Understanding Stacked Cables—Right Hand

Stacking cables is as simple as stitching one row of cables upon another usually while using 4-6 strands of floss (see Cable Stitch Mechanics from Week 1). Each subsequent cable row is a mirror image of the previous with the stitches of one row “kissing” the stitches of the previous row. Even though the example below may look like 4 rows, it is actually only 2.

Rather than taking just the top 1/3 of the pleat as in geometric smocking or a tiny bite like in back smocking, the needle is inserted near the bottom of the pleat for picture smocking. That way, the pleats are encased in thread, completely covering the fabric even down the sides.

Before pulling the thread snug against the fabric to finish the stitch, check that threads are separated and lying side by side. Guide the threads to the fabric surface using the tip of the needle if necessary (see below).

Use the length of the needle to push the stitches into alignment after each row (shown above).
TIP: Picture smocking has gauge just like knitting. Don’t pull too tightly or the pleats will be distorted, and the gauge will be wrong, just like knitting a sweater too tightly and having it end up long, narrow, and stiff.

**Practice figures—plate is at the end**

If you’ve never stacked cables, you might want to give these practice figures a try before moving on to the puppy plate. They progress in difficulty from 1-7. In all cases, the figures are meant to be smocked in one color. The green rows are worked from left to right with the smocking plate and the fabric right side up. The yellow rows are worked from left to right with the smocking plate upside down and the fabric upside down.

**Figure 1. Sometimes referred to as a four-cable rosette**

1. Begin with a down cable (the stitch with the asterisk), an up cable, and a down cable moving left to right (the green row). Take the needle to the back through the center valley above the last down cable.
2. Turn your work upside down; turn the plate upside down. Bring your needle up through the center valley above the center cable and finish with an up cable (the yellow row). Take the thread back down through the valley and knot on the wrong side.

**Figure 2. Sometimes referred to as a six-cable rosette**

1. Begin with an up cable (the stitch with the asterisk), a down cable, and an up cable moving left to right (the green row). Take the needle to the back through the center valley below the last up cable.
2. Turn your work upside down; turn the plate upside down. This time, bring the needle up through the central valley below the left-most stitch. Again, work an up cable, a down cable, and an up cable moving left to right (the yellow row). Take the thread back down through the valley below the last stitch and knot on the wrong side.

**Figure 3. It’s easier to work from a wide point to a narrow one if possible because you have a better idea of where the stitches should be placed.**

1. Start at the base and work eleven cable stitches beginning with a down