“Just Pin It!”
A SAGA Smock-Along featuring
a Sampler of Smocking Stitches

Pins! Pins! Pins! Where is that SAGA pin?
How can I display all of my pins?

Sound familiar? Welcome to the next SAGA Smock-Along designed exclusively for SAGA members! If you are like me, we have been dealing with how to organize, display, and enjoy our various aka “numerous” SAGA pins. When I saw a friend’s pins on a scrap of old quilt hanging on her sewing room door, I immediately knew how I wanted to display my pins. Our project will be a smocked sampler of eight different intermediate smocking stitches set into a panel which you will design and create to hang in your sewing room. You may even design your project to give to a favorite sports-enthusiast who needs it for their sports pins; how about using the panel as the front of a tote bag!
“Just Pin It!” celebrates the 35th Anniversary of the SAGA Artisan Program! I hope you are an Artisan participant; if not, I hope this will encourage you to join the Artisan Program. **Note:** You do not have to be an Artisan participant to participate in the Smock-Along. This project is intended to challenge your design creativity through the use of fabrics, threads, and color. Specific stitch instructions can be supplemented with instructions from your favorite smocking book.

You will design your personal pin panel, complete with a smocked insert that will highlight and display your pins. Because of the weight of the pins, the panel will require three layers – a top border fabric, a layer of batting, and a backing fabric.

**CC = Creative Challenge**

SAGA is celebrating the 35th Anniversary of the Artisan Program. As coral is the color for 35th Anniversary, I challenge you to incorporate some coral in your project.

**Lesson #1**

CC#1: Your first CC is to decide how you want to create the panel that will border your smocked insert, i.e. a pieced-quilt top panel, a lace panel, fabric of special significance (that you have been saving for “that special project”), or perhaps a favorite sports team fabric – you get the idea – personalize it! Your fabric border colors will influence your smocking thread colors.

Decide finished size of your panel. **Note:** The smocked insert measures 9” wide x 7” long. You can design your panel to be horizontal or vertical. Borders should be an appropriate width to accommodate all those lovely pins you will display.

**Supplies**

Top Border Fabric/s: Size, texture, weight to coordinate with and highlight smocked insert and work well with a layer of batting and backing. This is a great opportunity to show your skills with design, color, fabric selection, laces; perhaps you have some treasured heirloom fabrics/laces that you want to use – do it! **Note:** If you make a lace border panel, you will need a layer of fabric to back the lace panel – between the lace panel and batting; a great opportunity to play with color!

Smocked Insert: One piece (10” long x 45” wide) torn or cut on grain. Cotton broadcloth or quilters’ cotton will give firmness to your pleats, support the stitches well, and support the weight of the pins (yes, there will be places for your pins in the smocked insert). A solid color or very fine print will show off your smocking stitches.
**Backing Fabric:** A cotton broadcloth/quilters’ cotton the size of your finished front panel PLUS two inches around to accommodate the quilting. If your front panel measures 16” x 18”, you will need a backing piece 20” x 22”.

Have some fun with this – use a fun sewing-theme fabric!

**Batting:** Same size as Backing Fabric.

**CC #2: Thread:** You may use thread/floss of your creative choice. Be creative! Use a new-to-you smocking thread (if you haven’t used silk thread for smocking, this is a great time to try it!). The eight different stitches will require different numbers of thread colors for each block – one, two, three, and one stitch will require six color changes. This is a great opportunity to challenge your use of shading and contrasting colors. You will also need one or two soft colors for the sampler “borders” (both horizontal and vertical) that will separate the nine blocks and frame the insert.

When choosing a variety of thread colors, “debut” them, i.e. hold the skeins in a bunch (like a bouquet of flowers) and look at them – it should be “pleasing.” If a color/shade doesn’t look right with the other colors, change it. Lay them on your pleated piece; pull out three strands and lay it across the pleated piece – does it have the affect you want? Have fun with color – I used ten different colors on my sampler.

**Needles:** Appropriate to your thread. I like a #7 crewel for smocking with three strands DMC floss; use needle/s appropriate to the thread you use.

