

# Colorado State University

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# Guide for 4-H Heritage Arts Judges

# Common Finishing Techniques for Needlework

In judging, these things will be considered:

- General appearance
- Suitability of design and materials to purpose
- Beauty, style, harmonious colors
- Material use in the article
- Pressing, blocking
- Finishing
- Workmanship

## **Yarn or thread ends:**

On most all needle work the yarn or thread ends are to be woven into the back of work instead of being knotted for a smoother finished appearance.

## **Seams:**

A seam should be inconspicuous unless it is a design feature. It should secure the pieces together; yet not be too tight to cause puckers. Most seams are worked in a weave pattern that looks similar to the needlework technique of the article.

## **Washing: (If necessary)**

Treat any stains or heavily soiled areas with a reliable spot remover. Then hand wash the article in cold water using a mild soap or detergent for hand-washables. Do not rub or

wring out (twist). Rinse thoroughly with cold water. You may use a liquid fabric softener in one rinse. Drip dry or dry flat on bath towels. This is an opportune time to block your piece.

## **Blocking: (3 methods)**

### Method 1:

Block a saturated article (after washing or one that has been fully immersed in cold water) by pinning the article to the desired measurements and shape on blocking board or any flat surface that is covered with absorbent bath towels. Let the article dry thoroughly undisturbed.

### Method 2:

Pin dry article on blocking surface to desired measurements. Then spray the article with clear, cold water to dampen. Allow to dry thoroughly. A popular method to use on synthetics, especially acrylic.

### Method 3:

Pin dry article to desired measurement on the ironing board. Using a press cloth and a steam iron, steam press the article; never touching the iron to the article unless to flatten a seam. Leave article

pinned to the ironing board to cool and dry for several hours.

Note: This method may shrink wool yarns and fabrics. It might be the preferred method for synthetic yarns or fabric to heat set the desired blocking.

## Crochet

### Judging Standards:

- Even tension throughout
- Accurate pattern, stitches formed correctly
- Blocked well-not over pressed
- Ends woven in –no knots
- Seams firm, yet stretchy—neat and flat
- Suitable choice of thread or yarn

### Other Types of Crochet:

#### Broomstick Crochet:

### Judging Standards:

- Loops the same length
- Same number of loops crocheted together throughout article
- All loops turned counter-clockwise
- Suitable choice of thread or yarn

#### Hairpin Lace

### Judging Standards:

- All loops attached when joining

- Loops in each strip twisted uniformly
- Joining should be same tension throughout

### Crochet used as trim

### Judging Standards:

- Colors –either same or contrast should blend well
- Total piece is compatible
- Weight of thread used is compatible with fabric and design
- Size of trim should enhance the overall piece
- Tension maintained throughout
- Patterns made accurately

## Embroidery

### Crewel or Chicken Scratch

### Judging Standards:

- Neat and clean
- Appropriate stitches for design
- Thread suitable for fabric and design
- No knots or long threads carried from place to place
- Pattern outline covered by stitches
- Pressed or blocked
- Should be finished ready for use
- Colors, materials, textures, shapes, harmonious
- Design placed on the fabric evenly
- Stitching should not be flattened into the fabric
- As neat on back as front

## **Embroidery Stitches**

### **Basic embroidery stitches**

**Outline stitch**---The working thread is held up when the stitch is being taken. The return stitch should be about half the length of the total stitch. The stitch should come up in the same hole where the previous stitch went down.

**Stem or crewel stitch**---is made the same as the outline stitch except the working thread is held down while the stitch is being taken. Be sure the thread is held the same way on the entire line of stitching.

**Backstitch** ---looks like many small stitches on the front and the back appears more like the outline or stem stitch. The stitches should be very even with threads coming up exactly the same hole.

**Running stitch**----the stitch length and spaces between stitches should be very even unless there are some planned variations.

**French Knots and long-tailed French knots**----it is easiest to control the tension when one thread and one wrap around the needle are used. More strands or more wraps are used to make a larger knot. French knots should be uniform in size in each part of the design. The wrap should go the same direction around the design so the knots will lay the same way and look the same. Pull tight against the fabric, but not so tight that they pucker. Long-tailed French knots have more space between the stitch, which comes up, and the one that goes down.

