Alençon  A delicate, French needle-made lace with a very fine-mesh net background and a closely woven design outlined in cordonnet.

Baby Lace  A narrow lace edging or insertion.

Bars  A thread element connecting opposite sides of open areas in lace and cutwork.

Batiste  A sheer, fine woven fabric with a plain weave of cotton, cotton blends, wool, silk, rayon, or other fibers.

Battenburg Lace  Lace made with a braided tape, which is looped into a desired pattern and fastened together with fagotting stitches, spider webs, and/or buttonhole filling.

Beading  A lace or embroidered insertion, edging, or galloon, having small holes through which ribbon may be laced.

Beading  Adding beads to the threads of surface embroidery or smocking.

Bermuda Fagoting  A pulled thread and open work technique that creates a triangular trellis pattern of stitches and holes. It does not need to follow the grain of the fabric. This stitch may be used as a border, on curves or to apply lace. Also known as Point Turc, Three-Sided Stitch, Lace Stitch, or Turkish Stitch.

Bias Binding  A method of finishing raw seam allowances by enclosing the raw edge with a bias strip of fabric.

Binche Lace  A very fine cotton straight edge lace characterized by a spotted design, originally handmade in Flanders. Now made in England, France, and the United States.

Blind Hem  See Blind Stitch.

Blind Stitch  A tiny diagonal stitch hidden between two layers of fabric, picking up a single thread of the garment fabric, then picking up a thread or two of the hem or facing.

Bobbin Lace  General term describing hand-made lace made with bobbins on special lace making pillows or holders. Following a pricked pattern, pins are inserted into the lace while it is being made to keep all the thread crossings in one place until that portion is secure. Handmade Valenciennes, Binche, and Mechlin are some examples of bobbin lace.

Bound Seam  A self-enclosed seam formed by folding one seam allowance over the other, then machine- or hand-stitching it down next to the seam in the seam allowance.

Boutis  A hand-sewn form of textured needlework that produces a supple, refined, and detailed embossed effect. A type of whitework embroidery perfected in the south of France, mainly in Provence, in the 17th and 18th centuries. Boutis is a whole-cloth cording technique in which two layers of fabric are stitched together with running and backstitches in decorative patterns. Boutis is sometimes call “Broderie de Marseille/Embroidery from Marseille.”

Briar Stitch  See Feather Stitch.

Broadcloth  Closely woven fabric with a fine cross rib of cotton, cotton blends, wool, silk, or other fibers.

Broderie Anglaise  A form of white embroidery which is characterized generally by eyelet holes surrounded by overcast satin or buttonhole stitches.

Bullion Knot  Similar to French knot, but covering a length of stitches formed by wrapping the thread around the needle and passing the needle through the cloth to anchor it, creating a coiled effect.

Bullion Rose  A flower made of two or more bullion stitches.

Cambric  A soft, white closely woven cotton or linen fabric, which is pressed between rollers or plates to give a luster on the right side. Originally made in Cambrai, France.

Chain  A continuous looped embroidery stitch, which may be worked as a straight or curved line.

Challis  One of the softest fabrics made, usually with a plain weave, originally made of wool, but now of cotton, rayon and a wide variety of blends. Originally printed with Persian floral themes.

Cluny Lace  A heavy lace of cotton with a geometric design, often with radiating wheat-like or oval-shaped units.

Corded Tucks  Tucks made by encasing a length of gimp between the fold and the stitching line.

Cordonnet  Distinct, heavier thread outlines in the design of a lace. Cordonnet can also refer to a type of needlework thread as in DMC’s Cordonnet special.

Crosswise Grain  The threads across a woven fabric that run from selvage to selvage; also called filling, woof, or weft yarns.

Cutwork  Whitework embroidery with areas of the background fabric cut out. The cut out areas are edged in buttonhole stitch.

Simple cutwork: No overcast or buttonhole bars needed to hold the design together.

Renaissance cutwork: Cut out areas require unadorned bars and spider webs for support.

Richelieu cutwork: Bars decorated with picots and spider webs support the cut out areas.
Venetian (Padded) cutwork: The cut out areas are edged in a padded buttonhole stitch; likewise all accompanying surface embroidery is padded.
Reticella (Italian) cutwork: Decorative bars, spider webs, and buttonhole-filling support the cut out areas. Very little background fabric in the design, which is usually geometric in nature.

Dimity From the Greek word meaning “double thread,” dimity is a cotton lightweight woven fabric similar to lawn. It is made by weaving two or more yarns as one and separating them by areas of plain weave, giving a checkered or barred effect.

Dotted Swiss A lightweight cotton or cotton blend fabric woven of fine yarns embellished with woven, clip spot (embroidered) or flocked small dots. Background originally white with white or colored dots. Originated in St Gallen, Switzerland about 1750.

