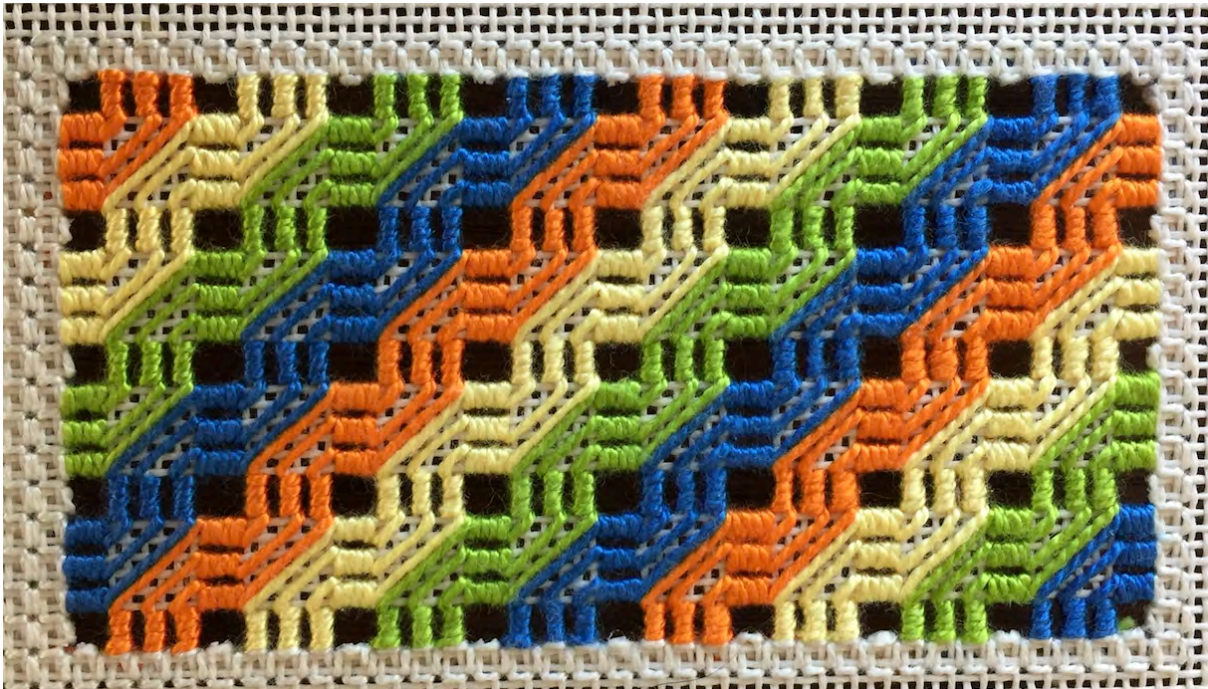


Aztec Scissors Case – Side One

From the EGA Stitch-a-Long (SAL) Facebook group, April 2021. Part 2 coming in June 2021. You can join the EGA SAL Facebook page here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/486902244995324>



Supplies needed:

18-ct mono canvas – cut size 6” x 12” (orientation doesn’t matter – just use the same dimensions). I used Ecru.

Threads:

One ball (partial) #8 pearl cotton -- I used ecru (DMC) to match my canvas

Four skeins #5 pearl cotton (DMC). I used :

- 825 (blue)
- 907 (lime green)
- 727 (yellow)
- 740 (orange)

You can use whatever color canvas you would like and you could even use one of the #5 pearl cottons for your border.

I like to stitch my canvas mounted with brass tacks on mini stretcher bars. If you want to do the same, you’ll need 6” x 12” stretcher bars and brass tacks.

Additional supplies may be needed in part two. (Nothing extensive or expensive.)

Aztec Scissors Case – Side One

If you're sharing threads with others, each skein of pearl cotton yields about 25 strands (about 1 yard each) cut once through the knot. I used 3 strands of each color and didn't rip out much.

Lining fabric: Ultra Suede or similar product is great and easy to use. Check Etsy for vendor selling smaller pieces. You need a piece about 8" long and 2 ¼" wide. (2" is likely wide enough if you're careful.) The color will show through the holes created in the canvas, so pick a color to coordinate with your chosen palette.

Notes on supplies: You may use any color of 18-ct mono canvas that you like. 18-ct is necessary to achieve the correct finished size of 4" tall x 2 ¼" wide. The scissors case is stitched in one piece and folded over to achieve the final product.

I also used Fray Check to help anchor the four-sided stitches at the cut edges. Use of any glue product is controversial in embroidery. I decided use of Fray Check was preferable to seeing my four-sided stitch roll off the ends of the cut threads. I used four-sided stitch because that's what many of the sources I read indicated was what was used on the original samplers. I applied a TINY amount of Fray Check on the back of my work on the cut edges PRIOR to stitching the Aztec Stitch. **If you are opposed to using glue, I suggest using a satin stitch border instead.** Just be sure the *inner* area for the Aztec Stitch itself is 34 threads wide by 66 threads tall. That's the original count.

Background notes:

EGA provides a lot of great educational opportunities and I have certainly participated in a lot of classes, correspondence courses and chapter programs over the years. This project pulls together a bunch of that learning.

The Aztec Stitch is a stitch that appears on Mexican samplers. It is reminiscent of Hardanger in that you remove ground threads to create a special grid. The remaining threads are wrapped into bars to create a distinctive open work pattern. You can see examples here:

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/mexican-embroidery>

Scroll down in the article above to view:

Sampler, Virginia Samtibañes, 1870, Mexico. Bequeathed by Alfred Percival Maudslay. Museum no. T.288-1928. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London and

Aztec Scissors Case – Side One

Sampler, Encarnación Castellanos, 1850, Mexico. Bequeathed by A. F. Kendrick. Museum no. T.92-1954. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
The pattern at the bottom right of the Virginia Samtibañes sampler is similar to what we're exploring in this project.

I should state up front that I am NOT an expert in this stitch. I am simply intrigued by the unusual pattern and decided to create something with the stitch.

Additional helpful resources:

Learn more about the four-sided stitch (used for the border) here:

<https://pieceworkmagazine.com/a-stitch-in-time-four.../>

Denise Beusen wrote a very informative article on the Aztec stitch that you can find here:

<http://www.beusen.net/Needlework/AztecStitch.pdf>

I would like to thank Lois Kershner, Betsy Morgan, Pat Rozendal and Denise Beusen for classes or reference materials that contributed to my understanding of this technique. I would also like to thank Margaret Bendig whose *Lacy Canvas Scissors Case* was an earlier SAL project that inspired this new one. The *Lacy Canvas Scissors Case* is one of many Petite Projects available to EGA members here: <https://egausa.org/petite-projects/>
(This link only works if you are logged in to your EGA account.)

