



# Creating Celtic Knotwork

A Fresh Approach to Traditional Design

CARI BUZIAK

Whether you're a complete beginner or have already attempted to learn the art of Celtic knotwork, this is the book for you! Artists at all levels will treasure this guide, which not only demonstrates how to duplicate patterns from a rich and varied gallery of examples but also how to take the next step to creating your own unique designs.

This newly revised edition of *Creating Celtic Knotwork* features a wealth of added material and revisions. Author Cari Buziak draws upon her extensive teaching experience to present easy-to-understand, well-illustrated instructions that explain

all the basic techniques of Celtic patterns as well as the art's meaning and history. In addition to spirals, mazes, and step patterns, the designs include dragons, hounds, and other animals as well as human forms. Exercises and tips encourage experimentation that will allow you to develop your own variations on traditional forms. Information on drawing tools, painting materials, transferring patterns, and other practical aspects will help you get started right away.

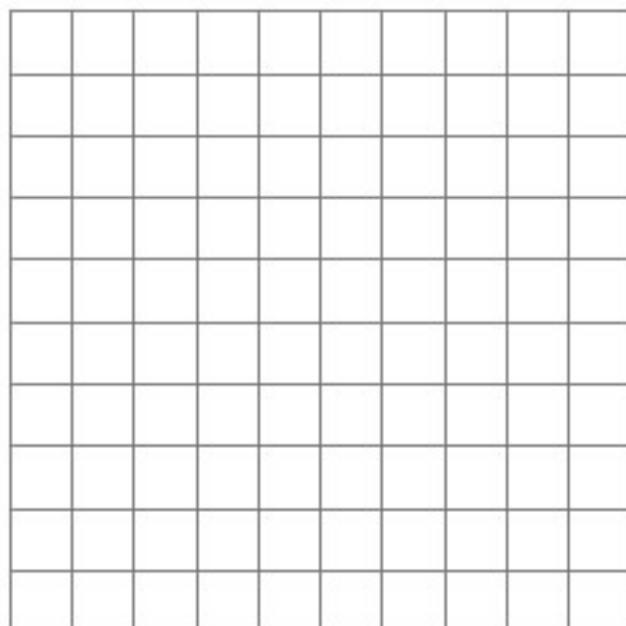
## GETTING READY...

To create Celtic knots I use a technique that's based on a gridwork of alternating big and small dots. The dots create a pattern that allows you to make new knotwork designs easily and even in shapes other than just rectangles or squares, as you'll see later in this and other chapters. This book includes a few sheets of ready-made "dot paper" for you, but to create your own is easy.

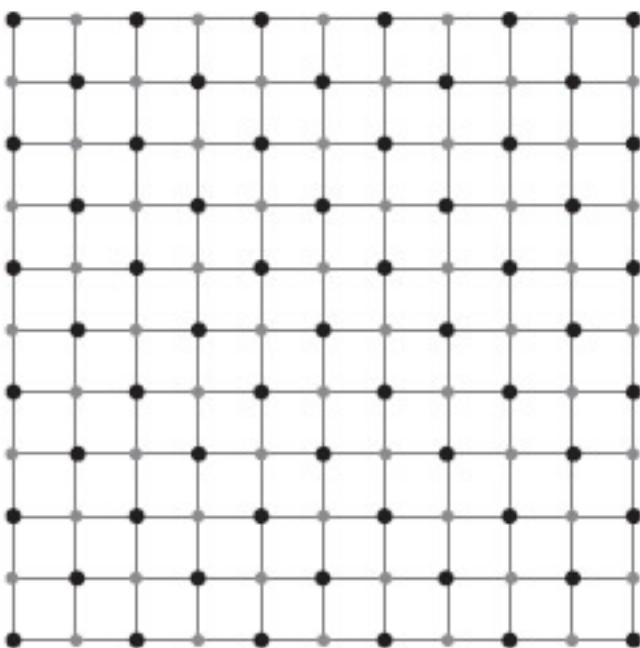
Normal graph paper is made up of a series of squares all over the page. You can sometimes purchase it with bigger or smaller squares, depending on the size of knot you want to create. If only one size is available it can be scaled up or down using a photocopier, or made from scratch at any size using a computer.

### Tip

Photocopy the sheets in the back of this book before you begin working. That way you'll always have a master page to copy from and won't have to make dotted paper again for each project!

