

TemariKai Tool Kit - 01: Stitch Basics, and the Little Things that Matter

Some of the most useful techniques and tips lead back to some of the most simple (and valuable) things that can help us all, whether beginner or more experienced stitcher. They are easy to forget or overlook, but collectively can make or break that final "something" on a finished temari. These tips and techniques apply in general to the vast majority of temari designs - of course there will always be some "exceptions" depending on special effects in some patterns. Thanks to Sue H. Ai M., and to ladies of the MHJCA for help translating sections of various Japanese temari books (you will find most all of this information presented in some form in almost all of the books, whether it's in diagram/picture form or text).

Placing Pins and Marking Threads (Jiwari): When placing marking pins that will be used for adding division/marketing lines to the mari, place them straight up-and-down. Pins on an angle can affect the placement of the marking threads. Especially on smaller mari, this difference can become significant.



When applying the marking/division lines (called Jiwari, in Japanese - Jiwari means "dividing into territories or sections") - pass all of the marking threads to the same side of the pin. If threads pass to both sides of the pin, the width of the pin can begin to affect the accuracy of placement. It is also much easier to make a sharp tacking stitch (if one is used) to hold the jiwari in place if all the threads are on the same side of the pin.

When placing jiwari/marketing lines, be sure to adjust them so that they are straight and even.

These hints may seem "insignificant" in terms of the amount of error that could occur but, it's important to remember that when you are working on a sphere, little things now get multiplied greatly as the project progresses.... seriously, this is a law of math/geometry.

Tacking Jiwari (Marking Thread) Intersections:



Place the tacking stitch diagonally across one marking line, so that it is 180 degrees opposite (think like 6 hours away on a clock face) for a smooth, sharp tack.



A stitch placed unevenly such as this one can result in pulling jiwari (marking lines) off center, missing some threads, and/or a "messy" appearance, among others.



A tacking stitch done fully across the set of jiwari (marking threads) and pulled snug results in a sharp, tiny point that holds all the threads in place.

Tacking intersections of marking lines is a personal preference. Most people find it difficult to not "nudge" the marking lines out of position as the mari is handled while being stitched... so usually at least a few major points are tacked such as North and South poles, and some or all of the obi/equator points. On Combination divisions, a common practice is to tack the main centers; after that, many people will have different preferences as to how many additional points are tacked to hold them in position.

There is no set rule as to what must be tacked (or, for that matter, HOW you tack as long as it's neat and tidy without interfering in the line placement or overall finished design) as long as the mari divisions are placed and remain accurate throughout completion of the temari. If you can stitch a temari without tacking any points - wonderful! (seriously!). If you would rather tack every intersection, that's fine too. Sometimes it does come in handy to not tack all points so you can adjust smaller areas as needed in the design.

Passing Threads Under the Mari Surface: Passing threads under the mari wrap also happens in design work. It's a handy trick to "make threads disappear" when working designs and you only need parts of shapes to show in the temari pattern. For example - you could "round off a square" by passing the threads of the corners of the design under the mari surface. This is frequently seen in more intricate designs found in Japanese books.



When passing stitching thread under the mari surface, whether it's starting/ending a thread or moving to another stitching location, be sure to stitch deeply into the mari so that there is no "bleed through": you should not be able to see any of the stitching thread through the mari threads.



If the stitching thread is not taken deep enough into the mari threads, color from the stitching thread will show through the mari wrap. The more contrast between mari and stitching thread the more this is a problem but, even with colors that are close you can still see changes in texture, etc. if the thread is too close to the surface.

