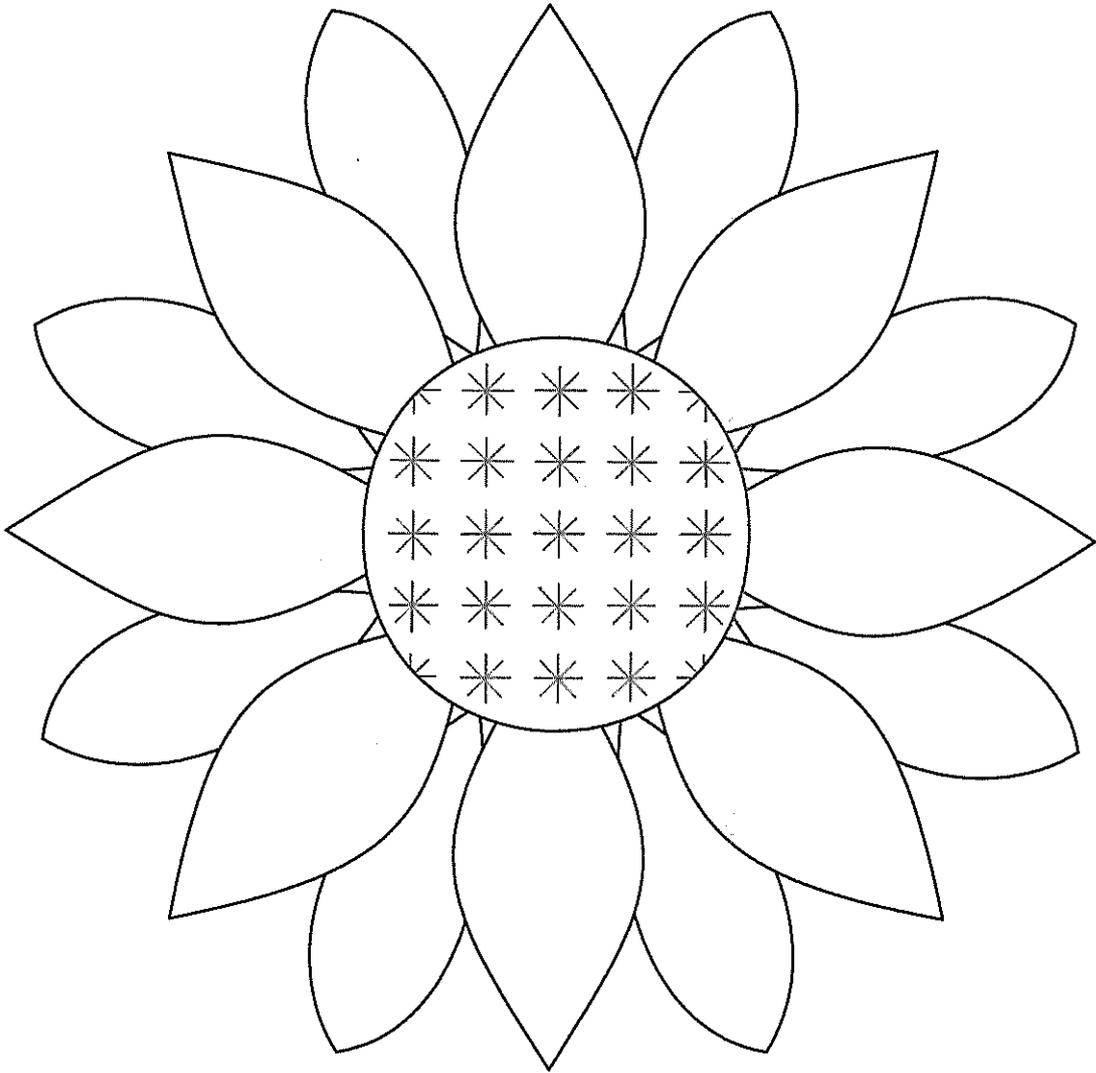


Sunflower for Ukraine

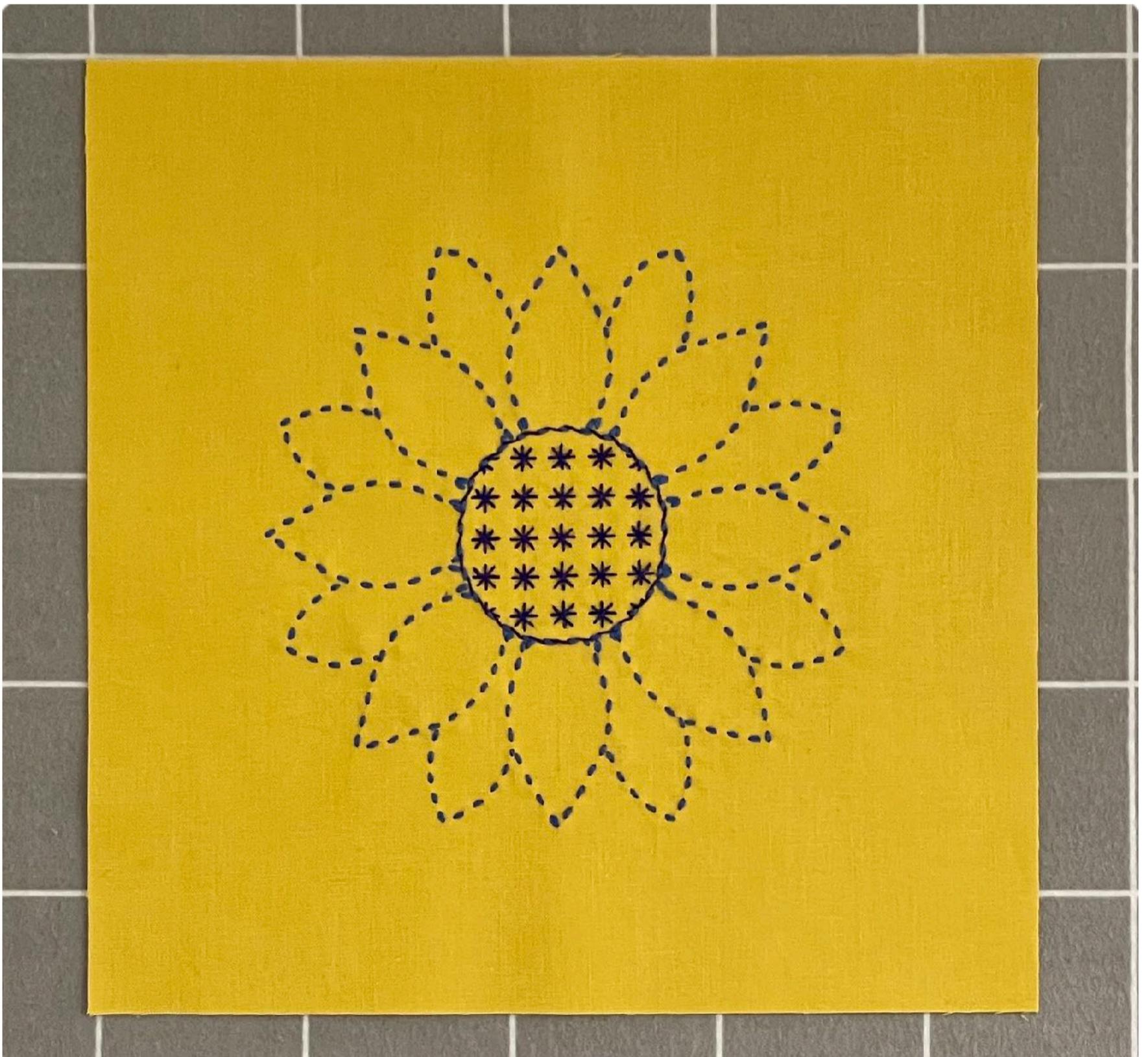


Jenna Clements

Sunflower for Ukraine

Sashiko Stitching

This pattern is inspired by sashiko, a traditional Japanese hand-sewing technique. 'Sashiko' means "little stabs", which refers to the running stitch that's used to create the pattern.