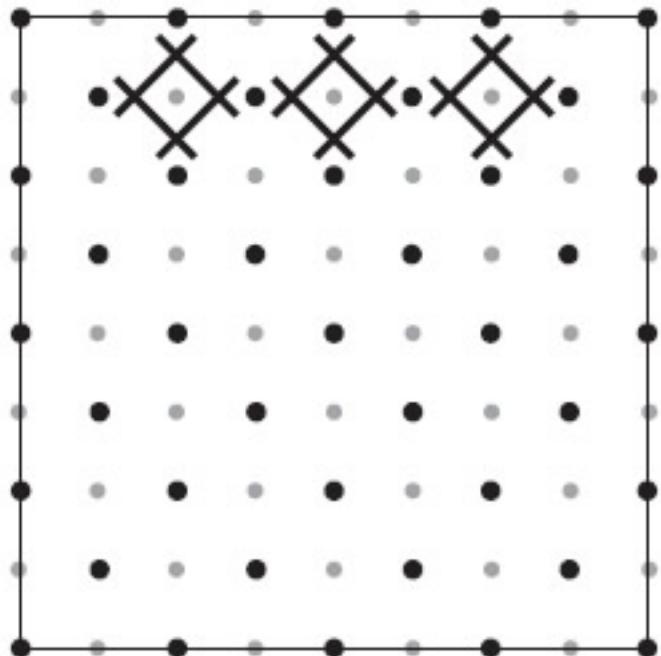


Using different-colored markers or a pen, alternate coloring one big dot, followed by a smaller dot, all across the page of graph paper. Make sure that as you move down to the next row you continue to alternate the dots. If there is a big dot above in the previous row, then below it there should be a small dot, and so on. Once the whole sheet is covered, make a photocopy before using it—that way you won't have to make it again next time.





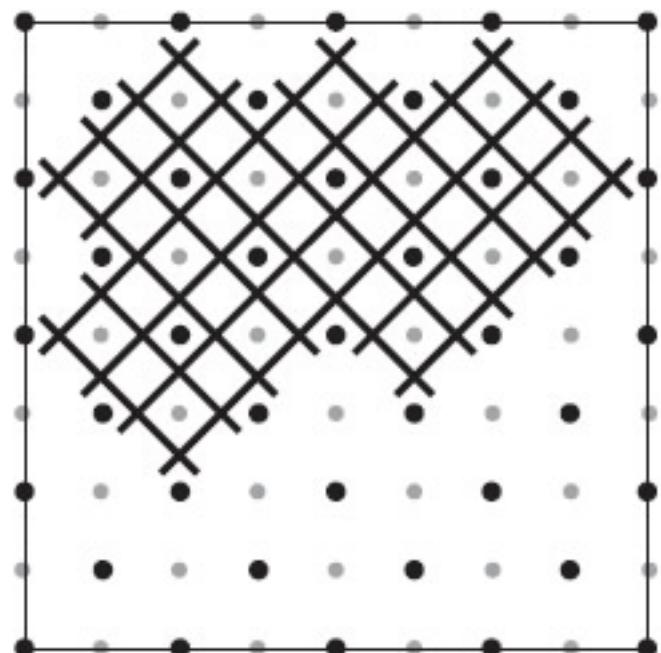
## Basic Celtic Knotwork



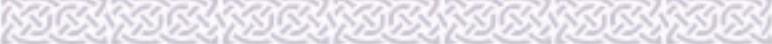
For clarity, in my examples I will display only the big and small dots and not the graph paper lines.

To make your first knot, mark off a box anywhere on the sheet, at least 5 big dots and 4 little dots across. Mark the same distance down (5 big and 4 little dots) so you have an even square. For the dot system to work properly, make sure box corners are always on a BIG dot.

Each small dot is going to be an intersection where two "ropes" of knots are going to cross over each other. Begin to add a double-lined "X" over the little dots within the marked-off box, with each set of the "X" lines running to either side of the little dot like a tic-tac-toe board tipped on its side.

