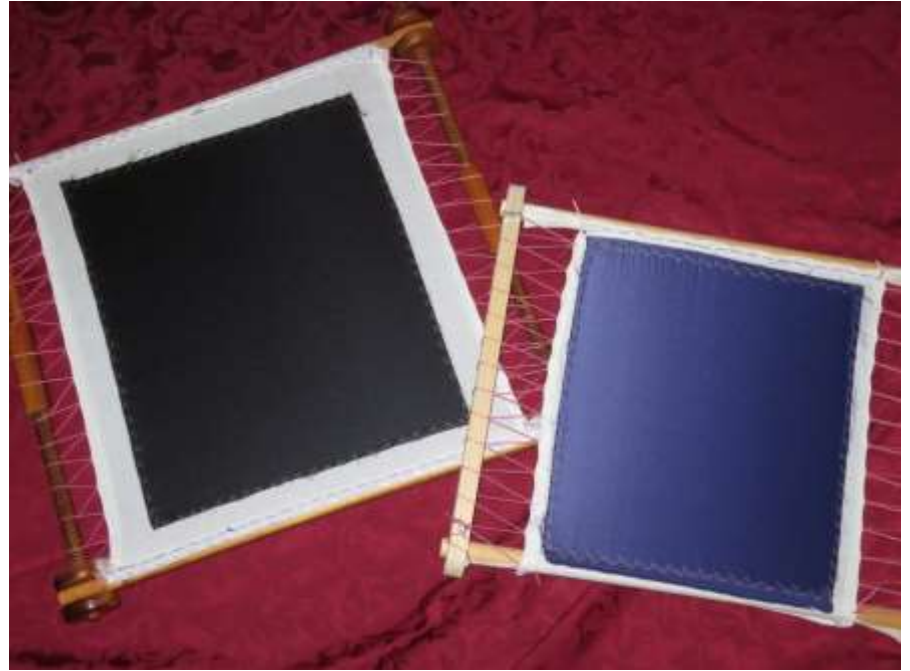


## Preparing a Frame Cyber Class

By Alison Cole

Preparing a frame for working Goldwork or Stumpwork embroidery can be daunting – and the first time that you do it, you can spend quite a few hours lacing the frame up.

The following notes are to help you in preparing your frames and this cyber class is freely given with my compliments – but please remember, that the notes are copyright protected and are for your personal use only – not for public distribution.



The frames that I prefer to use for my embroidery are scroll frames which are sometimes also called lap frames. The two types that I use are pictured here – one has taped dowels that fit into the side bars and tighten with screws and wing nuts. The other type of frame that I use has taped rods that screw up and down the side bars with wheels. This type of frame is much easier on the hands if you have arthritis, although you can get a toggle to help tighten wing nuts.

Never tighten wing nuts with a pair of pliers as you can strip the thread of the screw. **Hint:** always place the wing nuts facing upwards so that if you clamp your work to the table, you don't damage your table (been there and done that!)

The sort of scroll frame that I do not recommend has shaped dowels that snap into the end of the side bars. This sort of frame is near impossible to tighten as they always slip.

The following notes are going to show preparation of a frame where the fabric is completely within the frame as well as how to handle applying a piece of fabric that is larger than the frame.



To start, cut the calico so that it is the same height as your frame but 5cm (2 inches) narrower.



Press under a 1cm (3/8 inch) hem top and bottom.

Press under a 1cm (3/8 inch) hem on each side, folding twice to make a casing.





Place a piece of cotton kitchen string (like you use to tie up Christmas puddings), in the fold of the casing and pin in place along the edge so that it doesn't move.



Stitch along the pinned line – I use Gutermann polyester thread in a #10 crewel needle for this.

The stitches do not need to be tiny – mine are approximately 1cm (3/8 inch) long.

The string prevents the side lacings from pulling through the calico.





Mark the centre points of the calico with pins and then mark the centre point of the frame with pins.

© 2013 Alison Cole Embroidery. This cyber class and its notes are for personal use only and may be printed for personal use. These notes may not be circulated, published or photocopied without the written permission of the author.

Line up the pins and pin the centre of the calico to the centre of the tape.