Requirements

- Two pieces of fabric, each measuring approximately 9" square.
Notes: To prevent the fabric from puckering, the embroidery is stitched onto two layers. Because you'll be tracing the design onto the fabric (as a single layer), I recommend using a pale or light colour fabric.
- Embroidery thread - I like to use six-stranded embroidery floss, either DMC or Aurifil. You can use anything from two to all six strands for the stitching, depending on how bold you'd like the stitch line to be. Aurifil 12wt thread also works well.
- Embroidery needle - this will have a sharp point to pierce the fabrics, and a large eye to accommodate the thread.
- Fabric marker - I like to use a water-soluble pen. It's always a good idea to test your marker on the fabric first, to make sure it can be erased.
- Thread or pins to tack your two layers together, if you choose to do so.

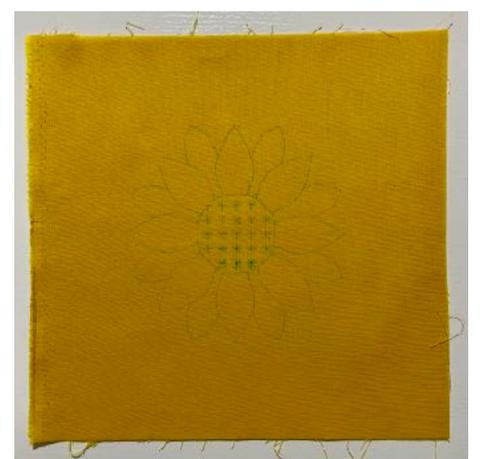
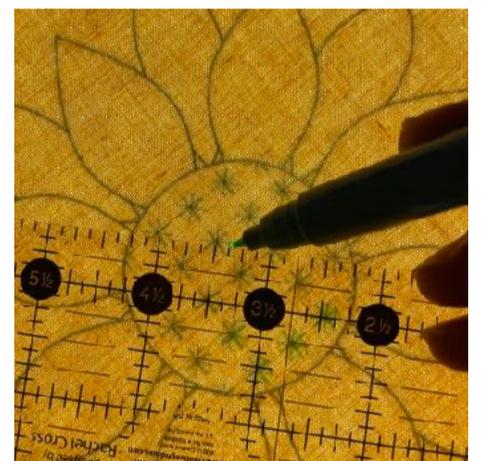
Preparation

1. Press your fabrics.
2. Trace the pattern onto what will be your top layer of fabric, making sure it's positioned centrally. You are tracing onto what will be the front of your finished piece.

TIP: Depending on how pale your fabric is, you may be able to trace the pattern easily - but using a light box or holding the pattern and the fabric up against a window will help.

TIP: For the stars design at the centre, the individual stitches have been marked out for you, so trace these as accurately as you can. Using a ruler will help - the stitches are $\frac{1}{4}$ " in length with a gap of $\frac{1}{8}$ " between them.

3. Place your second piece of fabric underneath the top piece. This second piece is to stabilise the top layer, which would otherwise be likely to pucker whilst being stitched. You can tack or pin the two layers together if you'd like to do so.



Order of Stitching

The sunflower is stitched in the following order:

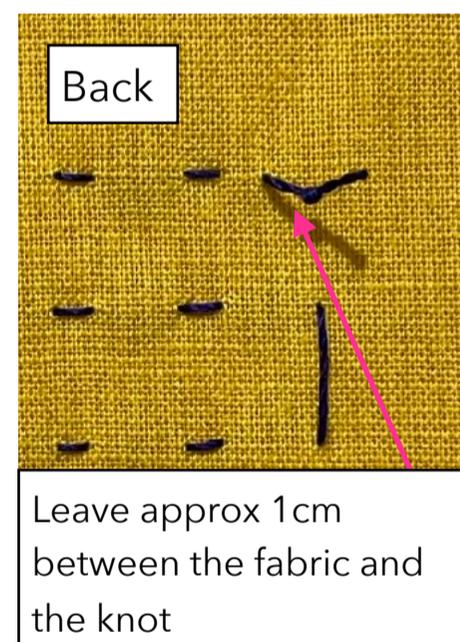
1. The stars design within the centre circle
2. The outline of the centre circle
3. The large inner petals
4. The smaller outer petals

Sewing the stars design in the centre first helps to prevent the fabric from gathering up at the centre, which would be likely to happen if for example you were to stitch the outline of the circle first.