Helpful note: Aztec Stitch is worked in units of 8 plus 2 threads. A unit is two threads withdrawn and then six threads stitched. Repeat the number of units to create the desired size and then add 2 stitches for the final inner withdrawn edge. This will make more sense once we begin stitching, but I mention it now for those who like to adapt things.

Aztec Scissors Case – Side One

Getting oriented....I considered the 12" dimension of the canvas as my "vertical" direction for measuring. I marked the TOP of the canvas accordingly:



I worked my canvas mainly in this orientation:

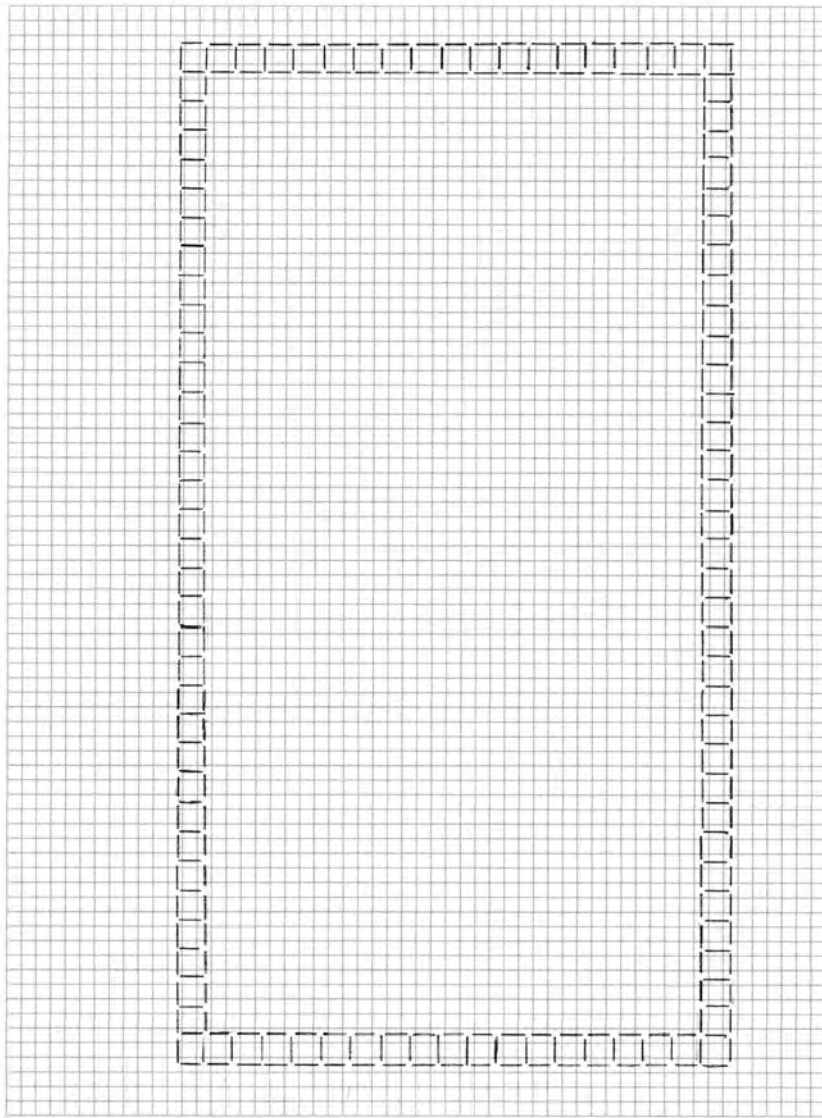


The canvas is folded in half for finishing. The top is left open to insert your scissors.

Aztec Scissors Case – Side One

Order of stitching:

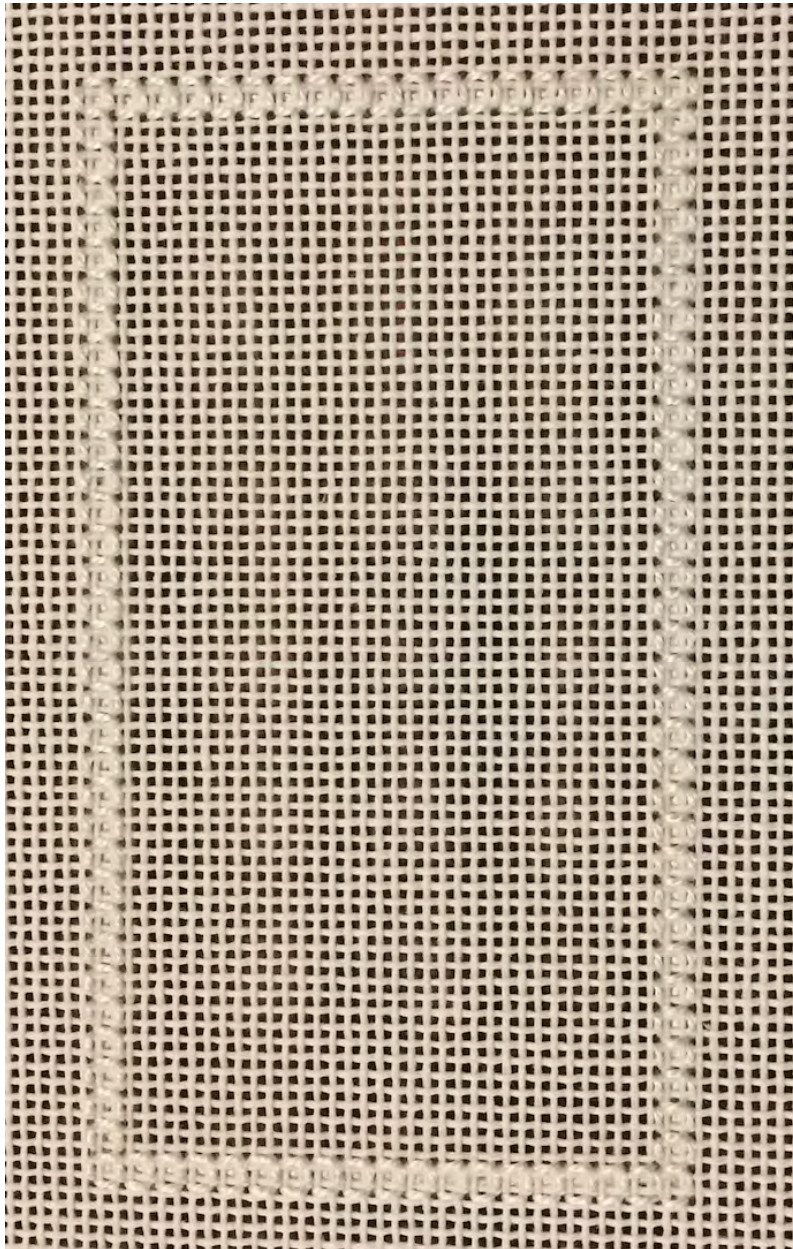
1. To begin, mount your canvas, mark the TOP and measure down about 2" from the top edge and 2" in from the left side. Begin your four-sided stitch here.
2. Stitch four-sided stitch outline in #8 pearl cotton or other thread of your choice. Do not pull the four-sided stitch. This is a complete graph of the border for Side 1. You will repeat the same border for Side 2.