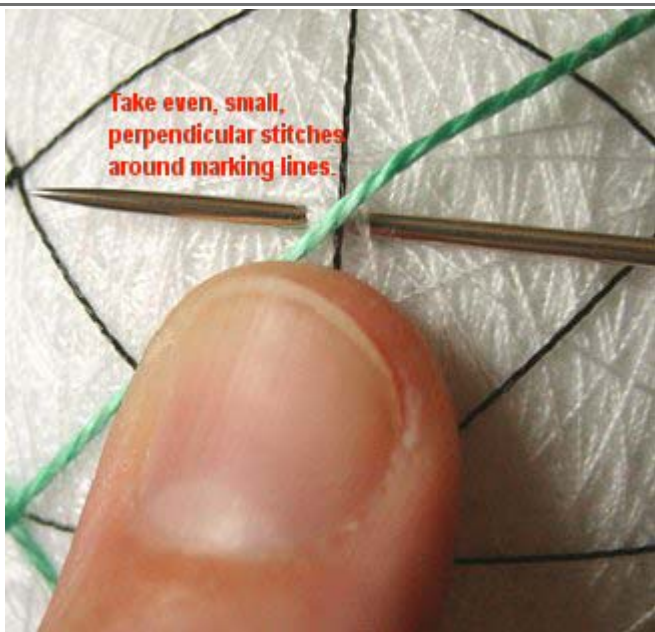
Taking a Stitch



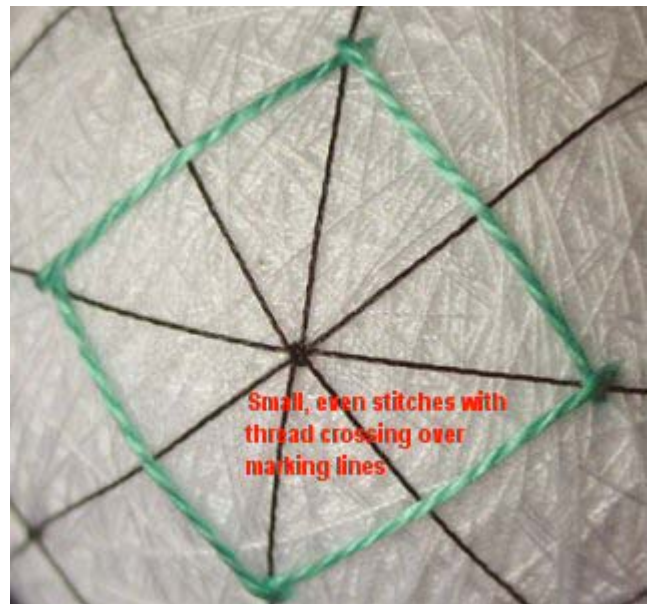
When taking a stitch around the jiwari (marking lines) the needle should be perpendicular (right angle) to the jiwari. The "bite" should be small and even on both sides of the jiwari.



If the needle is not perpendicular, and/or the bite of the mari threads is not evenly set on both sides of the marking line, the resulting stitch will be uneven and affect the design appearance overall.



Again, be sure the stitch taken is small, evenly placed on either side of the jiwari (marking line), and the needle is at right angles to the marking line.



The goal is to have small, even stitches that center around each marking line, with enough tension on the thread to give a sharp, crisp shape.

Placing Stitching Threads



When starting a thread, place it close to the jiwari (marking line); the jiwari should not be split, or moved out of place by the stitching thread.



If the stitching thread is too close to the jiwari (marking line) or pulled too tightly no matter where it is placed, it can pull the jiwari (marking line) out of place which skews the design as you work.



Use enough tension, and pre-place the thread to avoid loose, "floppy" lines, and be sure to center the stitches around the jiwari (marking lines). The result if not is a skewed appearance that will continue to get more mis-shapen.

