

Photo snapping skills

Learning a new skill can make us feel on top of the world. Follow our simple tips for good photos and you'll soon get great results...

New skills create added interest in life and open the doors to meeting new people. Conversations you'll have will be more stimulating and you'll start attracting positive, interesting people. Getting started is exciting and can be a bit daunting, but it's always easier to learn with a friend or in a group.

We know a lot of you like to take photographs of yourselves with your knitting and stitching projects. Many of you send them into magazines, too.

"Consider these basics, Light, Background, Focus and Interest plus a bit of forward planning..."

Betsan says, "I know from my experience of working on magazines that the majority of photos sent in aren't good enough to print." So we thought we'd give you some basic tips for taking great photos.

Snapping good shots is a lot easier with a bit of forward planning so before you start, consider these basics, (1) **Light** (2) **Background** (3) **Focus** and (4) **Interest**.

Seeing the light

Light is the most important element of a good photograph and the best light is natural daylight. Try to avoid using flash as it creates harsh shadows and can be very unflattering. Glass framed pictures reflect flashlight preventing you seeing the work underneath.

Choose a room with good natural light and a time of day when it's at its best. Your garden is an option as well and may provide some interesting backgrounds. If you can't avoid using a flash, don't stand too close to the camera as your face will appear washed out with harsh, dark shadows – not very flattering! And don't stand up against a wall as the flash will cast deep shadows and spoil the picture.

That brings us to backgrounds. It's worthwhile having a tidy up before you start your photography – hanging washing or coffee mugs and dinner plates spoil any picture. In general opt for a plain background and beware of

lamps and lights growing out of peoples' heads. Don't position yourself in front of a window or TV screen, either, as this will fool the camera's meter and the exposure will be wrong.

It's a good idea to place your stitching on a plain background. A clean, ironed sheet is great, as is a large A3 sheet of paper. Make sure the colour of the background complements your work. If you're snapping yourself, ideally rope in a friend to help. Check

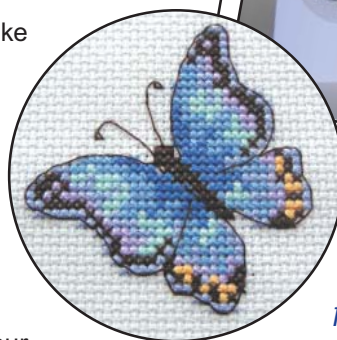
the lighting and the background and make sure the colour you're wearing doesn't clash with your surroundings and complements your skin colour. Go outside if you can and chose a pretty shrub, tree or archway to frame your head and shoulders. If you don't have help, take an image of yourself sitting. This will enable you to place your camera on a firm surface such as a table. Line up the shot and where you'll sit, then set your camera to Self Timer. You'll have plenty of time to arrange yourself for a good photo, but you may have to experiment a bit!

Another common mistake is for a photo to be out of focus. Projects are often placed on a floor or table and the shot taken at an angle. In this situation only a section of the picture will be focused sharply. So ensure the whole of your picture is in focus and if you're using a digital camera, check the image after every shot.

To add interest to your shots, picture them in context. Perhaps being worn, or why not record a loved one's reaction as you give it to them?

Many people use digital cameras these days so you need to ensure your camera's settings are on Fine or

Placing your stitching in context on a plain background can make a huge difference to the final image.



Our starter kit looks great in closeup. Experiment with focusing in on the detail.

High. This will produce the best quality image, which is essential if you're sending your photos to a magazine for printing, for example.

Send them to friends!

Sending an image by email can be done in a couple of clicks of a mouse. After you've downloaded your images onto your computer, write your email, click attach (in Outlook this is a paper clip symbol), then find your picture in your files. Once found, double click on the image and hey presto it's attached to your email and can be with the recipient in seconds!

Don't worry if you're still using film, the principles behind taking good photographs are exactly the same.

We'll be talking more about photography later – it's a great hobby to develop, even if you're housebound. And digital technology means you can practise without wasting precious film!