**Chain stitch**----the stitches should be an even length. The thread should be pulled the same tautness so loops are the same size. Always go in and out the same hole.

**Cross-stitch**----all the first stitches in the same design must slant in the same direction, the second stitches must be on top and slant in the other direction. The stitches should be exact. There should be no long thread across the back of the work.

**Closed lazy daisy stitch**----the stitches should come in and out the same hole.

**Open lazy daisy or fly stitch**----the arms should be equidistant from the same hole.

**Satin stitch**----the stitches should be even and the thread uniformly taut. The back is covered, just as the front. The background area should be completely covered giving a solid appearance to the area. If the area is, too large so the threads would be too long and catch or wear out quickly, divide it in half and do the satin stitch on half at a time.

**Long and Short stitch**----this stitch is used quite often in crewelwork. The first and last rows should be done with alternating long and short stitches. All other rows have uniform size stitches, but every other one should be done in the row. The background area should be well covered and the stitches uniform in length.

**Fishbone stitch**----a deep slant should be used to achieve the proper effect. Stitches should be even in length and a uniform distance apart.

**Blanket stitch**----there are many variations in depth, width, and number of colors which may be used for decorative effects. The stitches should be uniform.

**Herringbone or Catch stitch**--- again, many variations in depth, width, and number or colors may be used for decorative effects. The stitches should be uniform and show planning.

**Laid stitch**----you can achieve the same effect with a laid stitch as with the satin stitch, but use less thread. Put in one row of threads, going across at the ends (leave space for one stitch between each stitch). Fill in between with a second row. The stitches should be uniform in length and distance apart.

### **Candlewicking**

#### **Judging Standards:**

- Stitches uniform in size and equidistant apart
- All French Knots turned in one direction
- Fabric should be shrunk in hot water after the embroidery is done. This shrinks the fabric and tightens the knot
- Fabric pressed well and not puckered by stitches
- Pressed on wrong side with knots cushioned in towel.

### **Twilling**

#### **Judging Standards:**

- Stitches uniform in size and spacing
- No changes in the pattern where the new thread is added in a line
- Ends of thread secured
- Fabric pressed well and not puckered by stitches

### **Crewel**

#### **Judging Standards:**

- Stitches formed accurately
- No knots or long threads to carry work from place to place
- Embroidery is raised (not flattened in pressing)

### **Brazilian**

#### **Judging Standards:**

- Stitches formed accurately
- All petals of the flower equal in length
- No knots or long threads to carry work from place to place
- Three dimensional effect achieved
- Threads not flattened

### **Cross Stitch**

#### **Judging Standards:**

- Top stitches all cross in same direction
- Tension should be light and even
- Stitches exact and on straight grain of fabric
- Crosses worked in sequence should touch (use same hole)
- No knots

## **Counted Cross Stitch**

### **Judging Standards:**

- Needle goes between threads and does not pierce them
- Top stitches all cross in same direction
- Tension light and even
- No knots or long threads to carry work from place to place
- Ends should be run through work in same direction

## **Black Work**

(Queen's stitchery, Spanish Black Work)

### **Judging Standards:**

- Designs made accurately
- Definite repetition of pattern
- Partial patterns formed around edges to fill in outline
- Needle goes between threads and does not pierce them
- Stitches come together using same hole
- When threads are crossed they cross in same order throughout pattern
- Outlining done evenly (stitches may be split)

## **Chicken Scratch**

(Teneriffe Embroidery, Hoover's Lace Snowflaking, Mountain Lace)

### **Judging Standards:**

- Lines always cross in same direction
- Smooth—no puckering or pulling
- No knots or long threads

## **Hardanger**

### **Judging Standards:**

- All designs worked over 4 thread units
- Pattern accurately made
- Stitches are straight with fabric threads
- Needle goes between threads and does not pierce them
- Cutting done accurately with no thread ends showing
- Wrapping done tightly and evenly