Base grid is 19 four-sided stitches wide by 35 four-sided stitches tall. This translates to 38 threads wide by 70 stitches tall.

Aztec Scissors Case – Side One

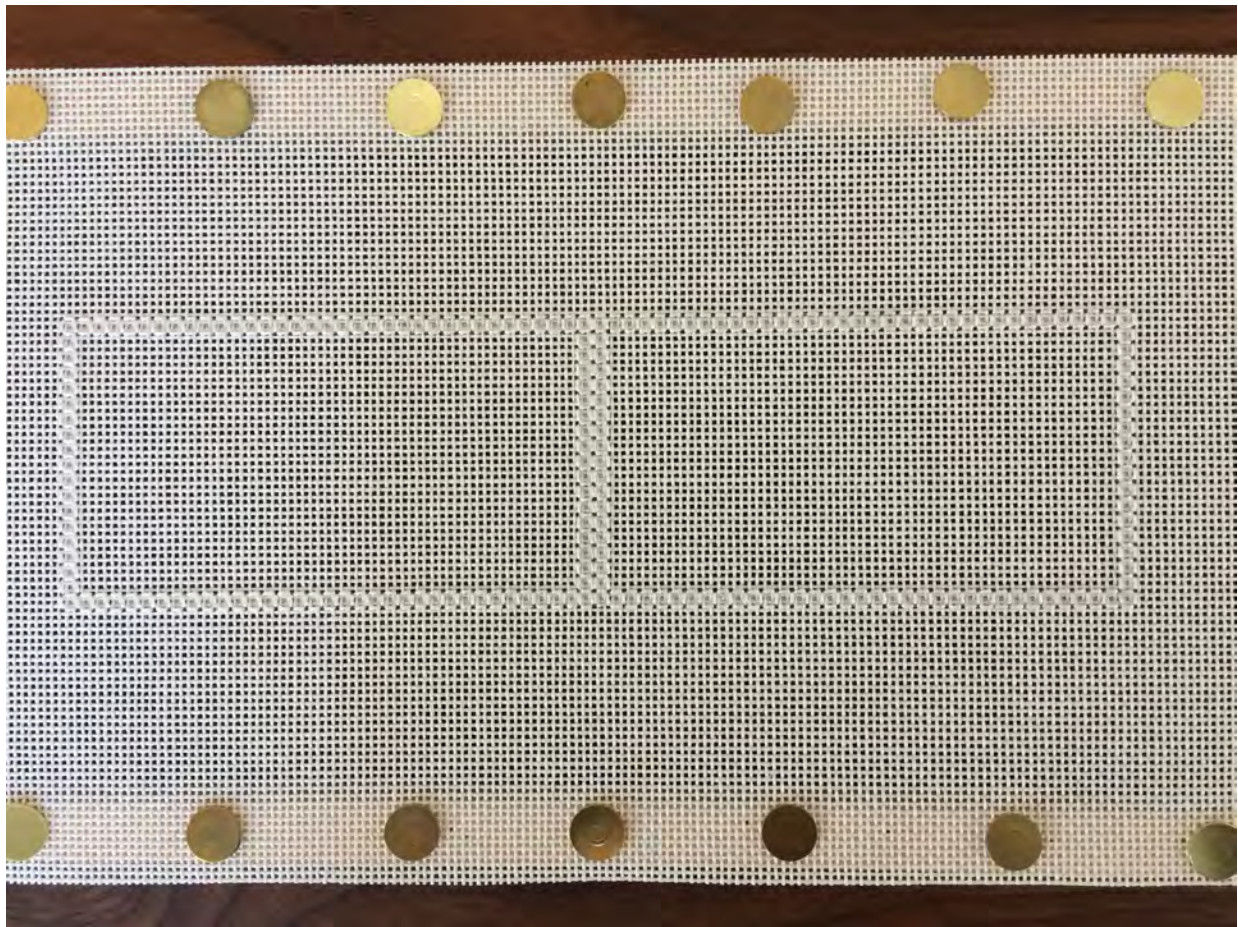
Your canvas should look like this:



