

# Software review



Charting editor Sarah Heys takes a look at cross stitch software programs, and tests out what they have to offer. Which one's for you?



## Cross Stitch Professional Platinum

DPSOftware\*

**O**f the programs tested, this has the best features to create a professional-looking printout of your designs. I've used the Standard version and the Plus version (£125). I do find the Standard version slightly basic and, although I do like its layout and how user-friendly it is,

there are some functions that are only included in the more advanced Plus version. For example, I find the placement of different facing fractionals easy, and swapping backstitch colours without having to delete and re-draw in another colour is very useful, but these aren't available in the Standard version. Likewise you can only have full backstitch lines (not backstitch part-across a grid square). For other backstitch tools like thickness, freehand draw and part-grid backstitch you need the Plus edition.

The smoothing tool included is useful though, so any motif can be smoothed out when you click – it automatically adds fractional stitches on the appropriate side.

This package also comes with a 200-page manual so it's easy to find something if you're stuck!



£75

## iStitch2

Jane Greenoff\*

**T**his is a good starter package... you'll be able to create charts in colour, or black-and-white or a mix, either design from scratch or use the motif library. Use the shade cards to pick from a range of thread brands – conversions between them are easy and automatically applied to the whole design.

The motifs are by renowned designer Jane Greenoff... there's a good variety, including blackwork repeats. You can also upload your own template motifs, all of which you can then edit.

Is it easy to use? Take special care when drawing backstitch, if you don't want to cut across squares. (An auto-backstitch exists, but I found it didn't always

outline what I wanted!) And I found that deleting backstitch lines is time-consuming, as you have to draw over each section of the line from start-to-end with another line. Also, when adding fractionals you have to select between the different tools rather than just clicking in the top left or bottom right corner of the square, for example.

£29.99



## Easy Cross De Luxe

Easy Software\*

**T**his program has a lot of useful tools that some of the other software programs are missing, for example, half backstitch. Although I didn't think it had the best layout of the programs I used, I did like the handy auto-shading option – once you've drawn a motif, just select a number of colours (as many as you wish) and it'll automatically shade the shape, though the colours can look slightly sectioned.

I also didn't really like the way you add different colours or alter colours in the design. Usefully, there is a spray size function, which

allows you to fill varying sized areas without having to draw each stitch. Another good feature is the draw function, where you can draw varying shapes such as squares and triangles to different sizes in cross stitch by pulling and dragging to the size you require. A great idea for making patterns quickly.

I like the backstitch, as it can be added not only in anchored lines, but you can also draw it freehand anywhere – it doesn't have to be anchored at any points – although this might be trickier to actually stitch! It's easy too to add notes and info to your final charts.

A hardanger/blackwork and needlepoint module is available, £10.



£44

## WinStitch 2014

Ursa Software\*

This program is a really good-value, basic option for getting started with computer charting. It has lots of standard functions that a sticher would need to get going. A library of motifs and alphabets is available and it's easy to import your own scanned images too, for these to be converted into charts.

I liked how easily you can see how your finished stitching will look, as a simulation on a fabric-effect background.

Then, if you grow in confidence and like doing things like creating designs with embellishments, this program can do some clever tricks with that. Choose different sizes of bead or

button... even nifty things like adding a circle of beads is easy.

A downside, however, is to do a half cross stitch you have to select between different tools rather than just clicking in either the top or bottom corner of the square – I thought this could be quite time consuming.

Only one backstitch tool means you'll need to take extra care when drawing across half a grid square, but it was good to see squashed fractionals are possible too, with care. You can use auto-backstitch for



£40

outlining groups of colours – although it sometimes selected odd sections! I did like being able to add a text box to my chart for stitching information.

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## Stitch Craft Home Edition

Crafted Software\*

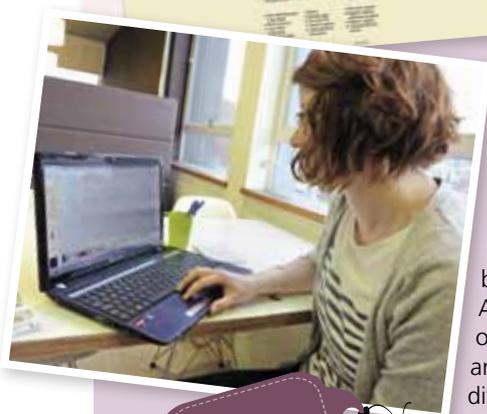
This is a very comprehensive program to use for designing various different crafts.

On opening a new document you're asked what type you want (cross stitch, needlepoint, hardanger, long stitch, canvas work, beading, knitting etc). Although the tools and options for each setting are very similar, the main difference is the simulation of the finished chart and more/fewer backstitch options for hardanger and knitting respectively.

Unfortunately, there isn't a bead tool, so you'll have to use French knots.

A good feature is that you're able to add backstitch to half-way points across a grid square (ie. part-square backstitch which splits an aida block). It also has an auto-backstitch option for outlining objects. Other useful tools include adding centre-of-design markers, thicker grid lines for every 5/10 stitches and for the chart centre lines.

Overseas buyers receive the software download and an optional back-up copy on disk. I found the download process very straightforward.



£99

## Which one is best for you?

Kit name	Photo conversion	Windows version?	Motif library	Printable key	Text tool
Cross Stitch Pro Platinum	✓	7, 8 & XP	✗	✓	✓
iStitch2	✓	7, 8 & XP	Over 2,000	✓	✓
Easy Cross De Luxe	✓	98-2000	439	✓	✓
WinStitch 2014	✓	All (Also Mac)	~380	✓	✓
Stitch Craft Home Edition	✓	Most versions	12 ABCs	✓	✓

\*For stockists, see page 90