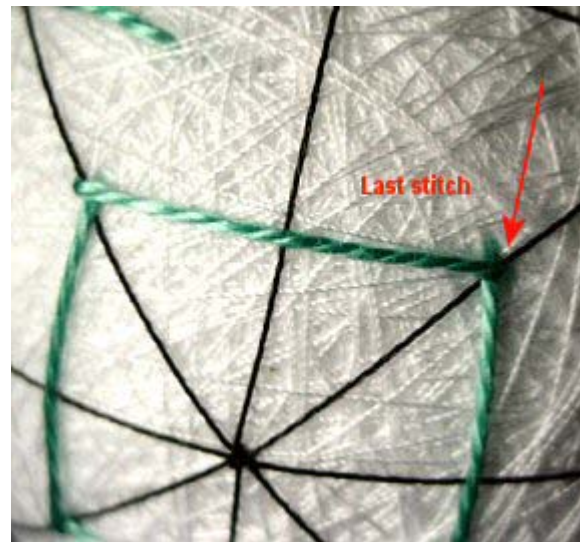
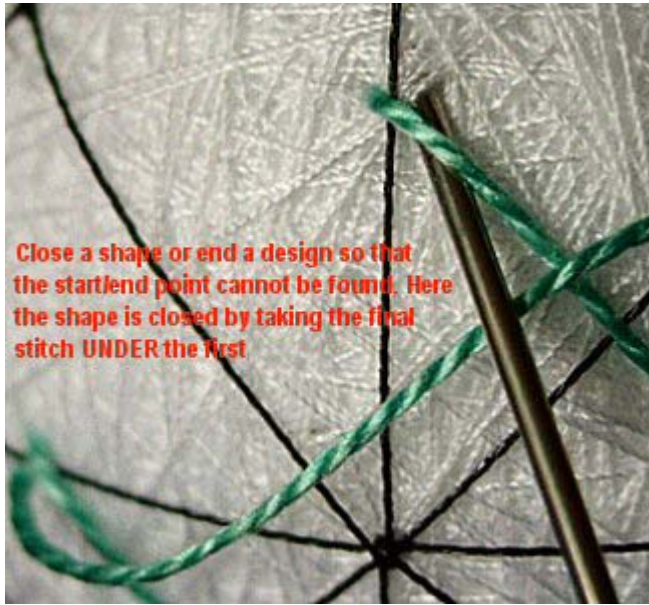


Large, loose stitches and threads that are loose and draping rather than nicely taught will result in less-than-crisp and precise shapes and designs, for almost all designs.

As mentioned above, there may be special designs or effects that may be desired in some temari patterns when these general stitching techniques are the exception rather than usual. Spacing the threads themselves can vary according to need, but that is usually limited to a specific design rather than being the norm to work by. Again, it's rare that the actual stitch into the mari will vary from a compact, even, small bite but - when it is needed to achieve a special effect then of course, that is what is used. Also, continual "grooming" or adjustment of threads to proper/desired position as you stitch will result in a cleaner, crisper design outcome. Adjusting thread positions after the design is complete cannot always allow for precise "tuning".

Starting and Ending threads - to knot, or not: there is no one answer to this question, each person will have their own approach to it as will any embroiderer or sewer. Some folks tie a small overhand or rolled knot, and "bury" it somewhere (for example, tugging it gently into the mari surface) - others will simply run a small length (inch or two, or about 2 to 5 cm) back and forth under the surface of the mari in one or more directions as they start a stitching thread. Ending a thread usually is done by running a small length of thread under the mari threads (and in both this and starting the thread - the same advice applies to go deeply enough so that the stitching thread does not show through the mari threads). As long as the design work is secure, and the method of ending or starting does not adversely affect the appearance of the final design (ie, no one should be able to see it) - whatever you are most comfortable with is fine.

Ending Stitching in a Design: When starting and ending threads in a design, work them so that the start and stop points can't be seen or found; the flow of the design should be uninterrupted.



Make starts and ends such that they can't be seen where the thread begins or ends in the design. Here, the last stitch is taken under the first thread, so that there is no difference visible on any of the stitches. They all cross the marking line, and each other, in the same way.

If the last stitch had only been taken across the first thread, as the rest of the stitches are done in the design, the last "leg" would have the crossover on the marking line going in the opposite direction (left over, rather than left under as the other stitches are oriented). Try to not have the design get interrupted.

To keep the North Pole or not? Once jiwari (marking lines) are placed on the mari and the design is under way - do you need to keep a pin or marker on the north pole? It's better to keep the orientation of what is north... even on temari that might not lead you to think that it makes a difference especially once stitching is under way. Maintaining the original north pole orientation will determine which way the stitches cross marking lines, and the goal is to have them all crossing in the same direction. It may seem to be a very small detail but, if the stitches are all oriented in the same direction the result is a much smoother appearance to the finished design (they all "fit" together better) as well as keeping the flow of the design. In temari designs that are worked from pole to pole across the obi, it is indeed important to always keep the same north pole until the design is complete, so that there is no change in the direction of stitches. Consistency of execution is a hallmark of good craftsmanship.

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