Aztec Scissors Case – Side One

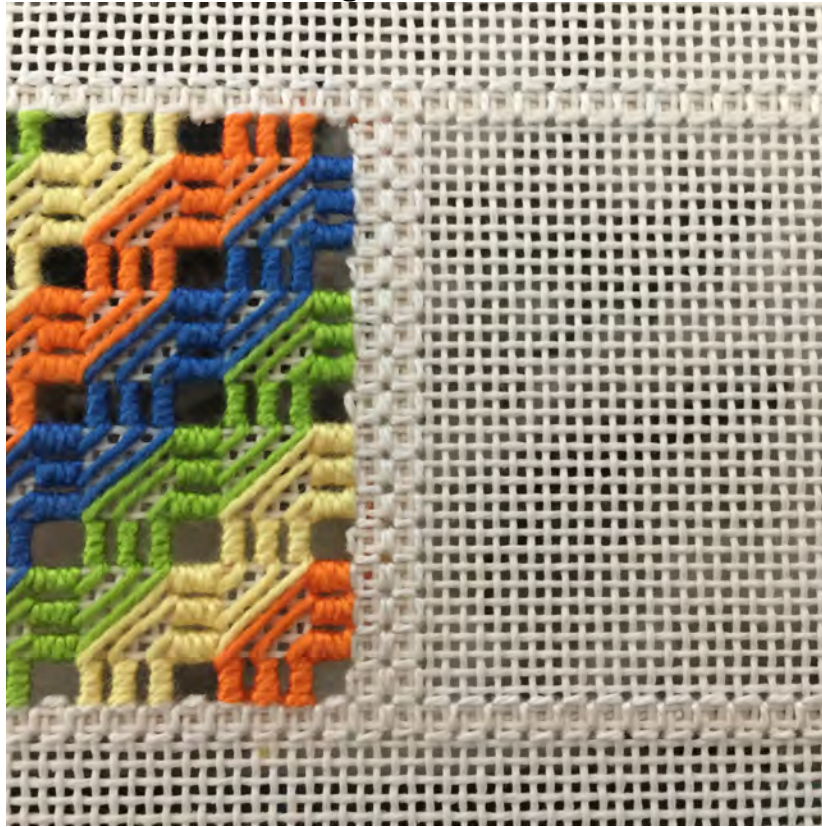
3. Stitch the second outline of four-sided stitch for the back section (Side 2), using the same graph that you did for Side 1. Note that you will have TWO ROWS of four-sided stitch in the center of your work (they share holes) and you will fold along the line between the rows to create the finished canvas. I worked a full four-sided stitch where the rows are doubled. Cease working on Side 2 until the next installment of instructions. Note that “Side 2” refers to what will be the back of the scissors case. It has NOTHING to do with the wrong side (underside) of your stitching.

Your canvas should look like this:



Aztec Scissors Case – Side One

Here's what the center looks like with the two adjacent rows of four-sided stitch. Note the doubled threads in the center. Try to get them NEXT to each other and not crossing over. This creates a neater look:

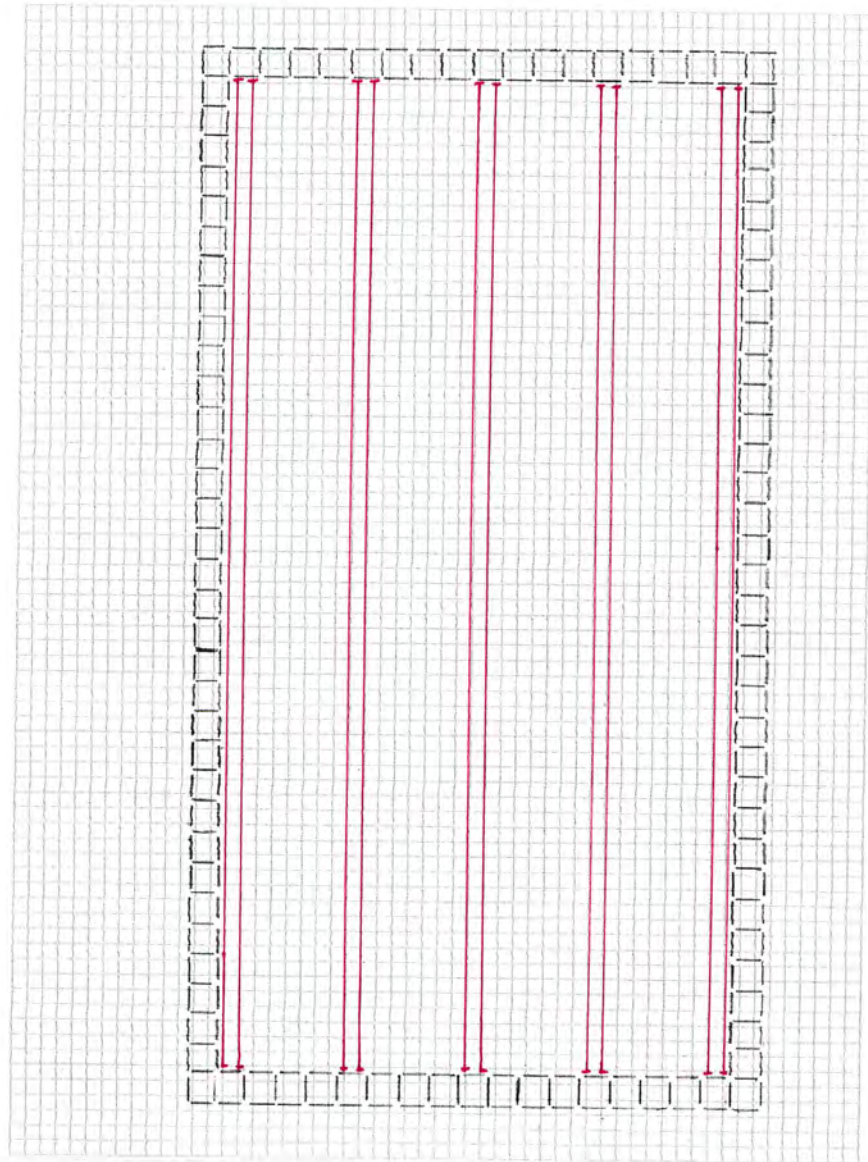


I took the picture AFTER stitching the Aztec Stitch, but this should help you visualize the center section.

You are done working on Side 2 for now. Return to the Side 1 section.