**Reference Books:** If you are not familiar with intermediate smocking stitches, you will want a reference book. (I use “A – Z of Smocking” by Country Bumpkin Publications.) The SAGA website – under Education – lists excellent Bibliographies and our many SAGA Business Members can assist you with your needs.

**Pleating**

A 10-inch long piece of fabric will pleat 24 rows. The actual smocking design consists of 19 smocked rows; you will have five extra rows as holding rows.
We are going to pleat our insert for minimal counting and marking. You will need two colors of pleating thread (I used red and navy on my white insert fabric).

Thread pleater as follows:

Rows 1, 2, 22, 23, and 24 (holding rows) – Red thread or thread to match fabric
Rows 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; 10, 11, 12, 13, 14; 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 – Red thread
Rows 3, 9, 15, and 21 – Blue thread

Pleat the entire 45” width. Leave pleating threads long enough to spread pleats to a comfortable smocking width and allow for tying off on both ends (wait to tie off sides).

A 45-inch width of cotton fabric should yield 180-188 pleats; count to be sure. Our design is nine blocks for smocking stitches plus borders that will “frame” the blocks. For 188 pleats, count, insert a pin, as follows:

Count 14* pleats; place pin
Count 8 pleats; place pin
Continue counting and placing a pin: 42 pleats, 8 – 46 – 8 – 40 – 8 – 14* pleats = 188 pleats. *If you do not have 188 pleats, make adjustments in the beginning and ending 14 pleats.

Once you have the spacing marked evenly, i.e. centered horizontally: Remove pleating threads from beginning and ending 14 (or adjusted number of) pleats – you will have approximately 3” on each side; tie off the 160 pleats to comfortable smocking width (approximately 8 to 9 inches). Run a contrasting long hand-basting stitch (double thread) along each pin-marked pleat from Row 1 to Row 24.

Use an erasable fabric marker, i.e. Frixion or Styla, and label each row: H, H, 1 thru 19, H, H, H.
You should now have a lovely nine-square sampler piece “marked” with vertical hand-basting threads and horizontal blue (or contrasting) pleating threads on labeled smocking Rows 1, 7, 13, and 19.

Looking at it horizontally, you have: 3” flat left side border; 8 pleats side frame; 42 pleats column one; 8 pleats; 46 pleats column two; 8 pleats; 40 pleats column three; 8 pleats; 3” flat right side border.

Looking at it vertically, you have seam allowance, two holding rows, Row 1 blue; Rows 2 – 6 red; Row 7 blue; Rows 8 – 12 red; Row 13 blue; Rows 14 – 18 red; Row 19 blue; three holding rows, seam allowance.

Your piece is pleated, tied off, and spacing marked for nine smocking blocks plus borders. Gather your needles and threads and be ready to start smocking in the next lesson!
“Just Pin It!”

A SAGA Smock-Along featuring a Sampler of Smocking Stitches

Come Smock-Along with Me!

Lesson #2

We will first smock our borders and backsmocking. Labeled smocking rows are numbered 1 thru 19; top and bottom holding rows are marked with an “H” and are not referred to during the smocking process.

**Horizontal Borders**

**CC#3:** Choose “framing” colors that are soft, divide the nine blocks, and do not compete with your smocking blocks.

Rows 1 and 19: Wheat Stitch
Rows 7 and 13: Outline Stitch

Color 1: Row 1A: Outline Stitch
Color 2: Row 1B: Stem stitch; butted together
Color 2: Row 19A: Outline Stitch  
Color 1: Row 19B: Stem Stitch

Color 2: Rows 7 and 13: Outline or Stem stitch – Starting on Pleat 9 and ending on Pleat 152 (do not stitch in the first or last 8-pleat column)

I used two soft colors of green (DMC #926 and #927) for my borders. Think of a picture mat – it is between the picture and the frame. That is the purpose of our border rows – you want the blocks softly divided with the attention drawn to the smocked blocks.

Sampler is now framed and blocks divided horizontally with smocked rows and vertically marked with hand basting threads.

**Vertical Borders**

First column of 8 pleats: One-pleat wave stitch. I found this stitch on a piece of scrap pleating. Apparently, I had tested it and then never did anything with it. I like it for “framing” purposes.