Double Binding See French Binding.

Edging That which is added to the border or which forms the edge, as lace, eyelet, or trimming added to a garment for decoration. May range from very narrow to very wide width. The lace has one straight and one decorative edge.

Embroidered Edge or Insertion A worked design usually on fine cotton batiste of varying widths.

Entredeux c-inch to ½-inch veining (usually stitched on Swiss batiste) used between two edges giving a ladder-like effect; from French word meaning “between two.”

Eyelet Lace A machine embroidered fabric trim with the look of broderie anglaise.

Fagoting the preferred spelling- (also seen as fagotting, faggotting or faggoting). A decorative looped or knotted stitch that connects two separate pieces of fabric or lace.

Feather Stitch A decorative alternating buttonhole type surface embroidery stitch loosely resembling a vine.

Fil Tiré A pulled thread (vs. drawn thread) technique usually worked on delicate fabrics. A series of squares are made by pulling groups of threads, first horizontally (forming backward “L’s”), then connecting them vertically into “squares.” Fil Tiré is used to fill areas such as the centers of flowers, butterfly wings, or baskets to give depth and dimension to embroidery. It is also known as punch stitch, point de rodi, or fagot stitch.

Filet Lace A needle-made lace formed with square meshes partially filled in to create a design; also the name given to crochet lace of similar design.

Fine Handsewing Also known as French Handsewing, French Heirloom Sewing or Heirloom Sewing. The techniques are stitched by hand and incorporate natural fabrics, French laces (these laces have header threads which can be pulled to shape the laces), Swiss embroideries (on natural fabric), and Entredeaux. The identifying techniques are stitched by hand and include one or more of the following: Rolling and Whipping, Lace to Lace, Lace to Fabric, Lace to Entredeaux, Entredeaux to Fabric, Puffing, Tucks, Pintucks, Hemstitching, Faggoting and Lace Shaping. The natural fabrics used such as cotton, linen, silk or wool are used not only for authenticity, but for ease in stitching.

Fine Machine Sewing Also known as French Handsewing by Machine, French Heirloom Sewing by machine or Heirloom Sewing by Machine. Elements include natural fibers, French Laces (these laces have header threads which can be pulled to shape laces), Swiss Embroideries (on natural fabrics), and Entredeaux. The identifying techniques are the same that are used in Fine Handsewing, but are accomplished with a sewing machine and include one or more of the following: Rolling and Whipping, Lace to Lace, Lace to Fabric, Lace to Entredeaux, Entredeaux to Fabric, Puffing, Tucks, Pintucks, Hemstitching, Faggoting and Lace Shaping.

Flat Fell Seam A self-enclosed seam allowance formed by pressing the seam allowance to one side, folding the top seam allowance over the trimmed bottom seam allowance, and then machine or hand-stitching it down to the garment. This seam and both stitching lines are visible on the outside of the garment. Pin stitching may be substituted for the second row of stitching.

Footing A fine plain lace with no decoration. It can be used as an edging or insertion. Also called Lace Tape.

French Binding A method of finishing raw seam allowances by enclosing the raw edge with doubled bias strips of fabric.

French Embroidery Dainty embroidery work using a padded satin, padded stem, or padded outline stitch. It is used to embellish fine hand- or machine-sewn garments. The design is usually of a floral nature.

French Handsewing See Fine Handsewing

French Handsewing by Machine See Fine Machine Sewing

French Heirloom Sewing See Fine Handsewing

French Heirloom Sewing by Machine See Fine Machine Sewing

French Knot A small knot on the surface of a piece of work. It is formed by wrapping the thread around the point of the needle once and then carrying the thread back to the wrong side.

French Laid Work Embroidery characterized by the use of padded, raised satin stitch motifs used at the turn of the century to embellish fine hand sewn garments. Often combined with broderie anglaise and other whitework embroidery stitches for textural contrasts.

French Seam A self-enclosed seam formed by stitching wrong sides together and stitching a second time with right sides together. This seam is usually used on lightweight fabrics and on fabrics whose cut edges fray.

Rev: A. Schindler, 2016
French Fell Seam  See French Seam.

Galloon A lace, Swiss trim or embroidery finished on both edges. May range from ⅛" to 10" in width. The finished edges usually follow the same design. Galloon lace may include beading holes down the middle and may be flat or gathered.

Growth Tucks Tucks placed in a dress during construction so they can be let out later to give the garment extra length for growing children.

Handkerchief Linen A lightweight fabric with a plain weave made from the flax plant. Handkerchief linen is similar in luster to batiste, but the flax yarns are more uneven than cotton yarns.

Hand-loomed Fabrics or trims, which are, worked on either the hand or hand-and-foot power looms.

