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Kathy's Kreations

Knitting Tips & Ideas

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This is the PDF version of our Tips And Ideas.

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Knitting tips are listed as they were received or added.

This section of Kathy's Kreations is for knitting tips suggested by our customers and friends (and Kathy). If you have any tips or ideas, email us at tips@kathys-kreations.com Tips and ideas may be any length, but we may edit them to fit our pages.

Thanks,

Helpful hints for knitters

To **convert** measurements of cms to inches - multiply cms by 0.394

To **convert** inches to cms - multiply inches by 2.54

To **convert** grams to ounces - multiply grams by 0.035

From the Internet Knit List comes a warning that **acrylic potholders** can be very dangerous. They are easily flammable and the melting yarn sticks to the hand, causing severe burns. Cotton is a better fiber to choose, since it won't "explode" into flames and it won't adhere to you. Joan Schrouder likes to use wool even better, making the potholder extra large, then felting down to size. The closed nature of felted stitches may prevent burns even more than cotton.

January 1998 tips and ideas

Kathy's tip - A frequently asked question from many customers who knit mittens is, "How do I **avoid holes around the thumb area?**" This problem generally arises at the point where the stitches of the hand are joined to the stitches of the palm after placing the thumb stitches on hold. This problem can be corrected by giving an extra tug when knitting this area. How to fix it later? Leave a tail when you attach the yarn for the thumb, which you can use to duplicate stitch the stitches on either side of the gap, pulling snugly to tighten the hole.

February 1998 tips and ideas

Tips found on the internet - when **working a circular knit garment**, try casting onto a straight needle first and then transferring the cast-on row to the circular needle.

March 1998 tips and ideas

a **caring for cotton** tip from Kathy

Cotton is rapidly becoming a fiber for all seasons. One of the properties is that it will stretch. If you wears jeans or cotton pants, you will notice that they "grow" as you wear them, but return to there original size when you wash them. Here are some helpful hints on caring for your cotton hand-knits.

Place you cotton garment (wash colors separately, please) in a lingerie bag or light colored pillow case. Wash in the automatic washer on gentle cycle, cold water, with a mild SOAP (not detergent). We recommend COT'N WASH starting the ribbing. The "bumps" of the purl round aid in covering up small holes, as well as adding a decorative touch.

April 1998 tips and ideas

Kathy talks about *****Working With Lace*****.

Eyelet and lace patterns span a large range of openwork effects. All are based on creating openings or holes in the knitted fabric by combining yarnovers with decreases. Eyelet fabrics have fewer holes than lace (the eyelets appear to "pierce" the fabric) and are therefore denser and less net-like. It is the type and placement of the decrease with which the yarn-over (yo) is paired which determines the kind of lace produced. Each yarn-over must be paired with a decrease to maintain the original stitch count. This becomes extremely important when shaping the garment pieces.

Yarn and needle size are crucial to the look and effectiveness of lace patterns. Again, **GAUGE IS IMPORTANT**. If the selected needles are too small, the holes will close and the airiness will be lost. If the yarn is textured or fuzzy, the effect will be the same. Fine smooth yarns best suit lace.

May 1998 tips and ideas

Joyce Bischoff says - **When knitting sleeves**, place two different colors of row counters on your needle. Use one to record the number of rows worked, and the second to keep track of the pattern repeat.

June 1998 tips and ideas

Kathy Mason wrote us to recommend **PATONS new "Look At Me"** yarn: "All of those bright colors make great doll & beanie baby sweaters. The kids love them."

Maryann Sisley says - "**Whenever I receive a new knitting magazine, I put a large adhesive label on the front** before I open it. As I go through it and see something I know I just have to make, I jot down the item and page number on the label. Then, six months later, when I'm looking for a particular pattern, I can quickly scan the magazine labels I've written all these "must do" items on. And, of course, while I looking through the magazines again, I find another half dozen things to add to the label! It really does save time, though, because how many times have you said to yourself, "I KNOW I've seen that pattern somewhere."

July 1998 tips and ideas

Kathy's tip for July is -

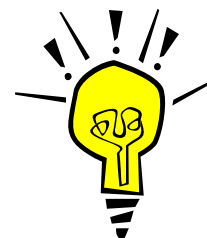
Have you ever tucked away a half-finished project on holders, "borrowing" the needles to begin another project, without writing down the needle size?

Here's a solution: **tie knots in the long cast-on tail** corresponding to the size needle used for the swatch or unfinished piece (ie., four knots means a size 4 needle was used for the knitting). This "clue" will enable you to begin your project again, right where you left off, without the guesswork.

August 1998 tips and ideas

Sue Birringer **recommends working duplicate stitch on sock heels and toes for additional reinforcement**.

September 1998 tips and ideas



Kathy says - Normally, stitches are bound off by bringing one stitch over the other; work two stitches in pattern, slip the first stitch over the second, work another stitch in pattern, slip the previous stitch, etc. However, with some designs it is better to bind off by working stitches together, resulting in a less stretchy edge. For this method, knit two stitches together, slip this new stitch back onto the left-hand needle and work two together again, etc. This **bind-off technique** is particularly good for patterns where the stitches pull themselves together (ex., cable patterns) or for pocket bands that are likely to stretch. This may also apply to stretchy fibers like rayon.

October 1998 tips and ideas

Kathy explains - **use rubber rings to mark off placement of increases.** The neatest increase for most patterns is the "make 1" (abbreviated m1). Work in pattern to the desired increase point, pick up the bar between the last stitch and the next stitch, and work into the BACK of this loop. Working into the back of the stitch twists the loop and avoids a hole.

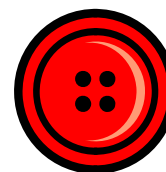
November 1998 tips and ideas

Kathy says - for a **buttonhole opening** that runs perpendicular to the rows of the buttonhole band, try this:

Row 1. Work 2tog. yo 3 times.

Row 2. Work into first yo, drop remaining 2 yo's.

Row 3. Work to buttonhole, knit into next stitch in the row below (into the yo)



Inez Baker has a clever method for keeping **track of rows** when working circular knitting. Simply thread a length of yarn through your plastic row counter, knot and place on circular needle at the beginning of the round.

Try these tips from Pattern #223, Classic Elite Yarns, for Elastic Cast On For 1 X 1 Ribbing: This beautiful edge is very elastic and appears as if the edge is folded over. Use knitting needles two sizes larger than those used for the ribbing and some contrasting colored yarn. Cast on HALF the number of stitches required. Rows 1 & 3: Knit (K) Rows 2 & 4: Purl (P) Change to the yarn required for the ribbing. Row 5: K. Row 6: P. Change to the required needles for ribbing & K the 1st st. With the left hand (LH) needle, pick up the main color loop from the back of the work between the two sts where it joins the contrasting yarn & P that st. K the next st from the LH needle, pick up the next main color loop & P it. Continue in this manner to the end of the row. Pull out contrasting yarn. If an even number of sts is required, an extra st must be made as the last st in the row does not have a loop below it. Continue in rib.

December 1998 tips and ideas

Kathy says it is a good practice to **measure your knitting** after you have worked a few inches. Even when you have carefully made a gauge swatch, the width and length may change. You may also wish to begin with the sleeve when working textured designs, as it will be easier to compensate for gauge drift.

January 1999 tips and ideas

One January tip comes from Joan Walsh: When doing K1, P1 ribbing in the round, **work the purl stitches from the back for a tidier rib**. The same principle should apply to working flat. The original source for Joan's tip is Beth Brown-Reinsel's "Yummy Mittens" pattern.

Thanks, Joan!

Does gauge matter? In the January's newsletter Kathy said the following- You bet it does! In most cases, you can substitute another yarn for the one called for in the pattern, **AS LONG AS IT KNITS TO THE STITCH GAUGE**. First, knit a 4" X 4" (minimum) swatch and compare the measurements to those specified in the pattern. You may need to experiment with different needles sizes to obtain the desired result.



Correct stitch gauge is *crucial*, but in **SOME** cases you may be able to alter the length by changing the number of rows. Row gauge *does* matter for intarsia designs, when working color charts, V-necklines, raglan sleeves, diagonal shaping and deep sleeve caps.

Want to learn more about successful substitutions? We recommend FAMILY CIRCLE EASY KNITTING's "Do It Your Way" comprehensive article by Ruth Tobacco to get started.

February 1999 tips and ideas

Can you **"unshrink" wool knits?**

The following tip is from an old copy of YANKEE MAGAZINE, in Earl Proulx's column "Plain Talk":

"Make a solution of one part vinegar to two parts water. Boil the sweater in this gently for a half hour. Then remove and reshape to its original size and dry flat".

Earl claims that many YANKEE readers wrote to thank him for their resurrected sweaters and that no one ever wrote to complain that it didn't work...

How do you wash felted or fulled handknits? Care for these as you would any fine wool item. We recommend that you wash these items by hand with EUCALAN wool wash in cool water and avoid agitation. Shape and air dry. Machine washing may cause further shrinkage, so use only if this is desired and watch carefully...

March 1999 tips and ideas

Our first March 1999 tips and ideas is actually **a chart of size conversions for knitting needles:**



U.S.	Metric	U.S.	Metric
15	10	5	3.75
13	9	4	3.5
11	8	3	3.25
10.75	7	2	2.75
10.5	6.5	1	2.25
10	6	0	2
9	5.5	00	1.75
8	5	000	1.5
7	4.5	0000	1.25
6	4	00000	1

Our second March tip comes from Maryann Sisley, who shares an organizational hint, just in time for spring housecleaning:

“When I ‘read’ a new knitting magazine or book and see something that really catches my eye, I use a **Post-It sticker to mark the page**. Eventually, I realized that my stacks of magazines had post-it stickers everywhere, which made it especially difficult and time-consuming to relocate what I wanted.

Here’s my newest gimmick: I found a small packet of Post-It page markers in five different colors. I use a different color for separate categories. For example, any yellow marker I place in a magazine indicates a design for an adult female (me), orange is for men’s knits, pink for kids, teal for miscellaneous. If I place a purple marker along with it, it signifies something that I want to tend to ASAP.

This sure has cut down on time trying to locate a particular pattern that I just ‘knew’ I had earmarked somewhere. I identify “miscellaneous” by jotting down just what it is on the Post-It (i.e, toys, doll clothes, edgings, etc.). Of course, when I go through my existing ‘bookmarks’, I always find other items that I either missed the first time — or my tastes have changed — and I start marking pages all over again! Thanks, Maryann...

April 1999 tips and ideas

A tip from Kathy

Many Aran or cable designs are worked on a **reverse stockinette stitch** background (the purl side is the “public” side). For easier increasing on sleeves or decreasing at armhole & neck shaping, try working increases & decreases on the wrong (knit) side. It is easier to see the stitches & to determine what type of increase or decrease to use (ssk vs. K2tog, lifted increase, etc.)

...more April 1999 tips and ideas

Internet tips from Knit-U Digest

Are **long floats on the wrong side** of your knitted work a problem when you doing colorwork? Joann Halpern suggests: “On the row after you work the color float, dip your needle down and pick up the float. Work your next stitch with the float yarn on your needle. It may take a bit of practice, but this will help “tack” the float down and keep fingers from getting caught in it”. Thanks, Joann...

How do you **purl using the continental method**? Donna Hrynkiw explains: “Bring the yarn to the front and insert your right-hand needle into the stitch from the previous row. The point of the needle follows this path:

- under the yarn then towards you
- up and over the yarn then away from you
- down , making loop of thread on needle
- back through the previous row stitch, taking the loop with it

May 1999 tips and ideas

***** TIPS FROM LISA *****

Have you ever tried to knit socks from stash yarn and aren't sure if you have enough to finish the pair? Our expert sock knitter and designer, Lisa Carnahan, uses a postal scale to **weigh the first sock**, then weighs the remaining yarn. If it weighs the same amount or more, you will have enough to finish. If not, you will need to get creative and perhaps knit the toes in a contrasting yarn.

Have you ever been knitting, need to **measure your work**, and not have a ruler or measuring tape? The **average dollar bill measures 6"** — a handy reference.

Lisa recommends **using open coil stitch markers** to separate panels of pattern stitches when working an Aran or multiple textures. The open coil type of marker also works great to mark underarms.

Measure your work periodically to make sure you are maintaining gauge. Transfer your work to a long blocking wire and measure flat, off the needle, for best results.

June 1999 tips and ideas

A swatch worked flat, back and forth in stockinette stitch, usually does not have the same gauge as a swatch worked in the round, all rounds knit. Many knitters purl at a different tension than they knit. **How do work a gauge swatch for a Fair Isle project or one worked in the round?** Meg Swansen of Schoolhouse Press has a “speed swatch” technique, recently shared by Amy Detjen on the Internet Knit U list. Cast on 20 (30, 40, whatever is needed for your multiple) with the double-pointed or circular needle you plan to use for your project. *Slide those stitches to the other end of the needle, and carry the yarn across the back of the work leaving a loose length of yarn. Knit across in pattern. Repeat from *.

There will be long strands hanging across the back of the work, but you will get a more

accurate gauge swatch. Other similar methods involve breaking the yarn at the end of the row before sliding the stitches. The advantage of Meg's technique is that the yarn remains in one continuous piece, just in case it is needed later...

July 1999 tips and ideas

This tip is found in the Knittin' News, a quarterly publication of the Laurel Highlands Knitting Guild - from Lisa Carnahan -

“Q: How do you tell if there is enough yarn for the second sock?

A: Weigh the first sock on a postal scale, the weigh the unknit yarn. Compare!”



Yarn Weights. from Old Pueblo Knitters newsletter, Tucson, Arizona, June, 1998

“Fingering or baby yarn - will give 7 or 8 stitches to the inch

Sport weight - 6 sts to the inch

Double knitting - 5.5 sts per inch

Worsted weight - 5 sts to the inch

Heavy Worsted of light bulky - 4 sts to the inch

Bulky weight - 3.5 sts to the inch

Super bulky weight - 2 sts per inch

Any weight can be any ply, depending on how it is spun. Ply does not indicate weight.

The **number of stitches to the inch is the best guide.**”

August 1999 tips and ideas

Elastic tubular cast on for 1 X 1 ribbing (original source: Lee Andersen's YOU KNIT UNIQUE). This beautiful edge is very elastic and appears as if the edge is folded over. Use knitting needles two sizes larger than those used for ribbing and some contrasting color yarn, preferably slippery cotton. Cast on HALF the numbers of stitches required with contrasting yarn.

Rows 1 & 3: Knit (K).

Rows 2 & 4: Purl (P).

Change to yarn required for ribbing.

Rows 5 & 6: Repeat rows 1 & 2

Change to the required needles for ribbing & K the first stitch. With the left-hand (LH) needle, pick up the main color loop from the back of the work between 2sts where it joins the contrasting yarn & P that stitch. K the next stitch from the LH needle, pick up the next main color loop & P it. Continue in this manner to the end of the row. Pull out contrast yarn. If an odd number of sts is required, an extra st must be cast on. Continue in rib as established.

September 1999 tips and ideas

***** YARDS / METERS / OUNCES / GRAMS *****

Denise Gaertner listed these **math conversion formulas** in the KnitU Digest V99 #344:

— There are 39 inches per meter. **To convert** meters to inches, multiply the number of meters by 39. To convert the inches to yards, divide this answer by 36. It follows that to convert meters to yards, multiply the number of meters by 39 and divide by 36.

— **To convert** inches to meters, divide by 39. To convert yards to meters, multiply by 36 and divide by 39.

— There are 454 grams per pound. This means that nine 50 gram skeins of yarn is approximately a pound of yarn. **To convert** grams to pounds, divide the number of grams by 454. **To convert** grams to ounces, multiply the number of grams by 16 and divide by 454.

— **To convert** pounds to grams, multiply by 454. To convert ounces to grams, multiply by 454 and divide by 16.



October 1999 tips and ideas

For best results when **knitting a shawl collar, do a gradual**

bind-off rather than a loose bind-off. Bind off the front borders with the same needle size used for the ribbing. At the beginning of the collar, change needle sizes, going up 2 sizes every 3". At the center back neck, reverse the needle sizes. When finished,

tug the entire cast off to smooth the edge and enjoy a collar that lies in place. Source: KnitU V99 #376

November 1999 tips and ideas

This **elastic bind off method** compliments the cast on from the August 1999. Hold the knitting needle with the "live" stitches in your left hand. Thread a tapestry needle with a length of matching yarn & hold in your right hand. Begin by passing the tapestry needle through the first stitch KNITWISE and slipping that stitch off the knitting needle. Skip the next stitch. Pass the tapestry needle through the next stitch (a knit stitch) PURLWISE, but leave it on the knitting needle. Go PURLWISE through the stitch that was skipped and take it off. Bring the tapestry needle around to the back of your work between the first and second stitches on the knitting needle, then go KNITWISE through the second stitch and leave it on. Repeat this process to the end of the row. After the first two stitches, all other stitches should have been passed through twice, once knitwise and once purlwise.

Original source [You Knit Unique](#) by Lee Andersen

December 1999 tips and ideas

BEV GALESKAS of FIBER TRENDS has a quick test you can use to **prevent felted knitting disasters**. Take about 25-30 inches of yarn, wet it and add a drop of dish detergent. Squeeze, rub and roll. It should start forming into a felt ball in a matter of minutes. If you cannot get it to form a ball in less than 10 minutes, Bev would not recommend that you use it for felted knitting. Remember that this test tells you if a yarn will felt, but not what type of fabric it will make or how much shrinkage will occur. For those answers, there is no substitute for felting a test swatch. (NOTE: We carry a large selection of Bev's patterns from FIBER TRENDS. Two of our all-time best sellers are AC-1 knitted felted hats and AC-11

Crochet Felted Hats. We've used her patterns to make the colorful models, which are

throughout our shop, with excellent results).



January 2000 tips and ideas

Lorna Miser of Lorna's Laces Yarns recently shared her technique for **blending marled and textured yarns**, which she describes as "watercolor" or "Monet" coloring.

She says that it allows you to "paint" subtly without doing lots of fancy work and is a great method for using leftovers.

"Knit a simple stockinette design holding two different strands together throughout. However, occasionally, change just one of the yarns at a time. It's great for using small amounts because you can run out anywhere and it all blends. In other words, Knit holding yarns A & B together for an inch or so, drop A (Lorna prefers to drop in the middle of the row), join C and knit with with B & C together for awhile, drop B & join D ... etc. The effect is like a watercolor painting. No blatant stripes, just softly blended movement."

Lorna reports that hand-dyed yarns in multis and solids give more of a painted look because the multi-color yarn blends and mixes the colors even more. Using a double strand of yarn has the advantage of knitting quickly. The body may be knit in one piece to the armholes to eliminate trying to match color changes at the side seams.

SOURCE: Internet Knit U Digest #542, submitted by Lorna Miser

February 2000 tips and ideas

What does "tbl" mean? Through the back loop. Normally, knit and purl stitches are worked through the front loop. When you work a knit stitch, the yarn is at the back of the work and the needle is inserted into the front, from left to right. To work a knit stitch through the back loop, the needle is inserted into the back of the stitch, from right to left.

When **working a purl stitch**, the yarn is positioned at the front of the work and the needle is inserted from the front, right to left. To work through the back loop, the yarn remains in front but the needle is inserted in the back from left to right. This maneuver will twist the stitch and creates a different slanting effect.

Will I have **enough yarn to do the sleeves?** As a general rule of thumb, sleeves take about 1/3 of the yarn needed in a sweater. If you aren't sure if you will have enough yarn for your project, use a temporary cast on and eliminate the ribbing at waistband and cuffs. You can work them later or "get creative" by working stripes or adding bands in a different color or texture, if necessary.

March 2000 tips and ideas

Sandy Kasmer tells us she **knits two socks at one time**. Working with two sets of double pointed needles, Sandy knits one sock cuff at a time, and then another. She then works each heel to make sure they match, then completes the feet. This ensures she has a matched set.

April 2000 tips and ideas

Multi-directional knitting is currently quite popular. Our customer Nancy Danca shares this tip, which originally appeared in TRADEWIND KNITWEAR DESIGNS' "Entrelac Scarf" pattern. When working entrelac or other

techniques requiring picking up stitches along sides of squares, carry a piece of waste yarn along the edge of your work as it changes direction from row to row. Knitting into these wraps makes it easier to visualize where to pick up stitches along the sides of the squares.

April 2000 tips and ideas

Lily Chin gives the following tip in KnitU Digest #754 in response to a question about the **equivalence between knitting needle and crochet hook sizes**: “For US sizes, think of this mnemonic device: H equals 8 (they almost rhyme). From there, size up and down: I is 9, J is 10, K is 10.5. Going the other way, G is 7, F is 6, E is 5, etc. For metric, refer to any standard needle gauge. This info may also be listed in many crafts magazines near the directions section or towards the front”. Our thanks to Lily for this valuable information...



May 2000 tips & ideas

On Knit U 766, Meg Swansen posted this handy tip for **avoiding the dreaded “jog” in circular knitting**, which she learned from Joan Schrouder: “At the beginning of the new round, bring the old color OVER the last color, rather than UNDER as for intarsia patterns. If you are NOT alternating the same colors every other round, leave a long enough tail so that, with judicious darning, you can hide the jog by darning in the old tail down and to the left, and the new tail up and to the right.

June 2000 tips & ideas

When **finishing a piece of garter stitch** knitting such as a border or buttonband, binding off in purl from the right side makes a very neat finish. An easy way to do this is as follows: purl the first stitch, place it back on the left-hand (LH) needle, *P2tog, place resulting stitch back on LH needle, repeat from * until all stitches have been worked. Fasten off.

July 2000 tips & ideas

When **knitting with a boucle or heavily textured yarn**, there is sometimes little visual difference between the knit side and purl side of basic stockinette stitch fabric. Try pinning a stitch holder or one of our new brightly-colored CLOVER marking pins to the right side of your work. This will remind you that when the pin is facing you, you are on a knit row; when it is on the back of the work, you are on a purl row.

August 2000 tips & ideas

Cast on with a needle one size larger than the one specified, then change to the specified needle on your first row. This ensures that your **cast on edge** will not be too tight. (one of the MANY tips from the book, "Simply Beautiful Sweaters")

September 2000 tips & ideas

...Kathy says

Got tangles? When working with slippery yarns that tend to fall apart easily or

with multiple strands of yarn held together as one, **place the ball(s) in a ziploc bag**. Allow the yarns to run through a small opening in the seal or a corner cut off the end of the bag...

When you bind off large cable patterns, the edge usually gets wavy if you simply bind off all the stitches in pattern. This may cause untidy shoulder or sleeve seams. Eliminate this excess by knitting the center stitches of the cable together before you bind them off. For a very wide cable, try knitting 2 stitches together 2 or 3 times.



October 2000 tips & ideas

Joan Schrouder shares this information for **seaming garments** (thanks, Joan!): When knitting a stockinette stitch sweater, slip the first stitch of each knit row as if to purl and the first stitch of each purl row as if to knit. This will make a knitted chain up the selvedge. To sew, overcast through the tops of the loops forming those chains, between the sides of the vees. It is not an invisible seam, but it is perfectly reversible and flat, actually quite decorative. You end up having a leg of each chain showing on the outside and the other leg of each chain on the inside, giving the effect of a chain running up both inside and outside. Be sure to fasten the ends securely. Joan originally wrote about this method in KNITTER'S MAGAZINE Issue 16, the now alas out-of-print Aran issue...

Thanks to Betty Lou Glasso for this helpful hint: **When winding yarn from a hank into a ball**, wrap the yarn around two or three fingers to keep the yarn from being stretched too tightly...



November 2000 tips & ideas

The most frequently-asked questions from our customers deal with finishing techniques. Here are a few helpful hints from our in-house experts:

--- Lisa Carnahan shared her pointers for **working smoother V-necklines**. When the "V" is a single center stitch (as in K1, P1 ribbing), work a vertical double decrease for a neat, slightly raised stitch. On a knit row, work to one stitch before the marked "V" stitch, insert the right-hand needle into two stitches at the same time (as if to K2tog) and slip them to the right-hand needle. Knit the next stitch, and then with the left-hand needle, pass both slipped stitches over the knitted stitch and off the right-hand needle. On a purl row, with yarn in front, slip the next two stitches, one at a time, as if to knit. Purl the next stitch, and with the left-hand needle, pass the two slipped stitches over the purled stitch and off the right-hand needle.

When the center "V" is worked over 2 sts (as in K2, P2 ribbing), work K2tog before the marked "V" stitches, slip marker, work the two center stitches, slip marker, ssk (slip, slip, knit). Lisa tells us that the decreased stitches appear to fall under the two center stitches and the vertical line of the "V" neck is more pronounced...

--- Try the **three-needle bind-off method** for shoulder seams. This technique can be used

instead of binding off shoulder stitches and sewing them together, resulting in a very neat join. **Do not bind off shoulder stitches**; place them on a holder. To seam, place "live" stitches onto the same size knitting needle used to work the body. With right sides of work together and tips of the knitting needles parallel (back stitches on one needle and front stitches on another), *K2tog, one st from front needle and one st from back needle. Repeat from * once. Pass first stitch over 2nd stitch. Continue to work in this manner until all sts are bound off. Joyce Bischoff tells us these stitches may be purled together instead of knit for a flatter seam...

--- To **neaten the last bound-off stitch**, work to the last stitch, knit into the stitch on the row below and bind off. This prevents the loose loop at the end of the bind-off row...

--- Weave extra yarn into the seam for repairs...

December 2000 tips & ideas

How many times have you been knitting in public and needed to measure your work? Unfortunately, your ruler or tap measure was at home, in your other knitting tote. **Mother Nature has provided you with a ruler that you'll find hard to misplace.**

Measure your own hand and arm. Typical measurements are:

- Tip of thumb to first joint is usually about an inch. The middle knuckle of your baby finger, crooked up like you are drinking tea, is about an inch.
- Tip of thumb to the end of thumb at wrist is about 4 inches.
- Length of middle finger is about 3 inches.
- Length of little finger is about 2 inches.
- Tip of little finger to wrist is about 6 inches.
- Span of hand is usually about 7 inches. A dollar bill is about 6 inches in length, in case you have your wallet handy.
- Length of elbow (outside) to wrist is about 10 inches.
- Length of arm to elbow to fingertip (middle finger) is about 17 inches.

These are probably the only measurements which haven't changed since you reached adulthood. While it's easy to mislay your ruler, you probably haven't mislaid your right hand in years.

Source: Old Pueblo Knitters Newsletter, November 2000

In case all of this is too much to remember, you can always do what Kay Holt does. Kay **leaves a long tail** when she casts on her project. She then ties a knot at 3 inches from the needle, or whatever is the length of her ribbing. The next knot in her tail will be to the underarm. Then, she'll put one for the length from the bottom of the ribbing to the shoulder. In this way, she is able to measure from the bottom of the sweater to its top with each necessary measurement represented by a knot. This system works for all sizes, all yarns, all measurements. Perhaps, best of all, you do not need to carry anything but the project. Our thanks to Kay for sharing this tip with us.

January 2001 tips & ideas

Sheila Ryle uses **duplicate stitch for repairing holes** in knitted pieces. Her method: Follow back the piece of yarn that was broken. Thread a tapestry needle with a piece of the same yarn and duplicate that thread, working a couple inches or so from the hole. If the yarn is a smooth one, you may need to re-knit some of the stitches near the hole. Work across the hole for an inch or two on the other side.

Sheila recommends that you try this technique first on a practice swatch by cutting a hole in it. She says, "That's what swatches are for!" If the mends are not as invisible as you'd like, embroider a flower over them. Then, so it looks like a design feature and not a mistake, embroider a few more. Our thanks to Sheila for sharing this helpful hint...