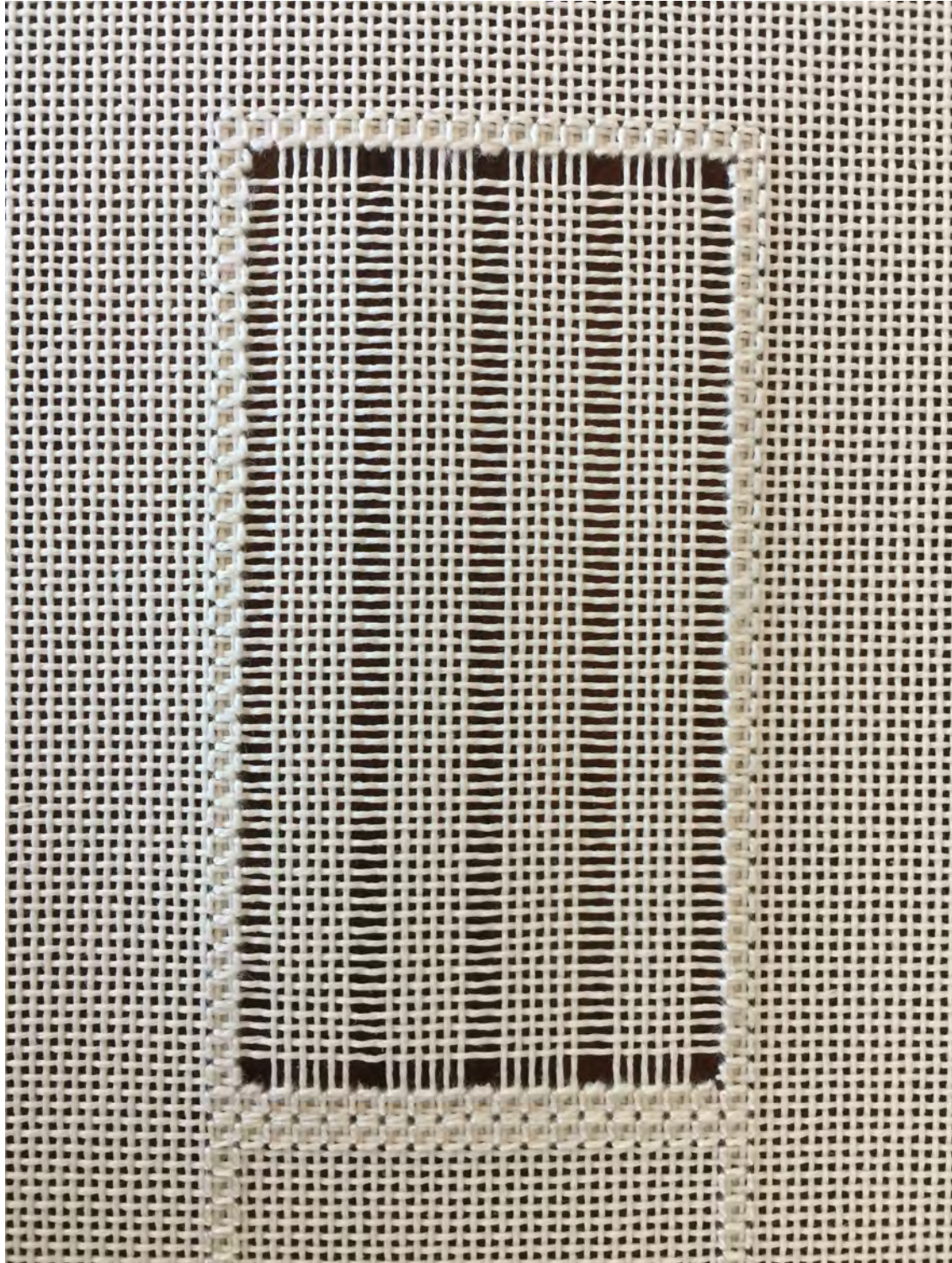
Aztec Scissors Case – Side One

4. Returning to Side 1 of the scissors case.... Cut and withdraw the vertical threads on Side One ONLY. (We'll be doing something else on Side 2.) These are the two threads next to each long border and then the other marked threads. You should have six threads remaining between each area where threads have been withdrawn. The threads to be withdrawn are shown in **RED**.



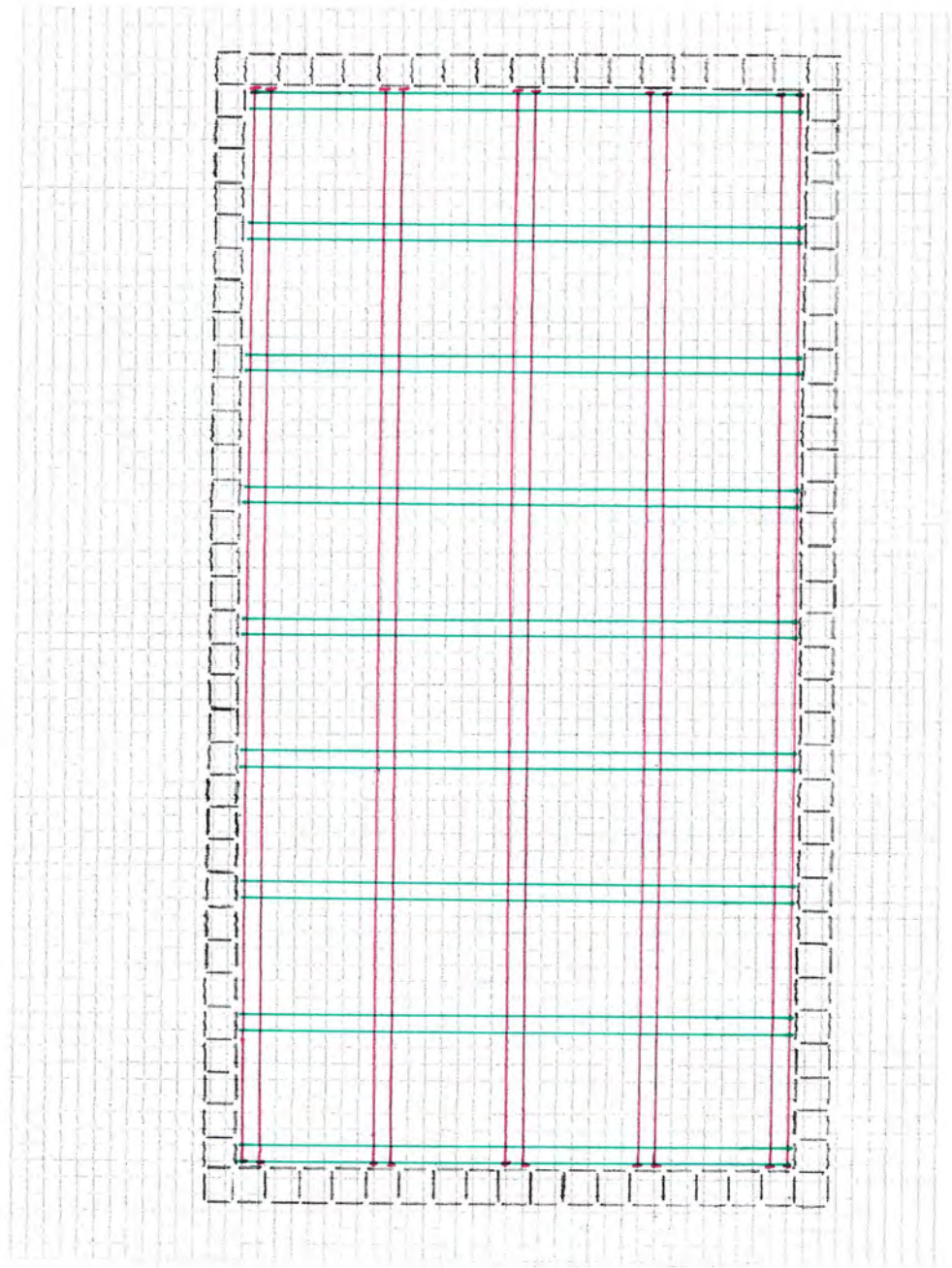
Aztec Scissors Case – Side One

Your canvas should look like almost like this. Note that this picture also shows the removal of the horizontal rows at the top and bottom of Side 1.