Color 1: Row 1 just below Wheat Stitch, Pleats 1 and 2: Up cable; bring needle out on left side of Pleat 1. Come down ½ space in Pleat 1; continue wave stitch down to Row 19 taking a ½ space and always staying in Pleat #1; down cable in Pleats 1 and 2. Do not flip fabric; work back up column from Row 19 (taking ½ spaces) on Pleat 2 to Row 1; take needle down on right side of Pleat 2; tie off on back.

You should have what looks like a chevron in Pleats 1 and 2 (the wave stitches “wrap” the pleats).

Repeat at end of row on last two pleats.

Color 2: Middle two columns of 8 pleats: Work one-pleat wave stitch on center two pleats from:

- Rows 2 to 6
- Rows 8 to 12
- Rows 14 to 18
Backsmock Columns: On back side of insert, starting at Row 2, using two strands thread the color of your fabric, backsmock each of the four 8-pleat columns moving vertically down to Row 18.

We now have a pleated sampler, counted in columns, marked vertically and horizontally with our beautiful inner and outer borders – ready to fill in with smocking stitches!
“Just Pin It!”

A SAGA Smock-Along featuring a Sampler of Smocking Stitches

Lesson #3

The nine smocking blocks will be labeled/referred to as follows:

1 – 2 – 3
4 – 5 – 6
7 – 8 – 9

Note: References to pleating row numbers for each row of blocks will be as previously labeled, i.e. Rows 2 to 6, 8 to 12, and 14 to 18

Bargello Smocking
Block #2 (center top row; Rows 2 to 6)

CC #4: Select six shades of your favorite color to highlight lovely color waves.
Spacing for Bargello should accommodate five rows of smocking between each two pleating rows; smocking rows of stitches stack next to each other.

Color 1 – Row 2A (46 pleats): Begin with down cable; cable across 46 pleats
Color 1 – Row 6A (46 pleats): Begin with up cable; cable cross 46 pleats

Color 2 – Up cable – work 9 cables; wave stitch to Row 3; down cable; wave stitch up to Row 2; 9 cables; continue for 46 pleats – you should have 4 sets of 9 cables between Rows 2 and 3.
Color 3 – 7 cables; wave down; 3 cables; wave up; repeat across row
Color 4 – 5 cables; wave down; 5 cables; wave up; repeat across row
Color 5 – 3 cables; wave down; 7 cables; wave up; repeat across row
Color 6 – 1 cable; wave down; 9 cables; wave up; repeat across row
The lower 9 cables (light color) should be resting at Row 4.

Note: I found it easier to begin each row (Colors 3 thru 6) at the diamond: leave a tail of thread long enough to accommodate going back and completing the half diamonds at the beginning of the row. It is easier to get spacing even and correct.

Rows 6 to 4 are a reversal of above Rows. The two rows of 9 light color cables should meet at Row 4.

Bargello Smocking completed yields a beautiful band of shaded color!
Plaid Smocking
Block #8 (center bottom row; Rows 14 to 18)

Choose three colors. For inspiration, peruse your favorite piece of plaid fabric. Plaid smocking is three rows of: “cable, 9-step wave,” to create the top half of the plaid; reverse to create bottom half of plaid. This block has 46 pleats and will yield one complete plaid diamond in the middle and a plaid half-diamond on each side.

**Note:** Color 3 (the top color) will be centered.

Color 1 (Blue on my sampler): Rows 14 to 16: Just below Row 14: 8 steps down to Row 16; down cable; 9 steps up to Row 14; up cable; 9 steps down to Row 16; down cable; 9 steps up to Row 14; up cable; 6 steps down to just below Row 15.

**Note:** all 6 smocked rows will end on Pleat 46 (photo next page).

Rows 18 to 16: Reverse to complete diamond.

Color 2: (Purple on my sampler): Rows 14 to 16: Leave a tail long enough to go back and complete 6 steps back to Pleat 1; come up in pleat 7; top cable (pleats 7&8); 9 steps down to Row 16; down cable; 9 steps up to Row 14; 9 steps down to Row 16; down cable; 8 steps up to Row 14. (Notice where the Color 2 stitches cross over the Color 1 stitches.)