Heirloom Sewing See Fine Handsewing

Heirloom Sewing by Machine See Fine Machine Sewing

Hem A fold of material turned, folded over, and stitched into place so as to protect a raw edge.

Hemstitch A decorative stitch made by drawing out or withdrawing threads running parallel to the hem and fastening the cross threads by stitches leaving an open work effect. It may be used as an insertion or hem finish.

Insertion A band of lace, eyelet, or embroidery with two straight edges.

Inset A band of fabric sewn between two other pieces of fabric. The band may be smocked, embroidered, appliquééd, etc.

Irish Crochet A cotton lace made by crocheting to form characteristic designs of layered rose petals and shamrocks with picot bars.

Ironing Usually referred to as the horizontal movement or gliding of the iron once it has touched the fabric. Often used to smooth the fabric or remove wrinkles or creases.

Lace A fine netting or open work fabric of linen, cotton, or silk produced by stitching, interweaving, or twisting threads in several directions to produce a porous trim.

Lace Loop An ornamental appliqué formed by shaping lace to outline a closed figure with the lace being layered or mitered where joined. Fabric behind lace may be trimmed away.

Lace Tape See Footing.

Lawn A lightweight cotton fabric with a plain weave; crisper than batiste but not as crisp as organdy.

Lazy Daisy Single unit of a chain stitch that can be used in groups to form flowers or leaves in embroidery designs.

Lengthwise Grain Refers to threads that run parallel to the selvage in a woven fabric; also know as the warp yarns.

Limerick Lace A delicate lace made by embroidering a variety of stitches on to a fine cotton net or tulle, giving it the appearance of bobbin lace made in Brussels. This lace is well suited for collars, cuffs, and medallions.

Lunéville crochet hook A wooden handle with a very fine crochet hook tip secured to it by a small screw which is used to do tambour embroidery like the point de Beauvais, and haute couture beading.

Madeira Applique A technique of attaching a secondary fabric (the applique) onto a base fabric with a Pin Stitch (also known as Point de Paris Stitch). The applique can be a shape, a geometric design or even a hem, but it is always attached with the Pin Stitch.

Malines A fine machine-made lace with an open textured diamond-shaped mesh. See Mechlin (hand version).

Mechlin A bobbin lace mesh of very fine thread. Early Mechlin lace had a six-sided mesh ground; however, present day Mechlin lace is often found with diamond-shaped ground. It is usually characterized by floral motifs with a fine cordonnet. It is lighter in weight than Alençon, not as strong as Valenciennes.

Medallion An oval or circular design resembling a medal in shape, made of lace or embroidery, and used as embellishment on a garment.

Meld To press the stitching line with steam to settle the machine stitches into the fibers of the fabric.

Mercerized Cotton and linen (fabrics and fibers) that have been treated under tension in a caustic soda solution to give them added luster, strength, and receptiveness to dyes.

Miter The diagonal 45-degree joining of two edges to form a right angle corner.

Mock French Roll A hemming technique often used to hand-finish an edge on poly-blend fabrics. A series of small stitches are taken from the fold line of the hem across the surface of the hem into the garment below the raw edge of the hem. The stitches are pulled at intervals to create a flat rolled edge.

Mock French Seam Stitch a normal seam. Trim the seam allowance to 3/8". Raw edges are turned in towards the first seam. Folded edges are stitched close to the folded edge. Looks like a slightly wider French seam but two rows of stitching are visible inside the garment.

Moiré Fabric with a waved or watered effect finish.

Motif A major design area.

Nainsook A soft finished cotton fabric similar to batiste but less transparent. It is slightly heavier and coarser than lawn.
**Needle Tatting** A type of lace made by looping and knotting threads on special needles rather than using a shuttle.

**Organdy or Organndie** A very light, sheer cotton fabric with a plain weave and a permanent finish added to give it a characteristic crispness.

**Organza** A very light, sheer stiff fabric similar to organdy but made of silk or man-made fiber yarns.

**Outline Stitch** Stitch used for stems or fine lines. Usually the thread is held above the needle on each stitch.

**Padded Satin Stitch** Satin stitch worked over one or more layers of chain stitch, satin stitch, outline stitch, or stem stitch.

**Paris Stitch** See Point De Paris.

**Picot** A looped or knotted decoration to an edging or bar.

**Picot Lace** An edging with narrow, triangular, or rounded loops along the outer edge.

**Pima Cotton** Superior grade of cotton with long fibers on average of 1 3/8” to 5/8” which produces very fine, silky, high quality fabric.

**Pin Stitch** See Point De Paris.

**Pin Tucks** Tucks made a needle's width away from the fold with a width no more than 1/16” inch.

**Piping** Used as a trim, it consists of a length of gimp or cord encased in a strip of fabric. Usually a bias strip of fabric.

