

This is an introduction to a hemstitching technique I learned from a class presented at Convergence-San Jose in 1990 by Birgit Olsen Barron. Coming from a knitting machine background, she developed this embellishment process for a number of uses. I find it most beneficial in its capacity as a clear hemstitching technique and that is what I am going to present today.

Definition of hemstitch – securing your woven fabric in order to prevent any change in tension at the beginning and ending of your work before you remove it from the loom. This is any loom, any project from tapestry to 4H loomwork to more complex fabric weaving. It is simply a good failsafe to maintain the structure and integrity of your work. Hemstitching is usually done on the loom, under tension, securing bundles of warp from the unwoven warp area INTO the woven area. Traditional hemstitching uses pre-measured yarn to wrap the warp bunch and stitch with a needle into the woven web. Knitting on the loom uses a crochet chain stitch to wrap and loop the bundle, leaving on the outside edge a very knit-like stitch, thus 'knitting on the loom'.

Here is the sequence to follow:

Throw 2 or so shots of plainweave hem area. There is no need to measure off length of yarn for hemstitch to come, just tuck your beginning yarn into weaving.

Insert crochet hook (Ms Barron uses a latch hook) below the weaving, 2-3 dents from the selvedge. Draw weft yarn onto hook, catch a loop. Loop again, drawing through first loop and pulling tight at edge. Keep loop on hook.

Hook in between same 2 warp ends, from below weaving. Going under the woven shots, bring hook up above weaving. Catch working yarn (weft) and pull through loop on hook, leaving new loop on hook.

Go over several dents, between 2 warp ends, insert hook from below weaving, under weft and up above weaving. Catch working yarn and pull through loop on hook. Continue across width of project.

At end selvedge, loop around end warps, pull second loop through. Expand this loop and pass shuttle through. Pull closed. Weft will be ready for weaving.

At end of your piece, remember you must still work from unwoven warp into woven web, but the process is essentially the same.:

Several warp ends from the edge, insert hook and catch working yarn to make loop on hook. Catch yarn again, pull through first loop and tighten at edge. Keep loop on hook.

Between same 2 warp ends, insert hook into weaving several rows down. Bring hook to surface, catch working yarn and pull through loop on hook. Pull until taut.

Move over several dents, insert hook into weaving and up between same warps, catch working yarn and draw it through loop on hook. Continue across width of project.

At end, catch yarn around last warps, pull second loop through first loop and tighten. Cut off working yarn and pull tail through the last stitch.