Stretch one side of the calico so that it is tight and pin at 2.5cm (1 inch) intervals along the tape.



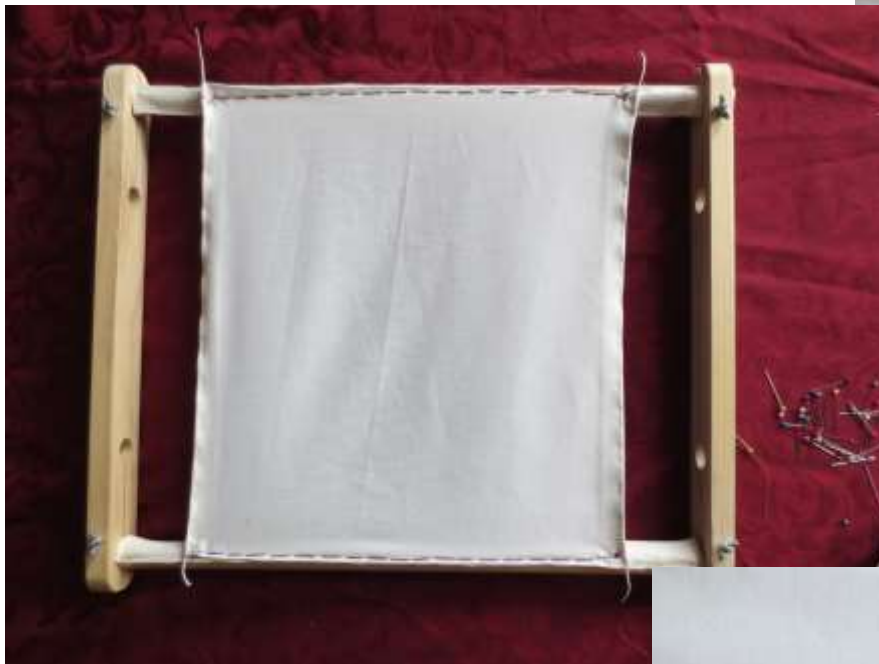
Once one half has been pinned, stretch and pin the other half.



When one side has been pinned, pull and pin the other side from the centre outwards as before.



Using a doubled length of strong thread (I use perle 8 cotton in a #18 chenille needle) use backstitch to apply the calico to the frame – top and bottom.

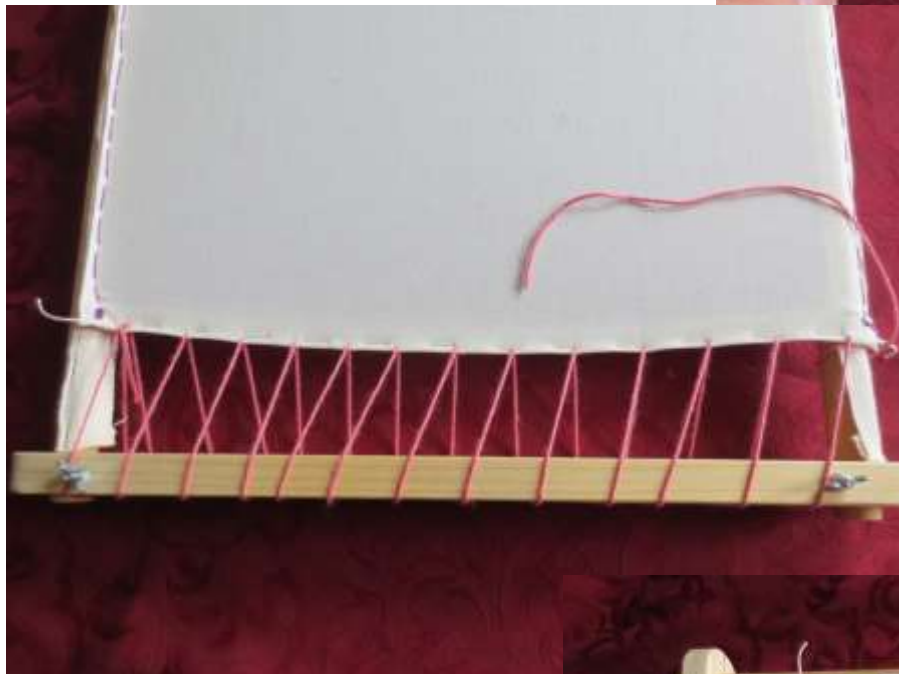


Once the calico is applied, you can remove the pins.