February 2001 tips and ideas

Having **problems shaping felted hats?** Kay Blackburn shared a tip with us discovered when felting a FIBER TRENDS hat. Her daughter placed it on her head, then carefully took it off, blew up a balloon inside the hat and it dried perfectly. The balloon can be deflated when the hat is dry. Thanks, Kay!

Intimidated by charts? Sheila Ryle shared this information about on KnitU digest #1169 and granted permission to re-print: "Charts are representations of the stitches. Until the chart police decide which method of charting is the best, different publishers and pattern writers use different symbols, so you must check with the particular pattern you are using.

Don't try out your pattern on the actual garment, because if you have to keep ripping it out, the yarn will wear and it will show. Test out your pattern on a swatch. Screw your eyes up and look at the chart and compare it with a picture of the garment / stitch. The pattern should show.

Whether you are **knitting in the round or backwards & forwards**, remember that **every time you knit a stitch it appears on the back of the work as a purl**. Think of stocking (stockinette) stitch. On the knit row, you are looking at the smooth side of the work, but the side away from you is purls. When the purl side is towards you and you are working purl stitches, you are creating a smooth surface on the side away from you."

Sheila tells her knitting students to try new pattern stitches or patterns with an unusual stitch or technique on a swatch, using spare yarn. Or, try purchasing one sample ball rather than all the yarn needed for the entire project. You may dislike the stitch for some reason and decide that you would not want to knit a whole garment in that stitch -- you haven't spent a lot of money or wasted much time. Our thanks to Sheila!

Not sure how long to make a scarf? Peggy Maguire recommends placing a 60" tape measure around your neck to get an idea of what length you would like. Thank you, Peggy, for sharing this at the Laurel Highlands Knitting Guild meeting...

Have you noticed the national television news reporters wearing lovely scarves? Pattie Sweeney spotted a **fashion trend in how scarves are being worn**. Fold your scarf in half, and place around your neck. Draw the open ends through the loop at the fold, pull snugly for comfort, and voila! A very trendy look, which stays in place, works with any weight or type scarf, looks neat and keeps your neck warm. Thanks, Pattie -- this really works great for skiing, too!

March 2001 tips and ideas

Do you love hand-knit socks, but prefer to **work the cuffs with circular** rather than double-pointed needles? Expert sock knitter Sandy Kazmer recommends casting on sock yarn with straight needles, working a couple rows flat, then transferring to a 12" ADDI TURBO circular knitting needle. This prevents stretching the cuff edge and the stitches will slide more easily. When your sock is finished, the cuff edge can be seamed with your cast-on tail. Thanks, Sandy -- this information is particularly helpful for working with fingering weight yarn and size US 2 or 3 needles...



April 2001 tips and ideas
!!! our 21st anniversary tips & ideas page

Jane Armstrong has a clever solution for **keeping track of cables**. Jane makes a chain of knotted loops with a strand of yarn to correspond to the number of rows in her cable pattern repeat. For example, for a 6-row repeat rope cable, Jane would make 6 loops and place the first loop of this chain on her knitting needles to mark it as row 1. On each successive row, she advances one loop. When all the loops are gone, it's time to start with row 1 again and work the cable. Jane credits Meg Swansen as the original source. We tried this with a chain of CLOVER lock ring markers (\$5.25 per pack) and it works very well...

For a neat, elastic cast-on edge, Shanta Moitra recommends casting on with two needles of the same size required for the project held together. Shanta says this works well for heavily textured patterns...

For a jogless join in circular knitting: when adding a new color or stripe, prevent a jog at the joining point by lifting the right side of the stitch below onto the left needle and knit it together with the stitch. This action brings the rows into alignment...

When changing colors in ribbing: **To avoid purl "bloops"**, work the first row/round of a new color as if to knit instead of the ribbing sequence. Then resume ribbing and continue until the colors change again. Knit the first row/round again and switch to ribbing on the second round. This eliminates the "old" color from peeking through...

Attention, sock knitters! Joan Walsh tells us that she achieved a very even striping pattern with REGIA 4 "Jacquard" by **working an afterthought heel**. Joan credits Sheila Ryle with the idea for using this method. This technique, also called a peasant heel, is from "Mary Thomas's Knitting Book" (\$7.95, in stock on our bookshelf). The sock is knitted in the round in one piece to preserve continuity of the striped pattern, and the heel is added later when the sock is completed, in the same manner as the toe! We hope to have Joan's pattern for sale later this spring...



At a recent cables workshop for the Golden Dome Knitting Guild in Greensburg, PA, Rosemary Lucas suggested that **twisting the stitches on cable crossings** will make them more prominent. This technique works very well for alpaca and other drapery yarns to give a crisper appearance to the cablework. Another tip from the

workshop for **avoiding a gap between** the cable and the background pattern is to work into the back of the stitch following a cable to tighten up the space...

May, 2001 tips and ideas

XEROX Doc-It sturdy **plastic envelopes are great storage containers** (small ones for dpns & a catch-all for accessories, and larger ones for pattern books & swatches)...

To prevent holes when working intarsia, knit the first stitch with the tail to the left instead of to the right. When you knit the next stitch, the thread will cross on the back. This "cross" holds the stitch in place and keeps the stitch from growing. Even though the first stitch is crossed, the stitch looks normal from the knit side...

Cable needles are available in different sizes, in angled shapes, fish hook style or straight. **What kind of cable needle works best?** Actually, it is a matter of knitter's preference -- whatever feels comfortable to you. The angled needles have the advantage that the stitches won't slip off the needle as easily, so these are a good choice for knitters learning to work cables for the first time...

June 2001 tips and ideas

Lois Ribblet asked us to print information about **how to center a cable or motif** onto a knitted piece. Here's how: deduct the number of sts from the cable or motif from the total number of sts, then divide the remaining number in half for each side. For example, if the total number of sts on the knitted piece is 80 sts and you wish to center a 16 sts cable, subtract 16 sts from 80 sts to equal 64. Divide this number in half (32 sts). Now, work 32 sts in pattern as established, work the 16 sts of the cable, and work the remaining 32 sts in the pattern as established. Always remember to account for gauge, as cables have a tendency to pull in and you may need to add more sts to the background to achieve the desired width.

July 2001 tips and ideas

This method comes from Ingrid Reed, who gave us permission to re-print it from KnitU. Ingrid tells us that this technique **makes a neat "woven" seam** down each side, and both heels look alike. Our thanks to Ingrid for sharing this with us:

- Knit to last st, turn, slip 1, purl to last st, turn.
- Knit to slipped stitch, wrap it, turn.
- Purl to slipped stitch, wrap, and turn.

Always wrap in the opposite direction of your work; i.e., bring the yarn to the front on a knit row, and to the back on a purl row. Continue thusly until half the sts remain. Make sure you have an even number of wrapped sts on each side. Knit to the first wrapped stitch, knit it and turn. With the right-hand needle, pick up the wrap and leave it on the needle. Slip the next st, and purl to the next wrapped stitch, and do the same. When you get back to the wrap, knit it together through the back loop with the next stitch, turn, and pick up that wrap. Purl 2 together wrap and next stitch, on the other side. Continue in this fashion until you've finished each side.

Have you ever tried to buy a tape measure at an airport? Joan McAnulty of the South Hills Knitting Guild has a great solution — she **measures and marks a “ruler” along the edge of her take-along directions** for works in progress. This is a convenient, quick way to measure your work and a great idea for travel or portable knitting. Thanks, Joan

Colleen at Lane Borgosesia tells us that **fabric softeners are not recommended for use when washing synthetic yarns** as the fibers break down and the garment may stretch dramatically...

August, 2001 tips and ideas

Scarves knit from all weights & types of yarns and in a variety of textures continue to be a hot fashion accessory. **For matching ends on scarves**, begin and end with a few rows of double knitting over an even number of stitches: *K1, slip 1 st with yarn in front, return yarn to back; repeat from * across. At the end of the scarf, work a few more rows of double knitting and kitchener stitch the ends together. Remember to swatch beforehand to check gauge and location for the increases and decreases necessary for a smooth transition between the double knitting and main pattern stitch. When the scarf is finished, the double knit ends will be the same width as the main part of the scarf and the ends won't flare out or pull in. And, they will look alike...



For a neater finish along neckbands and vest or shell armbands, work one row of knit stitches (on the wrong side of work) after the pick up row. This provides a couture finish and works well with cotton and other summer yarns to conceal any loose spots resulting from the pick-up.

September, 2001 tips and ideas

Helen Williams, who enjoys knitting infant items for charity, tells us that she prefers to **knit the instep of baby booties** back and forth flat with four double pointed needles, placing each of the two sides on separate needles and the toe stitches on a third needle. Helen finds this technique puts less strain on the wrists. We thank her for sharing this helpful suggestion...

Ann Budd, Managing Editor of INTERWEAVE KNITS and one of our favorite technical experts, has **this very useful method for shaping**: “When working decreases as in armhole shaping, I sometimes place markers at the end of the needle to separate out all the stitches that need to be decreased; i.e., I count the number of stitches I’m supposed to decrease on each end, then place a marker. Then I blindly decrease every other row (or whatever the pattern specifies) until I hit the marker. I know when I hit the marker I’ve done the correct number of decreases. I’ve also used this trick for increases (such as along sleeves), especially when working with dark or hairy yarn that hides the increases”. Ann also has a unique idea for your gift tag for a knitted gift — add up the number of stitches lovingly knit into the project. You may be surprised at how many you’ve done...



October, 2001 tips and ideas

From Amy Detjen, as seen in the Old Pueblo Knitters newsletter September 2001: To **knit 3 sts together** into one, slip 2 sts tog as if to knit, slip one st as if to purl, then insert the tip of the left-hand needle from left to right into the three sts (the left needle is crossed over the right one), then knit the three as one. Amy says, “the best thing about this 3-into-1 decrease is that the center stitch remains on top (the surviving stitch). If you are doing a row of 3-into-1 decreases, it makes a nice line.”

November, 2001 tips and ideas

In **need of an embellishment** for the top of a knitted hat, but no pompom maker in sight? For an instant pompom, Peggy Dailey suggests wrapping yarn around a credit card to the desired thickness, catching the wraps with a strand of yarn and knotting, remove wraps; cut, fluff and trim. Peggy and Pattie Sweeney were seen at the Laurel Highlands Knitting Guild meeting trying this out -- it works nicely.

Thanks, Peggy, for proving once and for all, that shopping savvy and knitting expertise DO go hand in hand...

December, 2001 tips and ideas

Jackie Taylor of Scottsdale, AZ tells us:” Here is a tip about knitting which has nothing to do with acutally holding yarn and needles in your hand, but makes a tremendous difference.

When travelling, I always carry several light bulbs to use in the hotel room so that I will have good light for knitting/reading”. Thanks to Jackie for sharing this enlightening tip...

Caroline Mitchell of Pittsburgh, PA suggests cutting off the bottom from an oblong liquid laundry detergent bottle to place **inside a knitted tote bag** or purse. This will not only give a sturdy bottom, but will keep items like pens or keys from poking through the knitted fabric. Caroline also adds that you choose a brand of detergent with a scent you find pleasing...

OK, it’s getting down to crunch time and you are knitting up scarves for everyone on your holiday gift list. We can’t help you knit faster, but it may actually help to visualize finishing the garment really fast, especially when working with big needles.

We want to hear from anyone who has any other realistic solutions (cloning doesn’t count and no, the little tiny elves in the storeroom aren’t for rent)...

January, 2002 tips and ideas

Thanks to Leah Oakley of LaVergne, TN for sharing this knitting tip: to **prevent ladders** when knitting with two circular needles in the round in place of double-pointed needles (as in the currently popular book “Socks Soar”). Leah recommends that you knit the first stitch on the new needle, and once you’ve inserted the needle into the second stitch (ready to knit it), tug the yarn snug on the first stitch, and keep going. Leah says that this makes a big



difference in the appearance of the fabric, especially when you are going from a knit stitch to a knit stitch when changing needles...

When **selecting yarn** for your project, it is important to consider what element of the garment you wish to accentuate. For example, if you choose a cable or textured design, these stitch patterns look best when worked with an even, firm yarn. Tweeds and boucles work well with simple stitch patterns such as stockinette or garter. Kathy prefers seed or half-linen stitch for variegated yarns to minimize color stacking or striping. Always use a yarn which will give you the correct stitch gauge indicated on the pattern. Remember to check for the same dye lot.....



February, 2002 tips and ideas

In response to a suggestion about **checking for yarn scratchiness** on the inside of your wrist: “My friend, who is highly allergic to wool got the following great suggestion from The Fineline. “Wear” the skein of yarn next to your skin for a few hours; one good, tender place is your back at waist level (the skein would be held in place by any waistband). That’s how we discovered the regular alpaca wouldn’t work, but baby alpaca was fine”.

(Source: KnitU Digest V2001 #1827, posted by Jo-Anne Naples)

Marylou Butler of Addison, PA, wrote to our website:” I started a vest. After the ribbing, I was to increase 2 stitches. I did a M1 for the increase. On both M1’s, there is a hole. What did I do wrong? I lifted the stitch and put it on the right hand needle and then knitted it off. I didn’t twist it or anything. Will I be able to “fix” this? It is very noticeable”.

Marylou is **referring to the make 1 (M1) increase**. This increase requires twisting the stitch to avoid the hole that occurred when she simply place the yarn on the needle. For a left -slanting knit increase, with the right needle from the back of the work, pick up the strand between the last stitch knitted and the next stitch. Place on left needle and knit, twisting the strand by working into the loop at the back of the needle. For a right-slanting increase, with the left needle from the back of the work, pick up the strand between the last stitch knitted and next stitch. Knit, twisting the strand by working into the loop at the front of the needle. These increases may also be worked in purl stitch to maintain the pattern, remembering to twist the strand by working into the back loop.

To **“fix” the hole after the fact**, work a duplicate stitch to snug in the gap. This “fix” also works well on spaces that may occur when picking up stitches around the front and back neck...

Many knitters suffer from **chapped hands** during winter. Shirley Vogt of West Alexander, PA, has a solution: generously apply good old-fashioned Vaseline petroleum jelly or UDDERLY CREAM onto your hands and don cotton gloves at night before going to bed, for a moisturizing treatment while you sleep!

Large buttons are great for toddler garments because they are learning how to use buttons and it helps in the learning process. Be careful to sew them on very tightly so that

they will not fall off. Avoid buttons with sharp points or edges. There are lots of cute buttons on the market (such as stars) that may look darling for your design, but are not in the best interest of the child.

In the garment industry, ties around the neck are a “no-no” and do not meet industry standards for manufacturing due to the possible strangulation potential -- so no ties around hoods until past the toddler stage is a good idea...

(Source: KnitU Digest V2001 #1827, posted by Jane A. Button)

March, 2002 tips and ideas

Thanks to Dixie VanVorous for her suggestion to place each knitting/crocheting project into a clear plastic bag or container so that you can easily see the contents, along with the pattern you intend to use for the project. Dixie finds that the colors will inspire you more to pick up the project if you have it in view, plus everything is neat and in sight. She has five three drawer units which stack like a chest and fit into her closet just below the clothes, or can be used as a night stand to brighten up the room. Dixie has started spring cleaning, donating extra tools and yarn to a nearby retirement home...

March, 2002 tips and ideas, *continued*

Marsha Smolcic [e-mailed](#) our website with the following question regarding her project pattern: “**What does the reference ‘over multiple of 12 + 3’ mean?**”

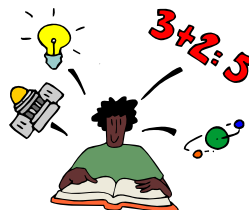
The knitting term “repeat” means a group of stitches worked more than once to form a pattern. “Multiple” refers to the number of stitches grouped together to form a pattern repeat along a row. In this case, a multiple of 12 stitches plus 3 more are needed to form a pattern repeat and achieve a balanced appearance. For example, 6 repeats would require 75 sts ($6 \times 12 = 72 + 3 = 75$).

The width of the knitted fabric can be adjusted by increasing or decreasing the number of repeats, then dividing that number by the stitch gauge to determine the actual finished width of the piece.

April, 2002 tips and ideas

You’ve spent hours knitting your favorite wool sweaters with loving care. Now is the time to launder your garments and **store them away for spring and summer**. This is especially important because moths and other critters are attracted not only to the fibers, but residues of dried food material as well. We recommend EUCALAN WOOL WASH for your woolies (available in eucalyptus and lavender scents).

This low sudsing, non-rinse formula allows natural lanolin to remain, providing a pleasing scent, conditioning for the fibers and protection against moths. Lisa Carnahan tells us to store our sweaters in cloth pillowcases after laundering to allow them to breathe...



To **freshen a washable sweater between launderings**, toss it in the dryer with a damp towel and tumble at warm temperature for about five



minutes...

When assembling your garments, check for loose or misshapen stitches on the public side. Use the tip of your tapestry needle to adjust the stitch by pulling slightly on the side of the stitch to redistribute the yarn. You may need to work back over one or two stitches for an even appearance. This is particularly important in intarsia work...

Check out the private side of your garments, too. Sometimes, you can discover a new pattern stitch or be inspired by what you see...

Be consistent in increasing and decreasing details throughout your project, using exactly the same methods. Good-quality edges & shapings and properly finished seams makes the difference between “home-made” and “hand-knit”...



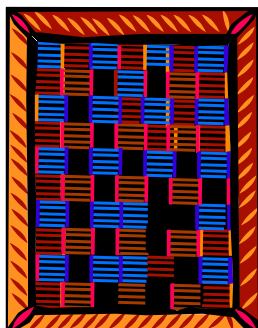
May, 2002 tips and ideas

How to read charts~

Stitch charts are appearing on more knitting patterns. Charts and knitting symbols are a universal form of knitting instructions used as an alternative to writing out stitch patterns. Each symbol represents a stitch as it appears on the right side of the piece. Each square represents one stitch, and there is a key to describe the knitting instruction for each symbol appearing on the chart. The rows are read from bottom to top. Right-side rows are read horizontally from right to left, and wrong-side rows are read horizontally from left to right.

May, 2002 tips and ideas *continued*

Colorwork stripe patterns are very popular this season. Many knitters prefer to carry the color(s) not in use up the side of the work, catching it every other row. **When working with three or more colors**, this can result in a bulky seam or a distorted appearance. Marilyn Watson tells us that some knitters on KnitU recommend cutting the ends instead, leaving a couple of inches which can be braided and tacked neatly in place. If desired, braid longer lengths on the outside of the garment as a design feature. This extra bit of yarn would also be helpful if mending is required later...



What does the term “yarn” mean? UK, Canadian and US knitting terminologies differ slightly. The term UK/Canadian “y fwd” means yarn forward; “yarn” mean yarn around needle. The US equivalent is “yarnover”. Other equivalents for UK terms are “tension” (US gauge) and “cast off” (US bind off)...

What does the term “selvage stitch” mean?

European magazines may refer to this as an edge stitch. Selvage stitches are used for neat edges on knit fabric. They provide stability and make it easier to seam garments. Selvage stitches are worked at the beginning and end of rows. This can be a knit stitch (garter), or knit on the right side & purl on the wrong side (stockinette). Sometimes, the first stitch of each row can be slipped as if to knit to create a chain selvage

(this is often used on sock heel flaps).

They are also worked on pieces that require no further finishing, such as scarves and afghans. In this case, the selvage is usually knit in a different stitch than used for the body, to keep the edges from curling. For example, on a stockinette stitch piece, 1" of garter stitch or seed stitch selvages may be worked as a border along all edges...

What is a “three-needle bind off”?

This easy bind-off method makes a seam directly from “live” stitches, and works especially well for shoulder seams. Transfer your stitches from holders and place them onto knitting needles. You will need three knitting needles in the same size -- two for the stitches and a third to bind off. With the right sides facing each other and the needle tips parallel, insert the right-hand needle (the third needle), into the first stitch on the front and back needles. Knit these two stitches together, Insert the right-hand needle into the next stitch on the front and back needles and knit them together -- two stitches are now on the right-hand needle. Bring the first stitch on the right-hand needle over the second stitch to bind off. Repeat this process until you have bound off all the stitches on both needles. Fasten off.

For a decorative seam, work with the the right sides facing outward...

June 2002 tips and ideas

A member of the South Hills Knitting Guild recently shared a helpful hint with us which she learned from knitting instructor Jane Zachary of the SHKG: “**Color wins over texture**”. When working with a multi-colored or variegated yarn, select a simple pattern stitch to show off the beauty of the yarn. When working with cables or highly textured knitting stitch patterns, select a solid color yarn in a light or medium shade to best show off the stitchwork.

June 2002 tips and ideas *continued*

For small projects, it is easier to work with shorter length straight knitting needles. The 9” CLOVER bamboo needles are very handy, or try adding point protectors to one end of 5” or 7” length double-pointed needles. These are more compact and are ideal for take-along travel knitting, small items like dishcloths, or embellishments (such as knitting petals for LISA KNITS “Bloomin’ Beauties” hats)...



Last month, we included directions for a three-needle bind-off. Dixie Van Vorous wrote and asked, “**What is the difference between the look of 3-needle bind off and kitchener stitch?**” Good question, Dixie!

Three needle bind-off is worked from “live” stitches and results in a knitted seam for added stability. The Kitchener stitch is worked with a tapestry needle and the yarn tail from the knitted piece. It is a way of weaving together edges without a seam so that the knitted fabric appears to be a continuous row of stockinette stitch. It is used for grafting stitches in places where a thick seam might rub the skin and be annoying, such as sock toes and underarms of sweaters that have been knit in the round. If you are unfamiliar with Kitchener stitch and would like to learn this technique, we recommend knitting a pair of socks and practicing on the toes. Here’s how:

Place the stitches to be grafted onto two knitting needles (half the number of stitches on

each needle) and break the working yarn, leaving a tail approximately twice the length of the seam. Thread the yarn tail through the tapestry needle. Hold the two knitting needles parallel in the left hand with the needle points facing right and the wrong sides of the knitted fabric facing. Hold the tapestry needle in the right hand and position the stitches near the points of the knitting needles.

Use the tapestry needle to draw the working yarn through the first stitch on the front needle as if to purl, and leave it on the needle. Draw the yarn through the first stitch on the back needle as if to knit, and leave it on the needle. Continue the seam, trying to match the gauge in the knitted piece.

Step 1 -- draw the working yarn through the first stitch on the front needle as if to knit, and slip it off the needle

Step 2 -- draw the yarn through the second stitch on the front needle as if to purl, but leave the stitch on the needle

Step 3 -- draw the yarn through the first stitch on the back needle as if to purl, and slip it off

Step 4 -- draw the yarn through the second stitch on the back needle as if to knit, and leave the stitch on the needle

Repeat steps 1- 4 until all stitches are joined.

July 2002 tips and ideas

Having trouble **keeping track of stray pins and needles**? Gini Dillon suggests glueing a square of magnetic tape onto the top of your knitting gadget box. Place pins and Chibi finishing needles on top of the magnet to keep everything in sight...

Inez Baker places the pattern for her current project in a plastic sheet protector. She keeps the knitting needles used for the ribbing in the same pocket to remember what size was used...

July 2002 tips and ideas *continued*

What's the best way to **sew buttons onto handknits**? One of our finishing experts, Joyce Bischoff, sews her buttons in place with a good quality sewing thread in a matching color, keeping a small size double-pointed knitting needle between the button and the knitted piece. After the button is secure, wrap several times underneath the base of the button. This allows a little space to accommodate the thicker knitted fabric. If you would like to learn more fabulous finishing tips from Joyce, please register for her "Intermediate Knitting" class on July 27th...

Those **pesky yarnovers**~

Lace knitting is especially popular for summertime projects. Some knitters experience a problem with the appearance of the size of the yarnover, depending on whether the yarn over is between two knit stitches or between a knit stitch and a purl stitch. Joan Schrouder recently offered this recommendation to Knit U Digest V2002 #2078 and graciously gave her permission for us to share her pointer:

(When working a yarn over between a knit and a purl stitch), "You can try wrapping the

yarn in the opposite direction for your yarnover before a purl. Instead of bringing the yarn between the needles and then wrapping over, wrap over the needle to the front first and then immediately do your purl. That should shorten up the amount of yarn used.” Joan also recommends vigorously blocking lace / openwork patterns:

“Many times a stringent blocking will even things up immensely”. Kathy adds: don’t forget to do that gauge swatch -- try wrapping both ways and blocking your swatch first to see which looks best.

When **shaping openwork patterns**, please remember the buddy system. All increases should have a paired decrease to keep stitch count constant. For example, if you are shaping a neckline and a yarnover is eliminated, you must also eliminate its “buddy” decrease. If there are not enough stitches to work the pairs, work in stockinette stitch or the background pattern until there are enough stitches. The reverse is true when increasing stitches for sleeves.

Thoughts on **twist stitches**~

The slip, slip, knit decrease is the recommended method of choice to “mirror” a K2tog decrease, so that the decreases will be slanted appropriately -- ssk to the left, K2tog to the right. This visual effect also applies to working twist stitch patterns.

To work a right twist (RT), knit 2 stitches together but do not slip off needle, knit the first stitch again, then slip both stitches off the needle together. To make a “mirrored” twist in the opposite direction, work the left twist (LT) by knitting the 2nd stitch on the needle through the back loop, knitting the first stitch and the second stitch together through the back loop, then slipping both stitches of the needle together...

August 2002 tips and ideas

Need to **organize your circular knitting needle stash**? Here’s a great tip from our customer, Linda Sporlein. Linda keeps her circular needles in the original packaging and uses a large stitch holder to gather circular needles of the same length in numerical order (inserting the holder through the hole in the top of the package). She keep her double-pointed needles together with 16” circular needles of the same sizes, since these may be needed for the same project. Thanks, Linda, for sharing your idea...

August 2002 tips and ideas *continued*

For **binding off in the round**, when you have one stitch remaining, knit one more stitch into the first bound-off stitch. Pull the right stitch over the left stitch, cut yarn and pull through loop. Weave tail through inside of ladder for a couple inches to secure.

For binding off when working flat in rows, at the last stitch, pick up both the stitch from the previous row and the stitch you would normally work, then bind them off together. This action pulls the last stitch down from the ribbing.

Cast off in pattern when binding off ribbing. If a looser bind off is desired (ex., when knitting socks), pull each stitch after you knit it, gently stretching between the two needles. Then, pull the right stitch over the left stitch, but do not tighten.

Sock patterns worked in the traditional manner from the cuff down may also be worked

beginning at the toe. To achieve the same effect, do the directions in reverse. Most lace patterns look just as good when going in the opposite direction, and charts can be reversed.

September 2002 tips and ideas

Mary Ann Butler places two stitch markers **when working increases** on alternate rows as a helpful reminder. Mary Ann keeps the double markers at the beg of the round when working an increase round, and only one for rounds without increases. We think you could also link CLOVER locking stitch markers or join coil-style markers in two different colors -- one color for increase rounds, the other color for no increase rounds.



One of our customers recently asked **how to add a collar** to a basic cardigan. We've done some research and here's what we found (warning: math and accurate gauge required).

First, measure the entire neck edge of the garment. Then multiply this measurement -- less 1 inch -- by your stitch gauge to determine the number of stitches to be picked up for the collar. For example, if the neck edge of the garment measures 16 inches and your stitch gauge is 5 sts per inch, this would be your calculation: $16'' - 1'' = 15''$; $15 \times 5 = 75$. 75 sts are to be picked up for the collar.

With the **wrong** side of the sweater facing you, pick up 75 sts evenly spaced around the neck edge, starting .5" from the right front edge and ending .5" before the left front edge (this is why you subtract the 1" in your calculations).

It is a good idea to work collars in a non-curling pattern stitch such as ribbing, seed, moss or garter stitch. Make an increase about an inch in from each edge after working about .25" on the collar. Repeat this increase every .25" until the piece is the desired depth.

