads for the stitching. You can vary the number of threads over which you will stitch to make it larger, smaller, or a different shape. The main thing to remember when using more than one of this stitch on a project is that you need to start the stitch in the same place and stitch the stitches in the same order to keep the top (last) stitch uniform for them all. For instance, you start at the bottom left and stitch clockwise for the remaining arms of the stitch. In the illustration below, there is a star to indicate the beginning stitch for the heart. This way, the last stitch is the center, bottom point of the heart. There is no “right” way for this. It is whatever is comfortable for you or what creates the look you want. If you are following a chart, it may indicate by numbers how the designer chose to stitch the model and will create the look shown.

In the illustration below, identical base grids are used to represent fabric threads. The number of threads over which the variation is stitched will alter the appearance, thickness, etc. Also, using one or two threads for the stitching makes a difference in the thickness and appearance. Experimentation is the best way to determine what will be most attractive for your project. Shown are a heart, square, octagon, diamond, circle, and cross (or sheaf - shown side by side to be filled or not with smaller stitches and offset which can fill an area on its own). The key to the Raised or Rhodes stitch is that all of the stitches cross in the center as opposed to an eyelet stitch which has all stitches meeting or radiating from the center leaving a hole there. The “Raised Stitched” is just that - creating height from the layering of the individual threads in the stitch. This results in a textured look to your project, particularly if used in a background or border.