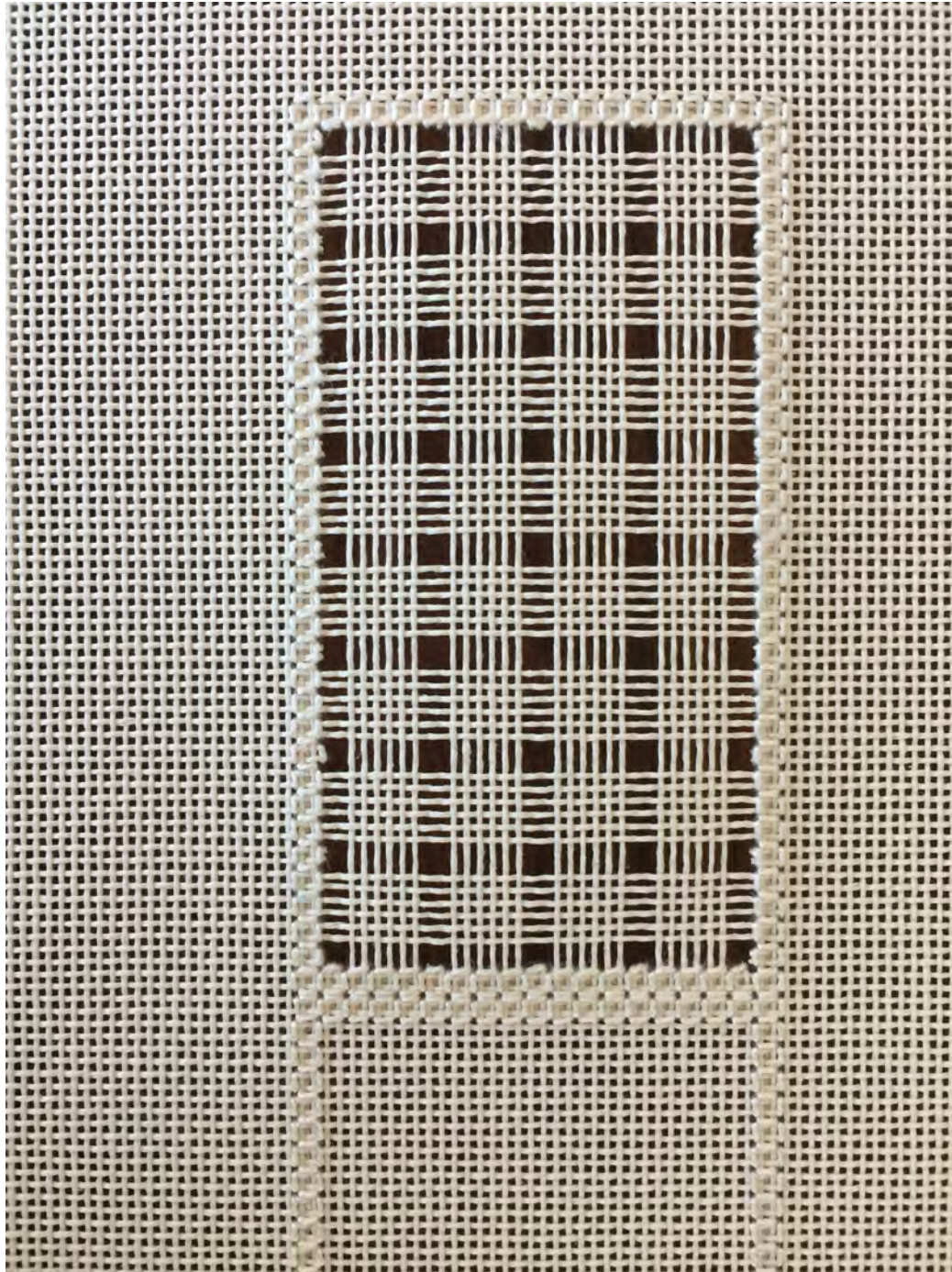
Aztec Scissors Case – Side One

5. Now we withdraw the rest of the horizontal rows on Side 1. The horizontal threads to be withdrawn are shown in **GREEN**.



Aztec Scissors Case – Side One

Your canvas should now look like this:



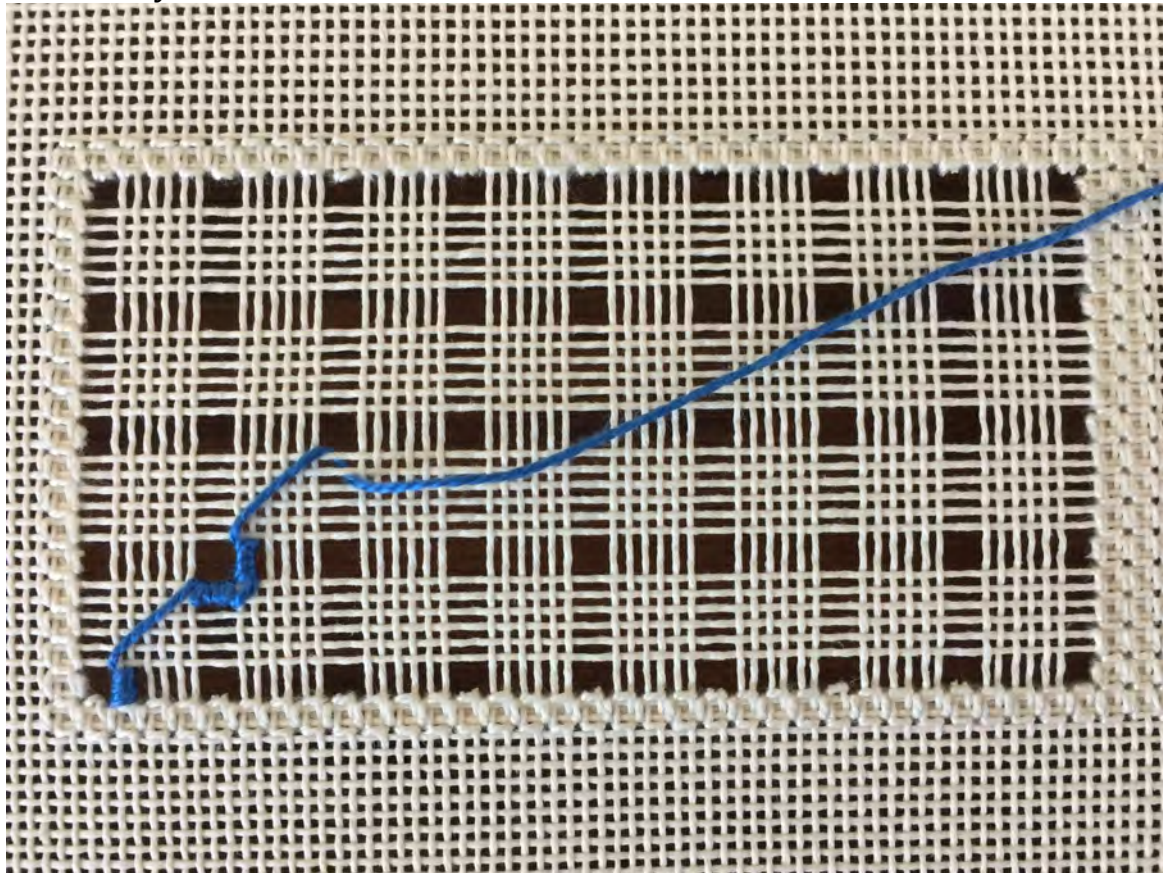
IMPORTANT NOTE: Now is the time to decide if you want to use Fray Check on your project. If you do, apply very lightly on the reverse side of your stitching. I applied it **ONLY** at the area where the four-sided stitch was next to the cut threads. You want to leave the areas between the cuts without glue so you can easily anchor your threads in the back.

Aztec Scissors Case – Side One

It's time to begin the Aztec Stitch. I used Denise Beusen's article for reference on stitch path and direction.

THREAD NOTE: I cut my pearl cotton at the knot in the skein and the resulting strands are about a yard long. This length is enough for three rows of each color. I did NOT have to begin a new thread in the middle of any row.

First, rotate your canvas 90 degrees to the left. This puts the area you marked "TOP" on your left.

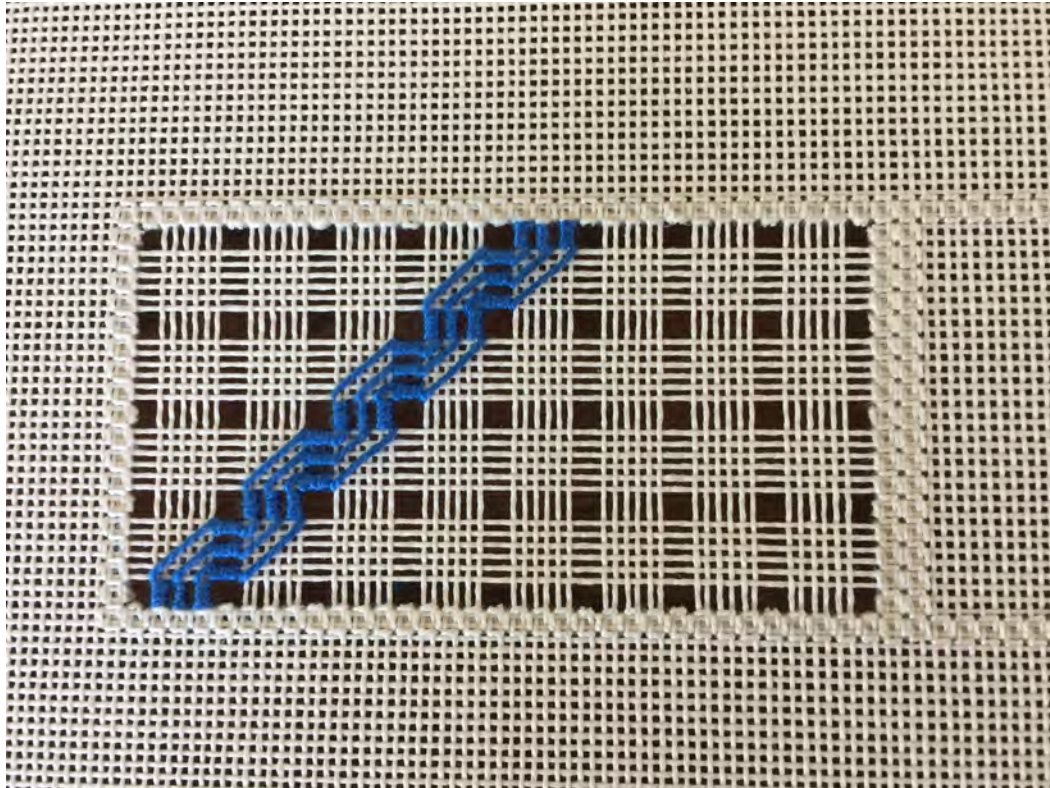


Anchor your thread in the back of the four-sided stitches. Coming up from the back and to the left of the bundle of threads in the lower left corner.