Thread up strong thread to lace the sides of the calico to the frame. I use 8 ply knitting cotton for this job as it does not stretch over time, so the frame stays taught.



Hint: do not cut the thread from the ball until you have finished lacing the sides – that way if you need more thread, you can just pull up the lacings to get more from the ball.



Knot off one end and pull up the lacing so that it is firm (not tight) and the edge relatively straight. Do not knot off the other end of the lacing thread.

Repeat for the other side.





When you press your hand on the calico, it should flex. It needs to be firm but not drum tight. When the background fabric has been applied to the calico, both layers will be tensioned at the same time.



Before I talk about putting on the background fabric, I'll show you a little bit different way of preparing the calico. On the second frame, rather than cutting the calico 5cm (2 inches) narrower than the frame, I have cut it to the same inside width of the frame.

The benefit of this is that you get that little bit more width to work with – the pitfall is that you need to make sure that you still have room to pull up the lacing to tension the fabric. If you do not have a space between the calico and the frame, you will not be able to tighten the fabrics to drum tight.



Iron your background fabric and then lay it over the calico.

Starting in the centre as you did when pinning the calico to the frame, pin the satin to the calico. Face the points of the pins inwards and smooth the fabric to make sure that it is flat as you pin to the edge.

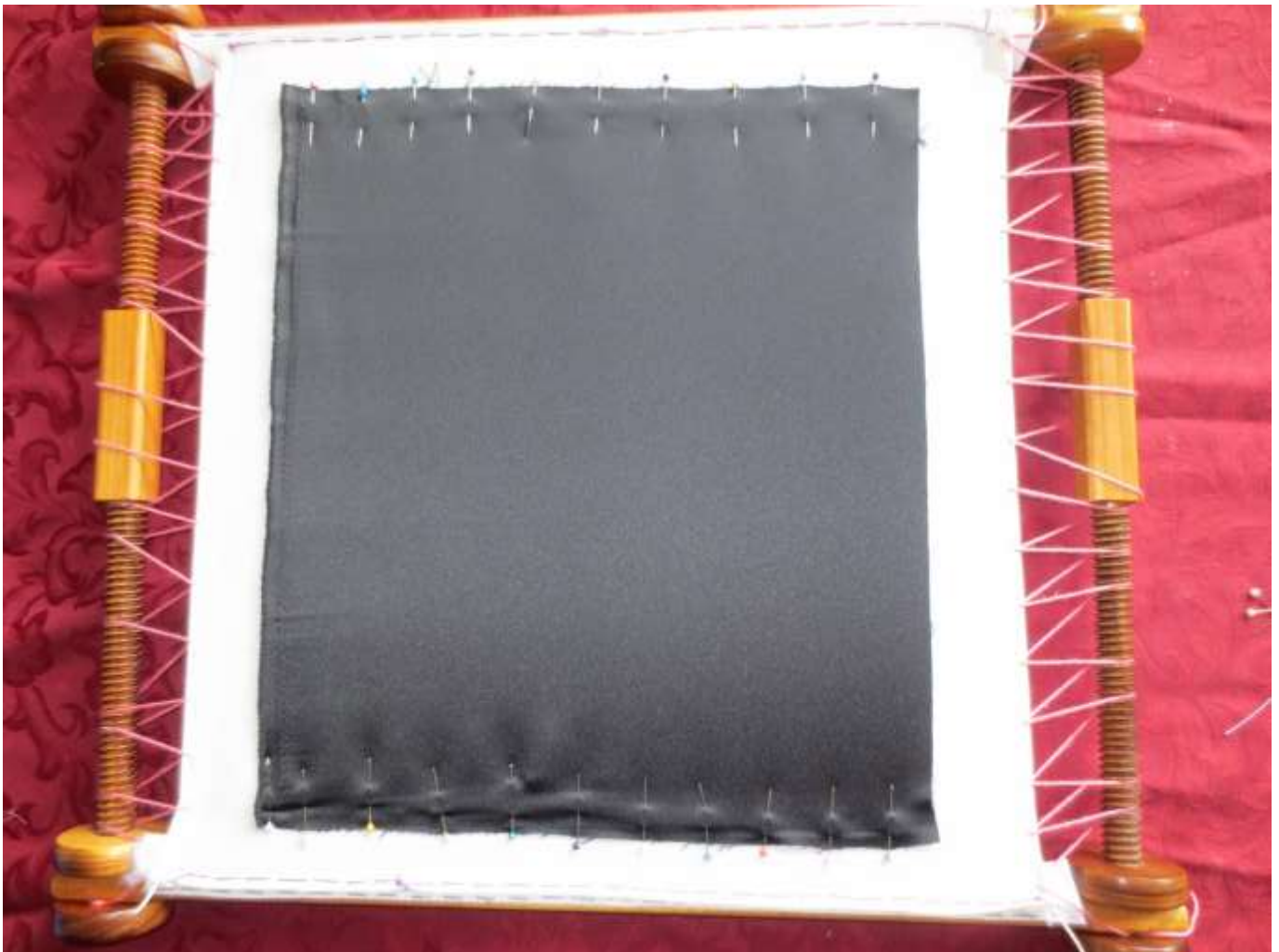
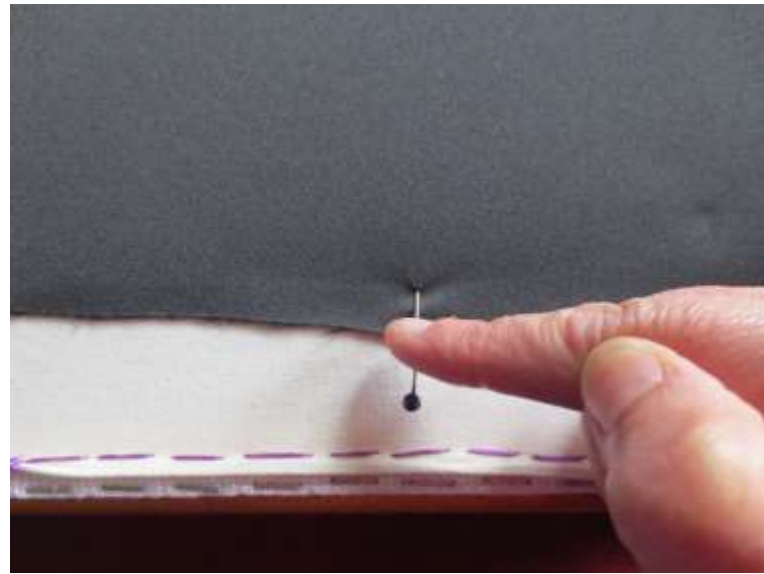
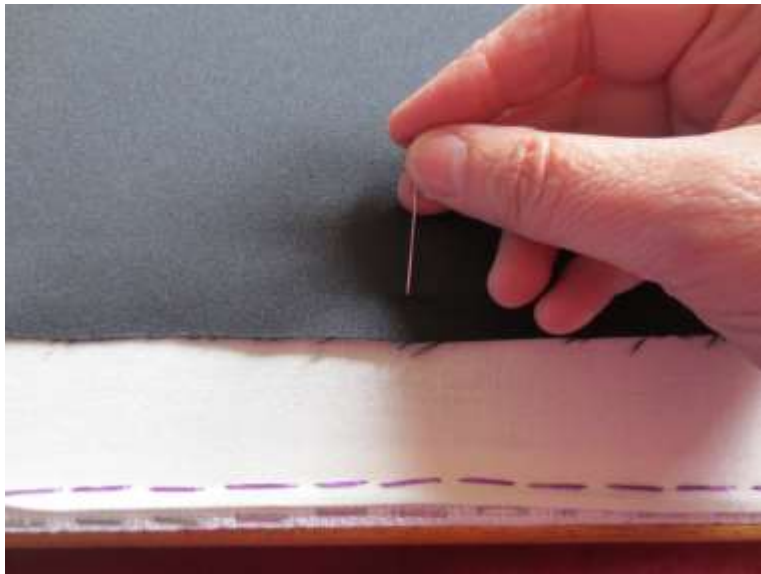