A smoother fit will result if you plan to work a couple of short rows in the back section of the collar (called a "stand"). Short rows give extra depth in the center of the piece without changing the depth at either end. If you notice small gaps in your work where the short rows were turned, there are several methods of wrapping the sts to close the gaps. When you come to a gap, a fairly simple way to tighten it up is to pick up a stitch from the row below and put it on the left hand needle. Knit 2 together (the original stitch and the one just placed there)...

October, 2002 tips and ideas

Wash your hands each time you pick up your knitting to avoid "soil stripes" in your work (especially white or ivory). Sometimes, the soil doesn't wash out completely, so prevention will go a long way. Store your knitting in a knitting tote or plastic bag. Work with a towel in your lap when working with fuzzy yarns, to avoid getting fiber residue on your clothing...



Time and care spent on finishing are well-spent. Most knitting patterns give the order in which to assemble your garment. General directions are: sew shoulder seams, sew sleeves

to body, sew side seams, sew sleeve seams. This may vary according to the design, but following the order given in the instructions will insure best results. Sew the sweater together completely before blocking to achieve smoother seams and a more professional look...

When **substituting yarns**, make sure to purchase adequate yardage of the substitute. Yarn companies include yardage or meters on their labels. Purchase yarn by **yardage**, not ounces or grams. Yarns are not created equal! When in doubt, purchase an extra skein. The extra yarn may be used to make a matching accessory (hat, purse) or may be used for a “stash” project such as a sideways scarf.

November, 2002 tips and ideas

Many of you know **how critical gauge is** to obtain a properly fitting knit garment. You need to match the stitch gauge required in your pattern to get the correct width. This usually can be adjusted with a change in needle size and working a test swatch. Remember, to save time, take time to check your gauge.

Knitting is an intensely personal activity with many styles of knitting. The biggest **difference between knitters' tension** occurs with row gauge. Generally, if the row gauge is slightly off, you can knit to the required length measurement. There are two situations in which row gauge matters. One is when there is angle shaping (such as raglan sleeve or neckline decreases), and the other is when working a chart (such as intarsia or stitch pattern), which begins and ends at a specific point. You will need to adjust your shaping to accommodate your gauge.

There is another important consideration with row gauge -- how much yarn will be required to complete the project to the desired measurements. If your stitch and row gauge are the same as listed in the pattern, you should feel comfortable purchasing the amount of yarn suggested in the pattern materials. If your row gauge is larger, you may not need as much yarn. However, if it is smaller, you will need to buy extra yarn. It is best if you purchase more yarn when beginning your project. This is one more reason to do a test swatch and check your gauge. And, yes, save a label -- not only will you have the exact yarn name, color and dye lot, but care instructions, too.

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, you run out of yarn. **Matching dye lots can be a problem**, particularly with handpainted yarns which are so popular. If you do run out and need to resort to another dye lot, save a substantial amount from the original dye lot, then work 2 rows from the new dye lot, 2 rows from the original dye lot, etc. This usually blends well, and will save the project.

November tips and ideas *continued*

Thanks to Donna Hosmer for this clever suggestion: place **unruly or slippery yarns** that have a tendency to fall apart inside a clean sock. This will keep them contained and clean while working your project. What a great use for mismatched socks...

One knitter asks: “**What is a temporary cast on?**” This is a cast on which will be removed later -- it is ideal for situations where you may wish to knit the ribbing after the

body of the garment has been completed. For example, if you are not certain that you will have enough yarn to complete your project and may need to add a ribbing in an accent color, or would like to work a decorative edging around the entire edge of the garment. Here's how:

With an appropriate size crochet hook to correspond to your yarn and a small amount of slippery cotton in a contrasting color, chain the number of stitches needed plus a few extra. With the knitting needle required for the body of your garment and your project yarn, knit into the back of the crochet stitch the required number of stitches. Work the garment in the usual manner. When completed, with the ribbing size needle, pick up the stitches that are on the crochet chain. Pull the edge stitch of the crochet to undo the chain stitches. The resulting "live" stitches will work for ribbing or any other edge treatment.



One of the most frequently asked questions in our shop concerns those **pesky jogs when joining circular knitting**. Here are two techniques for smoother rounds:

On the cast-on edge, turn and knit back (as for straight knitting) on the first row, and *then* join, making certain that the edges are not twisted. This will eliminate the "dog leg" uneven join, and will reverse the cast-on edge to look like garter-stitch bumps. Be certain to establish the ribbing or pattern correctly in straight knit on the first row, and then join for circular knitting.

When binding off in the round, eliminate the uneven join by inserting the needle into the first bound-off stitch, making a stitch, and then binding it off as the final bound-off stitch. This technique pulls up the first portion up to make it even with the last stitch...

December 2002 tips and ideas

One of our December newsletter traditions is to include knitting tips and ideas from our favorite customers, in-house experts and instructors. Here are some "purls of wisdom" we thought you would enjoy. Our thanks to everyone who participated!

From Joan Walsh, NYC, NY:

"This is really a '**dumb or dumber**' tip. It came about when I started my swatch for the Hanne Falkenberg Pygmalion kit. I misread the stitch pattern instruction, and knitted when I should have purl. The swatch looked and felt awful! I tried again, made the same mistake; I tried a third swatch, this time in a smooth worsted weight, and again made the same mistake. It still looked awful.

Well, I was DUMB for not noticing the name of the stitch -- *Shaker Rib*. Rib stitched usually have a purl stitch, and that should have been my first clue.

And I was DUMBER because I didn't read the instruction carefully; it said "K1 * K1 in the stitch below, P1*. Repeat from * to *". And in each of the three swatches, I repeated "K1, K1 in the stitch below".

Finally, I looked again at the instructions and figured out what was wrong. I tried a fourth swatch and it looked and felt fine.

I've decided that the next time I make a swatch that doesn't look right, I'll write out the stitch pattern (by hand!) and see if I'm missing something!"

December 2002 tips and ideas *continued even more*

From Mary Ann Beattie, sock knitting expert:

Work the heel stitch pattern on the toes of your hand-knit socks, as well as your heel for a comfortable fit. The heel stitch is: * slip 1, K1, repeat from * around (for use when working in the round over an even number of sts). On the next round, K the slipped sts and slip the K sts of the previous round.

From Nancy Premoshis:

When **doing a long tail cast on**, make knots to indicate the size of the needle used for swatching (i.e., 6 knots equals a US size 6 needle).

From Kathy Zimmerman:

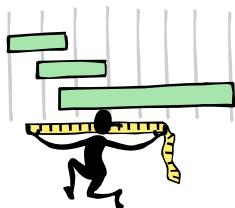
When **picking up neckband stitches** in a garment made from novelty or bumpy yarn, work a row of slip stitch crochet around the neck opening and then pick up the slip-stitches. This makes a very neat, attractive neckline.

When **working openwork (lace) patterns**, a good stitch chart can be infinitely easier to read than lengthy directions. A chart shows the design of the pattern stitches in graphic form, making it easy to see the relationship of the increases to the decreases. For every yarn-over increase, there will be a corresponding decrease; for every two yarn-overs, one double decrease or two separate decreases. The stitch chart will also reveal whether a decrease should slant to the left or to the right. Depending on the pattern, this can be very important. Keep an edge stitch -- one without increases or decreases --to avoid mixing the shaping decreases/increases with the decreases/increases in the openwork pattern. Sometimes, the chart may show only the right-side rows, and the stitches on the wrong-side will be worked as they appear (knit the knit stitches, purl the purl stitches).

January 2003 tips and ideas

To **aid in row counting**, leave the cast-on tail of your work the same length as the finished fabric. Advance the tail every row by one stitch, or every 5th row depending on the pattern stitch. You will have a quick assessment of how many rows you have worked, and an approximate measurement of how much knitting is still required...

Even with the best-laid plans, there are occasions **when you may run short of yarn**. Holly Wiggins recently shared a “creative camouflage” idea. If you are short a few yards for the neckband, for example, add a eye-catching touch of contrasting color in the band, as a stripe, perhaps in an accent yarn. A band of textured stitch, like seed stitch, or embroidery embellishment can also fool the eye. If you are earlier in the project, planned Fair Isle inserts or subtle stripes are very useful to blend different dye lots. Thanks, Holly! Hope we don't need to use this tip too often...



More magazines and yarn companies are using stitch pattern charts in lieu of lengthy written directions. If you are **working a chart with multiple cables**, Inez Baker has a suggestion for keeping track of the specified cable

crossings. Using a copy of the original, highlight each cable with colored pencils. For example, a right cross cable would be indicated in blue and a left cross cable in red. Using the same color stitch markers to correspond on your work is also helpful...

Tracey Earhart recommends **using #15 needles for felting projects**, even when the pattern calls for #11 or #13. This will speed up both your knitting and the felting process, too, so be sure to check your garment frequently...

Tips and Ideas February 2003

Most knitting projects represent an investment in time and money. It pays to be an informed customer when **purchasing yarns**. Here are some pointers:

- Check yarn labels for the shade and dye lot number and purchase all yarn of each color in the same dye lot. This can be crucial for hand-painted yarns.
- Check the yarn label for washability and other care information. If combining different yarns, make sure that they are compatible for cleaning. If care information is not listed, wash and block your gauge swatch to see how the yarn responds.
- Check the yarn label for gauge information. The manufacturer generally recommends a suggested needle size and gauge. It is wise to stay within two sizes of the recommendation.
- If you choose to substitute yarns, select yarn as close as possible to the original in weight and type. You may wish to purchase a single skein for test swatching to see how the gauge and appearance compare with those of the pattern.

Dixie Van Vorous asks, “Do you have instructions for **making simple crochet/knitted buttons**? I would like to make them for articles that are for younger children (safer than regular buttons if falls off).

Kathy’s reply: “I usually use the cabone plastic rings in a slightly smaller size than the desired button. With an appropriate crochet hook size for your yarn, chain one and insert it through the ring. Work single crochet into the hole of the ring until full and it is tight when you insert the hook into the hole. Cut yarn & draw up the sts (you may need to sew). One side looks like an ‘inney’ and the other an ‘outey’ so choose whatever you like.” Thanks for your question, Dixie!



The general “rule of thumb” for **picking up stitches** is to pick up every stitch or row on bound-off edges, and 3 out of 4 on straight edges. This will usually accommodate the stitch and row gauge ratio. There are situations in which this formula may not work out neatly and a buttonband may flare (the result of picking up too many stitches for the actual gauge). What then? Try picking up fewer stitches over a 4-5” section of the buttonband edge. Work an inch of ribbing and examine the appearance. Essentially, this method uses the actual knitted piece as a swatch to determine how many stitches are needed for a tidy buttonband.

When picking up stitches on a bound-off edge, do not insert the needle under the bound-off stitch. Insert the tip of the right hand needle into the center (looks like a “V”) of the first

stitch of the last row worked. Continue in this manner across the edge, picking up one stitch in each stitch across.

March, 2003 Tips and Ideas

Multi-gauge patterns are becoming more popular. These are patterns which work the same garment in more than one gauge, allowing for easier yarn substitutions. Simply work out your gauge in the desired pattern stitch with your chosen yarn and the recommended needle size on the ball band, and follow the directions for the corresponding gauge.

March, 2003 Tips and Ideas *cont.*

One of our customers, Peggy Maguire, recently asked us for advice for **working with variegated yarns**. To avoid stacking or striping of colors, try working K1, P1, every time you come to the lightest color in a multi-color yarn, working the rest in stockinette, reverse stockinette (purl on public side, knit on inside of garment) or a textured pattern. Seed stitch or half-linen stitch patterns are good choices.

Here's how:

Seed Stitch (worked over an odd number of stitches)

Every row: *K1, P1; repeat from * to last st, end K1.

This stitch is reversible and provides an interesting textured pattern.

Half-linen stitch (worked over an odd number of stitches, slipping all sts purlwise)

Row 1 (RS): *K1, slip 1 with yarn in front; repeat from * across to last st, K1.

Rows 2 & 4: Purl.

Row 3: K2, *slip 1 with yarn in front, K1; rep from * to last st, K1.

Repeat these 4 rows for pattern.

For best results, use a needle one - two sizes larger for this stitch, since it does compress.

April, 2003 Tips and ideas



***** **HOW MUCH YARN IS ENOUGH?** *****

Many knitters choose to substitute yarns. To determine the quantity of yarn needed for the project, locate the number of balls required in the "materials" section of your knitting pattern. Find the number of yards/meters per ball or skein of the required yarn, also usually listed in the "materials" section.

Multiply the required number of balls times yards/meters. Make sure that you are consistent -- use either yards OR meters, and be careful not to interchange.

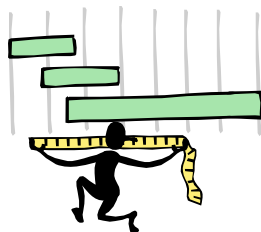
For example, if the pattern specifies 7 balls, and each ball contains 200 yards, then $7 \times 200 = 1400$ yards, the total yardage required. Determine the number of yards/meters per balls in your chosen substitution yarn and divide the total yards/meters requirement by the yardage/meters per ball. If this number results in a fraction, which is usually the case, round up to the next highest number...

***** **WORKING WITH RIBBBON YARN** *****

- Slinky ribbon yarns slide off the ball very easily causing tangles or knots. Place a tube cut from an old stocking around your ball of ribbon so it won't unwind too quickly.
- Avoid tugging on ribbon yarn. Most ribbons have a great deal of stretch and can distort if pulled too tightly. Gentle tension is best.
- Avoid over-twisting. A ribbon will have the best appearance when it lays flat.
- Wash your hands before knitting. Natural oils may stain or stiffen the fibers used in the ribbon yarn.
- Bamboo or wooden needles will give you more control if working with a slippery ribbon

May 2003 Tips and Ideas

According to Jackie Taylor: Sometimes a knitting project does not need all the items normally carried in your knitting bag and you leave the house with just yarn, needles, and a printed pattern. The first thing I do with a pattern is mark half and whole inches along the edge of the pattern. In this way, I always have a measuring tool with me. No more depending on the measurement of my hand, pulling out a credit card or dollar bill for a makeshift measuring tool. **Just refer to your pattern.**



To estimate **yarn needed for long tail cast-on**, wind the yarn around the knitting needle to be used for the cast-on ten times. Unwind and measure the length. Use that length for every 10 sts to be cast on...

For a **buttonhole opening** that runs perpendicular to the rows of the buttonband, here's Kathy's simple three-row version:

Row 1: Work 2 tog in pattern as established, yarnover (yo) 3 times.

Row 2: Work into first yo, drop remaining yo's.

Row 3: Work to buttonhole, knit into next stitch in the row below (into the yo).

- Planning where to place buttonholes can be done by rows (on vertical bands), stitches (on horizontal bands) or by inches
- When the neck is worked first and the bands are to be picked up and knit horizontally, work the band with the buttons first and use it as a guide for buttonhole placement
- Space buttons 2" - 2.5" apart, close enough to prevent gaping
- The top and bottom buttonholes should be 1/2 inch from the top and bottom, with the others spaced evenly in between.
- Work the buttonhole slightly closer to the body of the garment rather than exactly in the center to prevent pulling of the band.
- The band should be wide enough to show around the button
- Select a button that is appropriate for the weight of the knitted fabric
- The buttonhole should be narrower than the width of the button -- the buttonhole will stretch slightly to accommodate the button
- When picking up the front band stitches, the first stitch picked up should look like

it is almost falling off the sweater

- If you are unsure about how many stitches to pick up, use your sweater front for a gauge swatch. Pick up a small section of stitches and work in ribbing pattern for a 1" length
- An edge that puckers means that you have picked up too many stitches; one that pulls means that you have picked up too few.

June 2003 Tips and Ideas

Joan McAnulty recently shared this knitting tip for **working socks**. When working the foot section of fingering weight socks, Joan uses double-pointed needles in the same size used for the cuff to work the top of the foot and double-pointed needles one size smaller to work the sole of the foot. Each half is worked on a separate set of needles (for example, three double-pointed needles in US size 2 for the top section and three double-pointed needles in size 1 for the sole. This gives a denser sole which resists wear...

June 2003 Tips and Ideas *cont*

***** **PICOT BIND-OFF** *****

Interesting edgings can transform a simple garment into a sophisticated one. Joyce Bischoff recently requested information on picot bind-off. Picot bind-off will provide a decorative finish, and works very well on shawls. The picots can be made on every stitch, in which case the edge will flute, or they may be spaced as needed to make the edge lie flat. Here's how:

Insert the right-hand needle into the first stitch on the left-hand (LH) needle, and knit a stitch but do not slip the stitch off the left needle. Slip the new stitch onto the LH needle, then make a second new stitch as before. Cast off four stitches, then slip the remaining stitch back onto the LH needle. Repeat along the row, making two stitches and casting off four each time.

***** **A QUICK BIND-OFF** *****

Binding off a piece of knitting can be difficult when using an irregular yarn with bumps or eyelashes. Try using a crochet hook in the same diameter as your knitting needle. Put the hook through the first loop on the left-hand (LH) needle and knit the stitch onto the hook. Knit the next stitch onto the hook, & pull the new stitch through the first one. Continue in this manner to the end of the row, and pull the yarn through the last loop on the hook. This makes a tight, even edge and avoids frustration.

Our sock instructor Tracey Earhart shared this information (thanks, Trace!). According to the Danish book *Bondestrick*, the **length of the knitted foot** is correct if the heel and toe meet when wrapped around the wearer's fist. The knitter is advised to begin toe decreases when the foot of the sock in progress is laid around the flat palm of the wearer's hand and the needles meet the heel. This rule may be useful if no measuring tape is handy.

A knitting **needle is also a convenient measuring device**. Traditional double-pointed knitting needles are generally 7" or 8", glove needles are 5" or 6". If you know the length of your needle, you can use it as a guide for foot measurement to give a close guess...

***** **MORE ABOUT SOCKS** *****

--- The main adjustment required for socks is the foot length. Unless otherwise stated, most toe shapings add approximately 2" to the length of the foot, so adjust the foot length of the sock accordingly

--- Changing the size of the needles or yarn to adjust the gauge is often all that is required to size a sock larger or smaller

--- Once you understand the basic construction of a sock, you can begin to consider other stitch or color patterns. Most often the pattern is interrupted by the heel and continue only on the top of the foot.

July 2003 Tips and Ideas

***** **GETTING ORGANIZED** *****

Use a fishing tackle box to organize your knitting supplies. Tackle boxes come in various sizes and has many compartments from small to large to store markers, cable needles, stitch holders, etc. You can pick one to fit your personal needs...

Purchase a 3-foot retractable measuring tape and keychain. Attach small folding scissors to the keychain. This is a valuable addition to your knitting kit...

Make an enlarged copy of your purchased pattern or chart for your project. Place it in a plastic binder sheet. It is easier to handle and will leave your original pattern booklet clean. Write notes about the pattern as you knitted it for future reference...

July 2003 Tips and Ideas *cont.*

***** **YARN CONVERSION CHART** *****

Have you ever looked at a pattern and discovered the yarn specified is in ounces, but the yarn you want to use is in grams? Both knit to the same gauge, but you are left wondering how many balls/skeins to buy. Perhaps this little chart, found in an April 1968 issue of *Workbasket Magazine* will help:

1 ounce =	28.4 grams
1.5 ounces =	42.6 grams
2 ounces =	56.8 grams
3.5 ounces =	99.4 grams
4 ounces =	113.6 ounces



In addition to the weight and knitted gauge, you will also want to **consider yardage per ball/skein** as you make a yarn substitution. This will insure the most accurate assessment of yarn needed for your project...

To **keep your soft cover knitting reference books in good condition**, have them spiral bound and laminated. Staples and other large office supply companies provide this service, generally for around five dollars. (from Nicky Epstein, *Knit 'n Style* August 2003)

Our customer Claire Staples purchases enough **extra yarn to make matching socks** for her handknit garments, either the same yarn or complimentary lighter weight sock yarn. Smart shopping, Claire!

For **repairing a simple cable with a wrong twist**, Joan Schrouder shares a tip from Maggie Righetti: It doesn't even matter whether you drop the right half or left half of the cable. Just run those sts down to the infraction, push/pull it to the back/front to fix, then ladder back up with a crochet hook. Thanks, Joan!

When **repairing a more complicated cable**, just drop the stitches of the cable down to the point in need of repair. Using two short double-pointed needles at least one size smaller than the needles used to knit the garment, re-work that section to correct the error. Adjust stitches manually to even out appearance once repair has been completed...

When **keeping track of multiple repeats** in a pattern set some dice on a table next to you and rotate them to mark your rows. Standard six-sided cubes work just fine but gaming specialty stores sell non-standard dice, some with up to 20 sides. (originally suggested by Kim Salazar, re-printed from June 2000 newsletter of The Knitting Guild of Tidewater)

August 2003 Tips and Ideas

Our knitting know-how instructor Nancy Caldwell shares a tip learned when knitting our shop model Einstein coat from Sally Melville's *The Knit Stitch* using SKACEL's "Ethno" yarn: When **working garter stitch fabric**, use a slip stitch edge treatment at the beginning of every row on all the pieces. This will make seaming much easier and the resulting fabric will appear much neater. Begin with yarn in front, slip first stitch purlwise (as if to purl), take yarn to the back, knit across row. Nancy highly recommends this book to knitters of all skill levels. Sally's new book, "The Purl Stitch" will be available later this fall. We will gladly accept advance orders -- reserve your copy now!

September 2003 Tips and Ideas

Stitch markers are a wonderful tool to help knitters keep track of pattern repeats. Select the smallest size that will slide easily along your needles. Markers that are too large can stretch the adjacent stitches...

When **sewing seams** in handknit items and garments, use a blunt needle in order to avoid splitting the yarn. We recommend the bent tip CLOVER Chibi needle...

Here's an interesting **finish for a neat V-neck**, gleaned from a vintage knitting book: Work a row of loose single crochet around the neck edge. Then, with the desired size knitting needle, pick up the neck stitches, inserting the needle through the back loop of each crochet stitch. Work ribbing in the usual manner...

It's the season to begin knitting Christmas stockings for the holidays. We hope you'll be inspired by our mid-September trunk show from INTERWEAVE PRESS to knit one of two (they are a wonderful way to welcome a new family member). Handknits deserve the best

finishing and a well-constructed lining will help retain the stocking's shape. Holiday print cottons are readily available at fabric stores. Make a pattern from the knitted or crocheted piece after it has been blocked. Lay the piece on clean paper (brown wrapping paper is fine) on a flat surface. Carefully draw around the piece, using a hard pencil. Cut paper patterns 1/2" outside the outline (seam allowance). Trace onto fabric and cut out piece. Place right sides of fabric together, stitch all side seams, leaving an opening at the top of the stocking. Insert lining into assembled stocking inside out so that right side of fabric shows. Fold top of lining back and neatly tack into place at corresponding point at top of stocking, using a hem stitch. Tack toe in place. This extra finishing touch will preserve your heirloom for many holidays to come...

Two different dye lots? Although we all know we should purchase sufficient yarn to avoid this problem, it is something that occasionally happens. Use double-pointed needles, so you can work from either end. Alternate a row from each dye lot for an inch or two, then continue on with the new dye lot. This will eliminate a definite line, and will help blend the two dye lots. This technique will also reduce striping and color stacking when working with hand-painted yarns...

***** KNITTING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS *****

One of our customers recently asked us for advice on **adapting a crewneck sweater for the layered look** that's popular this season. Scoop neck sweaters look great when worn over a turtleneck. A scoop neckline is the same as a crew neck, only lower. Begin the neck shaping approximately 1" - 1.5" lower than for a standard crewneck, which typically has a 2.5" - 3" front neck drop. After the center stitches have been bound off, work the neck shaping decreases on every row instead of every other row for a shallow scoop. When working the bind-off row of the ribbing, decrease one stitch at each side of the center front stitches to pull the ribbing in against the body, maintaining the integrity of the pattern stitch...

October 2003 Tips and Ideas

When **knitting in the round** on circular needles, you may come to a portion of your pattern where purling several rows is required. Try turning your work inside out and knitting these rows instead. Knit stitches are usually smoother and more regular, therefore easier for most knitters to do. When the purled portion is completed, turn your piece right-side-out and continue...

October 2003 Tips and Ideas *cont*

When **working decreases or increases** in reverse stockinette stitch, try working them on the wrong side (knit side). It is easier to see (and count) the left and right slanting decreases, especially those pesky "through the back loop" ones...

***** FROM THE "CABLE QUEEN" *****

When **working cables in regular intervals** (ex., every 8 rows), it's easy to lose track even if you are using a row counter. Try placing a small coilless brass pin or CLOVER lock ring marker in the row where you do cable twists. This helps assure that you work the cable every 8 rows, not 6 or 10. This also works well as a quick-count method...

***** DISASTER RESTORATION *****

Karen McCullough recently asked us, “How can I **un-shrink a hand-knit baby blanket?**” We did a little research and came up with this item, which appeared in the newsletter of the Greater St. Louis Guild August 2002:

“Despite all your care, somehow or other, a sweater which wasn’t meant to go in the washer somehow found its way there and felted. Can you rescue it? Here’s an idea that has worked, to **SOME** extent and on **SOME** projects. Re-wet your sweater and masage hair conditioner into it. **DO NOT** rinse the conditioner out, and gently stretch the sweaters in all directions, and air dry”.

If that doesn’t work, try cutting out and sewing mittens out of the felted piece. If you can’t bear the idea of cutting up your sweater, our own Lisa Carnahan recommends stuffing it and turning it into a pillow **OR** making it into a stylish tote bag...

***** HOW ABOUT A LIFT? *****

Jackie Taylor recently e-mailed us: “What is the **most invisible increase**”? Although there are several methods which look very neat, you might try a lifted increase. This involves lifting the stitch from the row below, knitting it by working into the **HEAD** of the stitch (not the center), then knitting the stitch on the needle. This technique can be used to make either left-slant or right-slant increases: the increase is made on the right side of the stitch **before** working the stitch, and/or the increase is made on the left side **after** working the stitch. When making the increase on the left side, insert the needle tip **2 rows below**. You must knit the stitch first, before making the increase, being careful not to pull the original stitch out.

Lifted increases can be made on the purl side of the work also. To avoid pulling of the knitted fabric, increases should not be made in the same stitches without a 3-row interval.

Another invisible increase is the m1 (make one). This involves lifting and knitting the running thread between two stitches. This technique may be worked on the purl side also. There are three variations to this method:

Left Slant: insert the RHN (right hand needle) tip under the running strand from front to back between the next 2 sts, lift strand onto the LHN (left hand needle), and knit into the back of the strand. The facing strand leans to the left.

Right Slant: insert the LHN tip from back to front , lifting running thread between 2 sts. With RHN tip, knit into the front strand, twisting the running strand into a stitch. The facing strand leans to the right.

Open: insert RHN from back to front, picking up the running strand and knit it without twisting. This method leaves a hole much like a yarnover (yo). It can be an effective design feature.

For illustrations and more information, we recommend “The Knitter’s Companion” by Vicki Square (\$19.95, spiral bound), one of our favorite resources.

October 2003 Tips and Ideas *cont more*

Nancy Shroyer of Nancy’s Knit Knacks gave us permission to share her knitting tip from KnitU Digest V2003 #2600, written in response to a question about installing cardigan sweater zippers. Our thanks to Nancy for sharing this information:

“You need to **buy ‘jacket’ zippers that open at the bottom**. You can get them in both plastic and metal - I like the plastic ones better. Available at any sewing store.

Don't worry about the length. Finish making your sweater, then measure the length of zipper you need. If one doesn't come in your size, buy one that is a bit longer. Cut it about 1/2" longer than you need. Using a needle nose pliers, pull out the extra teeth. Using a matching thread sew a "stop" at the top, and you have a custom fit zipper. Your main problem will be finding a color that best matches. They don't seem to make the opening zippers in the same number of colors that other zippers come in.