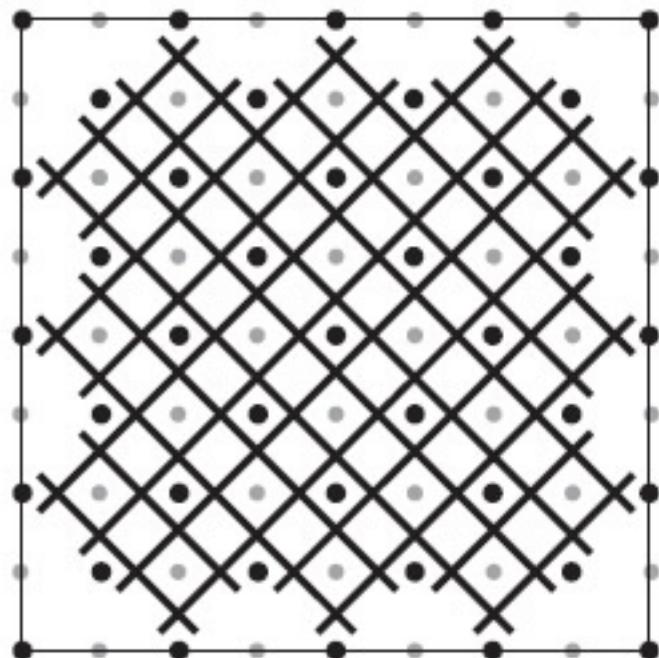


Continue drawing a double-lined "X" over each little dot until reaching the box border. Do not "X" the little dots that lie right on the border line, just those that fall within the border. Your big dots never get crossed over by the knot. Think of the big dots as posts that the knot must bend around to follow its path. You will find that the "X" patterns will meet up on the diagonal, which is correct. If you're making a very large knot, you can make this step go faster by using a ruler and just drawing a line along the diagonal of the little dots. However, when you begin to make very complicated knots, the "X" method keeps things from getting tangled up because it's easier to see clearly what's going on as you proceed.

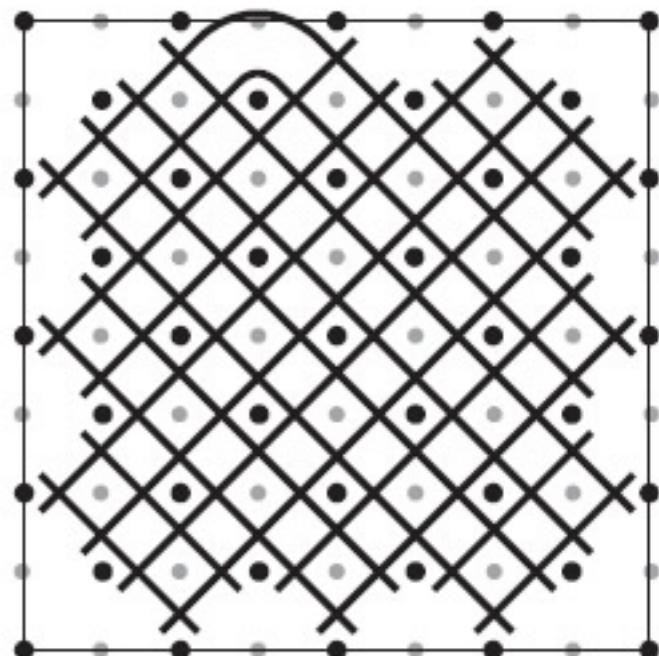


## BASIC CELTIC KNOTWORK...

At this point, there should be a double "X" over every little dot in the box. There will be empty spaces along the sides of the box and at the corners, but the center portion should be filled with the "X" pattern, as shown here.

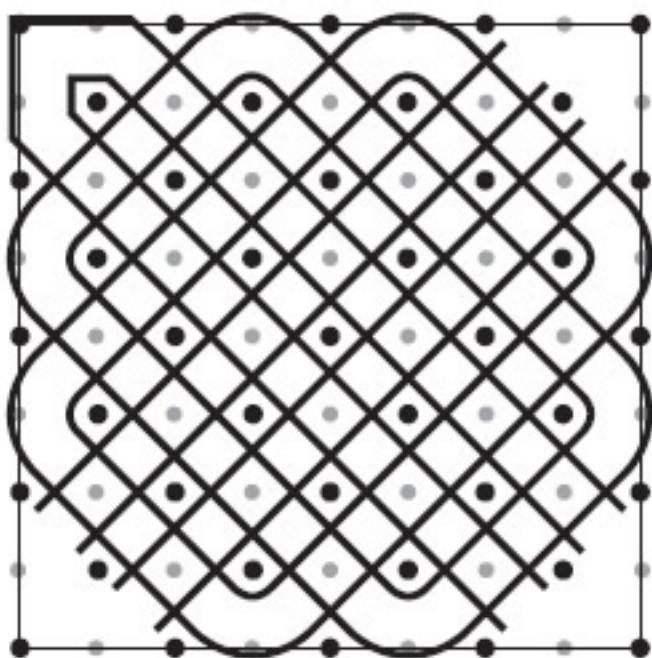


Now that all the little dots are bordered with the "X" pattern, join the knot lines along the sides, top, and bottom of the box. Along one side (it doesn't matter which you begin with) find two pairs of lines angling out toward each other from the body of the "X" pattern. Connect these to each other with a smooth curve. Vary the sharpness of the turn to suit your tastes, from a 90-degree angle to a soft, round curve. There are many variations you can create by varying the angle of the bends.