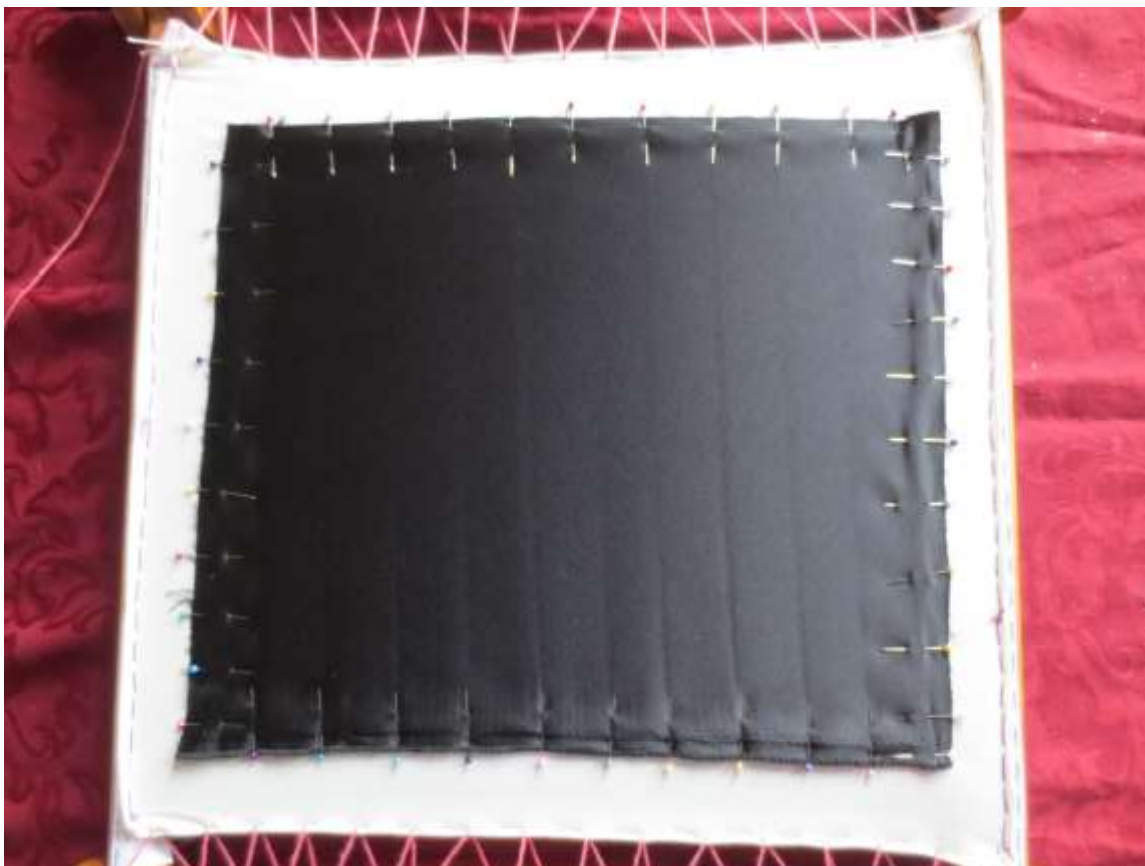
Once you have pinned to one edge, go back to the centre and pin to the other edge.



When you pin the opposite side, push the pins into the fabrics on an angle with the point facing the edge of the satin. Flip the pin over so that the point is now facing inwards as before – you should feel the satin tension tighter as you flip the pin – and then complete pushing in the pin. Again, work from the centre outwards.



Pin the remaining two sides the same way – from the centre outwards and flipping the pins to tension the background fabric.