For a great zipper edge, I use the same size needle the body of the sweater was knit with. Pick up 75% of the stitches along the edge (pick up 3, skip one). KNIT one row, bind off. Do the same on the other side. With the zipper closed, pin it in place on both sides, then un zip it so it will be easier to sew in. Hand sew it in with small back stitches from the front in the groove between the pick up row and the garter ridge. I have not had good results with machine stitching them in".

Sue Schroettinger recently asked, "There are so many different types of **cast-on methods**. How do I know which one is best for my project?"

You're right, Sue! There are over 27 methods that we have heard about, and probably more. Actually, when beginning your project, you should approach it from the standpoint of how you want the finished garment to look. Most knitters use a basic long-tail cast on, which is good all-purpose choice. The long-tail cast-on forms a loopy edge on one side (it looks like a purl stitch), while the other side is smoother and flatter.



Most knitters choose this smoother edge as the right side (public side) of their work. However, it's up to you -- just be consistent and work all the edges to match. The important thing to bear in mind is that the cast-on edge is the foundation of the garment. The cast-on affects all the rows to come, so you want the neatest edge possible. Make sure the tension of all the loops are even. If your cast-on is too tight, you may try casting on holding two needles together, and removing one of them before beginning the knitting OR using a needle that is a little larger. Conversely, if the cast-on edge is too loose, try a smaller needle to avoid flaring. Remember, it is better to make sure that you get off to a good start, so take time to cast on neatly. Learn to read your knitting -- take a good look periodically to make sure everything is tidy and there are no boo-boo's.

Now on to **types of cast-on methods**. If you are doing an ethnic type of sweater, such as a Fair Isle or gansey, you may select a decorative cast-on. Picot cast-on also gives a decorative edge, good for cuffs, or baby items. A double strand of yarn can be used for a firm edge for activewear, such as a ski sweater. Directions for these and other can be found in a good knitting reference book, such as *VOGUE KNITTING: THE ULTIMATE KNITTING BOOK* (\$38.95, hardback).

Pay attention to the **properties of the fiber** you are using. Synthetics and natural fibers work well with the long-tail cast-on method. Cottons, silks and fibers that are less resilient require special consideration. Since they have a tendency to relax, use a needle 3 sizes smaller than the body for the cast-on. Cast on 10% - 20% less stitches than used for the body to compensate for this tendency. The cable-cast on method works very well to stabilize cotton yarns.

November 2003 Tips and Ideas

Sheila Ryle passed along this tip from Edie Beck: When **working a 3-needle bind-off** at

shoulders, purl the live sts together instead of knitting. The seam will lie flatter and give a neater appearance. Thanks, Sheila!

Joan Walsh shared these tips with us, which she originally learned from designer Lily Chin. Thanks, Joan!

- When working a cardigan, leave the “tail” of your cast-on for picking up the stitches of the front buttonband. Attach another ball of yarn at the side edge which can be used for the side seam.
- How long of a tail to leave for cast on and seaming? For the cast on, three times the number of stitches in inches is sufficient. For the side seam, 1.5 times the length of the body to the armhole in inches.

December 2003 Tips and Ideas

To **slip a stitch knitwise**, insert the needle into the stitch as if you were going to knit it, and slip it onto the right hand needle without working it. To slip a stitch **purlwise**, insert the needle into the stitch as if you were going to purl it, and slip it onto the right hand needle without working it...

Cast on stitches for each sleeve on the same needle, using a separate ball of yarn for each. The, work both sleeves at the same time. You'll save time and be sure of getting the same measurements and shaping as well...

Ribbon yarns continue in popularity throughout winter and into spring. When **working with flat yarns**, pin the yarn to the ball every so often and let it hang freely to allow it to untwist...



Knitting in the round with a circular needle or set of double-pointed needles lets you **work in continuous rounds without seams**, creating a tubular fabric. All rounds are worked without turning the work. The right side always faces you, so the stitch pattern must be adapted accordingly. To work stockinette stitch, knit every round. To work garter stitch, alternate knitting one round and purling one round. When working ribbing, knit the knit stitches and purl the purl stitches as they face you (this is called working the stitches “as they appear”). When casting on, be certain that stitches are not twisted on the first round, as there is no fix for this problem on subsequent rounds. Place a marker to mark the beginning of each round and slip this marker on every round. To join a new yarn when working circularly, drop the old yarn leaving a 3” tail, begin the new strand leaving a 3” tail. Weave in the tails with duplicate stitch to conceal the join...

Jane Armstrong recently shared this method for **working a three-row buttonhole**, which she learned from Lily Chin:

- Row 1: Work to the buttonhole placement, yarn over, work 2 together, maintaining pattern.
- Row 2: Work to the buttonhole, purl the buttonhole yo through the back loop (tbl)

--- When your yarn runs out and you need to attach a new strand, do this at the start of a row. Tie the new yarn around to old one with a slip knot near the needle.

The tails may be inconspicuously hidden in the garment seam when assembling.

--- When working separate areas with separate balls of yarn (as in intarsia knitting), twist yarns around each other to prevent holes in the work. On right side rows, bring new color behind old color; on wrong-side rows, bring new color in front of old color.

--- Knitting instructions are always given for the smallest size with larger sizes in parentheses. If only one set of figures is given, it applies to all sizes.

Garment measurements are based upon body measurements plus ease for comfort. In order to get the best fit, measure a garment that fits you the way you will want your handknit to fit and use that measurement.

***** FELTED KNITTING REINFORCEMENT *****

Need to **repair your felted slippers**, tote bags, or other items? Tracey Earhart recommends needle felting, using special needles with barbed ends to poke into wool making it bond together. To reinforce something that is felted, you simply apply some roving or wool in a matching color to the area (inside and outside) and poke away both inside and outside. BROWN SHEEP Lamb's Pride worsted or bulky weight works well in Tracey's experience - - open the strand and give it a slight untwist before beginning. Needle felting may also be used to cover seams.

January 2004 Tips and Ideas

The new book "Celtics and Arans" has prompted many questions from our customers about cable techniques. We thought it would be timely to include some "how-to's" to answer some frequently-asked questions about cables, yarn, and other knitting stuff...

— "I love the look of cables, but those charts are intimidating. **How do I work a cable? How do I read the charts?**"

Cables are mysterious, but if you break them down row by row, stitch by stitch, they are fun and challenging. Knitted cables are achieved by crossing a stitch or group of stitches over another stitch or group of stitches. Cables are most often worked on the right side of the knitted fabric. While there are numerous variations, the basic action remains the same.

The stitches can be crossed from left to right (right cross, abbreviated RC) or right to left (left cross, abbreviated LC). The desired number of stitches are slipped from the left hand knitting needle onto a cable needle. For a right cross, the stitches are slipped to the back of the work while the desired number of stitches are worked, then the stitches from the cable needle are worked. For example, if you are working a right cross over 6 stitches, slip 3 sts from the left hand needle (LHN) onto the cable needle (cn) and hold in back, knit 3 sts from the LHN, then knit 3 stitches from the cn. The completed cable is a 3/3RC (3 knit stitches crossed over 3 knit stitches, crossing to the right). For a left cross, the stitches are slipped to the front of the work while the desired number of stitches are worked from the LHN, then the stitches from the cn are worked. If you are working a left cross over 6 stitches, slip 3 stitches from the LHN onto the cn and hold in front, knit 3 stitches from the LHN, then knit 3 stitches from the cn. The completed cable is a 3/3LC (3 knit stitches crossed over 3 knit stitches, crossing to the left).

The stitches may also be purled, resulting in a 3/3RPC (right purl cross) or 3/3LPC (left purl cross).

In our experience, the largest cable we've seen was worked over 12 sts (6 sts crossed over 6 sts). The more stitches crossed, the tighter the resulting knitted fabric, risking a too dense appearance and distortion. Conversely, the smallest cable is a 2-stitch cable. An odd number of stitches may be crossed — 1 stitch passed over two, 2 stitches crossed over three, etc. Fascinating variations of familiar themes can result from mixing textured background stitches to create new cables.

when working with a yarn containing angora or mohair, try putting it in the freezer about an hour before knitting to reduce shedding. This also works wonders if you need to un-knit (rip out)...

Sue Schroettinger recommends using **clear buttons on the wrong side** of the garment when attaching buttons with holes. Sue uses 2 plies of embroidery floss in a matching color to sew buttons into place. This is a secure finishing method — thanks, Sue!

February 2004 Tips and Ideas

Recently, Dawn Sherwood asked us, “My pattern directions **call for a left twist, working the second stitch through the back**. How do I do this?”

A left twist is formed by crossing one stitch over another. Here's how: Skip the first stitch on the left-hand needle. With the right-hand needle **BEHIND** the left one, insert the right-hand needle into the back loop of the second stitch on the left-hand needle. Wrap the yarn as if to knit and pull it through.

Another variation is to knit the second stitch as in the first version, then knit the first and second stitches through the back loops.

***** KNITTING TIPS AND TRICKS *****

Our February knitting tips come from Tracey Earhart, our resident felting expert, who offers some **suggestions for more successful felting**. Tracey tells us, “Felted purses have become **THE** winter project. Some knitters have had trouble with the pockets of the purses bias-ing, when sewn on and **THEN** felted in the washer. We noticed that in the problem cases the yarn used — which is excellent for felting — was a 'single' (meaning one strand, not plied), as in **CLASSIC ELITE** “Montera”, **REYNOLDS** “Lopi” and **BROWN SHEEP** “Lamb's Pride”.

Try knitting your pocket beginning with the yarn off the opposite end of the skein, or knitting the pocket in the opposite direction; i.e., start at the top and knit down, if your purse is knitted from the bottom up. This would put the twist of the yarn in two opposite directions ('S' and 'Z' twists) when they are attached, and should stop the pocket and purse from biasing. When sewing the pocket on, remember to pick up a 'bar' in the knit stitch of the purse. This should help to keep the side seams straight. If the pattern calls for two strands, start one from the inside of the skein and one from the outside of the skein.

The second option is to felt the purse and pockets separately. Use quilters thread or yarn in the same color as the purse and a tapestry needle. You can bury your stitches in the center of the thick felted wool and pull your stitches snugly to the inside of the purse. The stitches

will be hidden. You can use a felting needle to touch up the seam. The felting needle can also be used to set or 'baste' your pocket into place after it is felted and before you stitch it on.

The third option is to sew the pockets onto the inside of the purse and then felt. All knitters in love with the wonderful felted knitting should have a set of FELTING NEEDLES** in their little knitting gadget box. They come in handy for repairs, basting, embellishing and touch up. ALSO using a PLYED yarn- Like BROWN SHEEP "Nature Spun" or PLYMOUTH YARNS "Galway" instead should help with the problem. Always position pockets carefully."

February 2004 Tips and Ideas *cont*

And, Tracey recommends **A SCARF TO MATCH**: "So, you made your friend that lovely felted hat and you think a warm scarf to go with it would be wonderful. TRY THIS. Get one skein of the wool you used for the hat, and pick out a co-ordinating Fizzy/eyelashy/fluffy yarn. You'll need about 100-150 yards, depending on width and length you choose. Cast on 15-20 stitches onto #US 17's and knit all stitches throughout. The fluffy eyelash lays on top like a halo over the warm wool and makes the scarf so snuggly AND it matches up with the Hat (and the purse) perfectly. They really do turn out so lovely!" Our thanks to Betty Bennett for her inspiration and for sharing this original idea with Tracey. Betty used BROWN SHEEP's Lamb's Pride worsted weight and KERTZER "Multi-Fizz" with outstanding results...

March 2004 Tips and Ideas

According to the *Transportation Security Administration*, dated 12/18/2003, you may have, as carry on, or as checked baggage, knitting needles and crochet needles when traveling on domestic flight airplanes. To read the list, go online to http://www.tsa.gov/public/interapp/editorial/editorial_1012.xml The website also tells you where to check if you have further questions. To be safe, check that website, and with your airlines company, before going to the airport, just in case the law has been changed.



***** HEALTH CORNER *****

Originally appearing in the February 2004 newsletter of the Professional Knitwear Designers Guild, here are a few moderate hand exercises that are meant to stretch muscles and tendons before you begin or during a long session of knitting. They are NOT an aerobic workout for the hands; be gentle!

1. **Hand massage:** With the thumb of the left hand, massage the palm of the right hand. At the same time, wrap the fingers of the left hand around the outside of the right hand and massage. Massage for one minute. Repeat with opposite hands.
2. **Clench and Fan:** Clench your hand into a tight fist and hold for five seconds. Release smoothly, extending the thumb and fingers into a fully stretched position and hold for five seconds. Repeat five times for each hand.
3. **Thumb Stretch:** With the left hand, gently pull the thumb of the right hand away from the hand and down toward the forearm. Hold for five seconds. You should feel the stretch in the base of the thumb, palm side. Repeat for the left thumb.

Five repetitions, alternate thumbs.

4. **Wrist Stretch:** Hold the right hand in front of the body, palm facing out, fingertips up, fingers together. With the left hand, grasp the right hand's outstretching fingers and gently pull the fingers back toward the body. Hold for five seconds. You should feel the stretch in the wrist area. Repeat for the left wrist. Five repetitions, alternate wrists.
 5. **Wrist Circles:** With the hands in front of the body and elbows at a comfortable angle, gently rotate the wrists. Five repetitions in each direction.
- Good job! Now you are ready to knit in comfort...

March 2004 Tips and Ideas *cont*

An e-mail customer, Pat from Johnstown, asks, "Most baby afghan patterns say to use a circular needle. My stitches don't look even. I just started to knit it on regular needles. What difference, if any, will this make?"

Kathy answers: There are usually more stitches required for an afghan than can fit comfortably on a straight needle. Even though you are working back and forth just as you would with straight needles, the circular knitting needle will distribute the weight of the yarn as your project progresses. Even a baby afghan can get pretty heavy as it gets larger. Using a circular needle will save stress on your wrists.

"What is **the best way to change colors** when working a striped scarf or sweater to avoid weaving in all the ends?" If you will be alternating the colors every few rows, carry the unused colors up the edge of your piece. Catch the yarn not in use by wrapping the working color around it. If you are working with multiple colors that are used only every few inches, try to conceal the wraps by keeping a selvedge stitch (knit the first and last stitches on every row, adding these stitches if necessary to maintain your stitch pattern multiple). If you are carrying multiple colors, it may be neater to cut the yarns and weave in the ends to eliminate a bulky edge or seam. In this case, try weaving the cut end with a duplicate stitch to hide it neatly.

One of our instructors, Nancy Caldwell, recommends always slipping the first stitch of every row as if to purl **when working garter stitch scarves** to eliminate any flaring at the edges. Nancy learned this tip from Sally Melville's book, *The Knit Stitch*, which can be found on our bookshelf...

April 2004 Tips and Ideas

Knitters know it's important to **take care of your hands**. Creams and lotions can soften and replenish dry, cracked skin. Be sure your skin is damp before applying creams to seal in the moisture and increase the effectiveness...

"I'm **working a textured pattern** sweater which calls for short row shaping at the shoulders, but the pattern stitch looks uneven and awkward. What can I do?"

Short rowing, a very useful technique, results in a neater appearance and a better fit at the shoulders. Try working one extra or less stitch for a better appearance. Take careful notes to do the same number of stitches on the front and back of the garment.

“How long should I make my scarf?” The great thing about scarf knitting is that there are no hardfast rules. Scarves can vary in length from 40” to 60” or longer, depending on the whim of the individual knitter. Do whatever pleases you.

April 2004 Tips and Ideas *cont*

Joan McAnulty e-mailed us, “I’m set to cast on for a sweater that has a 2X2 ribbing and with the pattern I’ve written a note, “cast on as Kathy Z suggests for 2X2 ribbing”. But I can’t find what your suggestion is for 2X2 ribbing. Which cast on should I use?”

Kathy’s response: “I don’t have a specific cast on method for 2X2 ribbing (aka K2, P2 ribbing), but I do follow Janet Szabo’s recommendations in her book, *“The ‘I Hate to Finish Sweaters’ Guide to Finishing Sweaters”*. Set up the 2X2 ribbing by casting on a multiple of 4 sts plus 2. If the pattern doesn’t call for this multiple, work the ribbing on this multiple and adjust the number needed for the body on the last row of ribbing worked. Begin and end the row with K2. When the ribbing is seamed using the mattress stitch method (my preferred technique), one knit stitch from each edge will disappear into the seam, leaving a continuous 2X2 rib. Janet’s book it is well worth the read for lots of professional finishing pointers.” *The ‘I Hate to Finish Sweaters’ Guide to Finishing Sweaters* is available on our bookshelf (spiral bound, \$13.50).

TAHKI / STACY CHARLES offers sound advice for achieving the **best results with novelty yarns**; in particular, multi-colored or printed yarns in their collection such as their beautiful new gauze-like ribbon “Rosa” (\$9.25, 50 grams, 54 yards, 50% polyamide/20% linen/30% viscose). When using these fibers, you may notice color irregularities in your knitting. TAHKI recommends that you knit from two different balls simultaneously. Start with the first ball and knit one row, and use the next ball to purl in the next row. Continue changing off every two rows throughout the garment to avoid problems with color stacking or unwanted striping...

May 2004 Tips and Ideas

“Ribbon yarns are so beautiful. How do I **work with** them?” This season, there are numerous ribbon yarns available to handknitters. If the put-up on the yarn is in a hank, hand winding into a ball is recommended rather than using a ball winder. Simply knit these yarns as you would any other yarn, and the ribbon will curl naturally into shape. While there is no need to keep these yarns flat while knitting, these yarns have a tendency to twist. To minimize this problem, place a pencil or straight knitting needle into the center of the ball, hold the needle horizontally, and gently pull on the yarn from the outside. The ball will rotate the needle without any additional twisting.



If the yarn is particularly slick (such as COLINETTE YARNS “Mercury”) or tangles easily (sequins or eyelash), it may be helpful to place a rubber band around the ball when you are finished working for the day to prevent it from falling apart or tangling in your knitting bag. Some knitters report success with placing the ball of yarn in a small ziploc bag, cutting

a corner in one end and pulling the yarn through the hole.

May 2004 Tips and Ideas *cont*

Blocking no miracles

We are sometimes tempted to correct a knitted piece that is too narrow by blocking it, pinning to the desired measurements, hoping it will be the shape we wanted. It may look great before removing the blocking pins / wires but all too often will when worn, fall to 2" longer when worn without any additional width at all. This is particularly true if the piece was not knit to a firm enough gauge.

This question appeared in a recent Knit U post: "I am knitting a summer top with Brown Sheep's Cotton Fleece (80% cotton/20% wool). What is the **best way to block out the pieces?**" Joan Schrouder gave us permission to print her response. Thanks, Joan!

Joan's suggestions: "Wash, rinse, spin out excess water, lay flat to dry, pulling edges smooth. Use blocking wires if necessary. Cotton sometimes dries stiffly when done like this, but getting the edges smooth in preparation for seaming may be preferable.

After the garment is sewn/knitted tog, you can dunk in water again, squeeze out and then dry in the dryer which should soften it. Some like to partially dry in the dryer, then take it out while still just slightly damp and lay out to measurements. You can try different ways to see what you like and that work well.

Some knitters don't bother pre-blocking the pieces, but do the sewing first, then block the final garment. If the edges are already pretty smooth and the size right-on, and the particular stitch patt doesn't seem to require blocking, then skip that part.

You can also do steam-blocking either pre- or post-seaming, but never do it on knitting that hasn't been recently cleaned as the heat will permanently set in any oily substances (hand lotions, cookie crumbs <g>, etc.)

If you still have your gauge swatch, you can try any of these methods on it, which is a good idea anyway when working with unfamiliar yarns/fibers. Many times, you'll find that it may not make a huge difference which method you choose, so the whole process will become less daunting. On the other hand, it'll help you avoid those unexpected surprises that could doom an otherwise fine piece of knitting.

"The back piece of my sweater came out too narrow. Can I fix this by blocking?" It can be a temptation to correct a knitted piece that is too narrow by blocking it, pinning to the desired measurements, hoping/praying that it will be the shape we wanted. It may look great before removing the blocking pins/wires but all too often will when worn, fall to 2" longer when worn without any additional width at all. This is particularly true if the piece was not knit to a firm enough gauge. It is best to avoid this problem by **checking your gauge** frequently while the work is in progress. Transfer the knitting from the needle onto a piece of cotton yarn smaller in diameter than the working yarn and take the relaxed measurement. Don't be afraid to unknit if necessary — it's better than knitting a beautiful sweater that you can't wear because it doesn't fit correctly...
June 2004 tips and ideas

You've probably heard the term "Superwash" used daily in your yarn shop. So, **just what**

is “**Superwash**” anyway? “Superwash” simply means that the fine scales of the wool’s fiber (yes, it applies to wool only) are covered with a very fine layer of synthetic resin. This resin prohibits the fibers from interlocking as much, and felting less when washed (since felting is NOT desired on all designs worked out of wool). Wool garments equipped with Superwash can be machine washed on Delicate at up to 40 degrees. Please note, the information on the label will indicate the correct washing temperature for each yarn.
(original source May 2004 newsletter SKACEL COLLECTION, re-printed with permission)

“How do I **keep the cast-on edge neat and flat when starting cables?**” Kathy answers: Ah, the dreaded cable flare! The most important thing to understand is that this occurs because of the difference in gauge between the cable and the edge. The best information I have read regarding the topic of starting and stopping cables appeared in an INTERWEAVE KNITS Winter 1999 “Beyond The Basics” article by Mary Spanos. Mary recommends this trick: cast on half the number of stitches needed for each cable, then pick up the remaining stitches from the back of the stitches on the first row of knitting (i.e., the purl bumps on the backside when using long-tail cast on). For more information, this technique was used in my Cable High-Neck Tank in the current Summer 2004 issue of INTERWEAVE KNITS and the increase method is explained in detail on page 12.

July 2004 tips and ideas

***** SLIP STITCH KNITTING -- EASY, FAST, AND FASCINATING *****

Would you like to add texture and color to your knitting, but want to keep it simple? Beautiful effects can be achieved **with slip-stitch patterns**, when worked either in a solid color or in 2 or more colors. Stitches are slipped holding the yarn in front of the work (facing the knitter) or behind the work (away from the knitter). This is typically abbreviated as “wyif” (with yarn in front) or “wyib” (with yarn in back).

The resulting knitted fabric is denser and firmer than stockinette stitch, so select a knitting needle one or two sizes larger than you would when working the same yarn in stockinette stitch. Slip-stitch patterns tend to draw the rows in more tightly, so more rows will be needed to reach the desired length. Pay special attention to gauge -- do a swatch, wash or block it, and measure your work frequently to re-check.

Donna McGranahan of SKACEL COLLECTION shares this tip: “When **working with chenille yarns**, keep the smooth side of the pile towards you to control any problem with worming. Strip away fibers from the core of the strand and knot at the end to prevent shedding”. Lisa Carnahan also tells us that you can get a fluffier outcome with thick eyelash yarns by working them against the pile. Thanks, Donna & Lisa

Are you travelling, and forgot to pack scissors for take-along projects? No problem! Heather Kalidin **uses the cutter on a dental floss container** when scissors aren’t available -- this works very well. Thanks, Heather!

July 2004 tips and ideas *cont*

Delicate lace knitting is making a comeback. Before beginning your project with

fingering weight yarn, Shanta Moitra recommends that you **practice working the pattern stitch** with a heavier weight yarn and larger needles to master the pattern and/or stitch chart. This will also save wear and tear on the project yarn, as re-knitting may be avoided. Of course, you will still need to swatch for gauge accurately with the project yarn. Jane Armstrong recommends that you place markers at the end of each pattern repeat -- this helps in troubleshooting missed yarnovers or decreases if the stitch count is incorrect. Thanks, Shanta & Jane

August 2004 tips and ideas

***** SCARF SAVVY *****

Michelle Hoke shared this information about how best to **flatter your features with a scarf**. This information is based on information which originally appeared in FIRST magazine, 3/8/04 issue. Thanks, Michelle!

For a square face: a scarf tied in a knot distracts from a broad jawline and softens angular features

For a heart-shaped face: a scarf wrapped around the neck with one side draped over the shoulder adds volume below the chin, making a narrow jawline appear wider and a broad forehead look proportional

For an elongated face: a scarf work snugly around the neck and tucked into a coat adds flattering width to the sides of an elongated face

For a round face: a scarf wrapped once around the neck with both ends hanging loosely in front of the body draws attention downward and makes a round face appear longer and slimmer

September 2004 tips and ideas

Thanks to Lynette DiDonato, LeeAnn Schrock and Marsha French for sharing their knitting tips with us! Lynette brushes thick eyelash or fuzzy yarns on fancy flip flops, trims, etc. **with a toothbrush to restore fluff** after washing or if they get wet.

LeeAnn Schrock has a clever way to **check for a smooth join in circular knitting**. Before connecting the cast-on join, place Clover lock ring markers into a stitch on the cast-on row every 10 stitches (or one pattern repeat if you are doing lace). After joining, re-examine your work to make sure the cast-on row stitches are not twisted. The lock ring markers should hang downward from the needle.

Marsha French makes a chain of different colored open-coil stitch markers or colored paper clips. When working a complicated stitch pattern, she assigns each pattern stitch row to a **different color marker**. She moves this "reminder" as each row is completed. When she picks up her work, she knows that if her chain is on the blue marker, for example, she must be on row two because it has been designated for that color. Marsha tells us that this works great for lace patterns...

November 2004 tips and ideas

"What does it mean when the pattern says to 'knit into the row below'?" This is a term

usually seen with brioche stitches. You work the stitch by inserting the tip of the right-hand needle into the center of the stitch in the row below, work as if to knit, then drop the unworked stitch off the left-hand needle without working it. The new stitch will catch two rows of knitting.

This type of stitch generally results in a denser knitted fabric, so you may wish to work it on one size larger needles than you would use for stockinette stitch (knit one row, purl one row). This is true for slip stitch knitting, which also results in a thicker fabric.

Kathy's **yarn selection** tip: Furry, fuzzy, drapery or novelty yarns, particularly with more than one color in it, look best when worked with simple pattern stitches to let the beauty of the yarn grab the attention. In general, the simpler the yarn, the more complicated, lacy or textured the pattern stitch you can use; the more complex the yarn, the simpler the pattern stitch should be.

Be sure to **read the entire sentence in the pattern** before beginning the knitting or crochet instruction. Pattern directions may contain more than one instruction per sentence...

December 2004 tips and ideas

One of our holiday traditions at Kathy's Kreation's is to present knitting tips from our favorite customers and "Girl Friday/Saturday". Happy Holidays!

Sue Schroettinger: Not sure you have enough yarn to work two more rows? When the end of the ball is nearing, fold the strand in half and loosely knot at the mid-point. If you come to the knot before you complete the row, you won't have enough yarn to complete another row.

Tracey Earhart: instead of wringing out items **when hand laundering** knits, use a large spaghetti colander. Run water over the garment until no suds remain, let stand and allow excess water to drain. This works well for items that you don't want to agitate or yarns requiring gentle handling (like angora, which is so popular this season) and for rinsing out felted items. Tracey also sets aside a salad spinner to use for hand washing small items like mittens, hats, socks -- works great to spin dry.



Joyce Millsagle: when **working a stockinette swatch**, include a section of seed knit/purl at the lower right hand corner, with the number of purl bumps equal to the size needle used for the swatch. Experiment with more than one needle size if necessary to get the best look for the knitted fabric and the correct gauge -- for medium weight yarns, work 20 rows on one size needle, work a garter ridge (knit one row on wrong side) or work a row in a contrasting color to mark the change in needle size, then work another 20 rows with the larger or smaller size needle, depending on the desired look.

