



*In the Classroom
With Shannon & Jason*

SASHIKO BOOKMARK



There's something quietly powerful about a bookmark. It's small enough to disappear into your bag, but it holds the place where your story paused. This project takes that humble object and gives it the full Sashiko treatment: hand stitching that has reinforced and beautified textiles for generations.

We stitched this one on a scrap of lightweight denim, unpicked from the hem of a thrifted garment. That's not an accident. It's Textile Architecture in miniature: reclaimed fabric, given new structure and a second life. The raw, frayed edges we left in aren't a mistake either. They're part of the character. If you want yours cleaner, trim away. If you want yours a little wild, let it fray. Choice is yours.

Inside this small piece of fabric lives a full Hitomezashi pattern: stitched grid lines, then diagonals blooming into little starbursts. It looks intricate, and it is, but it's built one small, steady stitch at a time. Trust your hands and heart, and let the rhythm of the stitching carry you.



About the Technique

This bookmark is stitched using Hitomezashi, a pattern-based style of Sashiko where the stitches are placed to form a repeating design on a simple small grid. The signature look of this pattern comes from a deceptively simple rule: your stitches stop just short of every intersection, leaving a small, quiet gap where no thread crosses. That little gap is what gives the finished pattern its clean, dimensional look.

This project layers three passes of stitching, first the horizontal lines, then the vertical lines, lastly your diagonals, to build up the starburst design at the center of each grid square. Because everything is hand tensioned (no hoop required), you'll get comfortable working with a palm thimble to guide the needle through multiple layers of fabric.

Check out the video tutorial for a full walkthrough of every stitch pass.



INSTRUCTIONS

Tools and Materials

- John James Long Darner needles
- Presencia 12-weight thread
- Colonial Palm Thimble
- Roxanne Quilters Choice White Marking Pencil
- Roxanne Glue Stick
- Double-sided fusible stabilizer
- Scrap fabric of your choice (we used lightweight denim, reclaimed from a thrifted garment hem)
- Rotary cutter (a dedicated paper-cutting blade if you're trimming stabilizer)
- Iron and pressing surface

Fabric note: We love a frayed edge, so we left ours raw. If you prefer a cleaner finish, simply trim your edges neat before you begin.



Step-by-Step Instructions

Preparing Your Fabric

1. Cut 2 fabric pieces—2"×8".
2. Using your Roxanne Quilters Choice white marking pencil, draw horizontal lines ¼" apart across the entire front piece. Keep your pencil sharp for clean, precise lines.
3. Turn your fabric and draw vertical lines running perpendicular. You have a full ¼" crosshatched grid.

Tip: If your fabric is dark or your lines aren't showing up clearly, dampen the tip of your marking pencil slightly. These pencils are water soluble and will mark like a paint pencil when damp.

Getting Comfortable With Your Thimble

4. Slide the ring section of your Colonial Palm Thimble over the middle finger of your dominant hand, and pinch it snug.
5. Position the dimpled palm section in the palm of your hand. This is what you'll anchor your needle against as you stitch.
6. There's no hoop in hand Sashiko. Instead, you'll tension the fabric yourself, pinching it between your thumb and middle finger and pulling onto the needle as you work.

Threading Your Needle

7. Cut a length of Presencia 12-weight thread, roughly two yards, for a generous working length.
8. Fold the thread in half so the cut ends meet, leaving a loop at the fold.
9. Thread the loop end (not the cut ends) through the eye of your needle. This loop becomes your working tail.
10. Tie off the cut ends with a simple needle knot: lay the thread against the needle, wrap it around two or three times depending on your fabric weight, slide the wraps down snug against the needle, then pull the needle through to form a small knot.

Stitching Your First Grid Pass

11. If this is your first time working Hitomesashi, feel free to trace your stitch pattern onto the fabric first with your marking pencil. This isn't cheating. It's a smart way to keep from losing your place, especially the first time through.
12. Bring your needle up from the back, stopping just short of the first grid intersection. Take a small bite stitch, not a full stitch, then a matching small bite on the other side. This is what creates the signature open gap at the center of each intersection.
13. For this pattern, work all the vertical rows first; skip two grid lines between each stitched intersection, and repeat down the row: stitch, small bite, skip two, stitch, small bite, skip two.
14. As you tighten each stitch, smooth the fabric with your hands to check for puckering. A little snugness is good. Puckering is not.
15. When you reach the end of a row, tie off with the same needle knot method used to start, leaving about $\frac{1}{8}$ " of thread tail.
16. Repeat this same process to work all of the horizontal rows.

Adding Your Diagonal Starbursts

Once your two grid passes are complete, it's time for the fun part: the diagonals that turn this simple grid into a blooming starburst pattern.