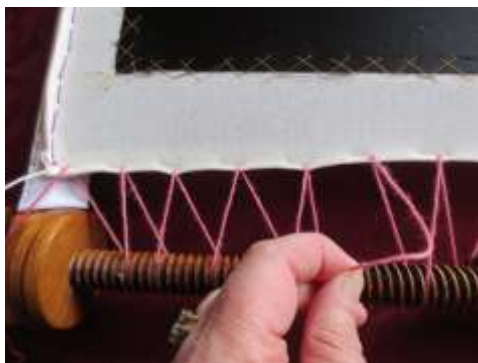
The background fabric should be perfectly flat with no puckers or bumps. The lines that you can see in the photo are where the pins are pulling the fabric tight against each other. If you run your hand along the background fabric from one side to the other and you end up with excess background fabric, you need to re-pin.



Apply the background fabric to the calico with herringbone stitch – once again, the stitches do not need to be tiny – and again, I am using Gutermann in a #10 crewel needle. Make the stitches alternating – one stitch through the calico and the next stitch through both the calico and background fabric together.



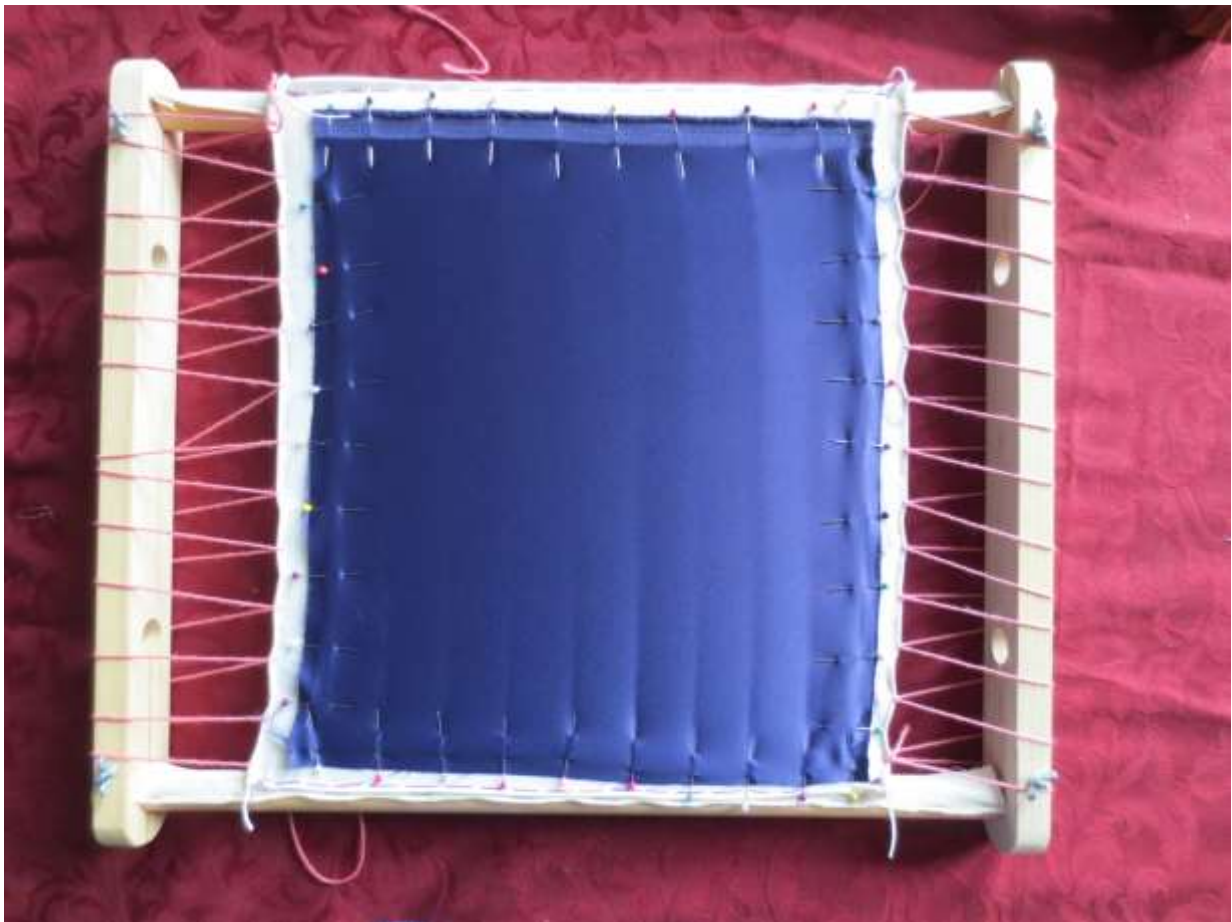
Once all the way around the background fabric, remove the pins and then tighten the frame and tighten the lacing – tensioning the fabrics to be drum tight.