Susan Zylka: if you like to **purchase yarn "on speculation"**, keep a notebook or journal for planning projects. Take a 6" length of your "speculation" yarn, tape it into your notebook on a separate page, along with suggested gauge information, washing instructions, and total yardage purchased. Take the notebook along to your favorite local yarn shop when deciding on a pattern. If you sew, the yarn sample is very helpful when selecting co-ordinating fabric.

When knitting a fine gauge sweater, attach flat buttons on the inside of the neckline. Make a decorative matching scarf with fine loops along the center inside edge which can be attached to the buttons. The scarf can be worn securely in place as a companion piece.

***** KNITTING TIPS *****

Despite the best efforts of designers and publishers, pattern typos do happen. Sue Schroettinger reminds us to look ahead and “**do the math**” before beginning your pattern to make sure the numbers of stitches jive. It is not only important to check the stitch multiple, but the numbers for armhole, neck, and sleeve shapings.

When **embellishing with duplicate stitch**, Sue works the duplicate stitch in vertical columns, as horizontal columns may distort the fabric. This is especially important with yarn that is slightly textured or tweedy.

When **seaming garments** made with textured yarns such boucles, Sue recommends the slip stitch crochet method, which is much easier than sewing with a tapestry needle. This technique is also useful when easing a set-in sleeve into its “cap”.

When **blocking ponchos** or sweaters, Lisa Carnahan places the garment under a ceiling fan to help it dry quicker. Could it be that Lisa occasionally has deadline knitting?

Our thanks to Sue and Lisa for sharing their helpful hints...

***** YIPES, STRIPES! *****

When **working narrow stripes**, carry the color not in use up the side of the work, twisting around the working yarn at the beginning of the row. This avoids cutting ends and extra finishing later on...

***** WORKING WITH BIG NEEDLES *****

When **working with large needles**, take care to work your stitches on the thickest part of the needle to get the correct gauge. Working too close to the tip of the needle will result in tight stitches, making it difficult to move the stitches freely on the needle...

February 2005 Tips and Ideas

***** FRINGE MADE EASY *****

Here's an easy way to **make fringe** the same length. Cut a piece of cardboard *half* as long as the fringe length you desire. Wrap your yarn around the cardboard as many times as needed, keeping the strands next to each other as you wind. Cut the yarn all the way across the edge where you began wrapping to get even lengths...

Shanta Moitra recently shared a tip for neat **selvedge edge**. Shanta credits Horst Schultz as the original source of this technique: Knit into the back of the first stitch on the left-hand needle. Work across stitches on needle to just before the last stitch. Bring yarn forward and slip the last stitch as if to purl. Turn work, knit into the back of the first stitch on the needle, and work the next stitch giving the yarn a little tug to tighten the stitch.

Shanta's mother-in-law taught her to weave a few yards of yarn left over from a sweater project into the body seam. Extra yarn will be available if needed for mending. Since the

extra yarn will be laundered with the garment, it will look the same if fading occurs. Thanks, Shanta, for passing along this helpful advice...

As many of you already know, there is no standardization when it comes to knitting **needle sizing** in the US. Although The National Needlework Association is pushing for some type of standardization, the Craft Yarn Council's hook and needle manufacturers have agreed to make metric (millimeter/mm) sizing more prominent on the packaging. More prominent labeling of metric sizing, which is an actual measurement, in addition to the US sizing, may help eliminate questions. Always be aware that different types of needles may result in differences in gauge, and choose needle size accordingly. And, take time to save time, check your gauge...



March 2005 Tips and Ideas

Having trouble **fine-tuning your gauge**? Betty Lou Glasso, recommends trying different types of needles (bamboo, plastic, metal, different manufacturers, etc.) when doing gauge swatches, because there can be enough subtle change to make a difference...

Tracey Earhart turns **double-pointed knitting needles into short straight regular needles** by placing CLOVER point protectors on one end of the needle. Stitches won't slide off. This works great when teaching children, as the shorter length fits more easily in their hands...

Inez Baker has a tip for **identifying luggage** on your next trip. Make a pompom or tassel with brightly colored yarn and secure to the handle. This worked well when her church group travelled by air to England and lessened time in baggage pick-up...

Babies love **soft toys**, and knitted blockss are safe! Use leftover yarns or gauge swatches to create blocks. Just sew six equal size squares together and stuff with washable fiberfil. Extra crochet granny squares work nicely, too. Thanks to Mrs. Bernice Worthington for the idea...

***** KNITTING NOTIONS *****

Experiment with your knits! Try embellishing your projects this season with notions. Pre-beaded tape, charms, or rings can add trendy pizzazz to necklines. Antique or flea market finds include vintage brooches and jewelry accents to serve as closures for wraps, jackets and "purse jewelry". Recycled beads can be used as embellishments on garments. Necklaces or eyeglass chains can be used as shoulder straps for bags. BERROCO's current pattern books feature dog chains for purse handles.

Some stoles feature dropped stitches that are unravelled down the length of the garment. Weave decorative, fabric or metallic ribbon through the ladders. Experiment with a knitting spool to create cords or braids to weave through eyelets.

We would love to hear from our customers about unusual embellishments, closures, or use of notions in your knits...

April 2005 Tips and Ideas

From Karen McCullough: **Books on tape** are a wonderful knitting companion, even when doing a challenging project. Karen always has an extra CAPS FOR KIDS hat to “take-along” when travelling, in the event she gets stuck in traffic, runs out of yarn for her main project, loses her pattern, etc. There is nothing worse than having the time to knit and no knitting!



Looking for more **fiber in your knitting diet**? Cotton and silk are excellent choices for spring knitting because of the “wicking” property of these fibers. They will draw moisture away from the skin, leaving you cool.

We recently received an e-mail from Elaine, who asked about gauge, “When you do not have enough stitches to the inch, will the garment be too small or too large?” Kathy responded: “If you do not have **enough stitches** to the inch, the garment will be smaller. You will need to try a larger needle to get a bigger gauge. Sometimes, if you are just a little bit off, a different kind of needle (metal, plastic, bamboo) can make a difference. If you have more stitches to the inch than needed, the opposite holds true. You will then need to try a smaller needle to get a tighter gauge”.

April 2005 Tips and Ideas *cont.*

***** SURVEY SAYS *****

There are as many reasons to knit as there are knitters. We asked our instructors and customers the question, “Why do you like to knit?” Here’s a sampling of what they said, in our unofficial top ten list:

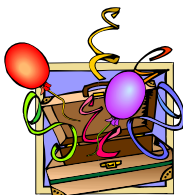
- 10) My knit sweaters fit the way I want them to fit (don’t we all want that?)
- 9) I like the way the yarn feels in my hands (soft, soft, soft)
- 8) Sheep need the work!
- 7) The new yarns are so beautiful -- I love to make fun scarves for my friends & family
- 6) My time is valuable -- my knitting projects are affordable luxuries that will be appreciated for years
- 5) It’s awesome! I can make such cool stuff...
- 4) Life is stressful -- my knitting keeps me sane
- 3) Knitting is relaxing, it’s my meditation (the “new yoga”?)
- 2) It’s cheaper than blood pressure medication
- 1) It’s cheaper than Prozac!

May 2005 Tips and Ideas

“I have some yarn in my stash without a label. How do I know **what size needle to use**?” Double the strand and draw it through the holes of a gauge check to determine an appropriate size needle. This is only a guideline -- you still must do a swatch...

Lynette DiDonato asks, “What does **wraps per inch** mean? If I get 8 wraps per inch,

does that mean I cast on 8 stitches per inch?” Wraps per inch refers to how many strands of a given yarn measure one inch when placed side by side (for instance, when wrapped gently around a ruler). It generally refers to the weight of the yarn and is a handy guideline for substituting yarns. Yarns that have a similar number of wraps per inch generally can be substituted for each other. It is not an indicator of gauge. You must decide on an appropriate needle for your weight of yarn and work a gauge swatch...



“How do I know **how long a tail** to leave for casting on a sweater?” When using a long-tail cast-on method, an easy method is to wrap the yarn around your hips three times and you will have sufficient yarn for the cast-on. For the sleeve cuff, wrap the yarn three times around your wrist...

“How can I get a neater finished edge for my cardigan bands?” For a smoother horizontal **buttonband edge**, work the first and last stitches in garter stitch (knit every row). Cast on two additional stitches, if necessary...

June 2005 Tips and Ideas

Rosalie Watson e-mailed us this idea: “Add a strand of sport or baby weight yarn when **knitting the soles** of slippers. This makes a better cushion and the slippers wear a bit longer”. Thanks, Rosalie!

When working an **openwork (lace) pattern**, place stitch markers between each repeat (the asterisks), and slip them on every row. Keeping track of the repeats may help you determine more quickly if a mistake occurred. This may save ripping out long rows and will help you figure out which row you are working in the pattern.

July 2005 Tips and Ideas

Nurture your creativity -- whether you live in a tiny apartment or a spacious house, your creative pastimes deserve a special space. Set aside a comfortable space for knitting and crocheting -- a chair, a quiet spot in the backyard or deck. Add a little “zen” atmosphere with candles, houseplants, a table with a teaset for one or coffee mug, and soon your creative juices will be flowing...

Here’s a great idea for a **baby gift**: when Goldie Durco knits a standard size baby afghan, she includes a smaller, tea towel size “blankie” -- the perfect security blanket for toddlers travelling away from home...

When working a felted **purse** with a tubular strap, insert a washable shoestring inside before felting. This will make a much more **durable strap**...

August 2005 Tips and Ideas

When **casting on ribbing**, use an even number of stitches, but always work the first

TWO stitches on the first RS row as if to knit. When you come to these sts on the wrong side rows, always work them as if to purl. If you do this on both the back and front of your garment, you'll find that the ribbings are easier to seam together...

Having problems with buttons coming loose from chunky knit cardigans? Shirley Glessner recommends using thin waxed dental floss to **sew on buttons**. Overcast the top with the project yarn for a custom look. Buttons will stay put...

Many knitters find a gap is created between the needles when **working in the round** with double-pointed needles. Try increasing your tension for the first two stitches of each needle. The tension will then even itself out. Another method is to rotate the stitches on the double-pointed needle; i.e., knit all of the stitches of one needle plus 2 more stitches of the next needle. The "gaps" are always moving around and never develop into a noticeable problem...



You've spent a lot of time and effort into completing your special scarves. Susan Zylka recommends **rolling knitted scarves** while the work is in progress and later when completed. Susan tells us this works well to prevent stretching and is very compact storage for drawers or suitcases. Thanks, Susan!

Karen Godlewski asked us how much yarn to wind onto a bobbin when **working intarsia**. We didn't have an answer at the time, but researched the question. We found one suggestion for working small areas is to count the number of stitches to be worked in that particular color on the graph and allow 1" of yarn per stitch. Measure off that amount of yarn and wrap onto a bobbin. This requires a little extra time to plan and set-up, but makes it easier to work when all the bobbins have the appropriate amount of yarn. Lisa Carnahan recommends working very small sections of color by duplicate stitch afterwards...

September 2005 Tips And Ideas

Vickie Angelo tells us that she uses **fabric softener** instead of detergent when felting handknit projects. Not only does this require no rinsing, but the item smells fresh instead of "sheepy". Thanks, Vickie!

Karen Frisa shared a wonderful tip during a "**fixing mistakes**" workshop with the Roof Garden Knitting Guild in Somerset, PA. Karen learned this idea from experienced lace knitters and gave us her permission to pass it on. Thanks, Karen! When working a complicated pattern (such as lace), carry along a fine cotton thread "lifeline" every 5-10 rows at a easy recognizable pattern row, running through each stitch. If you make a mistake and need to "un-knit", you will know that you can rip back to a familiar "safe place" without dropping stitches...

Karen Frisa also shared a tip she learned from Missy Burns from **WOOL IN THE WOODS**: When **working a garment with hand-painted yarns**, use a small amount of each hank needed for the project in the front, back, and sleeves. This will allow for an overall blended appearance and avoid color pooling or "stacking". For example, if your project calls

for seven hanks of yarn, wind them into balls and use some of each for each section of the sweater plus the bands...

Dawn Smith asked about **extended garter stitch**. We weren't familiar with the term, but Dawn researched it, and it turns out this is the same as the elongated garter stitch. This is a more open version of garter stitch. Work each stitch as if to knit as in regular garter stitch but wrap the yarn around the needle twice in every stitch. On the next row, every stitch is also worked with a double wrap, but the extra wrap of the previous row is dropped. Thanks for info, Dawn!

October 2005 Tips And Ideas

Shelly Thompson has a great idea for **interactive felting** projects. She sends her finished projects without felting them as gifts to family or friends along with felting instructions. The recipient felts his/her own project to fit. What a fun project for kids, and educational, too...

Need to do some blocking and your **blocking wires are not available**? In a pinch, Kathy uses thin bamboo or shisk-kabob skewers...

For a neater bind-off: knit or purl (depending on how the pattern stitch appears) the last 2 stitches together, then bind off. This prevents the loose loop at the end of the bind-off edge...

To **estimate yarn needed** for long tail cast-on (sling shot or thumb method): wind the yarn around the knitting needle to be used for the cast-on ten times. Unwind and measure the length. Use that length measurement to estimate how much is needed for every ten stitches. Don't forget to leave a little extra for finishing the seam...

For a smooth edge around the bottom edge of a sweater worked in the round, work the first stitch (joining stitch) with the yarn from the skein and the cast-on tail together. Place your marker and start with a new first stitch. The last stitch on the round will be the "two yarn strand" stitch and those two strands will be knitting as one, making a smoother join along the edge. Kathy originally received this tip from Kay Holt...

December 2005 Tips And Ideas

From Mary G: "I hate to finish sweaters. Is there a way to **pick up stitches** around the sleeve cap to make set-in sleeves without seaming?"

We searched our archives for an answer and found a vintage Pat Trexler column which originally appeared in *The Pittsburgh Press* in 1969. Our explanation is based on that resource and Pat's suggestions to her readers. We think it is like "short rows in reverse". Work the body pieces according to your commercial pattern, with the appropriate armhole shaping for the set-in sleeve. Seam the shoulders (Kathy prefers a three-needle bind off method), but do not sew the side seams of the body. Instead, determine the number of stitches required at the widest part of the sleeve, and divide this number by three. Pick up

this number of stitches around the body armhole with a 24" circular needle in the same size used for working the body of the garment.

Slip 1/3 of the stitches from each end of the circular needle onto a stitch holder or double-pointed needles with stoppers (three sections). Pat suggests that if the number of stitches picked up around the armhole is not divisible by 3, keep the 1 or 2 extra stitches in the center section which remains on the needle.

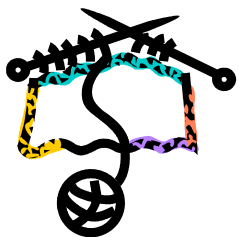
Begin working in the desired pattern stitch (usually the same as the body), picking up 1 stitch from the appropriate holder at the end of every row. Continue in this manner until all stitches have been picked up except for the number needed for the original bind off in the commercial pattern. For example, if the original directions stated to bind off 6 sts at each armhole edge, pick up the last 6 from each stitch holder at one time.

Work the remainder of the sleeve from the top down, reversing all directions (decreasing instead of increasing as you work down to the sleeve cuff). Work until the sleeve measures the desired length minus the ribbing, then work the ribbing or desired edging. Bind off in pattern. Sew the body and sleeve seams.

Diana Shark (on her very first felted bag project, we might add) used a stencil to work **dry needle felting** embellishment across the top of her tote. Diana used CRYSTAL PALACE "Iceland" in a multi-color for the bottom section of the bag, and a solid contrasting color stripe along the top border. The stencilling in a complimentary shade was worked along the top stripe and it looks fabulous...

When **assembling a garment** with a yarn that tends to fray (like ZITRON "Lido"), Sue Schroettinger joins the garment seams with slip-stitch crochet. This involves one long piece of yarn and the only tails (at the beginning and end) can be enfolded into the seam as you go.

Sue recommends using a crochet hook 1-2 sizes smaller than used to work the



garment. Did you know that knitting needles and crochet hook sizes are comparable? Check for the metric or US sizing on the packaging...

Mary Shonk, a very creative mother of seven, frequently finds herself mending sweaters for her family. **For major repairs**, Mary works small swatches from odds and ends of stash yarn in complimentary colors to

the

sweater needing mending. She appliques these patchwork squares not only over the holes, but places them all over the garment and embellishes them with embroidery and decorative stitchery for a "design feature". Clever, indeed...

January 2006 Tips and Ideas

***** ON THE LIGHTER SIDE *****

"Really, all you need to become a good knitter are wool, needles, hands, and slightly below-average intelligence. Of course, superior intelligence, such as yours and mine, is an advantage". Elizabeth Zimmermann

January 2006 Tips and Ideas *cont*

For an accurate **head measurement** when making caps or hats, place a tape measure around the forehead and measure around the full circumference of the head. Keep the tape measure snug for accurate results...

***** **WHAT IS THREE-BALL KNITTING?** *****

This colorwork technique calls for using three balls of yarn at the same time. These can be three different but complimentary colors for a tweed effect, three skeins of the same shade but in dramatically different dye lots, three balls of different textures, or three balls of hand-painted yarns. Each row is worked with only one ball at a time, changing at the end of every row. This method is useful for using up extra balls of leftover “stash” yarns.

Here’s how:

Cast on specified number of stitches and work one row in pattern with the first ball of yarn (#1). At the end of the row, drop #1, but leave it attached. Attach the second ball of yarn (#2) and work one row in pattern. At the end of the row, drop #2, but keep it attached also. Attach the third ball of yarn (#3), and work one row in pattern. Drop #3, but keep it attached. There are now three rows worked, and three balls of yarn attached. Pick up #1 from two rows below (it should be waiting for you). Repeat this process, working one row in pattern with #1, then #2, then #3. Drop the yarn at the end of every row, leaving it attached, and pick up the yarn waiting two rows below to work the next row.

Helpful hint: If you put your work away and can’t remember where to start again, it is always the side with two ends.



February 2006 Tips and Ideas

For **weaving in ends**, Kathy uses a bent tip tapestry needle (CLOVER Chibi) and works duplicate stitch on the wrong side. This follows the stitches and is neater than skimming under the stitches.

Kathy prefers the long-tail cast-on method and recommends winding the tail around a yarn bobbin to keep it securely out of the way until needed for seaming.

Joan Walsh recommends freezer bags for **storing** odds and ends of leftover **yarn**. She writes the weight, fiber content and brand on the outside. Joan also organizes her patterns according to yarn weight and children’s patterns according to size. She saves all pattern design notes just in case she wants to work the pattern again.

Shanta Moitra **simplifies row counting** when working circular knitting by weaving a contrasting color of the same yarn at the increase point as you work. For example, if you are increasing every 4th row, keep contrast yarn toward you and take it to the back of work after increasing. After 4 more rows, bring the yarn to the front. You will know that the increase was done and also how many rounds have been worked.

Peggy Dailey uses double-pointed needles for **working a separate vertical buttonband**. Work about 2” and attach to the front, stretching slightly for a good fit. Not only is the smaller length easier to use, but this method eliminates the guesswork of how long to make the band. Peggy also works both sleeves at the same time, using separate skeins of yarn. Not only will the sleeves be the same length, but the increases will be at the same points. Always complete the entire row of both sleeves before putting away your work so you will know

where you have stopped.

Ever get those tell-tale line when going from one double-pointed needle to the next? Aimee Levenson suggests bringing the empty needle which you will be knitting onto behind the right-hand needle with the live stitches to tighten up your work.

Ruffled and lettuce edges are in style. To **get a ruffled edge** on your bind-off, Pat Del Castello does a double bind-off. Simply knit into the back of the stitch on the left-hand needle and bind off, leaving on needle. Then, purl into the same stitch on the left-hand needle and bind off, taking stitch off needle .

March 2006 Tips & Ideas

***** DID YOU KNOW? *****

As wool absorbs moisture from the air, the fibers liberate heat. A gram of wool gives off 27 calories of heat when it goes from dry to wet...

Space-dyeing means that various sections of the same hank are placed in different colored dyes to create a rainbow effect...

Fair Isle sweaters (popular once again) first became the height of fashion in 1922 after the Duke of Windsor wore one to a golf tournament in St. Andrews, Scotland.

Knitters in Scotland developed their two-toned grid motifs in the 18th century, fashioning them after ancient weaving patterns called "shepherd's checks"...

Aran cables, lattice and moss stitch patterns are believed to have come to the Aran Isles with Irish emigrants returning from America in the early 1900s...

Luxurious mohair comes from the silky-haired angora goat. More than 90% of all American angoras are raised in Texas. Angora goats, raised for mohair, need the company of others and thrive on the competition of pushing and shoving. One goat alone can actually die of loneliness...

To keep mohair garments their softest and fluffiest, always dry clean them; hand or machine-washing will mat the fibers...

Fuzzy yarns are much warmer than smooth ones! All the little fibers create lots of tiny air pockets that trap your body heat...

The heathery multi-color yarns we now call tweed originated in the Tweed River region of Scotland (still famous for its wool yarn and woven fabrics). The thrifty-minded spinners would chop up odd scraps of dyed wool and incorporate them into the yarns they spun...

The indigo plant, the natural dye source for dark blue, has been grown in India and used to color fabric for more than 4000 years!

"What's the big deal about gauge? Is it really necessary to **do a swatch every time**?" YES, YES, YES! Elizabeth Zimmermann said it best, in *Knitting Without Tears*: "Gauge is the most important principle in knitting. People knit so differently in matters of tightness or looseness that it is totally impossible to recommend one size of needle for everybody. Gauge means the number of stitches that *you* achieve to one inch using the wool and needles you plan to use on the project. Get the gauge right and your measurements accurate and the sweater will fit". This is especially important when substituting yarns...

"It takes a long time for my **woolen sweaters and felted projects to dry**. Any helpful hints?" Here are our favorite short cuts and shape-ups for drying knits from Lisa Carnahan.

Thanks, Lisa!

Mittens & gloves: Pull them over bottoms of small jars or plastic containers and stand them in front of a fan.

Bulky sweaters: Insert a beach towel between layers and dry flat. This also blocks the garment and prevents pattern colors from running.

Turtle-cowl necks: Roll collar into shape and put crushed tissue paper under it. This helps re-shape the neckline, too.

In an emergency: use a blow-dryer on a **cool** setting. Just be sure to keep sweater on a flat surface.

Hats: try placing them over large spindle-type candlesticks with an inverted bowl on top to air dry (Kathy's favorite trick).

April 2006 Tips and Ideas

From Kathleen Babyak: "I'm knitting my first **sweater in the round** from the top down -- how do I know if it will fit?" Transfer the "live" stitches of the yoke from your circular knitting needle onto a long strand of slippery yarn thinner than your working yarn (a mercerized cotton like TAHKI "Cotton Classic" works well for this purpose). Tie the ends of the strand so that the garment stitches are secure, and try on the actual garment. You can make the necessary adjustments for the fit to the underarm shaping. This also works for the sleeve length...

From Charmaine Clawson: "The bottom rib of my beautiful kid mohair sweater is stretched. I tried sewing some elastic around it, but it doesn't look right. Is there anything I can do?" There are some tricks to **working with elastic thread** to correct stretched ribbings. Secure the elastic thread in the seam at the first row of the body. Work through **HALF** of every other stitch across the row (example, if the ribbing is K1, P1, work through only one half of the K stitch only). Give a slight tug following each stitch. Repeat this process approximately every .5" of the ribbing up from the bottom or as desired for best appearance from the public side of the work. Try the garment on to adjust for fit and then secure the thread in the seam...

April 2006 Tips and Ideas *cont*

From Bev (internet): "How do you block a sweater without making it look smashed? I tried steam and dry ironing and I'm not happy with the result". Easy does it -- steam is a last resort and dry ironing can damage the knitted fabric permanently. For best results, use blocking wires (thin wires than can be threaded along the outside of the knitted pieces, we have these in stock) and T-pins to shape the pieces of the garment before assembly. I use a large styrofoam sheet covered with an inexpensive plastic tablecloth (the disposable picnic table kind) and pin the individual pieces of the garment to the desired measurements. Use a clean plastic spray bottle filled with room temperature filtered water and spritz lightly. Let the pieces air dry in a place safe from pets and household traffic. After assembling the garment, a light spritzing may be needed on seams or collars to set. I've had bad experiences with a steam iron singeing hairy fibers, and have heard nightmares from

customers who have tried a wet towel laid on top of their projects. With the spritz method, you can try again making the pieces a little damper, but once the fabric is overblocked, there may not be a fix...

***** FELTING TIP *****

Vicky Trevino recommends using the back side of a rubber dish rack mat (the side with corrugated ridges) for **spot felting**. It worked wonders on a “too long” purse strap.

May 2006 Tips and Ideas

Vicki Trevino applies puffy fabric **paint** to the entire **bottom of felted clogs** to make them skid resistant and for added wear...

Stop and look at your work frequently. Admire your skill, but look for split stitches, misaligned patterns and any mistakes. **Fix it**, don't fudge it later — it will save time in the long run, and you will be happier with the results...

Knitted lace patterns are popular once again — bear in mind when shaping (**working increases and decreases** at the neck or on the sleeve) that every yarnover must have a corresponding decrease. If necessary, work in stockinette stitch until you have enough stitches to work a partial or full repeat...

When working with white or light colors, **wash your hands** before you pick up your project...

Our latest tip from Tracey Earhart for **de-stressing** the holidays is to take advantage of any windows of knitting opportunities to work on gifts. Tracey keeps baggies with small projects in the glove compartment or under the seat of her car. She particularly recommends the flip-flop sandal straps because they are an easy rectangle with minimal shaping. In the event there is an overtime Little League game or a wait in the doctor's office, you'll be able to make efficient use of time by having some knitting handy. Avoid having 100% wool though, just in case the summer heat may felt it a bit...

June 2006 Tips & Ideas

Lee Thompson recommends using a shoebox to **avoid yarn tangles** when doing intarsia colorwork. She learned this tip from Sally Melville's book, *The Knitting Experience Book 3: Color -- The Power and The Glory*. Divide a shoebox into compartments by punching holes in the side of the box, then cut slits to the holes. Slide colors into the holes in the order they will be used. At the end of a right-side row, the yarns will be crossed. Turn your needle to un-cross them at the end of the next row. Thanks, Lee, for sharing this tip!

From Sheila Ryle: When **planning a colorwork project** for Fair Isle technique, intarsia or stripes, wrap each color of yarn several times around an empty paper towel cardboard tube in the order in which you plan to use them. Unwind the yarn and change the order to determine which colors look best together, side by side. Experiment with different combinations before working your swatch. When you are satisfied with the color placement, then work your swatch. The wrap method is very useful to avoid knitting and re-knitting your swatch. This works very well when combining novelty or handpaint yarns, too. Thanks, Sheila!

Betty from Stahlstown asks, "How do I **work a central double decrease**?" This is a decrease which results in two stitches being decreased, with the center stitch of the three remaining in the center position. It is also referred to as "S2KP2" or "sl 2-K1-p2sso". Here's how:

1. Slip 2 sts together to the right needle as if to knit (take them off the needle). Do not confuse this with the maneuver used for the slip, slip, knit single decrease which slips the stitches one at a time.
2. Knit the next stitch.
3. Pass the 2 slipped stitches over the knit stitch and off the right needle; 3 sts become 1; the center stitch is on top.

July 2006 Tips & Ideas

***** NOVEL IDEAS: Knit & Weave with **Novelty Yarns** *****

The following information appeared in YARN MARKET NEWS e-Update June 2006, in the guest forum by Helene Rush of Knit One, Crochet Too. It is re-printed with the gracious permission of Helene Rush and Karin Strom, editor of YMN. Enjoy this easy and simple "girly-girl" project with KNIT ONE, CROCHET TOO's fine yarns...