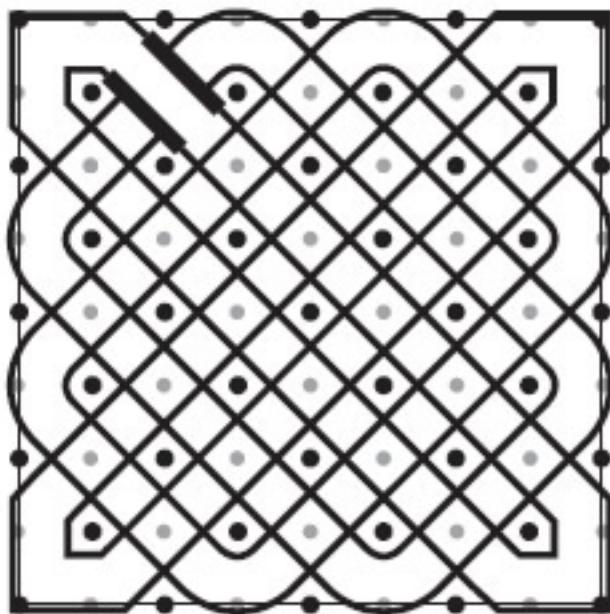
# THE BASICS

## BASIC CELTIC KNOTWORK...



Once all the loose ends that angle toward each other on the sides are joined, add corners. As with the sides, the way you join the corners is up to you, and you may want to experiment with different corners (see the examples on pages 9, 10, 13 and 14).

Joining the corners is easy, as there are only two pairs of lines in each corner to join. If there are other lines left over, then you have probably drawn the marked-off box incorrectly and put a corner on a small dot. Remember, for the pattern to work every corner of the marked-off box must be on a BIG dot. Also, check that you have not added an "X" to any of the small dots on the box border line. That will also break the pattern.

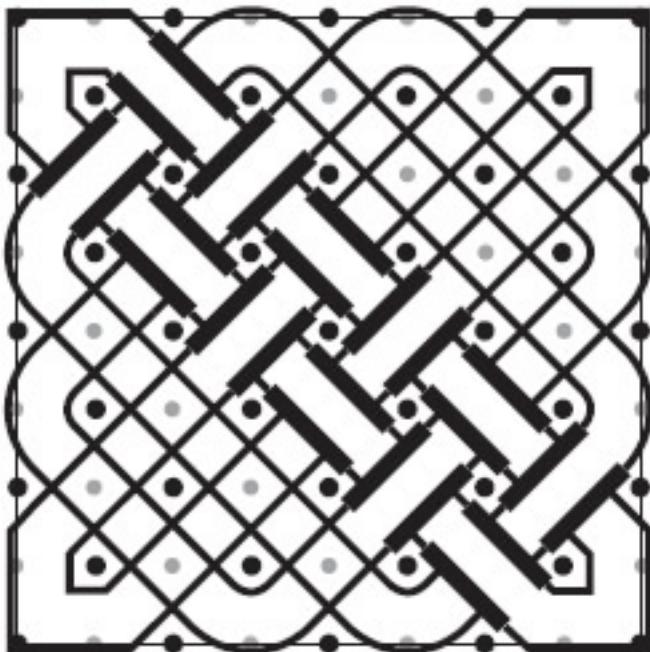


With all the lines connected on the knot we can begin to make the strands weave, or interlace. Each strand, if you follow it with your finger, will be made to appear as though it alternates over and then under and then over any other strand it intersects with. So any strand in the knot will appear to go over-under-over-under the other strands in the knot.