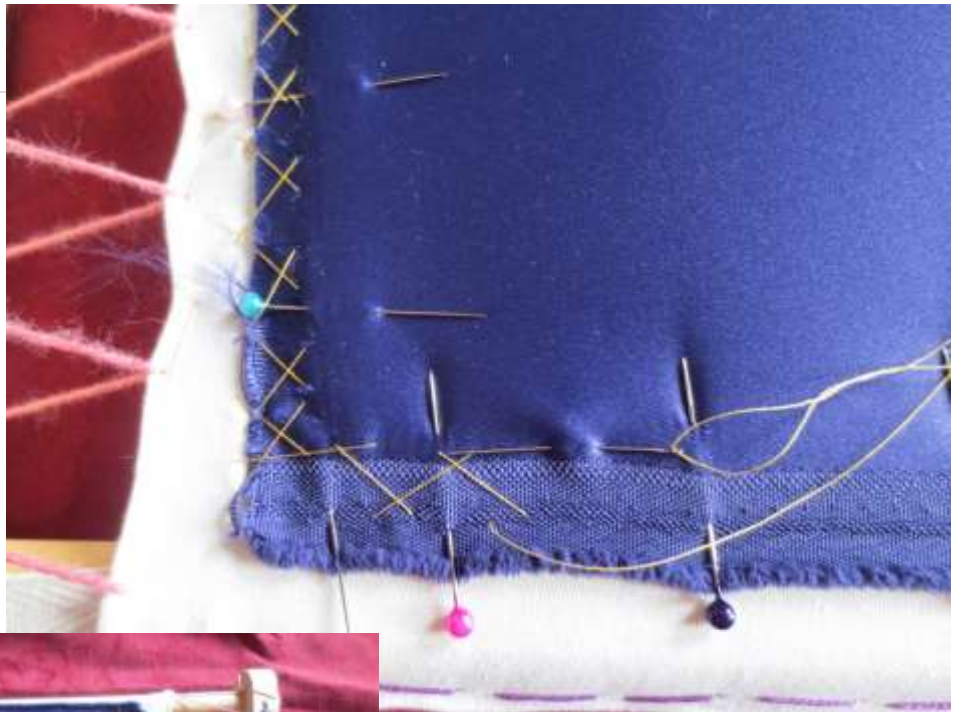


When you tap on the fabric, it should be tight and make a sound like a drum. You are now ready to stitch!

Ok, so what happens when your frame is not quite large enough for the fabric? The frame only has to be large enough to support the embroidery – if you are going to embroider a shawl or a vestment, you don't have to have a giant sized frame. So, for the next photo, you can see that the background fabric is just a bit too big for the frame. It just fits – but trying to alternate stitches though the background fabric and the calico is next to impossible on two sides as you will be bumping into the dowel of the frame. (The sides are no problem.)



So, when working on the sides that are too close to the edge of the frame, stitch both parts of the herringbone through both fabrics.



Once again, when herringboned, remove the pins and tighten up the frame and the lacings until the frame is drum tight.





The next two photos show a shawl on a frame – instead of calico I have used a matching coloured homespun.

The herringbone stitch is done with #40 machine embroidery rayon so that it doesn't leave holes in the shawl when the herringbone is unpicked.



When working clothing, never make the frame drum tight (unless you plan on having someone follow you around pulling your clothes out tight!)

For clothing, the fabric on the frame should just be firm like the calico was when it was applied. The trick is to not stitch too tight – otherwise you will get puckers with the weight of the stitching.

*Happy Stitching!*  
*Alison*