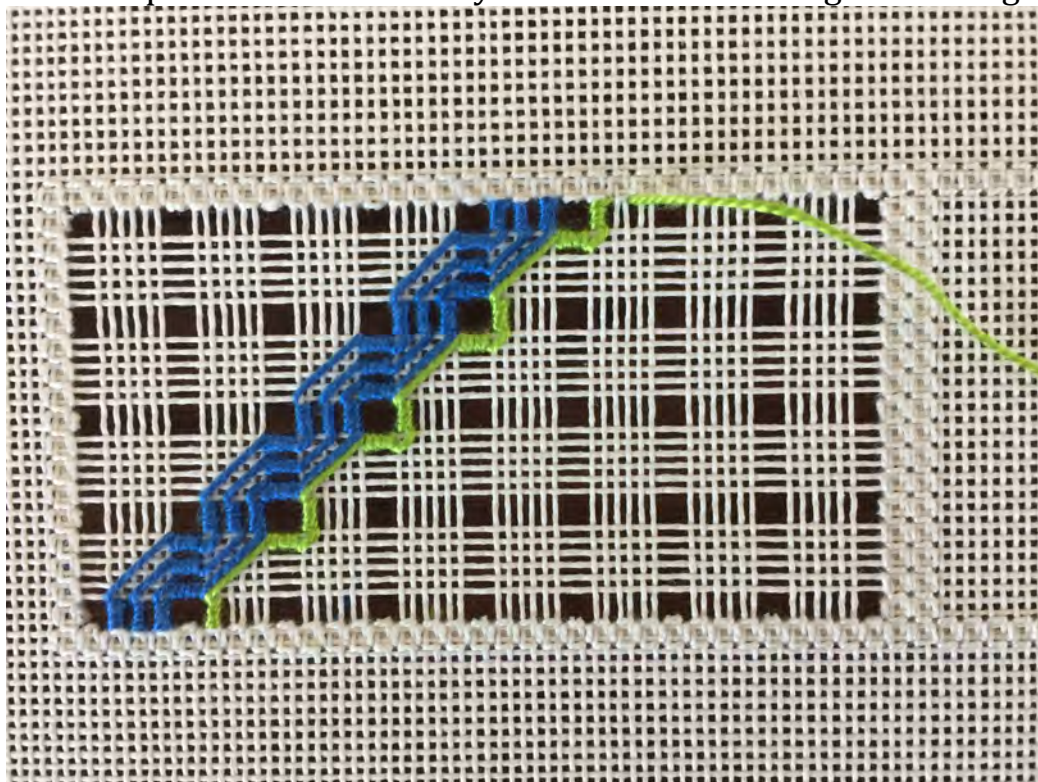
Following the graph in Denise's article, wrap your thread from left to right around the first two threads. I used four wraps. Three wraps might be sufficient, depending on your tension. You want to be consistent on the number of wraps throughout the project. Take care to "stack" your wraps so they lie neatly against each other and not crossed over each other. Continue to the top of your work to complete your first "row." Turn your canvas 180 degrees and follow the path to complete the second row. Turn your canvas again 180 degrees to complete your third row with your first color.

Aztec Scissors Case – Side One

Your canvas should look like this:

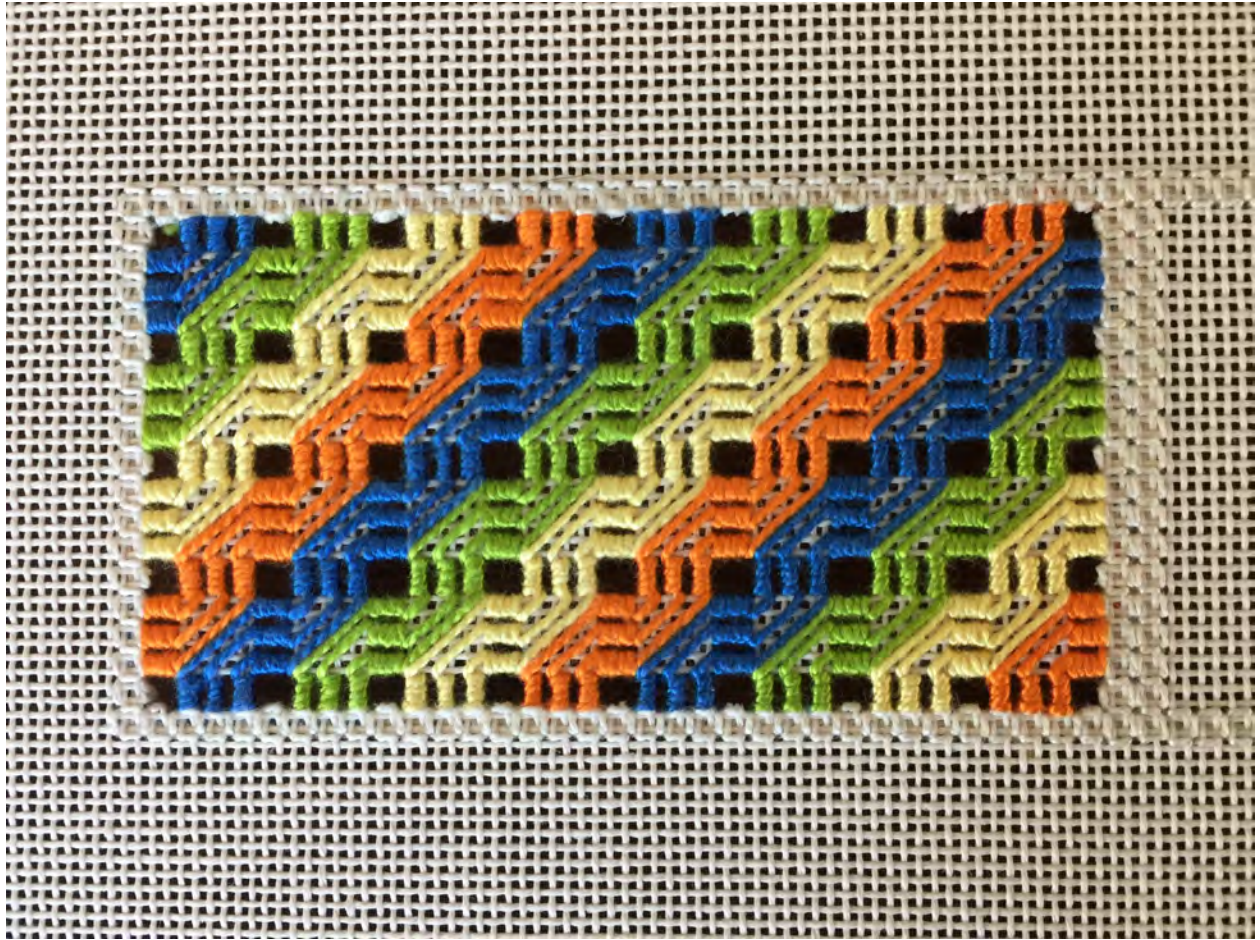


Thread up with one strand of your second color. Begin stitching:



Aztec Scissors Case – Side One

Continue to fill in the pattern, three “rows” of each color at a time. The finished Side 1 of your scissors case should look like this:



We will work on Side 2 of the Aztec Scissors Case in June.