Rows 18 to 16: Reverse to complete diamond.

Color 3: (Red on my sampler): Rows 14 to 16: Just below Row 14: 2 steps up to Row 14; top cable (pleats 3&4); 9 steps down to Row 16; bottom cable, 9 steps up to Row 14; cable (should be evenly spaced between Colors 1 and 2 cables); 9 steps down to Row 16; down cable; 9 steps up to Row 14; up cable; 2 steps down.

Rows 18 to 16: Reverse to complete diamond. (Photo next page)
The Color 3 diamond will be centered in the 46 pleats; the beginning and ending of the rows will match. The Color 1 and Color 2 diamonds are not centered; therefore, the sides will end differently; not to worry – you can put a pin in those two spots.

Block #4

Crossover Smocking (center left column; Rows 8 to 12)

Color 1: Row 10 up to Row 8: Down cable, half-space wave up to Row 9-½; up cable; wave down to Row 10; down cable; 3-step wave up to Row 9; up cable; 3-step wave down to Row 10; down cable; repeat across row. Reverse on Rows 10 to 11; Seven diamonds completed.
Color 2 (Crossover) Row 9-1/3; 2 steps down to Row 10 (crossing over Color 1); down cable; 5 steps up to Row 8; up cable; 5 steps down to Row 10; down cable; repeat to complete 42 stitches. Reverse to complete diamonds.

Color 2 crosses over Color 1 at the small diamonds – how pretty! Crossover smocking can be worked on all kinds of waves/steps stitches – be creative!

So, which three pins will go in this block?
Lesson #4

Block #3
Diagonal Smocking (top right column; Rows 2 to 6)

This lovely stitch will be worked as four separate rows (of one color) over 40 pleats.

One Color: Row 2 Pleats 1 & 2:
Up cable; wave one full space down to Row 3; up cable; wave one full space down to Row 4; repeat down to Row 5 then down to Row 6.

Turn upside down; cable next two pleats; wave down one full space to Row 5; repeat down to Row 2; flip; repeat and continue to end of each row.

You are always moving diagonally (via the next pleat) and down to the next row. You can tie off at the end of each row; or, you can flip the fabric and keep going. All rows should end on Pleat 40.
Fill in the beginning of Rows 3, 4, 5, 6 and end of Rows 2, 3, 4 to complete the block.

We have completed at least one block in each column – your spacing is established both horizontally and vertically.
Block #1
Cable-Wave Combination (top left column; Rows 2 to 6)

One Color: Row 2-½A: Up cable; down cable; ½-space wave up to Row 2; 3 cables, ½-space wave down to Row 2-½; 3 cables; repeat to complete row.

Row 2-½B: Reverse down to Row 3

Rows 3 to 6: repeat rows of diamonds; matching cables form 6-cable flowerettes and wave stitches create lovely diamonds – lots of spaces to pin your pins!

---

Block #9
Herringbone Stitch (bottom right column; Rows 14 to 18)

This stitch uses a new pleat and an old pleat. It gives wonderful coverage, and four rows of Herringbone will create a lovely band of color on our sampler.

One Color: Row 14: Come up in valley between Pleats 1 and 2. Needle moves right to left – go back thru pleat 1 to left side of pleat 1. Move down (thread above needle) to Row 15; take needle thru Pleats 2 and 1; thread below needle, move up to Row 14; take thread thru Pleats 3 and 2. Repeat across row always taking a new pleat and an old pleat. End row on Pleat 40.

Repeat for Rows 15 to 16
16 to 17
17 to 18
Lesson #5

Block #7
Raised Lattice (bottom left column; Rows 14 to 18)

Color 1: Row 15: Down cable; work a one-step full-space wave up to Row 14; up cable; wave back down to Row 15; down cable; repeat across row to Pleat 42. Repeat on Rows 16 to 15; 17 to 16; and 18 to 17.
Color 2: Use either a tapestry needle (blunt tip) or the eye of your smocking needle to “weave” Color 2 in the wave stitches. Going up, Color 2 is under the wave stitch; cross over Color 1; going down Color 2 is under wave stitch. You are not catching any fabric – you are merely weaving Color 2 thru Color 1 stitches.