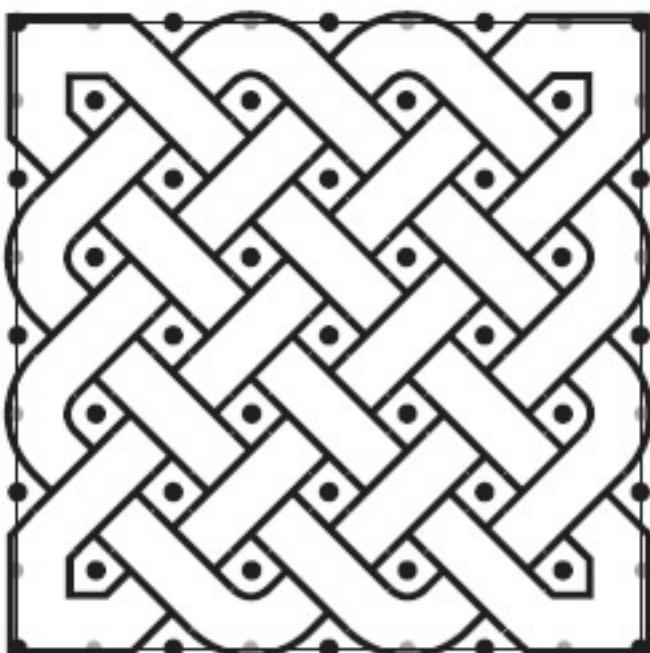
To begin, pick an intersection on the knot over a little dot. It doesn't matter which you choose. Erase part of the double lines, making the illusion that one strand is crossing over the other (see top left of the graph).

## BASIC CELTIC KNOTWORK...

Trace the path of that same strand of knot. When it reaches the next intersection, erase part of the double lines, but this time change the direction of your erasing—if you erased the first intersection as an over, this next one should be an under, or vice versa. Continue to follow the path, alternating overs and unders as you go. If you reach the beginning and there are still strands of over/under that haven't been erased, don't worry. This just means that your knot actually has more than one strand of knotwork in it. Simply pick an unerased intersection and look at the other ones around it. If the strand leading into the intersection has just come from UNDER another strand, you need to erase your lines so it now passes OVER this one. Continue until all the intersections have been erased.



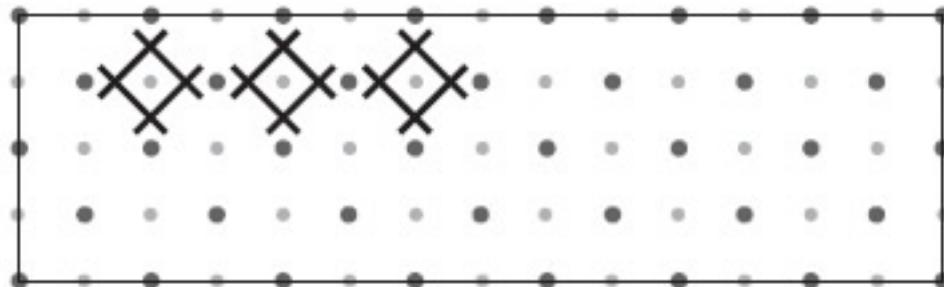
Finished!



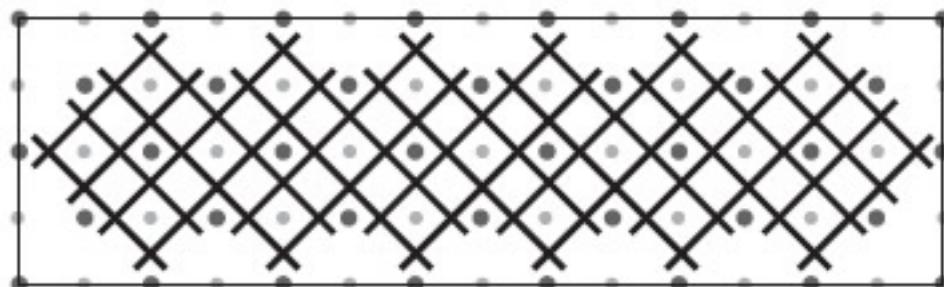
# BORDERS & CORNERS



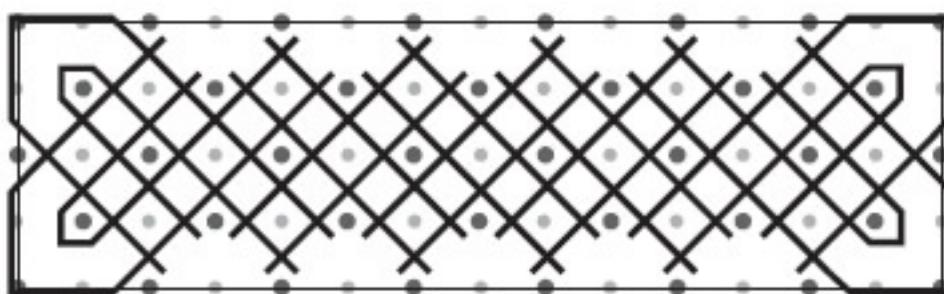
## 2 Borders



To make a Basic Knot Border, mark off a section on the dot paper that is at least three big dots high. The width, between big dots, is up to you. Remember to put the corners of the border on BIG dots only. Cover every little dot within this marked-off area with a double lined "X."