17. Working in one direction, stitch your first set of diagonals using the same small bite technique used in your grid rows.
18. As you push your needle through multiple layers of fabric, remember to anchor the eye of the needle into the dimples of your palm thimble, then push the needle the rest of the way through. Redistribute the fabric over the thread as you go.
19. On longer rows, you may need to repeat that pinch, push, pull motion more than once to guide the needle all the way through. That's completely normal, especially as your stitch layers build up and the fabric firms up.
20. Work your first full set of diagonals, checking the back periodically to make sure nothing is puckering.
21. Turn your work and stitch a second set of diagonals running the opposite direction. Again, these should come up just past the halfway point toward center, slightly shorter than your first diagonal set, so the two sets nest together into a complete starburst.
22. Continue working diagonals in both directions until every intersection has bloomed into its own little starburst.

A note on bias: diagonal stitching runs along the bias of your fabric, which makes it more prone to puckering than your straight grid passes. Take it slow here and keep checking your tension.

23. Tie off your final diagonal stitch the same way you finished your grid rows.

Backing and Fusing

24. Trim your backing fabric to match the size of your stitched front piece.
25. Cut a piece of double-sided fusible stabilizer slightly smaller than your fabric pieces.
26. Before ironing, check your work for any loose thread ends or loops sticking out on the back. Tuck these in as needed. If a loop is overly large to tuck fully, a small dab of Roxanne Glue Stick will hold it in place while you press.
27. Press to secure and allow to cool before handling.
28. Layer your backing fabric on top and press again, following the manufacturer's instructions for your specific stabilizer. Once your work is joined, you won't see any of the stitching loops from the back at all.
29. Once cool, trim away any rough edges if you'd like a tidier look. We prefer to leave ours frayed.

Optional: Edge Stitching

If you'd like a finished edge, you can add a row of running stitches around the perimeter of your bookmark. This step is optional. Your stabilizer alone is enough to keep everything in place.

30. Bring your needle up through one of the open edges of your bookmark, just inside the border.
31. Using the same hand-tensioning method (pinch, push, pull), work a set of small, snug running stitches very close to the edge, gathering several stitches onto your needle at once before pulling through.
32. Continue all the way around the perimeter of your bookmark. The fabric will be noticeably thicker here now that all your layers are joined, so expect a little more resistance as you stitch.

Finishing Your Thread Ends Invisibly

Instead of tying a knot at the very end, we like to weave our thread tails in so they disappear completely.

33. Flip your work to the back. Take a small half-back stitch through just one layer of fabric (not all the way through to the front), following the path of your last few stitches.
34. Repeat this for three or four stitches.
35. Insert your needle back in as if coming out the other side, but instead turn the needle and run it between the layers of fabric rather than through to the front.
36. Pull the thread through, tighten slightly, and snip the tail close to the fabric. Your thread end is now secured and completely hidden.

The Final Step: Wash and Reveal

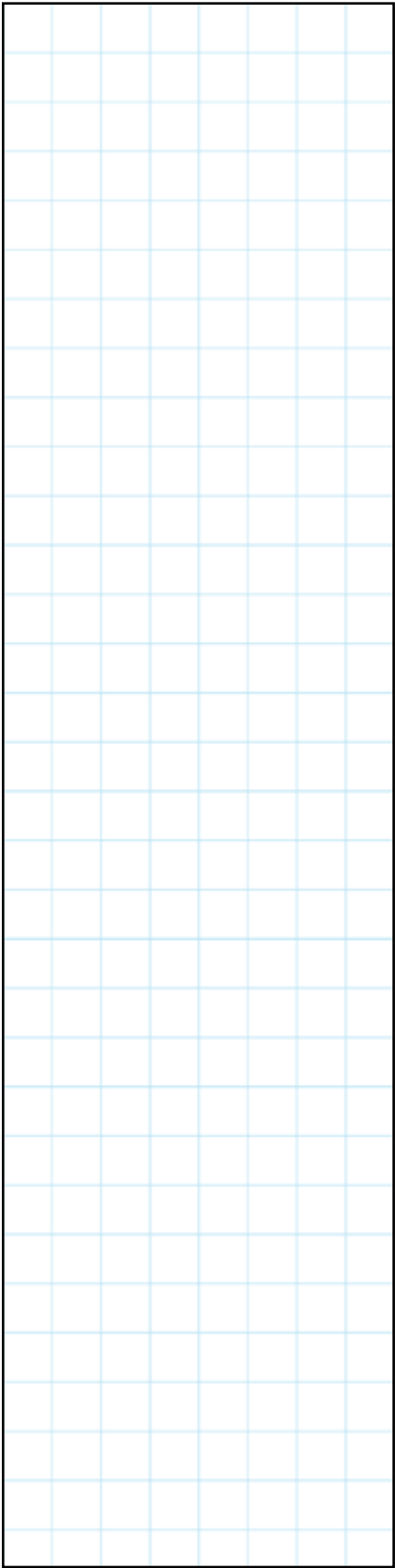
37. Gently rinse your finished bookmark to remove your marking pencil lines completely. They're water soluble and will wash right out.
38. Let it dry completely.