The Sashiko Stitch

To start your stitching...

1. Thread your needle and tie a knot at the end of your thread.
2. Push your needle up from the back of your work, on the line you are about to stitch and where you want your first stitch to begin.
3. Pull the thread through, but don't bring the knot right up against the back of the fabric. Instead, leave approximately 1cm between the fabric and the knot. This gives the thread a little bit of 'breathing space', and will help prevent the stitching from being too tight - which could gather and pucker the fabric.



The running stitch

1. Once you've started and pulled the needle through to the front of your work, push it back down a short distance from the starting point. This creates the first stitch.
2. You can make each stitch in a single movement - once you've inserted the point of the needle through to the back of your work, tilt the needle so that its tip comes back up to the front. Then pull the needle all the way through to the front. Repeat this action to continue making the running stitch.

Take care not to pull the thread too tightly as you stitch, as this will cause the fabric to gather. Each stitch ought to just sit nicely on the surface of the fabric - not too loose, but not too tight.

A good stitch is formed when the stitches are the same length as each other, and the gaps between them are also consistent.

TIP: Use a pencil to mark a couple of lines on your thumb nail and use this to measure each stitch, and the gaps between them, as you go!

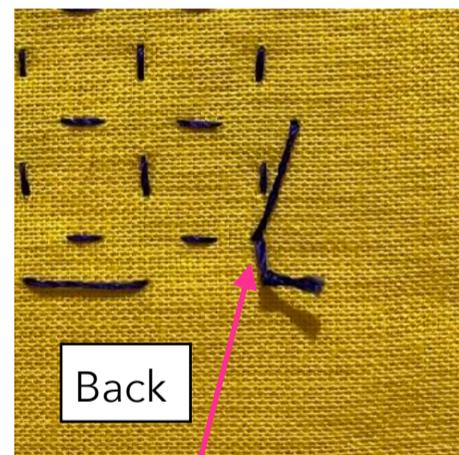


Drawing little marks on your thumb nail can help you keep a consistent stitch length

For this project, I found that a stitch length, and gap, of 2-3mm worked well for the outline of the circle and the petals (the individual stitches of the stars design at the centre have been marked out for you). However, we each have our own individual stitching style. I designed this project as an opportunity for slow stitching and mindfulness - so try to relax and enjoy the process.

To finish your stitching...

1. After making your last stitch, make a knot in the thread, approximately 1cm away from the fabric. In a similar way to how you started the stitching, not having the knot right up against the fabric will give the thread some 'breathing space'.



Back

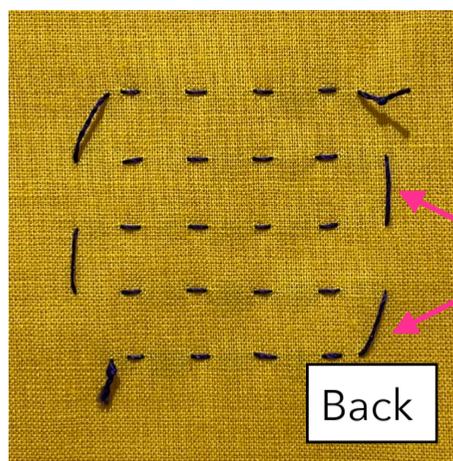
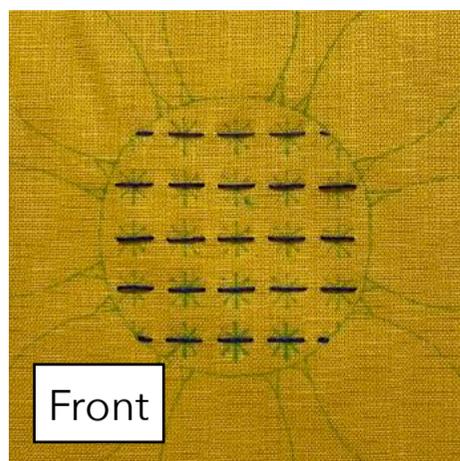
Leave approx 1cm between the fabric and the knot