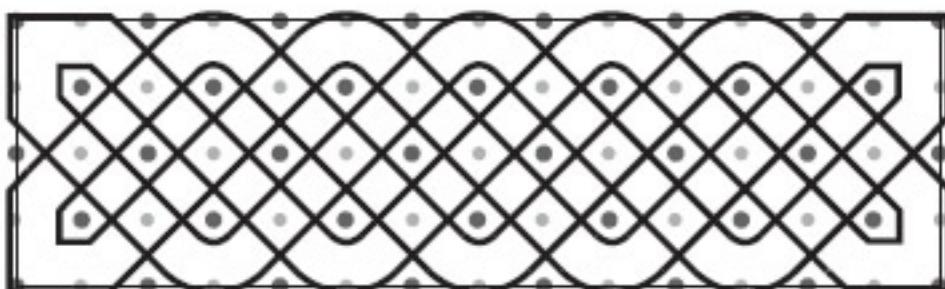


Continue until the marked-off area looks much like this. All of the little dots will be crossed over with the double "X," which will create a grid-like structure. The basic knot border is really a basic knot that extends out over a larger area, so instead of being square, it's rectangular. All the same rules and processes apply as before.

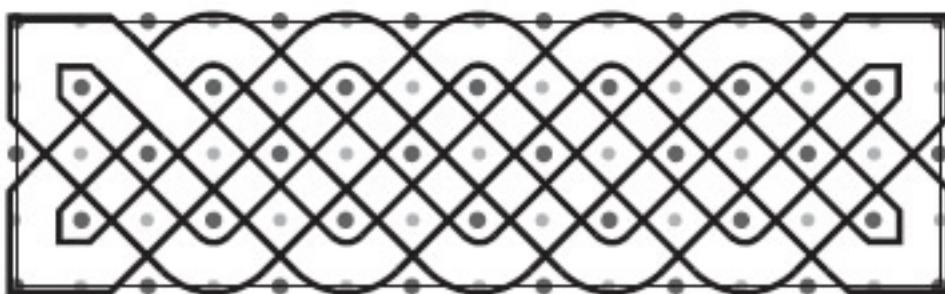


Now start to close the ends of all of the knot lines. Connect the lines in all the corners, or work on the bends on the horizontal and vertical first, if you prefer. Depending on the pattern, the corners or the bends can be easier to see, so do whichever is easiest for you.

## BORDERS...



Now add all the bends along the horizontal and vertical so that all the knot line ends are used. There shouldn't be any leftover ends. Note that this example is a narrow border so it has no bends on the vertical to connect.



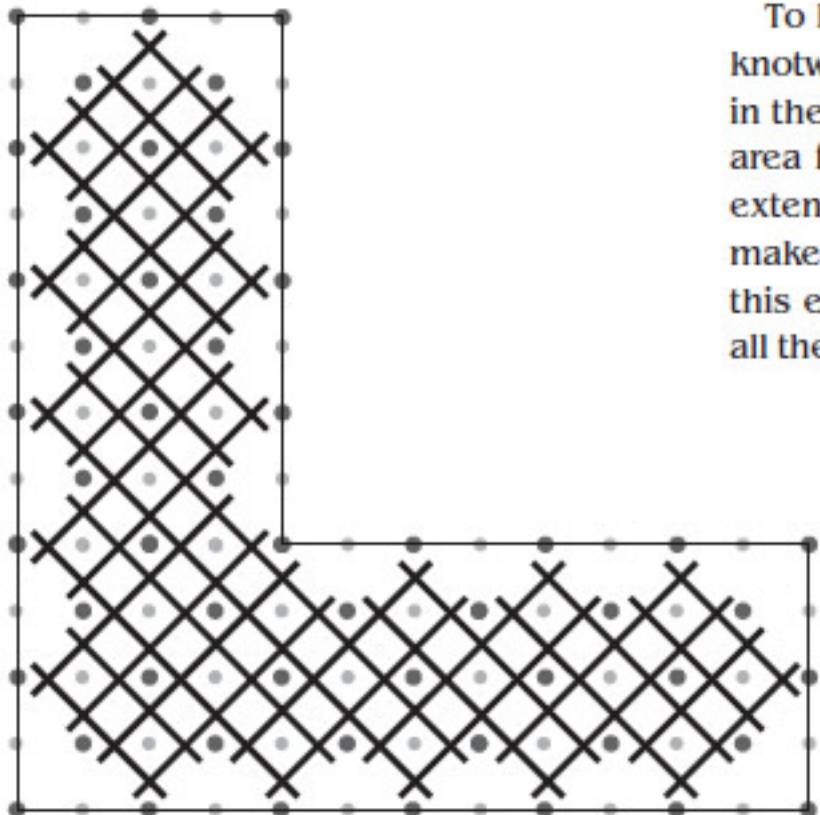
Now begin to weave the overs and unders. Pick an intersection and erase the center so that it appears as though one knot strand is passing over the other. Follow that strand around, erasing so that it passes over and then under the next strand it meets. As you continue, you'll see a pattern to your erasing which is helpful when creating larger knots. Anything that falls directly in line (horizontally or vertically) with an "over" will also be an "over," or an "under" if it's an "under." This will also be helpful for double checking that the overs/unders have been erased correctly. In addition, it speeds up the erasing process when there are a lot of intersections to erase.