**Placket** An opening at the neck, cuffs, or in the skirt of a garment.

**Point de Beauvais** Continuous chain stitch created with a tambour hook (see Lunéville crochet hook) that is directional in nature. Each adjacent row begins and ends in the same spot, going in the same direction.

**Point de Paris** A decorative stitch characterized by tiny pierced holes used to apply edging, curved lace, or Madeira appliqué. It is also used to finish a flat felled seam or as a decorative method of sewing a hem.

**Point Tiré** Variation of the basic point de chainette (chain stitch) used for such tambour embroidery techniques as Beauvais embroidery and haute couture beading done with a tambour hook. It is a pulled stitch that allows you to: make fine points and sharp edges in surface embroidery, create bundling and decorative effects in drawn work, and attach multiple beads at any given time to haute couture beading

**Point Turc** See Bermuda Fagoting.

**Pressing** Usually referred to as the movement of the iron vertically from section to section of a piece of fabric. There is no horizontal movement once the iron touches the fabric.

**Puffing** Fabric that has been rolled, whipped, and gathered and attached to entredeux on both sides. Used as an insertion.

**Pulled Thread** Tension is used when making stitches, causing the fabric to pull together. The holes made by the stitch often create the pattern.

**Ramie** A natural fiber fabric made from a nettle plant, similar in character to handkerchief linen. Ramie has more luster than linen and can be woven into fabric as fine as imported Swiss batiste.

**Released Tucks** Tucks generally used to create fullness, sewn only part way up or down the garment.

**Roll and Whip** To sew a natural fabric rolling under the raw edge and securing it with a tiny slanted stitch.

**Roll, Whip, and Gather** To sew a natural fabric by rolling under the edge, securing it with a tiny slanted stitch, and pulling the fabric along the thread to create fullness.

**Rolled Seam** Used in areas of little or no stress e.g. ruffles, puffing, doll clothes. Offset two raw edges by 1/16”, right sides together and ‘roll and whip’ the raw edges together to make the join.

**Rosettes** An ornament made of ribbons, threads, lace, etc., gathered or folded in the shape of a rose.

**Running Stitch** A basic sewing stitch. Small forward-moving stitches taken by evenly weaving the needle in and out of the fabric.

**Satin Stitch** Side-by-side straight stitch solidly covering a given motif.

**Selvage or Selvedge** The tightly woven edge on each side of a fabric. The word means “self-edge” (i.e. its own edge).

**Shadow Work** Embroidery generally worked on a transparent fabric so that the threads on the back create a delicate shadow effect. It may be worked from the right side using a double backstitch, or from the wrong side using a closed herringbone.

**Shell Stitch** A decorative scalloped stitch formed by making a narrow fold or hem and working a blanket stitch at intervals over the folded edge. Each blanket stitch is pulled firmly to form the scallop.

**Shell Tuck** A decorative tuck secured by stitching the shell stitch over the folded edge.

**Single Binding** See Bias Binding.

**Slip Stitch** A tiny durable stitch suitable for the folded hem edge in which the threaded needle is slipped through the fold of the hem edge. Then the needle picks up a thread of the underneath fabric.

**Spider Web** A “filling” embroidery stitch consisting of two or more bars worked across a circular area, then woven together at their intersection.
Stem Stitch  Stitch used for stems, outlines, or fine lines; usually the thread is held below the needle on each stitch.

Swiss Batiste  A sheer transparent fabric with a high luster which is accompanied by a special finish. The fabric is made using special grades of long fiber cotton and Swiss mercerization.

Tatting  A kind of lace made by looping and knotting a thread that is wound on a hand shuttle.

Thread Loops  Tiny fastenings for buttons created by (1) working a buttonhole stitch over anchored threads, (2) crocheting with a fine crochet hook and sewing thread, or (3) tatting. Three-Sided Stitch See Bermuda Fagoting.

Toymaker's Stitch  See Mock French Roll.

True Bias  The grain from aligning the crosswise and lengthwise grains of fabric at right angles.

Tucks  Stitched folds of fabric used for decoration or shaping.

Turkish Stitch See Bermuda Fagoting.

Valenciennes Lace (Val)  A fine cotton bobbin lace usually with a hexagonal or diamond shaped mesh background; originally made by hand and later by machine in Valenciennes, France. Most widely used lace in fine handsewing.


Voile  Lightweight sheer fabric with a plain weave and a crisp feel.

Whipped Stitch  A stitch used to hold two finished edges together. The stitch is made by inserting the threaded needle at a right angle from the back edge to the front, picking up one or two threads.

Whipped Tucks  Tucks made using an overhand whipping stitch at the fold of the fabric. This decorative “tuck” can be done in a scalloped design or worked on straight grain. It is narrower than pintucks.