

**Introduction to Art Textiles by Karen O'Shea,  
textile artist**

**To make a small art textile, you will need:**

Calico, cotton or linen fabric

An embroidery hoop

Sharp scissors

Pins / Glue stick

Pencil or heat erasable pen (eg Frixion)

Cotton embroidery threads in preferred colours

Scraps of fabric in suitable colours/patterns

A needle, ideally a slender embroidery or darning needle with an eye that is easy to thread.

A design and paper to trace it onto and cut out.

**Method:**

Place the calico into the hoop by putting the fabric over the smallest hoop and pressing the larger hoop over the top, then tightening the adjuster so that the fabric becomes like a drum.

Cut scraps of fabric into a design and arrange then pin them onto the calico

Trace the design and cut around it.

Trace around the design onto the fabric using the pencil or heat-erasable pen.

Unravel a piece of yarn from the skein or bobbin. Cut off a piece to an arm's length.

Split the yarn, by anchoring one end in your teeth whilst you count out the threads so that you can hold some in one hand and some in the other, then widen your arms and keep stroking the twist out of one of the sets of thread.



Don't let go with any of the ends, as the thread will try and twizzle back together and could tangle.

Thread the needle by wetting the yarn, pinching it to a sharp point and passing it carefully through the eye of the needle. Tie a knot in one end by looping and passing the end through. Keep the other end at a distance of around half way between the needle and the knot at all times.

To start sewing, pass the sharp point of the needle up from the underside of the calico and push the needle up in the place you want the stitch to begin. When you can, hold the needle from above and pull it through the fabric. Pull your stitch comfortably tight but not too tight that it causes the fabric to pucker. Don't forget that it is necessary to pass the needle through the fabric from the side the yarn is already to the other side.

Use a combination of straightforward stitches (like running stitch and backstitch for following a line, and seed stitch for shading) to stitch along the lines of your design to develop your first projects.

To change colour, finish off with one colour by passing the needle carefully through the back of the existing stitches.

When all the design is stitched, loosen the metal closure on the hoop and release the design from the hoop.

It can then be ironed, and mounted or framed.



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