

Transcript of the video “CCI Notes 13/10 Stitches used in Textile Conservation”

Video length: 00:05:11

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Repairing and maintaining textiles frequently involves stitching by hand. Whether a hem is being re sewn or a lining is being added to a textile, it is important to use the appropriate stitching technique.

In this series of videos, the stitches illustrated in the Canadian Conservation Institute Note 13/10 Stitches Used in Textile Conservation will be demonstrated.

For demonstration purposes, a thick thread that contrasts with the colour of the material will be used. When stitching on an actual object, the threads and fabrics used should be sympathetic in colour, type, and thickness. For more information on material choices, see Canadian Conservation Institute Note 13/10. If in any doubt, consult an experienced textile conservator.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/conservation-preservation-publications/canadian-conservation-institute-notes/stitches-textile-conservation.html>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/conservation-experts.html>

In textile conservation, the self-couching stitch is used to secure torn, frayed, or weak areas to a new support fabric to make these areas less vulnerable to further damage. Consequently, it is the most frequently used stitch in textile conservation.

The self-couching stitch is worked parallel either to the warp or weft. A long stitch is laid first which extends into the stronger area surrounding the damaged area under repair. The laid thread is then held down by small stitches that cross the laid thread at right angles. This process is repeated at regular intervals until the weak area is completely secured. The small stitches are often staggered along the long stitches in order to avoid creating a noticeable, regular pattern.

The support stitch is used to hold large textiles to a new backing fabric while evenly distributing the weight of the textile. Most frequently, the support stitch is applied in a staggered pattern parallel to the warp.

A small stitch spanning only a few yarns of the fabric is made on the front of the textile and a longer one is made on the back.

The herring-bone stitch is a simple interlacing stitch and is worked similarly to cross stitch. The herringbone stitch can be used to join two layers of fabric together while maintaining flexibility. It can also be used to sew raw edges, for example, to hold down a single folded edge or to secure the edges of patches.

A thread is laid diagonally and tacked into place with a small stitch working horizontally from left to right. This process is then alternated to create a series of overlapping ‘V’s.

The slip stitch is almost invisible on the right side of the fabric. It is used for blind hemming and to attach linings to textiles. If worked loosely, it avoids undesirable tension between the backing fabric and the textile.

The fabric is folded over. Working from the wrong side of the fabric, a small vertical stitch is made from the right side to the wrong side. The needle and thread then travels through the fold in the material and another small vertical stitch is made through to the right side.

When more than one width of fabric is needed to back a textile, a whip stitch is used to join the two selvages. When the fabric is opened up, a flat butt joint is created that avoids bulk at the seam.

With the two selvages stacked and the two front sides facing each other, the needle travels from the underside to the upper side, looping the thread around the edge. The next stitch is then placed a few millimeters away from the previous stitch. This process is then repeated until completed.

A few things to keep in mind. When performing any stitch on a historic object it is important to:

Plan the placement of stitches and use as few stitches as possible.

Be sure to document all of your work.

Whenever possible, stitch through existing holes or between the warp and the weft of the textile. Avoid piercing the threads. Always work on a flat surface.

Stitching should be relaxed so that tension is not created in the fabric. Tension causes buckling or gathering, which can break old threads causing more damage.

If in any doubt, consult an experienced textile conservator.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/conservation-experts.html>

Thank you for watching.

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