## **Swedish darning or huck weaving**

### **Judging Standards:**

- Proper tension—neat, even appearance
- Even, uniform stitches lying flat against the fabric
- Floats picked up by needle—fabric not pierced
- Design in balance—centered
- Thread ends secured by weaving into stitches
- No threads visible on wrong side (on huck fabric)

## **Cutwork**

(Madeira Work)

### **Judging Standards:**

- Eyelets worked in fine buttonhole stitch
- Purl of buttonhole stitch is on edge which is cut away
- No thread ends showing
- Closely woven fabric used
- Even stitches

## **Hemstitching**

### **Judging Standards:**

- Even weave fabric where threads can be counted and pulled easily
- Even groups of threads and drawn together
- Stitches go in same direction
- Stitches are even in length and tension
- Hem lies flat and even
- Edge and hem are perfectly straight

### **Drawn Work**

#### **Judging Standards:**

- Even weave fabric
- Thread which matches or contrasts well
- No knots, thread buried in stitching
- Threads counted accurately so all stitches are the same
- Tension the same on all stitches

### **Pulled Thread**

#### **Judging Standards:**

- Even tension
- Stitches between threads, no split threads
- Thread ends woven into work

### **Punchwork**

#### **Judging Standards:**

- Punch needle forms even loops
- Yarn is worked in proper direction
- Starting and ending yarns are clipped evenly
- Fill-in yarns are worked evenly straight across or in

the direction of the design contours

- Spacing between loops and rows vary with the yarn weight but should be consistent
- Pile loops may be closed or cut, but should maintain even shape, whichever is used.

### **Bunka**

#### **Judging Standards:**

- All thread ends pulled through to wrong side
- Stitches of uniform length
- Background covered
- Even tension
- Loops on back long enough to hold
- Blending of colors (when used) done so there is no definite line where color changes

### **Russian**

(Loop, Punch, Rush-N-Punch)

#### **Judging Standards:**

- Loops of uniform length
- Close stitches—the closer the stitches the better the finished product as long as they are not crowded
- No knots or ties
- Tightly woven background fabric
- Stitches angled apart so colors do not mix

### **Needlepoint**

#### **Judging Standards:**

- Neat and clean
- Canvas blocked squarely

- No faded or marker stains
- Design suitable for its use
- Color scheme enhances the design
- Canvas, yarn and stitches chosen to complement design
- Stitches completely cover canvas
- Tension is uniform and not drawn too tightly
- Ends woven in
- Yarns not twisted, kinked, knotted or pulled thin
- All stitches lie smooth
- The same things are considered for grospoint (refers to size of stitches and canvas 7-14 meshes per inch) and petitpoint (canvas 18 count or higher)
- Accurate pattern throughout
- Yarn ends woven in
- Colors should be knit in smoothly with no knots or loose yarns
- No twisted, split or dropped stitches
- Seams and edge stretchy, but firm, smooth and flat
- New strand or colors picked up so there are no holes
- Sections should fit together well, i.e., front and back should be the same length, sleeves fit into armhole, etc.
- Buttons, buttonholes, zippers neatly and securely attached
- Facings may be knitted on, with the turning point knitted in.
- Pockets are finished by the same methods as the hems.
- Yarn knotted on threads running from selvage to selvage
- Knots pulled to even tension
- Stitch in every space
- Yarns even in length
- Edges finished
- Article should be blocked, but the pattern or texture not flattened

## **Bargello**

### **Judging Standards:**

- All stitches parallel to threads on canvas
- Yarn covers canvas completely
- Stitches pulled uniformly tight (smooth and even)
- Design is uniform throughout

## **Knitting**

“Gauge” is one of the most important parts of crocheting. Gauge means the number of stitches in each inch across the work, and the number of rows in each inch up and down the work. If the gauge is not the same as in the pattern, the finished article will not be the size wanted.