The trick to this stitch is your tension; don’t be too tight, yet don’t let it loop. Tie off at the end of each row; do not try to flip fabric to continue weaving.
Block #6
Alternating Cable (middle right column)

Color 1: Rows 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12: Beginning with down cable, work cable across 40 pleats.

Color 2: Beginning with up cable (below the first down cable), work 3 cables (see the two-color flowerette). Take needle to back; above the cable row come up in same pleat and work 3 cables (creates second flowerette). Continue working 3 cables, going up and down across the cable row to form a lovely picot.
Block #5
Backsmocking (center middle row)

CC#5 – Block #5 is your design. Backsmock the entire block – this will give you a lot of room for pins. Remember that backsmocking will give a “shadow” effect on the front – so use it to your advantage! You can smock waves, diamonds, cable stitch etc. on the back. Depending on your fabric, if you choose a dark thread, it can “show thru” to the front and give a very nice affect.

Have fun with backsmocking!

You may choose to smock your initial/s in the middle block. If your project will be a gift, placing an initial in the middle block will personalize it beautifully.

What a lovely sampler of smocking stitches! Wasn’t it fun to work these small patches of stitching! You can play with color combinations while trying new stitches and if you don’t like something, it can be redone with little effort.
Lesson #6

Designing the Panel Borders

As you were smocking, have you been thinking about:

- How many pins do I have that I want to display?
- What size should my finished panel be?
- Do I want to hang it in my sewing room?
- What about using it for the front of a tote bag (that I will take to SAGA activities)?
- Will I give it as a gift? To a sports enthusiast?

Things to consider when designing the finished panel:

- The pins will be heavy and will need support.
- You will need three layers that include an inner layer of batting.
- The batting will require some sort of quilting stitches, tied threads; something to hold the three layers together.
· Finishing outer edges: Bind (like a quilt); apply piping to the edges and finish by sewing rights sides together and turn; add a beautiful lace edging.

· Piping above Row 1, below Row 19, and down the sides gives a very professional touch.

**Finishing Touches**

Remove pleating and basting threads. Pin insert to ironing board; steam to set pleats.

Using your favorite method, make and apply piping to sides edges, above top smocking row, and below bottom row.

Apply top and bottom borders; then apply side borders. At this point, make sure you like the border widths – if they are too large, trim them down. Press panel.

Mark top panel for quilting as desired. The weight of the pins creates the need to use and secure three layers including batting. **Note:** First mark a row of stitching (¼” to ½”) around insert. Then mark remaining quilting lines.

Backing and batting pieces should extend 1” to 2” on each side (to allow for the quilting).
Place backing piece right side down on working surface; add batting; add your beautiful smocked insert panel. Pin and quilt/tie as marked.

**CC#6:** Be creative with your quilting, tacking, or whatever method you use to secure the three layers together. Use some fun decorative thread; be funky!

Finish outer edge – add piping and/or a lace edging – be creative! Bind it like you would bind a quilt. Don’t forget the loops (on the back) to hang it.

Did you decide to use it as the front of a tote bag? Wouldn’t that be a great way to take your pins to classes and SAGA events!
I hope you have enjoyed creating your “Just Pin It!” panel. I really enjoyed designing it for you and watching your progress on the Smock-Along Facebook page. Thank you for participating.

If you are coming to the SAGA Convention in Winston-Salem, September 18 – 23, 2018, please bring your project (it need not be finished) or send it along for a special display.

**SAGA Artisan Program Participation**

SAGA Artisan participants: There are two options to document and verify your participation in the “Just Pin It!” Smock-Along in order to earn two points onto your Artisan card:

- I will sign Artisan cards at the Salem-Winston Convention, September 18-23, 2018. Please bring your card and your project with the smocking completed.

- Post a picture of your project, with the smocking completed, before October 15, 2018, to the Smock-Along Facebook page. Make sure that I respond to it. At the end of October you will receive an acknowledgement email from SAGA which you may attach to your Artisan card as verification.

**Note:** Verification for this Smock-Along cannot be accepted after October 15, 2018.