

CHAINSTITCH by Sally Turner

Chainstitch is so called because it is a series of looped stitches that looks like a chain. Chainstitch is an ancient craft. The earliest archaeological evidence of chainstitch embroidery dates from 1100 BC in China. It is a technique found in the embroidery traditions of many cultures worldwide.

A very versatile stitch it is useful for bold outlines that mimic drawing, as well as solid colour filling.

As well as a hand embroidery technique, the earliest sewing machines were chainstitch machines, before the more familiar lockstitch machines that we usually use. The early chainstitch machines used just one thread, whereas lockstitch machines use both a spool and a bobbin, which is how they can create a simpler straight stitch.

Hand chainstitch is very versatile, and anywhere machine chainstitch is used, hand chainstitch could be too. The type and weight of thread used will change the look accordingly



A 1940's bedspread from the private collection of Sally Turner. Although this is machine chainstitch, it could easily be replicated by hand. The abstract decorative lines are chainstitch, as are the outlines of the appliquéd flowers. Notice how multiple rows of chainstitch together make bolder lines. The flowers are scraps of fabric cut out and stitched on top. This technique is called appliqué

Solid Colour & Outlines

Detail of an embroidered silk gauze ritual garment from a 4th-century BC, Zhou era tomb at Mashan, Hubei province, China. Rows of even, round chainstitches are used both for outline and to fill in colour.



Sampler by Sally Turner, using chunky yarn



Helena Ericsson



Inverse lettering by Maricor/Maricar



Vintage hickory denim workwear coat embellished by Sally Turner

Monogram and Logos



Chainstitcher, LA



Vichcraft Chainstitch



Chainstitcher, LA



Vichcraft Chainstitch



Custom chainstitch by HonsetlyWTF



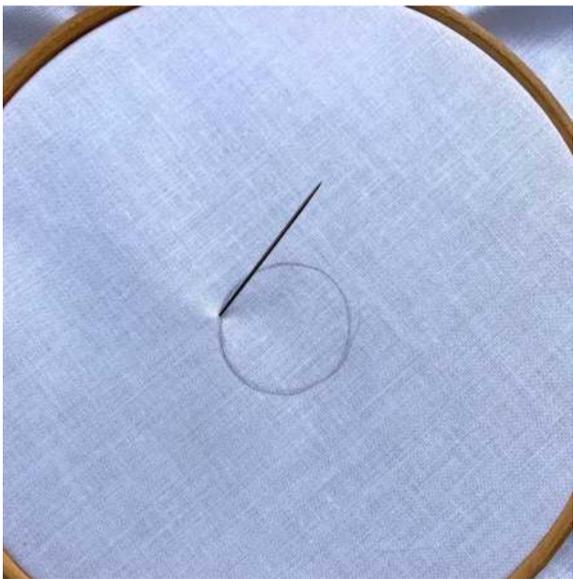
Mister freedom jacket



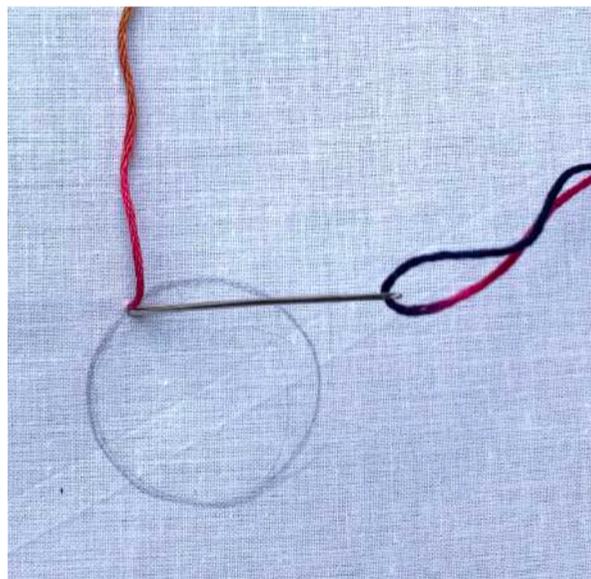


You will need:

- Fabric or item to embroider
- Thread (you can use any kind of thread. Shown here is classic cotton embroidery thread in rainbow colours)
- Needle that fits the thread
- Scissors.
- Helpful but not essential: Embroidery hoop to hold your fabric taut. Thimble.