Stitching the Sunflower

The stars design within the centre circle

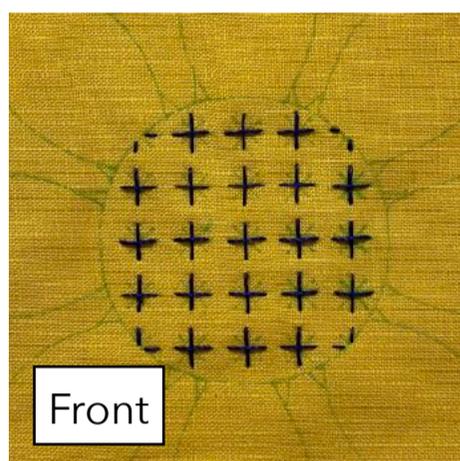
For the stars design at the centre of the sunflower, the individual stitches have been marked for you. One principle of sashiko is to follow your way across the pattern in a straight line where possible, rather than turning lots of corners.

Rather than sewing each star individually, build-up the stars design as follows:

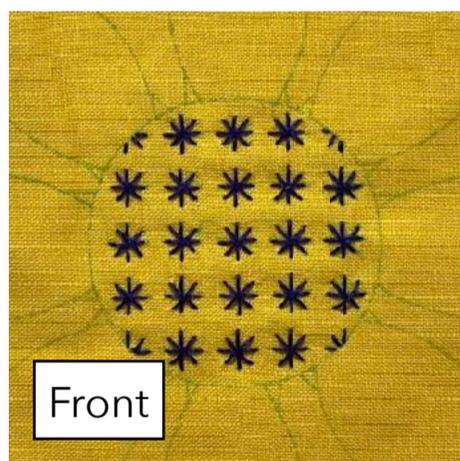


Sew all the stitches of the horizontal lines first.

When you reach the end of one line, you can 'jump' over onto the next. Leave a slightly loose 'loop' of thread on the back of your work when you do this, to help prevent the fabric from being gathered-up at these points.



Sew all the stitches of the vertical lines next.



Using the same principle, sew all the stitches of the diagonal lines that go in one direction, followed by all the stitches of the diagonal lines that go in the other direction.

The outline of the centre circle

Use a running stitch to sew around the outline of the circle.

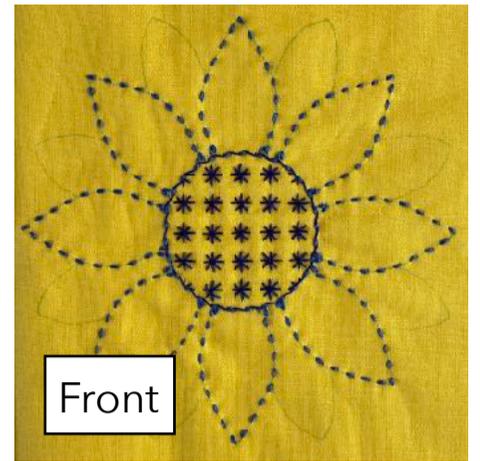
I make this into a whipped stitch by weaving a different colour thread underneath the running stitches. By always weaving this thread in the same direction, it becomes a solid wiggly line.



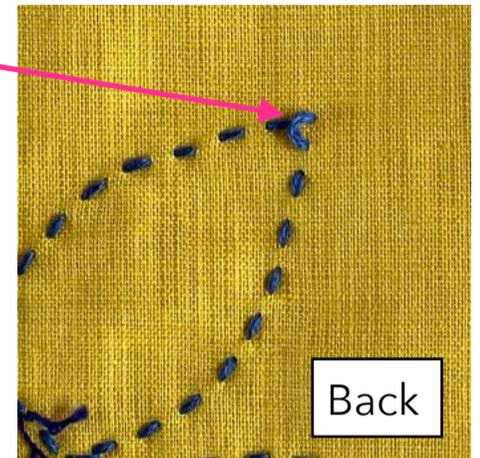
The petals

Use a running stitch to sew around each petal.