"Stoles, handbags, pillow covers, coverlets, square-top hats -- all look great when made in a quick-to-knit or easy-to-crochet mesh fabric woven through with novelties.

Here's how:

1. Take a smooth base yarn and create a knitted or crocheted mesh.
 - 1 a. For the knit version, work right-side rows as follows on a multiple of 4 sts plus 1: K1, *yarn over (yo), slip 1, K2tog, pssso, yo, K1; repeat from * across. Purl on all wrong-side rows.
 - 1 b. For the crocheted version, work in basic filet crochet.
2. Bind off once your piece is the desired size (length).
3. With one or two different novelty yarns, weave alternately cut lengths in and out of your

mesh fabric. Leave long tails to create fringe at each end, or weave in neatly.

This technique can be used to create garments: Substitute the mesh stitch for stockinette in any basic pattern (make sure you get the correct gauge). Once the piece is done, weave in your novelty fibers".

For more about basic filet crochet, see *The Crocheter's Companion* (\$19.95, spiral bound), available on our bookshelves. For instruction on crochet for knitters, please call for a private lesson here at Kathy's, or, The Laurel Highlands Knitting Guild cordially invites you to its July 27, 2006, meeting from 7-8:30 pm at the Ligonier Town Hall, Meeting Room A. Mrs. Peggy Maguire will be teaching a basic crochet mesh scarf woven with novelty yarns. Please bring a cotton or rayon blend base yarn, novelty ribbon yarn, a tape measure, crochet hook size H, and a tapestry needle.

Elizabeth Ladd of River Knits in Lafayette, Indiana, shared a **simple belt pattern** for use with corded yarns. Elizabeth casts on 7 stitches on a US size 6 needle and knits to the desired waist measurement. She then makes a long fringe, which she braids. Beads may be added to the fringe. Thanks, Elizabeth, for sharing your pattern. We think this would look great worked with PLYMOUTH YARNS "Linen Isle" (\$6.50, 50 grams, 86 yards, 50% cotton / 30% rayon / 20% linen)...

Tracey Earhart recommends both of these ideas to **de-stress the holidays** and special occasions by planning ahead for gift-giving. Create a few on-the-go packets with small projects for a stolen moment or two of knitting. Tracey's project of the month is "girly-girl" lacy washcloths and soap sacks.

A recent question from an inquiring knitter: "My felted bag pattern calls for **10-ply yarn**, which I can't find. What does this mean?"

The Craft Yarn Council has established a weight classification system from 1 - 6 to help standardize weights of yarn. Because yarns come from all over the world, this can be confusing since not all manufacturers use this system.

To our knowledge, 10-Ply is a term used primarily in Australia and New Zealand to designate a worsted or Aran weight yarn knitting at 4.5 - 5 sts per inch (CYCA weight classification 4), which should work for you. **Always** remember to do a gauge swatch when substituting yarns, however.

September 2006 tips and ideas

when **joining a new ball of self-striping yarn**, unwind the new ball until the color which you ended with appears. This will give a continuous color appearance, one more pleasing to the eye. Save the yarn which you unwind to use later as needed.

Our expert test knitter, Eleanor Swogger, recommends a quilter's ruler as a **useful tool** to accurately **measure gauge**. This is a long, wide, clear, hard plastic "see-through" ruler that enables you to see your stitches to easily count and measure at the same time. The hard plastic is durable and will not stretch like a cloth measuring tape might do...

"What is a **German bind-off**?" This bind-off method will give you a slightly decorative edging. Here's how: Work one stitch in pattern, *slip stitch back to the left hand needle,

work 2 together; repeat from * across row until all sts are bound off. The "work 2 together" may be done as an ssk, K2tog or P2tog. The ssk is the easiest, as it is the most rhythmic

When the cycle is completed, place garment(s) in automatic dryer, still in the bag. Run dryer on gentle cycle for 15-20 minutes. Let the dryer cool down by turning dryer to Damp Dry or Air Fluff (this is important). Repeat cycles until garments are slightly damp. Remove from dryer. Place on flat towel, shape and air dry.

October 2006 Tips & Ideas

when working with a dark shade of yarn, **choose needles** that are a light color like bamboo or blond wood. The same is true when working with light yarns -- it may be helpful to use a darker wood needle such as rosewood or ebony.

Viv A. recently asked, "My bobble **stitches look flat**. Is there a way to make them look neater?" Yes, Viv, there is! With the resurgence in the popularity of textures and English Countryside sweaters, bobbles seem to be popping up everywhere. A bobble is created by making extra stitches in one stitch, working them over one or several rows, then gathering them back together into one stitch, creating a round ball shape. One remedy is to "strangle" the stitch after completing the bobble decreases, by wrapping the lone stitch left on the needle after decreasing with the working yarn tightly before working the remaining stitch...

November 2006 Tips & Ideas

Susan Zylka tells us that her grandmother always worked **bobble stitches** with short 5" double-pointed needles, two sizes smaller than the needles being used for the rest of the garment. Susan remembers that her grandmother's bobbles were always neat and compact. Thanks for sharing this tip, Susan, and congratulations on your new grandson!

When knitting or crocheting a gift for someone, **save a yarn label** and include it in the gift package. The fiber content and care information will not only help the garment's new owner care for it properly, but it will let fiber-sensitive people know that they can wear the gift.

Plan ahead. Before casting on your first stitch, decide how you will finish your project. Choose the best cast on method, leaving a long tail for seaming if needed. What shoulder finish, seaming technique, band, etc. will you use? Try experimenting with something new -- it may come in handy for another project. For example, try working increases and decreases one stitch from the edge on side and sleeves. Seaming can be completed more easily and neatly. Rely on row count rather than measurements -- it is more reliable.

When working a **garment with variegated** or hand-painted yarns, pick up the neckline stitches with a complimentary soft solid color. This will blend the neckband transition and have a neater appearance. For an interesting accent, purl one round in the solid color, then begin neckband by working one row of knit with the main color handpainted shade before



When working cable patterns with a yarn that tends to split, **try using a crochet hook** of similar size to the working needles as a cable needle. The stitches are less likely to split.

Cables pull in knitted fabric probably more than most other pattern stitches. When cables are combined with other patterns, such as reverse stockinette or seed stitch, there is a difference in the **stitch gauges**. In order to avoid "flare" at the lower edge, increases to compensate for this gauge difference should be made at the point where the cables are placed, before working them, instead of evenly spaced along the set-up row. The more stitches used for the cable usually means more increases required under that cable. If you make increases at the base of the cable, remember that you may wish to decrease those extra stitches at the end, for best results.

When **working a provisional cast** on with a crochet chain edge, try using dental floss instead of a smooth, slippery waste yarn. It will remove easily without tangling or "shedding" fibers into the main yarn.

When **finishing your garment**, leave an extra length of yarn in a seam for repairs. Since it will be cleaned with the garment, it should have the same color and appearance as the original yarn. Duplicate stitch works well for repairing holes.

December 2006 Tips & Ideas

Thanks to all who attended this fun holiday kick-off event. Congratulations to the winners of our Thanksgiving Open House door prize drawing:

1st Place: Laura Heitzer -- choice of book from our bookshelves (Laura selected XRX's "The Knitter's Handbook")

2nd Place: Marian Beckiary -- choice of any knitting needles or crochet hook

3rd Place: Laura Polliard -- 2007 Knitting Pattern-A-Day Calendar

***** KNITTING TIPS, HINTS, TRIVIA & TRENDS *****

Did you know that the girth of your wrist is one-half the girth of your neck? The length from fingertip to fingertip with your arms outstretched is about the same as your height? Your hand is as long as your face? This bit of trivia is shared by Karen McCullough (thanks, Karen), with credit to "Knit Bits Calendar 2006" and original source "Knit Mittens" by Robin Hansen. A practical application of this information is to knit or crochet your scarf so that it extends from fingertip to fingertip. This length will allow you to wrap it around your neck once and it will appear proportionate...

Having trouble finding the start of that fuzzy boutique ball of novelty yarn? Kathy recommends that you grasp the yarn ball firmly in the center and shake it once with a flick of your wrist. The unwieldy end should come loose. Remember to keep a firm grip on the ball, though, or you may shake off more yarn than intended...

Kelly Gradischek recommends always keeping "Post-It" notes in your knitting bag. She

uses them to keep her place when working a pattern or on a stitch / colorwork chart. They are also handy for noting pattern changes or any other thought or idea.
Thanks, Kelly!

A tip learned from Barry Klein at his Stitches East "Fit & Style" class: What if the given finished chest measurement size in a pattern isn't quite right? Sometimes changing the needle size up or down may alter fit just enough to give you the measurement needed. ALWAYS take an accurate gauge measurement and do the math to make the necessary adjustments.

If working sweaters with novelty or highly textured yarns in a simple pattern stitch, a better fit may be obtained if you drop down one needle for a few inches at the waist line. Or, waist shaping may also be achieved by working 1/2" - 1" worth of decreases at the side edge, one or two stitches from the side edge. This shaping should take place over the middle 1/3 of the lower section of the body. Barry also said that the latest fashion trends for the upcoming season are split collars for women's pullovers and side slits at the lower edge of men's sweaters for comfort and easier movement...

A tip Kathy learned from Laura Bryant at her Stitches East "Fringe, Tassels & Embellishments" class: When making fringe, wrap the yarn around a book widthwise as many times as needed. Cut the yarn along the open part of the book (in the groove of the side with the pages). Laura also finds it helpful to hang the fringed item over the edge of an ironing board to trim evenly...

Another reason to do a swatch: pick up stitches along the edge to test ribbing gauge and pick-up ratio...

January 2007 Tips & Ideas

Get Organized

How do you keep track of multiple projects at the same time? It's hard not to start that fabulous new sweater project you just bought at Kathy's Kreations, but what about the 4 or 5 other UFO's (unfinished objects) in your stash? Keeping track of projects will help turn them into fo's (finished objects). The folks at TAHKI / STACY CHARLES have some ideas to help you get organized. If you put something aside, package it neatly, making certain that the pattern and notes are with it. It is not a copyright violation to photocopy a pattern that **you have purchased** for your own use, as a working copy. Circle your size & pertinent information with red ink. Invest in some large clear zip-loc bags to make it easier to identify the project and keep everything together. You don't want to pick up something a few months down the road only to find you don't remember the needle size you used for the completed parts. You may find it helpful to keep a journal or notebook to list your projects along with specific details on where to locate them.



It is always a good idea to have both easy and difficult projects at hand. You will then have an easy portable project to take along in the car or to your child's basketball game, and a more detailed project for a quiet, undistracted winter evening at home.

If you get to a point where you know you won't finish a project because you don't enjoy it, it's OK to "re-cycle" it by giving it to a knitting or crochet friend, or passing it along to your local knitting guild for charity knitting or auction.

(tips adapted from TAHKI / STACY CHARLES "Knit Flash" November 2006 newsletter)

Another great reason to **make a gauge swatch**: take your swatch along when button shopping to help you find the perfect finishing touch for your jacket or cardigan. Did you know that Kathy's Kreations has a large selection of buttons especially selected for hand-knits?

When knitting toys intended for children under the age of three, **embroider eyes and features**. Button eyes can be pulled off and present a choking hazard if swallowed...

Add a little color to your knitting or crocheting even if the pattern doesn't call for it. **Work with two complimentary colors** when working scarves, hats or afghans, changing colors every two rows and carrying the unused color up the side of the work when not in use.

February 2007 Tips & Ideas

***** KNITTING TIPS *****

Having trouble identifying the weight of that mystery yarn in your stash? Julie Charlebois folds a strand of the yarn in half and matches it up with the hole of her gauge check. If the doubled strand covers the hole, that is the size needle you should try for swatching (for example, if the doubled strand covers the US 8 hole, this should be in the worsted weight gauge range). Lisa Carnahan tells us that you can also try inserting the double strand through the hole, as a variation on the same suggestion...

When knitting modified drop and drop shoulders sweaters, taper the shoulders for a better fit. Bind off the shoulder stitches in three steps (at the shoulder edge three times), binding off one-third of the stitches in each step...

***** SHAPE IT UP WITH SHORT ROWS AND KNITTING FOR KIDS *****

From Carol Hurt of the Greater St. Louis Knitters' Guild; Knitter's News November 2006: If you're a sock knitter, you've probably used short rows for the heels. In addition to socks, there are many uses for short rows.. Did you know Short Rows...

- can add bust ease?
- can make a shirt tail hem?
- can be added to accommodate a rounded back?
- make a beautiful shoulder shaping without "steps"?
- can shape shawls?
- make shaped gores for hats?

And a tip for knitting children's cardigans: Use different colored buttons down the front of a child's cardigan. Outline the buttonholes with a color to match the corresponding button. This will help the child line up the buttonholes with the correct button. Thanks, Carol!

***** NATURE'S FAVORITE COLOR *****

Green is the color that's most closely linked with nature, so we're used to seeing it as the background for all other colors. So, you can think of green -- in all its variations -- as a neutral shade. Other "crossover" colors commonly found in nature are sky blue, sunlight yellow -- we have become accustomed to seeing them in combination with many other hues.

For that reason, these colors look good on almost everyone. Use them to expand on the colors found in your most flattering palette...

***** WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING *****

Cold weather outside and dry heat inside is a recipe for chapped, cracked skin as it loses moisture, and, with it, its barrier layer. Lois Ribblet recently shared her nightly skin treatment for nourishing hands. Before going to bed, Lois warms a jar of Vaseline petroleum jelly in hot water for a few minutes, applies liberally to her hands, then she puts on a pair of white gloves. This will help to heal your hands while you are sleeping. Thanks, Lois!



***** SOCKS ON TWO NEEDLES *****

Attention, sock mavens! Here's a tip from Carol Robinson which appeared on KnitNet: "If you are knitting a sock -- or even two socks at a time -- on two circular needles, use needles of two different colors. 'Color coding' makes it much easier to decide which point to use next". Kathy places stoppers on the ends of the "idle" needle not in use, which is also very helpful...

March 2007 Tips & Ideas

Linda Sanner passes along this suggestion: if not sure you will have enough yarn, work the back and one sleeve first. If 1/2 of the original amount of yarn remains, you are OK -- if not, you will need to purchase more yarn. Make a note of the yarn type, name, shade and dyelot number **before** starting your project so that you'll be able to try to match the yarn you have. If the yarn is not available, then you will need to come up with "Plan B" (un-knit, re-knit, add trims, creative color blocking, accent yarn, shorten sleeves, shorten the body length, etc.) To alter length, make all changes by adjusting the number of rows worked **before** starting the armhole shaping.

When working sleeves increases, place a marker at each end of the row with the original stitch count between the markers. Compare the number of stitches before and after the marker as you work your increases. Both sides should be the same. You can keep track of how many increases have been worked as well.

For a better fit, always taper the shoulder on drop-shoulders, modified drop shoulders, and vests (even if your pattern doesn't specify this). Bind off the remaining shoulder stitches in three steps (one-third of the stitches in each step).

When shaping armholes and neck, work directional decreases for a neater look. Work ssk for a left-slanting decrease at one edge and use its counterpart, K2tog, at the opposite side for a right-slanting decrease.



April 2007 Tips & Ideas

V-neck designs are very popular this season. When working the neckline ribbing, Kathy has a designer tip for working the perfect "V". Place markers on either side of center "V" stitch or stitches (usually 1 or 2 sts). Work in pattern until 2 sts before the 1st marker. If the next stitch in the pattern is a purl st, then P2tog (purl 2 together); if it is a knit st, then work a ssk decrease. Slip the marker, work the center st or sts (usually stockinette), slip the 2nd marker, work the next 2 stitches to mirror the two sts before the 1st marker. If you worked a P2tog, then P2tog tbl (through the back loops) after the center sts; if you worked ssk, then K2tog after the center sts. Continue in ribbing pattern, decreasing before and after the center markers on EVERY row, **including** the bind-off row for a fantastic finish...

***** LACE KNITTING TIPS *****

When knitting lace, hold your needles gently to keep your tension even and prevent hands from cramping. To ensure even distribution of stitches when picking up along edges or sides, mark into sections with small coilless safety pins. Yarn overs and decreases tend to cross on the left-hand needle when working with finer gauge yarns. Be very careful to work the stitches in the proper order and keep count of the stitches...



May 2007 Tips & Ideas

***** ASK THE DESIGNER *****

A group of knitters visited our shop in mid-March while on a bus trip hosted by Cathy Finley of "Finely, A Knitting Party". One of the ladies asked how she could adapt one of Kathy's V-neck designs to a crewneck styling. Here's Kathy's how-to for intermediate to advanced knitters:

Work the front of the sweater exactly the same as the back until the front measures 2.5" - 3" less than the total length of the completed back. For example, if your row gauge is a typical worsted weight gauge of 7 rows per inch, approximately 18 - 22 rows less than worked on the total back (another good reason to count those rows). Choose a stopping point in the pattern stitch repeat that is pleasing to the eye.

Take the measurement of the back neck. Allow approximately 2" worth of stitches for each front neck shaping, with the remaining stitches to be bound off for the front neck. For example, if your stitch gauge is a typical worsted weight gauge of 5 stitches per inch, and your back neck measurement is 7" , that is 35 total stitches to be decreased when shaping the front neckline. If 2" (10 stitches) are to be decreased along **each** side of the front neck (20 stitches total), 15 sts remain to be bound off at the center front neck. **OR**, deduct the number of stitches remaining for each shoulder shaping (hopefully, these numbers will correspond to your gauge & schematic, and the number will be the same as stitch gauge times neck measurement in inches).

So the pattern would read: work in pattern as established to center 15 sts, join 2nd ball of yarn, bind off center 15 sts in pattern, work remaining stitches in pattern as established. Kathy finds Ann Budd's *Handy Book of Sweater Patterns* formula to be a valuable guide for the rate of bind offs: Continuing in pattern as established, bind off three stitches at each neck edge once, two stitches at each neck edge twice, then dec 1 st at each neck edge every other row (on the public side of the work) three times. This accounts for ten decreases at each front neck, and should result in the same number of sts remaining for shoulder shaping as on the

back. Work even until piece measures the same as the back to the shoulder shaping, and shape the shoulders the same as on the back.

Kathy would like to pass along some tips, originally shared by Marlyn Ibele of the Western Reserve Knitting Guild. Here are Marlyn's **tips for more successful knitting**:

- 1) Leave a long tail when casting on to sew seams. Use look-alike cast on and bind off edges where possible.
- 2) Increase or decrease one stitch from the edge on side and sleeve seams to allow a selvedge for neater finishing.
- 3) Rely on row count rather than inch measurements -- it is more reliable. Use a stitch counter -- it comes in handy to find your place in the pattern, too.
- 4) Pick up all sts around the neckline if necessary for a neater finish, then decrease to the desired stitch count on first row of ribbing. This is a good tip when working with cotton, rayon, bamboo or slippery yarns.
- 5) Leave an extra length of yarn in the seam for repairs. It will be laundered with the garment and have the same appearance if needed later.
- 6) Duplicate stitch any "holes" along the front or back neck bind-off / pick-up areas. Duplicate stitch also works well for repairing holes.
- 7) When picking up the front band stitches for a horizontal buttonband, the first stitch picked up should look like it is almost falling off the edge of the sweater.

Madelon Sheedy, our felted "critter knitter", runs a mesh dish scrubber over the stuffing seams of frogs, squirrels and hedgehogs to "**faux-felt**" and conceal the seam. This works well to "spot felt" areas that may need a little extra attention...

To **wind yarn** skeins into balls for knitting, wrap yarn around four fingers . Continue to wrap, sliding fingers out every 6 wraps or so to vary the direction of the winding. Continue in this manner, wrapping yarn around four fingers and the ball. This results in a nice loose ball, and the yarn will not be stretched from winding too tightly...

June 2007 Tips & Ideans

***** **GAUGE IS NOT A FOUR-LETTER WORD** *****

Launder or block your swatch before taking your gauge measurement. Cleaning or wetting may alter the gauge. It is crucial to know if your garment will "grow" after washing...

As you are working a garment, your gauge can change. To avoid surprises, check your gauge as you progress. Transfer your work to a blocking wire or a smaller weight piece of scrap cotton yarn in a contrasting color and then measure. Do not measure directly from the work on your needle as this may distort the gauge. Many of us knit or crochet more tightly when we are tense or stressed out...

During the summer months, your hands may become sweaty. Be sure to take a break for

hand-washing to keep your work clean and avoid undesirable changes in change...

Having trouble getting the gauge? Try different types of needles (we've got a large variety

for you to choose from). Some fibers have a lot of "drag" and will slide easier on metal needles.

Other yarns, such as wool, mohair or slippery cottons may be easier to work on bamboo or wooden needles...

If you knit tighter than you purl (or vice versa) and experience "railroad track" lines in your work, you may need to use two different-sized needles. Use the larger needle for the rows that you tend to work tightly...

Colorwork patterns are gaining popularity. If you are working a project with solid areas alternating with Fair Isle or stranded knitting, you may need to use a larger size needle for those areas worked with more than one color. This also applies to slip-stitch or brioche patterns

which result in a more compact row gauge. Conversely, garter or seed stitch bands may spread laterally, needing a smaller needle to maintain gauge...

Dixie from Illinois would like to know if there is a neat method for weaving in ends and changing colors. Kathy prefers to attach new balls of yarn or change colors at the seam edge. The ends can be concealed by weaving them into the seam when assembling the garment. If working in the round, leave a couple of inches from each ball. Weave these in later with duplicate

stitch on the inside of the garment. Hope this helps, Dixie!

Katie from PA asks, "What is corrugated ribbing"? According to Alice Starmore in *Alice Starmore's Book of Fair Isle knitting*, this is the name often given to the two-color rib pattern used on many Fair Isle garments. The stitch is usually a K2, P2 rib, but can be K1, P1. The knit stitches are worked in one color, and the purl stitches in another. No more than two colors are worked in one round, and the yarn not in use is stranded across the wrong side of the work. The same two colors may be used throughout the rib or one or both colors may be changed at the beginning of the round. If colors are used on successive rounds, a change occurs to the middle rows of ribbing, then progresses backward to the beginning colors at the end of the ribbing, for a "mirrored" effect.

Corrugated rib is worked on smaller needles than the body, and is firm, durable and less elastic than ribbing worked in a single color. If using the two-handed method of stranded knitting, Kathy finds that it is easier to work the purl stitches right-handed with the American method of throwing and the knit stitches with the left hand using the Continental method of "picking". Corrugated ribbing looks very striking as the cuff of a simple knit hat...

August 2007 Tips & Ideas

Having a problem with a yarn that tends to split? Betty Lou Glassco recommends trying Bryspun needles -- the concave points reduce splitting...

To ensure that your garment sleeves are the same length, try knitting both at the same time, working back and forth on a circular needle. Pin the inside edges together to avoid working the same sleeve twice if you get distracted...

Eleanor Swogger blocks and sews sweater shoulder seams after blocking them. She works the neckband, using a new ball of yarn to avoid knots. She then completes the sleeves...

Mary Lou Fleming uses a large cereal box inside a plastic bag to shape the bottom of her smaller sized felted tote bags as they dry...

September 2007 Tips & Ideas

Dixie V asks, "What is **Guernsey** knitting? What is a **gansey**?" In her book, *Knitting Ganseys* (1993), Beth Brown-Reinsel states, "Gansey sweaters, also known as guernseys, developed in nineteenth century England as hard-wearing garments for hard-working fishermen." They are characterized by dense, dark yarns, rich knit/purl patterns, dropped shoulders, and underarm gussets that allow the wearer additional freedom of movement. Ganseys are traditionally seamless, and knitted in the round. The typical gauge is 7 - 9 sts/ inch, producing a dense fabric impervious to wind and cold. Rae Compton, author of *The Complete Book of Traditional Guernsey and Jersey knitting* (1985), writes, "throughout the British Isles the fishermen's garment is known in some places as a guernsey, in others as a gansey, and in others it has always been and still is a jersey." The gansey or guernsey took its name from the knitted fabric that has been called guernsey since before the seamen took to wearing them...

Charlene B recently e-mailed us, "What does 'work stitches as they appear' mean"? This instruction means to knit the knit stitches and purl the purl stitches, as they appear on your needle...

Betty L asked, "Is there any difference between the terms lace knitting and knitted lace?" Kathy took a class with Sally Melville at TNNA, in which Sally said that lace knitting refers to openwork patterns with the yarn-overs worked on the public side. In knitted lace, the yarn-overs are worked on both sides of the fabric for a more open fabric...

Joan Walsh passed along a knitting tip which she credits to Anna Zilbourg, page 30 of *Knitting for Anarchists* as the original source. Basically, changing the size of the needles is more likely to affect the number of rows per inch than the number of stitches per inch. Think of a stitch as two pieces of yarn lying next to one another (how much will a change of needle affect thickness of yarn?) Then, think of the stitch as one piece of yarn going up the needle, over and down the other side (the yarn has farther to travel with a larger needle). Thanks for the insight, Joan and Anna!

October 2007 Tips & Ideas

Tracey Earhart keeps a chain of locking stitch marker pins on her work to keep track of increases and decreases, having one pin for each increase / decrease. As you work each increase / decrease, place one of the pins at the edge of your work. When you run out of pins, you are finished with the shaping. Tracey says that this works especially well with textured yarns. Tracey also uses a short 5" double-pointed needle (dpn) as a cable needle, in the same size as the project needle. You can work the cable crossing directly from the dpn. Thanks, Tracey!

Karen Frisa recommends working seed stitch in the round over an odd number of stitches. Round 1 is worked by beginning and ending with a knit stitch. Round 2 is worked by beginning and ending with a purl stitch. If you are having trouble visualizing this (as we did), Karen tells us, "Remember that knitting in the round is really a spiral. The last stitch of round 1, a knit, will be next door to the first stitch of round 2, a purl. So, in a side-to-side way, it will look like seed stitch. And the first stitch of round 2, a purl, will be sitting on top of the first stitch of round 1, a knit, so in an up-and-down way, it will also look like seed stitch. It's really pretty cool". VERY cool! We had to try this out on needles, so Kathy designed a cap for you to try it, too...

***** TOP-DOWN SEED STITCH HAT *****

SIZES: Babies' (toddler - child - adult in parentheses)

FINISHED HEAD CIRCUMFERENCE: 15.5" (18" - 20" - 23")

MATERIALS: BROWN SHEEP LAMB'S PRIDE Worsted Weight 1 hank; US size 7 double-

pointed (dpns) and US 5 & US 7 circular knitting needles 16" length

GAUGE: 5 sts / 8 rounds = 1" in seed stitch

DIRECTIONS: With dpns, cast on 3 sts. Join into circle. Divide onto 3 needles (1 st on each needle). Shape crown:

Round 1: Knit (K).

Round 2: Inc 1 into each stitch: 6 sts (2 sts on each dpn).

Round 3 and all odd-numbered rows: K.

Round 4: Inc 1 into each stitch: 12 sts (4 sts on each dpn).

Round 4: *K1, m1 (increase by picking up the strand before the next st & working through the back loop), K2, m1, K1; rep from * on each dpn: 18 sts (6 sts on each dpn).

Round 6: *K1, m1, K to last st on needle, m1, K1; rep from * on each dpn.

Cont to inc 6 sts on all even-numbered rounds, one st at each end of each dpn, until 78 (90 - 102 - 114) sts on needles. K next round, inc 1 st at end of round: 79 (91 - 103 - 115) sts.

Round 1: K1; *P1, K1; repeat from * around.

Round 2: P1; *K1, P1; repeat from * around.

Repeat these two rounds until piece measures 3.5" (4.5" - 5.5" - 6.5"), dec 1 st on last round: 78 (90 - 102 - 114) sts. Change to smaller circular needle. Repeat round 1 only for 1" more. Bind off all sts in rib pat. Weave in ends.