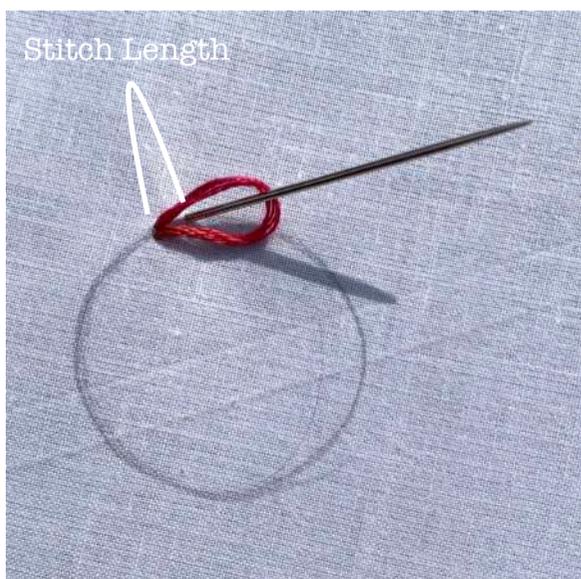
Step 1: Draw your outline in pencil, or follow the pattern on the fabric, or just work freehand!
Bring your needle from the back out to the front...



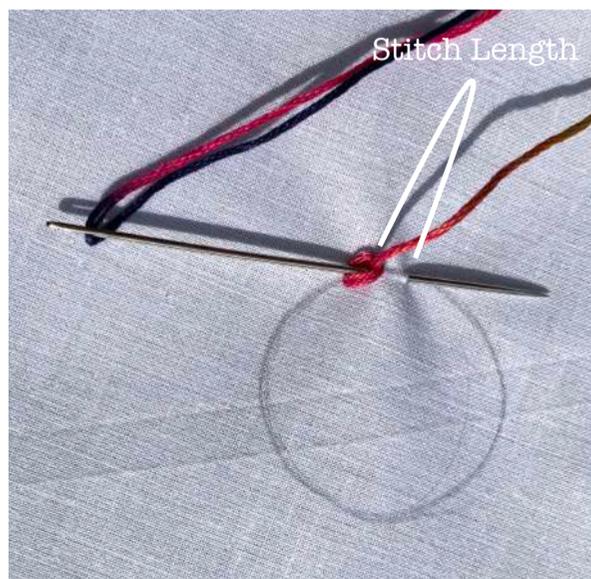
2...take your needle back through, right where you just come through...



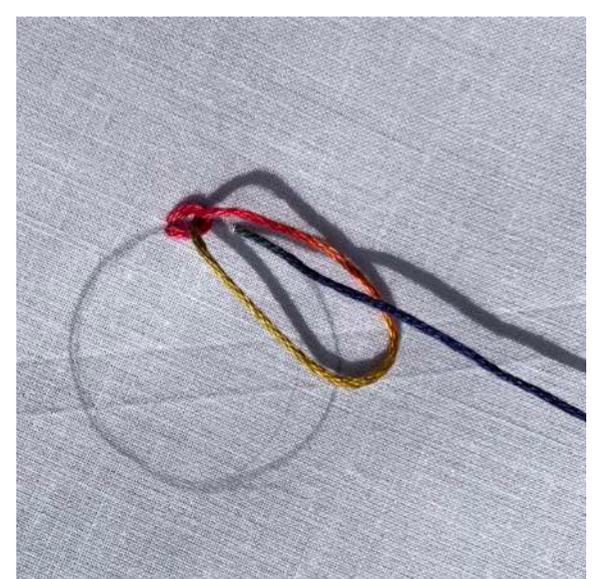
3... and leave a loop. This is your first chain link in the chainstitch



4: Decide how long your stitches will be and bring your needle out through the front, and through the loop and pull the thread *just* taut enough...



5...go back in through the loop and out to the front, one stitch length...



6...make sure you leave a loop. Then repeat the process as many times as you need to create your chain

There are two main ways to finish off your chainstitch:



A: To finish at the end of a line of chainstitch, take a small stitch to anchor the last loop, and secure at the back with a knot



B: To complete a continuous loop of chainstitch, continue stitching until you are one stitch away from the end. Tuck the needle underneath the loop in front, not through the fabric, and bring your needle back through the last stitch. Finish with a knot at the back.



And thats it! Have fun experimenting