And that's it. Once it's dry, your grid lines will be gone entirely, your edges will have that soft, frayed character, and you'll have a sturdy, beautiful bookmark ready for your next good read.

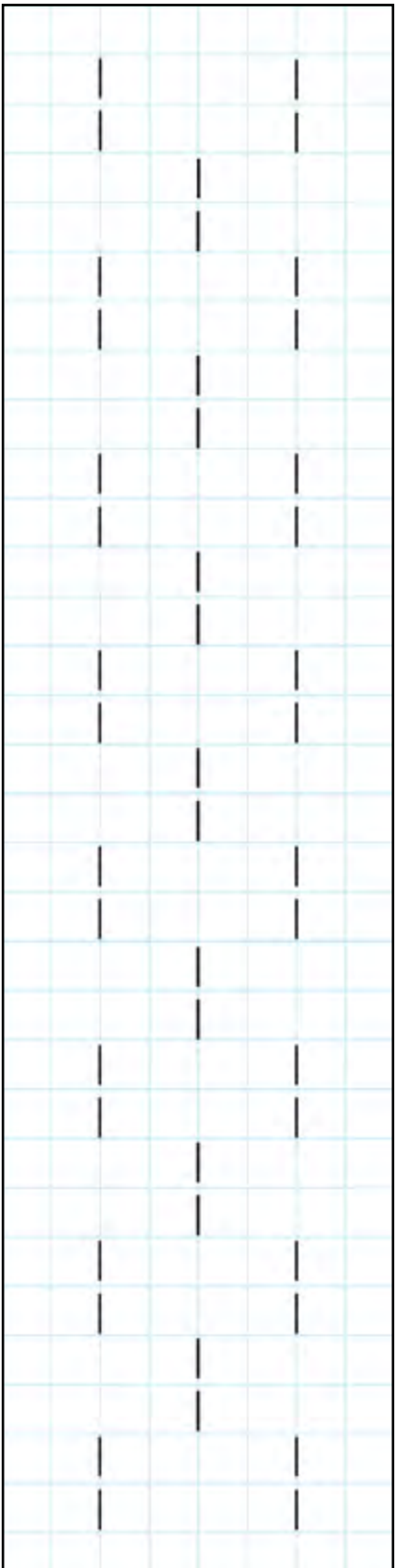
Tips for Success

- If you lose your place in the pattern, step back and look at the overall design. Sashiko is more forgiving than it looks, and small variations often just add character.
- Watch your diagonals carefully for puckering. They run on the bias, which makes them more prone to pulling than your straight grid rows.
- The fabric will firm up as your stitch layers build. This makes later passes a little more resistant, but also more stable and easier to keep from puckering.
- Prefer frayed edges like we do? Leave them raw from the start and let the wash step soften them even further.