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Tami Forgan, a hand spinner and knitter, tells us that people who are sensitive to lambs' wool might find alpaca to be a wonderful alternative, because there is no lanolin. Very often, it is the lanolin in the lambs' wool that causes the problem. Thanks, Tami!

Is your skin sensitive to some fibers? Joyce Bischoff suggests testing yarn by taking a small length of the yarn and tucking it inside your bra or waistband. If your skin becomes irritated, then you will probably be sensitive to that yarn. Good idea, Joyce!

November 2007 Tips & Ideas

When shaping a sloped shoulder, bind off the specified number of stitches for the first two rows. On all subsequent bind-off rows, slip the first stitch instead of working it to eliminate the dreaded "stair steps"...

Lace knitters often use a "lifeline". This means to insert a length of yarn at a specific row of the pattern repeat. In case you need to rip back to correct an error, you will have a "safe" place in the pattern and will know where to begin. Bonnie Welch suggests using dental floss instead of yarn, which works for all weights of yarn (source Knitnet.com)...

Another re"mark"able tip from Deesha Martin (source Knitnet.com): When working lace, Deesha divides her chart into sections of 10 stitches each, using colored stitch markers to correspond to the 10-stitch sections. Using crayons or colored pencils, she matches each section of the chart to the colored stitch markers on her knitting. If she is interrupted, she looks at the stitch marker and matches it to the color on the chart...

When a pattern calls for multiple stitch markers when working in the round, Joyce Mill-slagle recommends always using a green-colored marker at the beginning of the round (green for "go"). This eliminates any confusion between the starting point and any increase or decrease points. Thanks for sharing this tip, Joyce!

December 2007 Tips & Ideas

--- This sock knitting tip from Cheryl Austin appeared on Knitnet.com : When knitting socks with a lace pattern, a traditional yarnover can result in a bigger hole than desired, particularly for a knitter who tends to knit loosely. Try omitting the yarn, placing a marker instead. When coming to the marker on the next row, lift the working yarn between the stitches and knit it. This is similar to working a "make 1", but **do not** work into the back loop or you will make an invisible increase. Simply working into the space will result in a hole with a pleasing appearance...

--- Creative Director Pam Allen @classicelityarns.com comes a great idea for picking up cardigan bands: "Before I invest the time to pick up an entire edge, I like to establish a stitches-to-row formula for picking up along a vertical edge. I usually begin with the recommended rate (3 sts to 4 rows) along a 4" length of edge. Then I knit the trim along this picked-up edge. If it still measures 4" and looks smooth and tidy -- no waves or puckers -- I'm golden. I rip out and pick up the entire edge with confidence. If not, I have to experiment. If 3 sts to 4 rows stretches the edge, I try 2 sts every 4 rows; if 3 sts to 4 rows puckers, I try 4 to 4. Once I find the best formula, I know that I'll have a successful band". Thanks, Pam!

--- Stash buster: trim your Christmas packages and tags with yarn instead of ribbons, making tassels and pompoms instead of bows. This is particularly good for packages which are to be mailed as these do not crush as readily as ribbon. Add some metallic yarn for a special touch of glitter...

January 2008 Tips & Ideas

***** **KEEPING YOUR SWEATER SWEET** *****

Joyce Bischoff sent us a newspaper clipping from the *Tribune-Review* 11/30/07, with this advice for keeping your sweaters looking smart and smelling fresh:

- Washable wool sweaters that can be safely machine washed should be placed inside-out in a pillowcase or mesh laundry bag and laundered on the gentle cycle in cool water. Do not use standard laundry detergents, which are intended for removing tough, greasy dirt. Soaps especially formulated for gentle-cycle cleaning are easier on the fabric. Kathy recommends "Eucalan" or "Soak" for washing wool, which require no rinsing.
- Dry flat on a mesh screen away from heat and sunlight. Only if the label says "Easy Care" can it be tumble-dried. Never use chlorine bleach on a wool sweater. Soften harsh wool sweaters by adding a capful of hair conditioner to the rinse water. Do not use fabric softeners.
- Do not machine wash your sweater unless the label says you can. Even when using cold water, the agitation might cause the sweater to shrink.
- Remove spots and stains promptly. For getting food or alcohol out of wool, the American Sheep Industry Association recommends placing a towel under the stain and **gently** rubbing it with carbonated water toward the center of the spot. For red wine, immerse it in cold water. For lipstick, rub the stain with white bread.
- To speed up the drying process, purchase a mesh screen that fits over the bathtub, hangs from a clothesline or stands 4" - 5" above the table. Occasionally, turn the garment over while drying being careful to re-shape.
- After drying sweaters, remove any wrinkles with a hand-held steamer.
- A perfume or cigarette scent on a sweater can be dissipated by hanging it outdoors, out of the sun, for a few hours, *Good Housekeeping* suggests. Then wash the sweater according to the label instructions and rinse in a mixture of equal parts white vinegar and water.
- Labels that say "Dry Clean Only" should not be hand-washed. Those that only say, "Dry Clean" can be carefully laundered.
- Cotton knits should be turned inside out to avoid pilling that occurs from the fabric rubbing against itself in the spin cycle, according to *Real Simple* magazine. Hand-wash cotton sweaters and knits with buttons or other embellishments. Perspiration can cause discoloration if not laundered within 48 hours. Bulky knits should be dried flat to avoid stretching.
- When hand washing sweaters, do not oversoak. Soaking too long can cause colors to bleed or fade, or can alter the size. It can also loosen the glue holding embellishments. According to *Real Simple*, about 98% of the dirt is removed in the first 2 minutes of a machine cycle and in about 5 minutes with hand washing, which should be plenty of time.
- To ensure returning your wool sweater to its proper size during the drying process: Before washing, measure and trace the shape of the sweater onto a clean sheet of paper. Hand wash gently in cool water with gentle detergent. Rinse with fresh water until the water runs clear. Squeeze out excess water -- do not wring -- and roll sweater in a towel to absorb moisture. Lay the sweater on the paper, and gently re-shape it to fit the outline. Pat into the desired shape with a towel. Dry flat on a mesh screen.
- Never hang sweaters, because they can easily sag, be pulled out of shape and left with

unsightly humps and bumps. Most sweaters are best stored flat or gently folded. Never stuff them into crowded drawers. According to *Martha Stewart Living*, the best means of storage is to fold with a sheet of tissue paper inside to prevent wrinkling. If you're pressed for space, sweaters can be folded lengthwise and hung on a wooden hanger. Place a sheet of tissue paper between the bar and the sweater to prevent creases.



If you prefer **working circular knitting** projects with two circular needles instead of double-pointed needles, Kathy suggests that you place point protectors at each of the needle not in use to avoid picking up the wrong end. Another tip gleaned from KnitNet.com for working two socks on one circular is to mark one sock with a stitch marker and always end with that sock. This avoids inadvertently turning the needle in the wrong direction if you are interrupted and knitting the same sock again...

When **working color stripes** in the round, break off the color change leaving a 4" tail. After the project is completed, turn it inside out and duplicate stitch the ends in place directly behind the stitches of the same color. This hint appeared in Margaret Radcliffe's *Knitting Answer Book* (a wonderful resource book now on our bookshelf, \$14.95)...

When you need to measure your work and don't have a ruler handy, **try using a dollar bill**, which is exactly 6" long...

When **assembling a garment**, begin at the cast-on edge of the bottom of the body or sleeve cuff and work the seam towards the underarm. Any unevenness can be concealed at the underarm, and the edges will appear neater...

February 2008 Tips & Ideas

February 2008 Tips & Ideas

UN-SHRINK A SHRUNKEN SWEATER

If your sweater has shrunk more than a size or two, it's too late, reports www.ehow.com. But if it is just a bit too snug, these steps can return it to the original size:

Mix 2 tbsp. baby shampoo into a sink full of water. The shampoo will relax natural fibers such as wool. Soak the sweater for 15 minutes. Without rinsing the sweater, take it out of the soapy water and roll it in a towel to remove as much moisture as possible. Spread the sweater on a large corkboard, pulling it into the size you want. Fasten the sweater to the corkboard using T-pins, being careful not to snag the sweater. Return to the sweater every few hours, re-stretching and re-pinning as necessary, until the sweater is dry.

***** SOCK KNITTING TIPS *****

When knitting sock cuffs, the cast-on row often ends up being tighter than the rest of the cuff. To add ease at the top of the sock, cast on double the number of stitches and then knit or purl -- as the pattern requires -- two together for the first row.

Another possible solution is to cast on with a set of double-pointed needles that are one or two sizes larger than the needles you plan to use for the correct gauge. When you join and start the first round, use the needle size for the project.

To make certain that your socks are the same size, keep track of rounds worked on the first sock on a piece of paper. When you work the second sock, make certain that you work the same number of rounds. If you are careful about recording each round, the second sock will be exactly the same as the first.

To adapt a sock pattern for a custom fit, measure the circumference of the foot. If the wearer has wider or narrower feet than the "average" size listed on the pattern, use the gauge for the pattern (for example, 7 sts per inch) and multiply the circumference by that number. If the wearer's foot is 9 inches around, then multiply 9 x 7 to get 63. Since a multiple of 4 is easier to divide onto double-pointed needles, add 1 stitch and cast on 64 stitches. This will also make it easier to work knit one, purl one ribbing or knit two, purl ribbing for the cuff.

When purchasing self-striping yarns, pay attention to the color sequence in the yarn. Some knitters love the look of "matchy, matchy" socks, while other knitters are perfectly content to have them unmatched. If you want your pair to match AND you are working with a yarn that has a regular sequence (some don't), begin the first sock at a junction between two colors. When beginning the second sock, wind off yarn to get to the same place in the color sequence. Remember that subtle changes in your tension will affect how the colors in your yarn line up, particularly in any spotted sections. Don't make yourself crazy -- simply relax and enjoy the unique idiosyncrasies of your yarn, especially with handpainted yarns...

***** KNITTING TIPS & TRICKS *****

Try using the clip style hangers used for ladies' slacks and skirts to dry a pair of handknit socks. Simply attach one sock to each clip and air dry in an out-of-the-way spot. This also keeps the socks organized as a pair...



When working a Fair Isle pattern, duplicate the color sequence chart on graph paper by hand or photocopy your own personal copy (most copyrights permit a copy for personal use). Using colored pencils or highlighters, color each block with the shade that you plan to use for the knitted project. This will help you keep track of the color work plus provides a good visual illustration of the motifs and how the colors will appear in the finished piece...

Having a problem counting rows in your knitted piece? Find the center of a knit stitch (it looks like the letter "V") and follow the column upward, placing the point of a knitting needle into the center of each "V" as a reference. Do not include the cast on row or the row on the needle in your count...

***** INQUIRING KNITTERS WANT TO KNOW *****

Joan McAnulty recently asked us a "stash" question: "How do I tell the difference between DK and worsted weight yarns if there is no label available?" Tracey and Kathy both recommend checking the wraps per inch. This can be done by gently wrapping the yarn around a wooden ruler without stretching. Count the number of "wraps" per inch. Then do the same with a yarn that you know for certain is DK or worsted weight. Compare the two and that will give you an idea of the weight yarn you have. Lisa

Carnahan uses a needle check tool. Place the yarn doubled over the opening of the size needle you think you will need to use for the yarn. The doubled strand should completely cover the opening. This should be an appropriate needle size to use with the yarn. Try a range of holes to make sure you get the correct fit...



April 2008 Tips & ideas

Recently, this tip from Terry D appeared on KnitNet: "A simple way to **keep track of your cable needle** between cable pattern stitches is to tuck it under your watchband. It's out of the way and won't fall out, particularly if you have an expansion watchband". Kathy prefers to use a short 5" Bryspun double-pointed knitting needle for cablework. She winds her cast-on tail onto a small bobbin and keeps her cable needle stored inside to be ready when needed...

Tips from KnitNet: if you design your own socks and begin the **socks with a ribbed cuff**, make the rib pattern flow into the leg and foot pattern for a more polished, well thought-out professional look.

Joyce M recently asked, "How do I **know the correct number of stitches** to pick up for bands? The number that the pattern calls for seems like too many and I'm worried that the band will flare". Good question! Joyce Bischoff has a couple of suggestions.

When working bands, particularly with cotton yarns, Joyce picks up into every space. Then, decrease evenly spaced on the first row to the number of stitches specified in the pattern. For buttonbands, you may use your garment as a swatch to pick up a few inches worth of stitches as a "gauge swatch" to experiment.

Kathy reminds us that the pick up row is gauge-dependent. The typical pick-up for a vertical edge is 3 out of 4 rows. This roughly translates into standard gauges of 5 sts / 7 rows per inch for worsted weight yarns and 6 sts / 8 rows per inch for sport weight yarns. If you are working garter stitch, slip stitch, brioche stitch or patterns that have a more compressed gauge, pick up the ratio between stitches and rows. For example, if your gauge is 5 sts / 10 rows per inch, try picking up every other row. For horizontal pickups (bound off neck stitches), pick up one stitch for each bound-off one. For diagonals, usually 5 out of 6 is the appropriate amount.

If you pick up too few stitches, the edge will have a "pulled" appearance. If you pick up too many, the edge will flare. Sometimes a trial and error approach is best, and it's OK for you to use a different stitch count in the required multiple, if necessary...

May 2008 Tips & Ideas

From KnitNet: a small plastic waste paper basket with open sides or a ventilated swing top works well as a knitting or crochet **project basket**. Thread the working yarn through one of the openings -- this will keep it from falling onto the floor, safe from curious pets...

From KnitNet: when knitting a baby sweater, consider picking up the stitches around the armhole and working the sleeve out from the body. This results in **fewer ends** and less bulk.

The sleeve can also be lengthened as the child grows...

Our thanks to Nancy Shroyer of Nancy's Knit Knacks for sharing her remedies for **avoiding loose edge sts** when working cables and ribs:

"When you transition from a knit stitch to a purl stitch, the yarn has to come to the front of the needle, then wraps counterclockwise around the needle for the purl. When you transition from a purl stitch to a knit stitch, the yarn goes back and wraps around the needle counterclockwise. The purl wrap actually uses a tiny bit more yarn and, for some reason, the knit stitch likes to take up that slack, resulting in a loose edge. It happens on the left edge of cables and columns of stitches. It even happens on K2, P2 rib if you look close enough.



To fix this, on the right side, wrap the purl stitch the wrong way, clockwise. On the wrong side (now it is a knit stitch), knit it in the back, keeping this as a twisted stitch. Wrapping it in the wrong way uses less yarn and making it a twisted stitch keeps it tight. It doesn't show on the front and makes crisp edges along that knit edge.

Twisting the stitch gives less stretch and can change the gauge if there are a lot of columns or cables, so make sure to incorporate this twisted stitch in your swatch. On cables with looser spun yarn, or fuzzy yarn, I like to use twisted stitches on both sides of the cable to give real crisp edges. This twisted purl sort of tucks itself under the knit stitch and pushes it forward. Make sure that you swatch because doing this twice does change the gauge".

Marcella S asks, "How do you **work a picot bind-off**?" Here's an easy method for a picot bind-off resulting in pretty little picots (tiny points), each with a small hole underneath for a delicate edging:

Starting at the beginning of the bind-off row, *In first stitch on left needle and with the knitted cast-on technique, cast on two new stitches. Bind off 4 sts. Transfer remaining stitch on right needle back to left needle. Repeat from * across. This results in picots which are two stitches apart. If you wish to space them out more, bind off 6 or even 8 before transferring the leftover stitch back to the left needle and casting on the next set of extra stitches.

Susan T asks, "What is the **best cast on** for a cotton pullover sweater"?

We recommend the cable cast-on method. Here's how: Cast on one stitch onto the left needle (slipknot). Insert the right needle into the slipknot from the front. Wrap yarn over right needle as if to knit. Bring yarn through the slipknot, forming a loop. Insert left needle into loop and slip loop off right needle (2 sts now on left needle). Insert right needle between the last 2 stitches on left needle. From this position, knit a stitch into the space between the 2 sts on left needle and place it on the end of the left needle (now 3 sts). Continue in this manner for the desired number of stitches.

This provides a stable firm foundation for cotton garments, and is also useful when adding stitches within the work (for wing sleeves, etc.).

June 2008 Tips & Ideas

When working **I-cord on garments**: If your I-cord is to be a feature, use larger gauge / size needles than used for the body. If you simply need a finished edge, use smaller gauge / size needles.
(gleaned from the Internet)

When **working a baby sweater with drop shoulder styling**, complete the body pieces, then seam the shoulder. Instead of knitting the sleeves separately and sewing them to the body, pick up the number of sts needed for the top of the sleeve around the armhole and work the sleeves in the opposite direction. Remember to do decreases as directed, ending with the number of sts needed for the cuff. This makes it easier to adjust the sleeve length if needed, with fewer ends to finish and less bulk.

The resulting shoulders will appear seamless and smooth. (gleaned from the Internet)

Designer Elsebeth Lavold recommends **binding off stitches with scrap yarn** instead of placing them on a stitch holder. This makes it easier to block the garment pieces. Simply unravel the bind-off, place the stitches back onto needles for working a three-needle bind off at the shoulders, or picking up a neckline. (Knit Simple S/S 08)

Re-check the gauge off the needle periodically during the knitting process. Transfer the stitches to a blocking wire or scrap piece of smooth cotton yarn. Spread the work out and measure gauge over the entire piece. (Kathy Zimmerman; Knit Simple S/S 08)
What's a blocking wire? A thin wire that may be threaded along the side of a swatch or garment piece -- simplifies the blocking process, giving a neater edge for seaming.

July 2008 Tips & Ideas

When **binding off a scoop** or wide ribbed neckline, Leslie Chmiel works 2 stitches together every 6 - 7 stitches. This results in a more attractive, smoother edge which will lie flat. Thanks, Leslie!

When **threading yarn** into a tapestry needle, cut a 2" long strip of paper just wide enough to fit through the eye of the needle. Fold the paper in half lengthwise, crease the fold, sandwich the yarn inside the paper and slip it through the needle originally from knitwear designer Linda Medina *Knit Simple S/S '08*



August 2008 Tips & Ideas

To prevent stitch markers from getting lost in your knitting bag, place them on large safety pins or stitch holders...
from Tanis Gray, *Knit Simple S/S 08*

Melissa G asks, "**What is mirrored increasing?**" Mirrored increases appear to be the exact opposite of each other, as if they were being reflected in a mirror. According to CLASSIC ELITE YARNS website (classiceliteyarns.com), "When increasing on both edges of a piece -- often used when shaping a waist or sleeves -- mirrored increases can add a touch of detail that really enhance the symmetry of the piece -- similar to mirrored decreases of working ssk on one edge and K2tog on the other.

Make one left-slanting: insert the left-hand needle under the horizontal strand between the stitch just worked and the next stitch from the front to the back, knit through the back loop.

Make one right-slanting: insert the left-hand needle under the horizontal strand between the stitch just worked and the next stitch from the back to the front, knit through the front loop."

Patti G asks, "**What is drape?**" According to the Knitting Daily website, "Drape, loosely defined, is the ease with which stitches are able to move past each other. The more easily the stitches can move against each other, the more the fabric flows and the more drape the fabric has. If the stitches cannot move against each other, then you have stiff body armor -- and, thus, no drape". If you are substituting yarns, getting gauge may not be enough. Do a large swatch and make sure the resulting knitted fabric feels appropriate for the project you have in mind...

***** BE CROCHET SAVVY *****

Here are some words of wisdom from Kim Werker, editor of *Interweave Crochet*. Get hooked on crochet!



1. ANY yarn can be crocheted; some yarns behave quite differently in crochet than in knitting. This opens up a world of possibility!
2. Cashmere is great for crochet. So is silk, merino, alpaca, mohair, cotton, linen, soy, bamboo...
3. Crochet uses about 2-3 times more yarn than knitting, depending on the stitch. Crochet stitches are tubular and don't lay flat like, say, stockinette stitch in knitting.
4. Crochet stitches are denser than knit stitches; use a larger hook than needle to give the stitches similar room to breathe. Recommended knitting gauge does not always translate into crochet gauge. When folks complain that crochet is always dense, it's because they've never experienced crochet worked with the proper hook size for the yarn and stitch pattern.
5. You can't "drop" a crochet stitch; ripping out is easy. You can, however, miss a stitch. New crocheters often have a hard time keeping track of stitches, especially at the beginning and end of a row or when using heavily-textured yarn.
6. Crochet requires removable stitch markers (check out our selection of CLOVER locking stitch markers and open coil style).
7. The loosely-constrained nature of crochet means that crochet patterns are often longer than knitting patterns.

September 2008 Tips & Ideas

Jennifer B asked: "How do I **keep track of increases** when working lace?" The most important thing to remember is to always work the yarnover / decrease pairs together. Every yarnover increase **MUST** have a corresponding decrease to maintain the pattern. It may be helpful to make a working copy of the stitch chart, find the yarnover/decrease pairs in the pattern and circle them (or color with different color highlighters) to help keep track of them. If you do not have enough stitches to work the paired combination together, then work them in stockinette instead. When you have enough extra stockinette stitches to work only half of the pattern, that may be enough to keep the lace pattern intact. Stitch markers are always helpful. Place one color stitch marker to keep track of the original stitch count, and another to count the number of increases, which should be the same on each side.



When knitting a cardigan, work the buttonhole stitches on each band. When it's time to sew on the buttons, just attach them over the buttonhole. You will have perfectly matched buttons...
from KnitNet.com

Having trouble remembering **how to cross cables** in the correct direction? Try this mantra: "I'll be **RIGHT BACK**, I **LEFT** the **FRONT** door open". Hold stitches to the back for a right cable cross. Hold stitches to the front for a left cable cross... from KnitNet.com

Marie P called to ask, "I'm working Lisa Knits Flower Garden Cardigan. The direction says to **purl through the back loop**. How do I do this?" Good question, Marie, this can seem awkward if you've never done this. According to Barbara Walker (*Second Treasury of Knitting Patterns*, on our bookshelf), "P1-b" or P1 tbl, or purl through the back loop, means: purl one stitch through its back loop, placing the right-hand needle point behind the stitch as if to insert the needle between the first and second stitches from the back, then inserting it, instead, into the *back* loop of the first stitch from the left-hand side, and wrapping the yarn around the needle point in front to complete the purl stitch as usual".

October 2008 Tips & Ideas

Lois Ribblet purchases **knitting accessories** like stitch holders, row counters, etc. in pairs. She places them in two separate zippered cosmetic bags. She uses one in her project bag and keeps the other as a "back-up" for any item that gets misplaced or lost.



It is easier to **pick up** ripped out stitches onto a needle that is one size smaller than you are using for your knitting. Be sure to switch back to the original size needle when you continue your work.
Mary Pat Miller @ knitnet.com

When **binding off** stitches at the beginning of a row, slip the first stitch of the row, then bind off as usual. This eliminates a "stairstep" effect and makes a smoother, more rounded edge for finishing.
Louise Kelly from Knitnet.com

When knitting the popular **feather and fan stitch** pattern, it is important to cast on very loosely

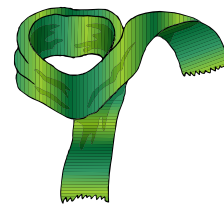
to get the initial wave effect on the bottom. Try using a needle size at least four to five sizes larger than required for the body of the afghan. Binding off immediately after the pattern row, without a border and using larger needles, will maintain the beautiful rippled look that is typically distorted on the bound-off edge.

Deesha Martin from Knitnet.com

Many tables and countertops have beveled or rounded edges. If you have difficulty finding a surface to clamp your **ball winder**, try purchasing an inexpensive wooden tabletop ironing board, which is smaller than a standard-sized ironing board. You can easily clamp a winder and swift to it and use where it's most handy.

Susan Zivec from Knitnet.com

Wendy K asks: "What is the correct **method for blocking**? I block my pieces before assembly and my daughter does her garments after seaming." Kathy answers that you are both right, depending on the style. Kathy prefers to always use a selvedge stitch edge and blocking wires, blocking pieces separately before seaming. In her opinion, this makes the seaming much easier, because the edge is flatter and easier to see. Kathy's method of choice is to insert the blocking wires at the sides of the garment, pin out the pieces to the desired measurements on a styrofoam board covered with a plastic tablecloth, then gently mist with room temperature water in a clean spray bottle that is only used for blocking, using bottled or filtered water. You have more control with this method rather than steaming the piece. After assembling the pieces, you may re-block the seams as needed. However, if the garment is worked circularly or in one piece to the underarm, then it should be blocked after seaming. It is always best to follow the pattern directions for blocking order.



Nancy P asks: "A scarf project I want to knit requires three balls of ribbon yarn. I have three balls, but one is a different dye lot. Although the yarn is variegated, there is a noticeable color difference. Do you have any suggestions for **blending these balls**?" Kathy recommends that you work with the three balls at the same time. Work one row with ball #1, one row with ball #2, then one row with ball #3. When you finish with ball #3, the strand from ball #1 will be waiting at that edge. Drop #3, work the next row with #1. At the end of that row, #2 will be waiting. This is a very effective blending technique and also works well with different textures for "stash-busting" projects...

November 2008 Tips and Ideas

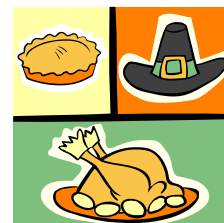
Laura M asked: "I plan to knit Kathy's Brick Pullover from INTERWEAVE KNITS Summer 2008 for my husband. How do I know what size to make?" Fit is a very subjective matter. Some of us feel comfortable with a close-fitting style while others like a more relaxed fit. The term for this is "ease" and it refers to the amount of roominess in the garment. Kathy suggests that you take the measurements from your husband's favorite sweater that fits him just the way he wants the new sweater to fit. This will be your target finished measurement for the chest, sleeves, shoulders, etc.

The knitting pattern will provide you with a wonderful tool, the schematic (it's there for a very good reason). This is the little drawing with all the measurements for all the sizes. Remember that this is a custom-knit sweater -- you are investing your time and effort into getting

it just the way you (and your hubby) want. It's OK to make changes to the sleeve and body length to get just the perfect fit. Measure each of the key dimensions on the laid-out-flat-favorite sweater and compare it to the corresponding measurement on the schematic. If necessary, measure two sweaters, if one fits up top and one over the tummy.

On "Knitting Daily", the Interweave Knits website (knittingdaily.com), editor Sandi Wiseheart lists 10 key measurements to determine the best fit (if any of these is too big or too small, the sweater will be ill-fitting):

1. Finished bust / chest
2. Finished hip
3. Finished waist
4. Neckline width
5. Neckline depth
6. Neckline to shoulder seam
7. Shoulder seam to shoulder seam across the back (perhaps the most crucial)
8. Underbust to waist height
9. Waist to hem height
10. Sleeve length



Accurate gauge is important to insure the best outcome. If you can't achieve the correct gauge after trying a different size needle with your chosen yarn and pattern, consider working a smaller or larger size. If your gauge is too big, choose the pattern stitch count instructions for a size smaller. If the gauge is too small, choose the pattern stitch count instructions for a size larger. Test for fit by first dividing the number of stitches cast on for the back by your actual stitches per inch. The number should equal the width you need for the lower body. If the pattern instructions specify rows-to-knit rather than length-to-work for pattern pieces, divide the number of rows specified by your rows per inch. The number should equal the length you need for the side seam, raglan armhole, sleeve, etc. If it doesn't you must add or subtract rows as necessary. When altering the body length, do so before the armhole shaping. Also, remember to check your gauge often during the knitting process, as it may change.