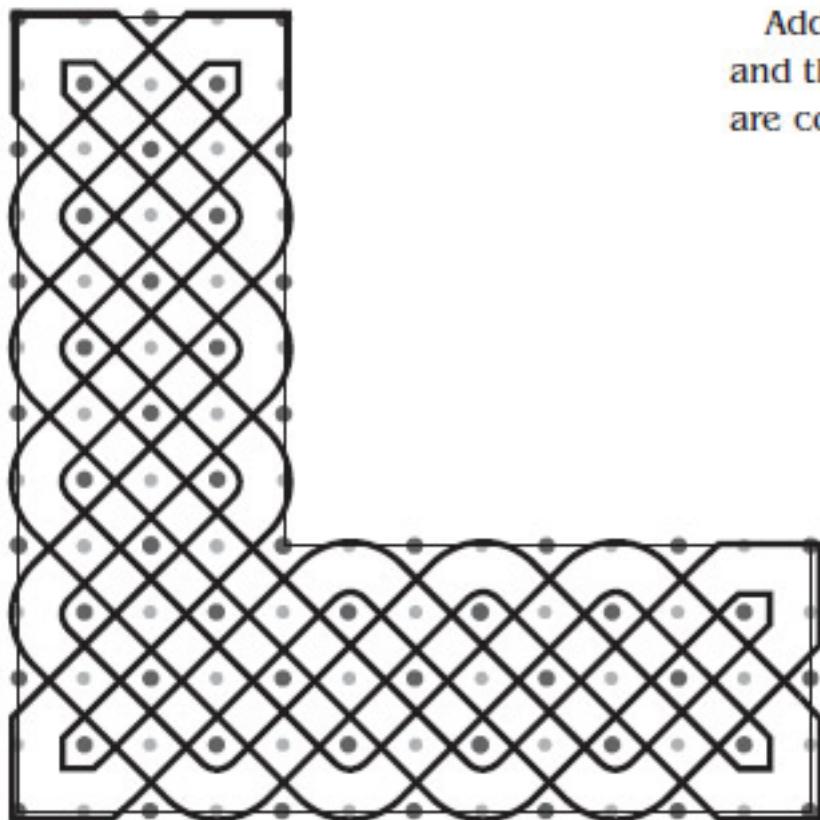
Here we see that our knot border has all been erased so that the overs/unders appear. You can now see how, if you look straight across the intersections on the horizontal or vertical, it's either all unders or all overs.