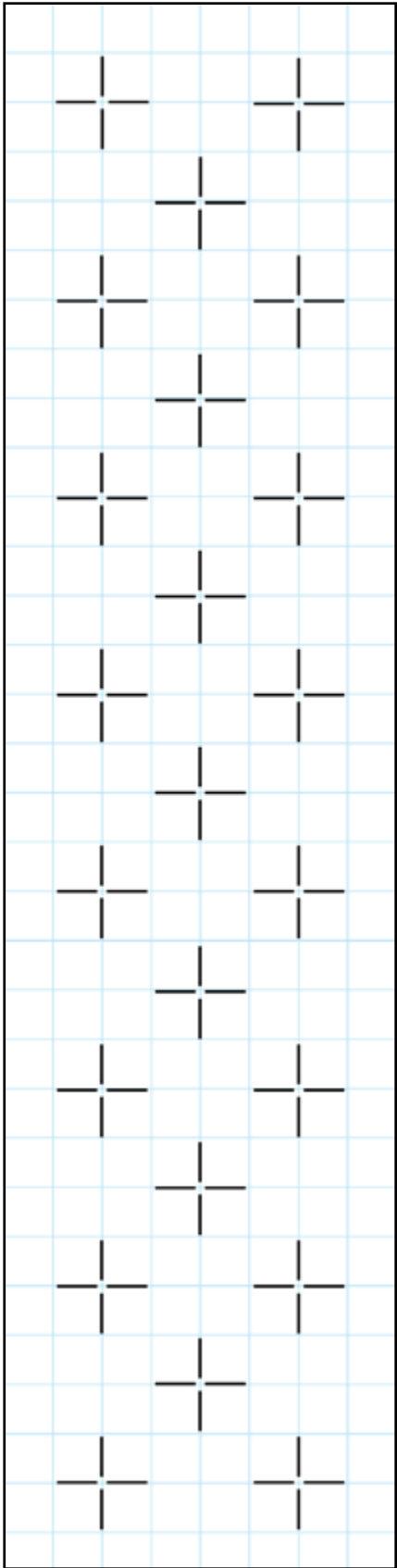
Stitch Chart



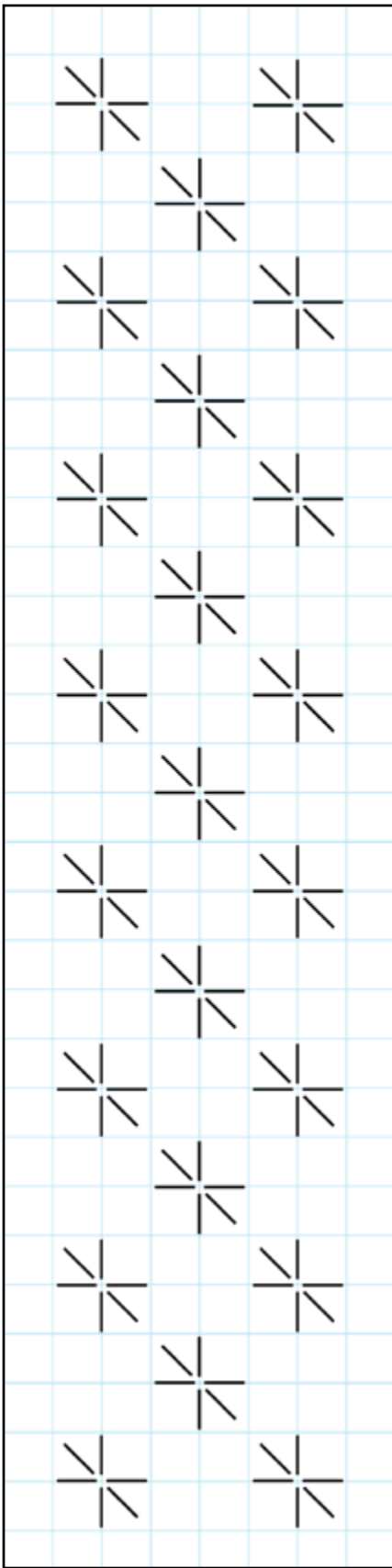
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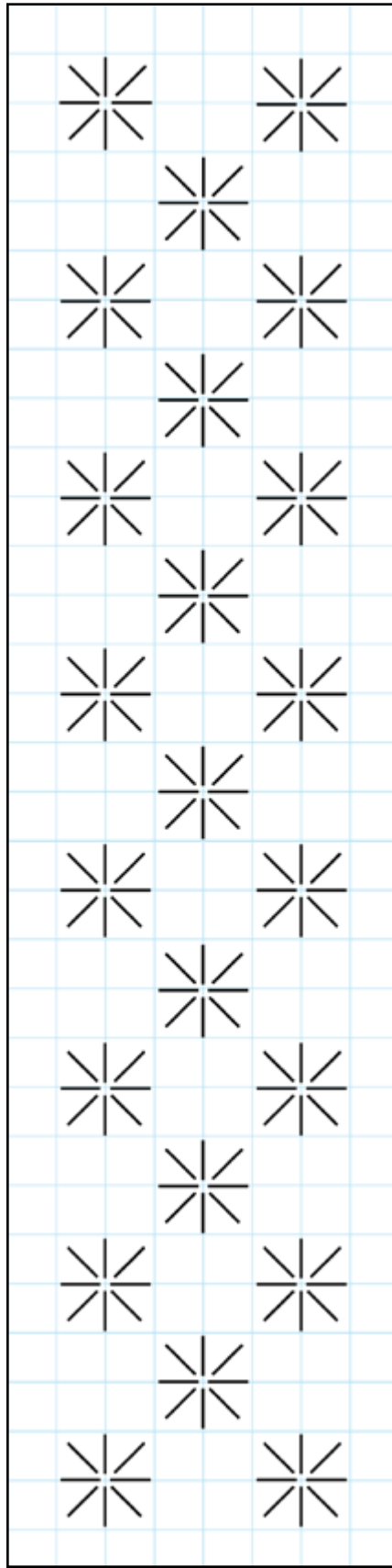
Step 2



Step 3



Step 4



Step 5



Thank you for joining us!

Our Website — [shannonandjason.com](https://www.shannonandjason.com)

For questions about anything we've covered in this course, email:

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