December 2008 tips & ideas

Sara P asked: "How do I know how many yards are in a **50 gram ball**?" This varies from yarn to yarn. "Grams" is a measurement of weight and 50 grams equals about 1.75 ounces, 100 grams equals about 3.5 ounces. The number of yards will be indicated on the label by the manufacturer -- all 50 gram balls are not equal -- one may contain 50 yards, others 150, and everything in between. It is therefore more accurate to purchase yarn by yardage rather than weight.

JoAnne B. asked: "What is the best surface for **blocking garments**?" Kathy prefers to use a large piece of styrofoam covered with a plastic tablecloth, swears by blocking wires and TULIP T-pins. Sandi Wiseheart of knittingdaily@interweave.com tells us that the following surfaces will work: blocking boards, mattresses, towel-covered tables, foam floors, cork boards -- anything waterproof and pin-able.

Tips & Ideas January 2009

Laurie M asked, "What is the best way to begin a new ball of yarn"?

Good question! Whenever possible, join yarn only at the edges of your work so that you can weave the tails neatly into the seam of the garment. If you must join a ball in the middle of the row (for example, if knitting in the round, or when working an afghan with a garter or seed stitch border), only do so where there's a change in the pattern, to make the changeover less noticeable. And, while we're on the subject, here are some helpful hints:

--- Treat any knots or imperfections in the yarn as "breaks" -- cut them out, then re-join yarn, preferably at the garment edge.

--- It's easier to disguise joins with textured patternwork. Join a new ball of yarn behind a cable by whipstitching it in where the knit meets the purl.

--- For a neater look on your completed garment, weave in ends before blocking.

Never try to weave in a dark color over a light one -- it will show through on the right side of the garment. For slippery yarns, weave in the tails on two rows, changing direction as you go. With bulky or chunky yarns (very trendy right now), split the yarn in two and weave it in opposite directions to avoid thick spots.

--- To determine if you have enough yarn to complete another row: If your yarn measures four times the length of the width of the piece, you can do one row. To determine if you can do two rows, fold the remaining strand of yarn in half & make a slipknot at the halfway point. If you reach the knot before you complete the first row, there is not enough left to do a second row.

--- Long tails from your cast-on row can be used to seam your garment.

--- When joining a new color in Fair Isle technique, knit one stitch with the tail of the old yarn and the beginning of the new yarn. Then, while you are knitting the different colors, twist the loose strands into the back of the work in the traditional Fair Isle technique.

Big yarns are popular this season. When working with chunky or super bulky yarns with an uneven thickness or texture, you'll get more accurate gauge results if you make your swatch at least twice the normal size -- about 8" or 20 cm square.



February 2009 tips & ideas

"Ladders" or loose stitches, can occur when working with double-pointed needles in the round. Ladders are caused by too much yarn between the last stitch on one needle and the first stitch on the next. Sandi Wisheart, editor of Knitting Daily.com recommends a firm little tug to ensure there is no extra yarn, and uses this mantra: "give the yarn an extra tug so the stitches will be nice and snug". Tug until the needles gently touch each other -- experiment to find the proper amount of "pull".

March 2009 tips & ideas

Joan M and Joyce B both asked, "My pattern instructs me to '**work even** for 2 rows'. What does that mean?" To "work even" means to continue working in the pattern as established, without doing any increases, decreases or shaping.

Madelon S asks, " I have an unlabelled yarn in my stash. How can I tell if it is **100% wool?**" Eleanor Swogger, Merchandise Manager of Kraemer Yarns, suggests immersing a small snippet of the yarn in full-strength Clorox bleach. Let it soak overnight. If the fiber is 100% wool, it will disintegrate within 24 hours. Thanks for the information, Eleanor!

April 2009 tips & ideas

Betty K recently called about yarnovers: "I'm not sure I'm doing this correctly. What is the **difference between a yarn-over and a make 1?**"

With the renewed popularity of lace projects, we are getting more how-to questions. Knitted lace is an openwork fabric, created by pairing yarn-over increases with decreases in an organized sequence. The placement of the holes resulting from yarn-overs and angles of the corresponding decreases are the key to the lace design.

Both the yarn-over and make 1 increases are worked between stitches. When working a yarnover between knit stitches (the yarn is already at the back of the work), bring the yarn to the front **towards** you between the two needle points, wrap it over the needle towards the back to create a new stitch, then knit the next stitch. This creates a hole, or eyelet. Remember to always bring the yarn towards you.

A "make 1 (m1)" is worked without a resulting hole, it is less visible than a yarnover. "Make 1" stitches can slant either to the left (M1L, make 1 left) or to the right (M1R, make 1 right). When working between two knit stitches, the M1L (left-slanting increase) is worked by inserting the left-hand needle from front to back under the strand between the last stitch knitted and the first stitch on the left needle. Knit, twisting strand by working into the loop at the **back** of the needle. When working between two knit stitches, the M1R (right-slanting increase) is worked by inserting the left needle from front to back under the strand between the last stitch worked and the first stitch on the left needle. Knit, twisting the strand by working into the loop at the **front** of the needle.

Unsure of what size to knit? **Compare the schematic measurements** with those of a favorite sweater...

As a general rule, garter stitch (knit every row) has twice as many rows per inch as it does stitches per inch...

What are some ways to find creative **joy on a budget**? Try the "one skein" strategy! Purchasing "just one" special skein of yarn often costs less than ordering out for pizza and much less than dinner & a movie, plus it provides more hours of entertainment value. This strategy works better than denying yourself "yarn fixes" entirely (as any dieter knows all too well). What can you make with a single skein of yarn? Socks, hats, mitts, knitted cuffs, a cell phone case, a dishcloth, a neckwarmer -- lots of small knitted delights! Sandi Wiseheart, editor of *Knitting Daily* tells us, "We knit for joy, and anything done for joy is worth finding a way to do, no matter what the challenges. The more joy, the more solace, the more calm we can bring to this crazy world, the better". We'd love to hear your ideas for "one-skein wonders"...

May 2009 Tips & Ideas

From shopgal JENNIFER FERRENCE: On many interchangeable circular knitting needle set cables is a small opening near the connector. Thread this opening with sewing thread and weave it along as you knit to use as a "lifeline" for knitting lace. Weave it on the same pattern row each time, preferably on row that is worked without yarnovers. If you need to **"unknit"** you will be certain of which pattern row has this "lifeline". Thanks, Jen! (original source CAST ON Magazine)

From INTERWEAVE PRESS editor Ann Budd: when **working decreases** as in armhole shaping, count the number of stitches you need to decrease on each end, then place a marker. Work decreases as your pattern specifies, until you hit the marker.

When you come to the marker, you know you've done the correct number. This also works for increases (such as sleeves). Place a marker at the original starting point, and count the number of increases.

June 2009 Tips & Ideas

Kathy suggests enlarging knitting patterns and stitch charts, then having them laminated to protect from spills. Try our new highlighter tape to follow along in the pattern. Save your originals for use again at a later time, clean and unwrinkled...

"When using hand-painted yarns, buy more yarn than you think you will need. Dye lots rarely match. If you need to work with different dye lots, alternate yarn from two different skeins / dye lots every two rows. Don't be afraid to mix yarns from different companies. Many complement each other very well. If you are worried about striping, try slip-stitch pattern stitches. Texture of any kind tends to break up stacking of colors. By working side to side or cuff to cuff, any striping runs vertically and improves the line of your garment".

Original source Leslie Taylor & Diane McKay, Mountain Colors Yarn

August 2009 Tips & Ideas

Do you enjoy making hats for "Caps For Kids" or similar charity knitting / crocheting? If you use small balls of "**stash**" yarn for stripes or slip stitch patterns, decide the order in which you wish to place the colors, then "skewer" them onto a spare knitting needle to keep them in the order you want. Simply slip off the next color when ready and keep working away...

from Betty Lapp; KnitNet 7/15/09

If you are working on a garter stitch project and have a problem **keeping track** of the right and wrong sides, use two different colors or types of knitting needles. Use one of each color / type. Color one is the right side and color two is the wrong side...

from Pauline Angione; KnitNet 7/15/09

When **selecting a yarn for knitting lace**, avoid firm, tightly spun yarn (like certain sock yarns). Choose mohair, silk, alpaca, or merino wool with a looser twist for a delicate appearance for openwork projects like shawls and scarves... fom Shanta Moitra

If you are **modifying a pattern**, write down your changes. You may decide later to duplicate the same garment. If you do not write it down, you will not remember what you did.
Laurel Highlands Knitting Guild

For an **easy bobble**, work K1, P1, K1, P1, K1 into one stitch on the right side (public side) of your work, then purl these 5 stitches together on the wrong side of the work.

Ann E. Smith, designer

October 2009 Tips & Ideas

Marylou B recently e-mailed: "My pattern states to **slip one stitch** at the beginning of every row for an edge stitch. I'm confused. Do I slip to knit or slip to purl?"

When a pattern direction states "slip one knitwise", it means "as if to knit", and "slip one purlwise" means "as if to purl". Slip knitwise only if you are working decreases (slip, slip, knit decrease, etc.) or are instructed to "slip knitwise". Otherwise, slip purlwise. In your case, always slip as if to purl.

On a related matter, if you are not sure whether to slip a stitch with yarn in front (wyif) or with yarn in back (wyib), always slip yarn on wrong side of work unless instructed otherwise. Thanks for asking!

Even if your gauge swatch is correct, continue to measure and re-check your gauge periodically throughout the project. Your **gauge can change** as you relax.

If your knitting needs to be ripped back several rows (it happens to everyone on occasion), **rip back** to one row before the problem. Slide a smaller size needle through the loops (it is not necessary that these stitches be oriented properly). With the working needle in your left hand, rep the last row stitch by stitch, orienting the stitches correctly and fixing the problem stitch(es).

When **starting the heel flap** when knitting socks on two circular needles, tuck the unused needle inside the sock. It won't dangle or be in the way, and will not stretch out the sides of the sock. More importantly, you will be able to find it when you need it again...

November 2009 tips & ideas

Janet Klauss shared her tip for keeping a "step ahead" with holiday gift projects. When Janet's family is together (or when the opportunity presents itself), she **gets a tracing of their feet!** Use sturdy cardboard to trace each family member's foot so you have accurate measurements for fit and a rigid template. Try the sock on the template periodically while you are knitting the recipient's gift socks. Janet keeps her friends and families "feet" in manila envelopes when not in use, so she is always sure to put her "best foot forward". Thank you, Janet!



December 2009 tips & ideas

When **knitting mittens**, it is sometimes difficult to avoid small holes when picking up stitches at the base of the thumb. Try picking up a few extra stitches at both ends of the thumb opening. Decrease on the first row or two to get back to the correct stitch count. If any gaps remain, snug them up by weaving on the inside of the mitten.

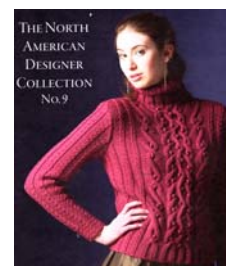
January 2010 tips & ideas

To get more pronounced points at the corners of Granny Square motifs, try placing a taller stitch in each corner stitch of the motif. For example, if you are making a double crochet square, place a treble crochet in place of the center double crochet in each of the four corners. If the corner is made with a chain, add an extra chain...

If you run out of yarn for your project, and can't get the same dye lot, blend the two shades together as you knit. Reserve enough yarn from the original dye lot, and work two rows with the new dye lot, then two rows with the original. You may also use a circular needle, working across twice on the right side (one row with each dye lot), followed by working twice across the wrong side row. If you have equal amounts of the two lots, you may alternate rows throughout the project for consistency or disguise the difference by working the main part of the garment in one dye lot & the ribbings in the other...

February 2010 Tips & Ideas

Lois R recently asked for more information about **knitted bobbles** and the knots used in our Kathy's "Julia" design for NASHUA HANDKNITS MAGAZINE Volume 2 North American Designer Collection No. 9 (shown at right).



Kathy says, "These touches of texture come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from the small sophisticated knots which flank the cables in this design to larger popcorn-looking ones. Bobbles are made by working new stitches into a base stitch to produce extra fabric that pops out from the surface of the knit fabric. They can be added into almost any pattern as an embellishment, used singly or in groups to form lines. If you plan to add bobbles, you will need extra yarn."

Knots are more subtle than bobbles, are completed on one row, are small, firm and sit close to the fabric. Knots can be made smaller or larger by varying the number of stitches worked into the base stitch. To make the knot used in Kathy's cabled pullover, knit into the front and back of the same stitch 3 times, then knit into the front once more -- 7 stitches made from 1 stitch. Pass the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th stitches on the right needle over the 1st stitch as if to bind off "backwards" -- 7 stitches decreased back to 1 stitch. Place the knot stitch temporarily on a cable needle, wrap the working yarn snugly around the base of the knot to "strangle", bring the yarn to the back again, then return the knot stitch to the right needle. Before working the following stitch, pull the wrap tightly to make the knot stitch "pop out" more. If a smaller knot is desired, you can work 3 stitches into one, then simply purl the 3 stitches together.

Bobbles are usually worked with short row technique, and are larger than knots. For a medium-sized stockinette stitch bobble, knit into the front and back of a single stitch to form 5 stitches, OR work (knit 1, yarover) into the same stitch until you have 5 stitches. Turn, and purl these stitches. Turn, ssk, knit 2, knit 2 together. Turn and purl 3. Turn and slip 2 together as if to knit, knit 1, and pssso -- 1 stitch remains. Work into the back of this stitch on the return row to secure more firmly. For a bolder bobble, work 7 stitches into the base stitch. For more texture, knit the wrong side rows (garter stitch effect). For wider bobble, decrease every row, rather than every other row. Try mixing different kinds of bobbles and knots for varied texture...

March 2010 tips and ideas

In a recent issue of Woman's World magazine, an article called "Smart Moves to Protect Yourself from Diabetes" states: "When it comes to Type 2 diabetes, you already know that

staying trim and eating a well-balanced diet can reduce your risk dramatically. But to truly dodge this preventable disease, doctors say, you'll want to take control of some surprising risk factors...

Chronic stress is a sneaky risk factor. Protect your health with a relaxing hobby. Being tense can often bump up your risk of blood-sugar problems by 184%! "Non-stop production of cortisol, adrenalin and other stress hormones exhausts the nervous system and pancreas," triggering carb cravings and blood-sugar spikes, says Michael Roisen, M.D.

Stay healthy by spending 20 minutes a day **knitting** or doing anything else that requires fine motor control. These hobbies activate calming brain waves that cut the production of stress hormones by 45%." Thanks to Lois R for sharing this article with us...

We received an e-mail from Dixie V about yarn weight categories.

Dixie writes, "If #1 is super fine (sock, fingering, baby), what weight is **"lace weight"**? I thought it was finer than sock weight. Is fingering yarn lace weight?"

This question had Kathy doing some research, and she found a revised version of the standard yarn weight system for crochet and knitting in the current issue of VOGUE KNITTING. The Craft Yarn Council (CYCA) gives guideline categories based on yarn thickness. These guidelines are available at: YarnStandards.com

Yarn weight symbol "0" (zero), lace category refers to thin fingering and 10 count crochet thread yarns. The knit gauge range in stockinette stitch is 33-40 sts = 4" with recommended needle size 000 to 1 (1.5 mm - 2.25mm). The crochet gauge range is 32-42 double crochets = 4" with steel hook 6, 7, 8 (1.6 - 1.4 mm), regular hook B-1 (2.25 mm). These guidelines reflect the most commonly used gauges and needle / hook sizes for the specific yarn category. For further clarification: "Lace weight yarns are usually knitted or crocheted on larger needles and hooks to create lacy, openwork patterns. Accordingly, a gauge range is difficult to determine. Always follow the gauge stated in your pattern." Kathy adds, remember there is no substitution for a good old-fashioned swatch...

April 2010 tips & ideas

One of the biggest changes we've seen during our 30 years in business is the steady growth of the Internet. Through our ever-expanding website, our monthly newsletter updates are read globally by our subscribers. Recently, Janice S of England e-mailed: "I am making a garment and have come across the term 'wrap 1 and turn' and am not sure what to do". Janice also wrote, "I will keep using your website, as our knitting group is looking for ideas and group projects to start for our Summer fetes and bazaars. We love all the American things as they are so innovative and colourful".

Thank you for your e-mail, Janice. **"Wrap and turn"** is a knitting technique most commonly used when working a "short row". Short rows are partial rows done to shape knitting, such as sock heels, necks, or shoulders. The row is worked part way, then turned back and forth until the required number of extra rows are completed. The "wrap" is worked to prevent a hole when turning. When you reach the point where you are to turn, slip the next stitch. Bring the yarn from the back to the front of the work if knitting, or from the front to the back if purling. Slip the stitch back to the left needle, thus wrapping the stitch that was slipped, then turn your work. This is what is meant by "wrap 1 and turn". Be certain that the yarn is in the

correct position, depending on whether the next stitch is knit or purl, and continue back across the row. After the short rows are completed, and you are ready to work the wrapped stitch, pick up the wrap with the tip of your right needle and work it together with its stitch. This will hide the wrap, and the shaping will have a smooth appearance.

May 2010 tips & ideas

Shopgal Betty Lou Glasso recommends **recycling those wonderful plastic** zippered packagings from bedsheets and linens to organize your projects. This is an excellent idea to conveniently keep all your needed supplies, the pattern and yarn together when you need it.

Eleanor Swogger, Marketing Manager of KRAEMER YARNS, recently told us that the reason **helmet liners** for the troops are to be made from 100% wool is because of its fire retardant and self-extinguishing properties. The military does not want anyone in a combat zone to wear any type of clothing that will burn...

June 2010 tips & ideas

Knitted baby jackets make wonderful **heirloom quality gifts**. If you don't know if you are knitting for a boy or a girl, make buttonholes on both bands. Sew the buttons on the appropriate side when the baby arrives. Move the buttons from one band to the other for another child, no matter the gender...

August 2010 tips & ideas

When working with a **heavy button closure** such as the Kollage Kimono Jacket, Marilee Roney sews a large snap in place behind the button. Simply eliminate the buttonhole, sew the button in place on the top band with the snap positioned underneath it, and you'll avoid the fiber stretching from the weight of a heavy button...

Bind off edge **too tight?** Try substituting a crochet hook instead of knitting needles to bind off. Use the same size crochet hook as your knitting needle...

*** WASHING ADVICE FOR HANDKNITS ***

Gleaned from KRAEMER YARNS July 2010 newsletter: "Proper care of handknits is important for garments to maintain their shape and surface appearance. We encourage you to read and understand the care instructions on the yarn labels.

All yarns, even easy care yarns such as Perfection and Tatamy, will benefit from being washed in a lingerie bag. Use a gentle soap (note: Kathy's stocks Eucalan and Soak, two non-rinse wool & natural fiber washes).

Do not wash your handknits in a load with towels, jeans, or other heavy items. If fibers are machine dryable, a short cycle at a low temperature is best, and then lay flat to finish drying". (re-printed with permission of Kraemer Yarns)

September 2010 tips & ideas

Worried about **running short of yarn** for your sweater project? Lisa Carnahan of LISA KNITS suggests weighing your yarn on a kitchen or postal scale. If you know the yardage per ounce/grams, then you can project the amount you have left. For example, if you've finished the body and one sleeve, simply weigh the finished sleeve and the yarn. If the yarn weighs as much or more than the finished sleeve, you will have enough yarn to complete the second one. Remember to calculate yardage needed for the neck and any buttonbands.

Kathy's general rule is the "**rule of thirds**" -- generally, you will need approximately 1/3 of your yarn for the front(s), 1/3 for the back, and 1/3 for long sleeves, plus the bands. If in doubt, finish the body, neck, and bands, then work both sleeves at the same time to the same length with the yarn remaining. You can use a complimentary yarn for seaming if using mattress stitch technique.

If you do not have enough yarn in your dye lot, but can get more in another dye lot, **blend the "odd" lot** by using it in ribbed bands. Another trick is work three balls at the same time -- work across with ball #1, back with ball #2, across with ball #3 where voila! ball #1 is waiting. Kathy uses this technique when working with handpainted yarns to avoid stacking or pooling of colors...

October 2010 tips & ideas

One frequently-asked question in Kathy's classes at Knitter's Day Out was: "How do I know **which way to slip** the stitch when working a slip-stitch pattern or a decrease?" Good question! When you will be completing a knitting action such as a slip, slip knit (ssk) decrease or slip 1, knit 1, pass the slip stitch over decrease (skp), always slip the stitch knitwise (as if you were knitting it). When the stitch is not going to be worked on that particular row, such as in a slip stitch pattern, slip purlwise (as if you were purling it). If the pattern direction does not state which way to slip the stitch, always slip as if to purl unless told otherwise.

Another was: "My yarn-overs never look right. Which way do I wrap the yarn when **working a yo**"? (Kathy smiles). If the yarn-over does not leave a hole, you have probably wrapped the yarn in the wrong direction. There are four possible scenarios for yarnovers: going between a knit to a knit, a knit to a purl, a purl to a knit, or a purl to a purl. In every case, always bring the yarn between the needle tips TOWARD you and then over the needle from front to back. Then, bring the working yarn into position to make the next stitch. If going from a knit to a purl, remember to wrap the yarn-over completely around the needle to make a new stitch...

November 2010 tips & ideas

Duplicate stitch technique can be used to correct mistakes in color knitting (cover over the errant stitch with the proper color) or for small color accents. It also comes in handy to repair areas where the yarn is split or "weak". Thread a blunt tapestry needle with a length of yarn, cover the "weak" stitch with an embroidered stitch, following the flow of the yarn. Duplicate stitch on the wrong side of the work is useful for weaving in ends in the middle of a row when

knitting circularly.

Before you cast on even one stitch for that beautiful fall sweater you've got planned, you need to decide **what size to make**. This can be confusing, but with a little planning, you can easily choose your perfect size.

First, take your actual chest measurement at the fullest point of the chest. Decide how much ease (roominess) you would like in the finished garment. This is usually very individualized and will depend on the weight of the yarn, and fit (oversized drape vs. more fitted). Fit is generally noted on the pattern instructions.

If you aren't sure how much ease you would like, measure a piece of clothing that fits you the way you would like your sweater to fit. This is also a good way to determine your preferred sleeve and body length.

December 2010 tips & ideas

*** TIPS FOR SWEATER CARE ***

Keep your knits looking like new with these tips from *Self* magazine:

- Sweaters don't require a wash after every wear. (Hooray! Kathy adds, wear a tee or long-sleeve T-neck under your sweaters for layering & prolonged wear before cleaning) If one is soiled, check the tag to see whether it's machine washable or hand-wash. A good gentle cleanser is EUCALAN no-rinse delicate wash, available here at Kathy's Kreations.
- Fold knits a different way after each wear to avoid perma-creasing.
- A sweater shaver is the best way to remove pills. We recommend De-Fuzz-It. Practice on a place that doesn't show, like under the arm. Glide the shaver lightly and slowly.
- Before storing your knits, clean them. If you've worn them -- even for only a quick try-on -- bugs will be attracted to eau de you.

January 2011 tips & ideas

When someone asks you if making sweaters **saves you money**, you can answer "Absolutely!". Whether you are using our sale-table yarn or handpainted luxury fiber, you enjoy an entertainment bargain in dozens of hours of pleasure and creativity. Not to mention the stress reduction factor. Compare the cost of your new sweater project to what you'd spend for as many hours in the gym, yoga classes, or spa treatments. That sweater looks like a real smart bargain now, doesn't it?

March 2011 tips & ideas

Kathy recommends **blocking** all swatches and knitted pieces before assembly, to set the stitches and improve the hand of the fabric. Kathy uses blocking wires and "pins out" pieces before misting, laying the piece flat to air dry.

One of Kathy's Stitches West students, Willa Cather, shared this blocking tip: When misting with room temperature water, add a tiny drop of Eucalan to the spray bottle before dampening the piece. This will help to reduce surface tension / water beading and cleans

the fabric (Eucalan is non-rinse). Thanks, Willa!

April 2011 tips & ideas

To end the confusion of how to **slip a stitch**, use this rule:

SLIP AS IF TO KNIT -- when you will be doing something with the stitch, such as a
left-slanting ssk decrease (slip, slip, knit)

SLIP AS IF TO PURL -- when you will not be doing anything with the stitch, such as in slip
stitch patterns

May 2011 tips & ideas

three organizing tips

When making a cardigan, always make the band without the buttonholes first. Mark the buttonhole placement with tiny coilless pins, and leave these pins in place as you do the other band. When it comes time to sew on the buttons, the placement is already marked for them...

Freezer bags are wonderful for storing odds and ends of leftover yarn -- write the weight, fiber and brand info on the outside & tuck a label on the inside. Organize your patterns according to weight (Mary Lou Fleming uses notebook binders, placing her patterns into plastic sleeves) and childrens' patterns according to size. Save all pattern notes inside the plastic sleeve in case you wish to work the pattern again...

To simplify counting rows when working circular knitting, weave a contrasting color of the same yarn at the increase point as you work. For example, if you are increasing every 4th round, keep the contrast yarn toward you and take it to the back of the work after increasing 4 rounds later. After 4 more rounds, bring the yarn to the front. You will not only know that the increase was worked, but also how many rounds have been completed...

Jane B wants to know: "What does the **abbreviation DK mean**? Should I work with two strands of yarn?"

No, Jane, this does not mean to work the yarn doubled. The term refers to double knitting weight (DK) yarn. This weight knits up at approximately 5.5 stitches per inch on US #5 or #6 knitting needles, CYCA yarn weight classification#3. It is a good choice for summer wear or kids' garments.

The terminology is said to have started in Great Britain during World War II, when factories were short staffed and materials hard to come by. Instead of spinning a sport weight yarn to be worked at 6 stitches per inch as well as a worsted weight to be knit at 5 stitches per inch, this in-between gauge could "double" to get either gauge depending on the size needle used. Some of the more popular summer DK weights brands on our shelves include CLASSIC ELITE "Provence", BERROCO "Comfort DK" and KRAEMER "Tatamy Tweed DK". And here's a cute little hat worked in your choice of DK weight yarn...

June 2011 tips & ideas

Although any cast-on method will get stitches onto your needles, choosing one with the right

look for your project will add a professional-looking touch. Kathy chose the cable cast-on for the drop stitch scarf so that the first row worked will appear on the right side (public side) of the work with a smooth, clean edge.

Cable Cast on Method: Make a slip knot onto the left-hand knitting needle (LHN). Insert the right-hand knitting needle (RHN) into the slip knot as if to knit (knitwise). Pull up a loop and place it on the LHN. *Insert the RHN between the two stitches and wrap yarn around the RHN knitwise. Pull the loop through and place it onto the LHN.

Repeat from * until the desired numbers of stitches are cast onto the LHN. If your work seems tight, try inserting the RHN between the two stitches before you pull the working yarn for the next stitch...

July 2011 tips & ideas

two colorwork knitting tips

When knitting a Fair Isle circular sweater yoke neckband from the bottom up, decrease the needle size every few rounds to prevent the neckband from being too wide at the top. You may need to use a couple of different sizes to complete the band...

When working slip-stitch patterns, unless otherwise instructed, always slip the stitches as if to purl, and hold the yarn on the wrong side of the work when you slip the stitches. Avoid weaving in multiple ends by carrying the color not in use up the side of the work, catching it every other row to secure...

August 2011 tips & ideas

lace knitting From *Interweave Knits* Fall 2011: "Lace knitters find it helpful to have a "lifeline", in case they need to rip back or "re-visit" an error. Try using a small circular needle instead of thread or yarn. Simply insert it through every stitch of the current row and leave the needles hanging on those stitches.

If you need to rip back, everything below that row will be preserved on the circular needle 'lifeline'...

Eleanor Swogger shares this information about KRAEMER YARNS Natural Skeins line: "The **Natural Skeins line** is developed to dye before use. If you want to use them in their natural state, gently wash hanks and allow them to dry. This will allow the yarn to bloom and give you a more accurate gauge".