### **Judging Standards:**

- Even tension

## **Patchwork/Quilting**

### **Patchwork and Piecing**

#### **Judging Standards:**

- Fabrics go well together—weight, fiber, color, care
- All pieces should be on grain, straight, evenly matched and stitched to the corners
- Pieces accurately stitched and joined



- Seams consistently pressed open or in one direction
- Knots or thread ends hidden
- Emphasis placed on use of color

- 6-8 stitches per inch
- Tension even and smooth
- No pattern marks showing
- All other quilting standards apply

## **Quilting/Hand Quilted**

### **Judging Standards:**

- Pieced blocks or shapes accurately cut and stitched so joinings are accurate
- Fabric pieces should be cut on grain
- Fabric pieces are not puckered or have ruffled edges
- Color of stitching thread should match the color of fabric pieces or enhance the design
- Grain of appliquéd pieces should be same as in the background
- Quality years should be used for embroidery
- Quilting stitches small and even
- No visible knots or obvious pattern marks
- All layers caught in stitch
- Binding should be neat, even with inconspicuous stitches in matching thread
- Edges should be straight
- Square corners should be mitered or at least square
- Stitches should look as good on the back as well as front

## **Machine Quilted**

### **Judging Standards:**

## **Tied Quilting**

### **Judging Standards:**

- Backing, batting and top smooth and wrinkle free
- Tying evenly spaced or determined by design
- Tying material matches or contrasts in color
- Square knot used in tying
- Thread trimmed to 2 inches

## **Trapunto**

### **Judging Standards:**

- Design areas outlined with small even running stitches
- Padding—even and smooth
- Openings on back closed neatly with whip stitch

## **Rugs**

### **Judging Standards:**

- Heavy or medium-weight wool is best for a braided rug because it wears well. (Cotton, linen, or silk fabrics should be avoided because they do not wear well. Synthetics also should be avoided attract static and will not stand wear.)
- Light color shards look better in the center. Dark shades on the edge provide a good frame for the design.
- Braids may be laced by using a blunt-edge needle (lacer).

Braids may be sewn together with carpet-and-button thread and a large sharp needle.

- Rug strips may be tapered, edges folded, and the ends inserted into adjacent loops to make them less visible. Stitch with matching thread.

## Macramé

### Judging Standards:

- Overall appearance (clean and neat)
- Creative contribution
- Cord choice (right cord for project)
- Tightness of knots (appropriate to use)
- Finish including ends
- Correct knot used for project

## Spinning

### Judging Standards:

- Fleece is clean
- Skein tied properly
- Skein balanced
- Twist even and consistent
- Fleece carded properly
- Fleece appropriate for yarn type
- “Joins” strong and even

## Weaving

### Looms or Simple Frames

### Judging Standards:

- Clean and neat
- Design elements and principles utilized
- Color; design, texture—harmonious uniform
- Evenness of warp tension

- Evenness of weft tension
- Weaving even and consistent
- Yarns straight
- Joining and raw edges hidden
- Straight even selvages
- No broken yarns
- Pattern consistent
- Ends securely finished

## Ethnic Arts

### Judging Standards:

- Clean and neat
- Suitability of materials
- Use of texture, colors, materials
- Compatibility with ethnic group
- Construction appropriate
- Suitable for intended use
- Finished and complete

## Miscellaneous Heritage Arts

### Judging Standards:

- Clean and neat
- Suitability of materials for technique
- Appropriate use of decoration
- Construction: Appropriate, made finishes, hems, matching thread
- Even stitches, smooth inconspicuous joining, no unnecessary knots
- Even, harmonizing with background color, kind and quality of materials
- Decoration follows general shape of article it decorates
- One color predominates, all colors in harmony

- Finishing and presentation:  
Pressing, blocking, framing

## **Latch Hook**

### **Judging Standards:**

- Knots are tight and evenly worked row by row across the canvas
- All spaces should be filled
- Design should be pleasing to the eye. Yarn colors should be harmonious. Designs may be original or reproductions.
- Trimming and sculpturing pile should be neat and brushed free of trimmings
- Article should be finished with hem and/or binding
- Back of item such as rug is blocked and finished