## CORNERS



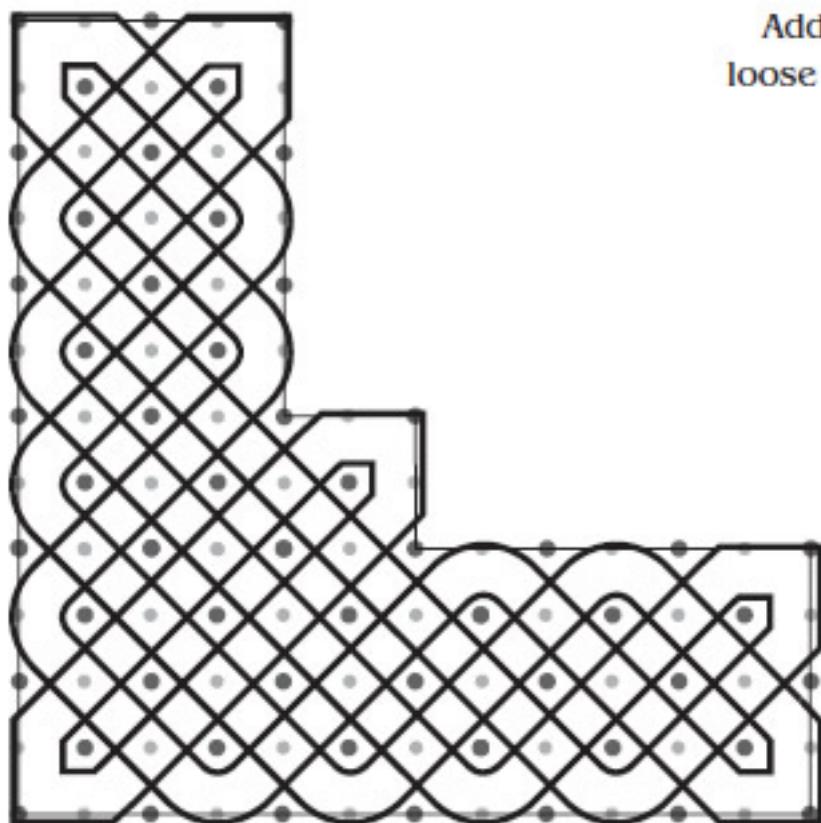
To knot around a corner or make a continuous knotwork frame or border, first mark off the area in the shape you desire. Here I've marked off my area for a corner, making it 3 big dots wide and extending around in an "L" shape. As always, make sure all of the corners end on a BIG dot. In this example I have crossed an "X" pattern over all the little dots that fall within my boundary box.



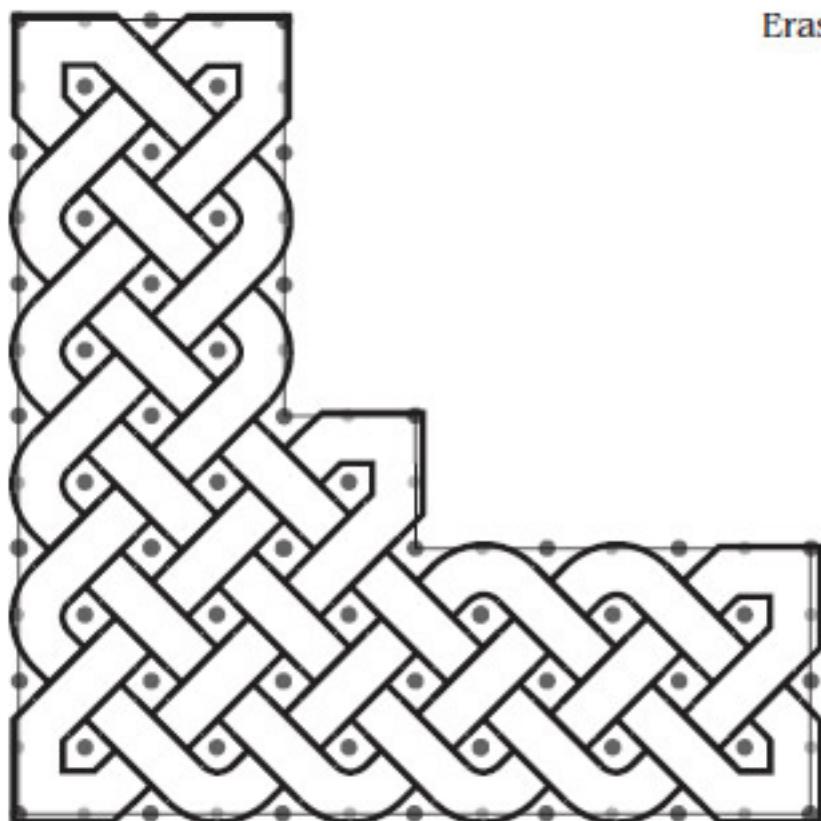
Add the bends on the horizontals and verticals, and the corners to the corners, until all the lines are connected.

# BORDERS & CORNERS

## CORNERS...



Add all the corners and bends to connect the loose ends.



Erase your overs and unders, as usual.