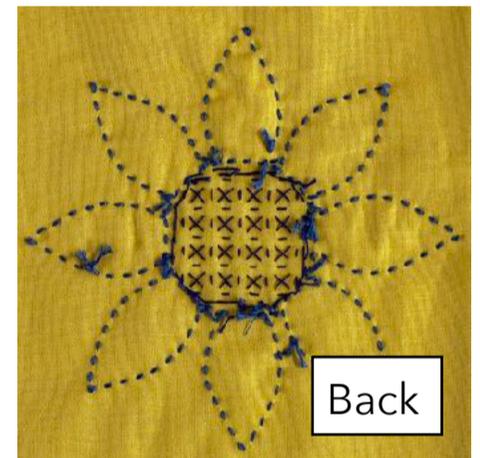
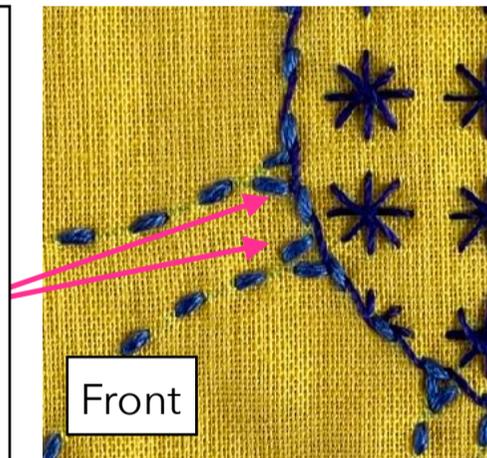
I start with the larger, inner petals.



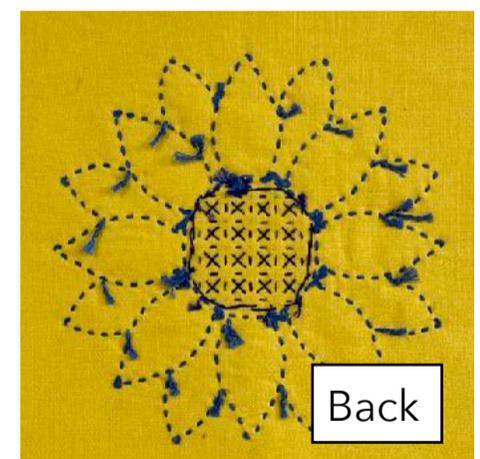
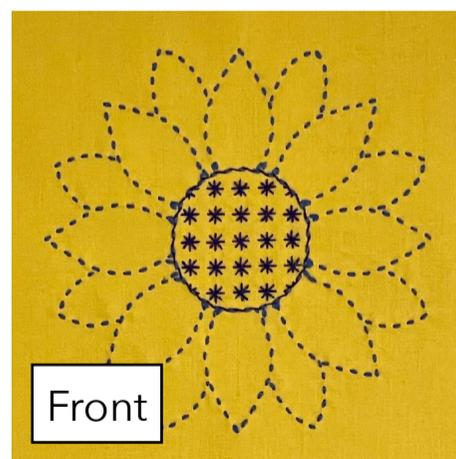
When you reach the point of a petal, again leave a tiny 'loop' of thread on the back of your work, to help prevent the fabric from being gathered-up at these points.



When you reach the end of each petal, you can sew the small lines between them, then move along to the next petal - still using the same piece of thread, for as long as its length allows. Remember to leave tiny 'loops' of thread on the back of your work whenever you change direction.



Once you've sewn all the large petals, sew the small outer ones. These I do sew with individual pieces of thread, rather than jumping across from one to the next, because there is a large gap between them.



Once you've finished all the stitching, spritz or gently wash your work to remove the fabric marker.

You can now use your embroidery in a small project - for example you could use it in a quilt or sewing it onto a tote bag. Or simply keep it as it is, perhaps displaying it on a noticeboard or in a window.