

KNITTING TIPS

From the Knit at Night Guild

I gathered these tips from members of the guild, workshops and retreats I've attended, and various internet sites. - ted

MISC. TIPS - Roddie Shelley

1. Knitting is not a competitive sport. Enjoy it and take the pressure off.
 2. Always keep three projects going at the same time. One that is brainless, one that is small and portable, and a challenging one to work on at home.
 3. Teach those around you to look to see how close you are to the end of a row before interrupting you.
 4. Start all Christmas gifts by May.
- Never leave your knitting basket out if you own six cats!
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ONE ROW BUTTONHOLE

1. Work to buttonhole position
 2. Slip 1 purlwise with yarn in front
 3. Put yarn in back and leave it there.
 4. *Slip 1 purlwise, pass previous stitch over as in basic cast-off. Repeat for each buttonhole desired -- for a very small buttonhole, cast off one, 2 stitches make about 3/8", 3 stitches about 1/2"....
 5. Slip last cast-off stitch back to left needle and turn work, putting yarn in back.
 6. Cable cast-on all buttonhole stitches (i.e. if you cast off 2, now cast on 2, etc.)
 7. Cable cast-on another stitch, but slide the yarn in front before putting it on the left needle. Turn work.
 8. Slip 1 stitch knitwise and pass that last extra cast-on stitch over it.
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Margaret Stove's STRETCHY CAST OFF

Knit the first two stitches, *return these two stitches to the left hand needle and then knit these two together; knit 1. Repeat from * to end of row. Break off yarn and draw through remaining stitch. If you knit the two together through front loops it becomes very loose - almost looks like a cable, but if you knit the two through the back loops it looks more like a traditional cast off, but still has lots of extra play in it

SWATCHES

- When you make a swatch, tie knots in the cast on tail corresponding to the size needle you used, i.e. 4 knots = size 4. This hint came from Cheryl Oberle when she was here doing a workshop.

- Do a generous swatch then trust that the project will come out the way it should. Don't start over or rip out at night; if may look fine to you in the morning. Or you may come up with a creative solution to your "mistake". - Maggie Baldwin
- Keep in mind that various stitched fabrics handle and age differently. Held or slipped stitches widen, garter stitch fabric is shorter than stockinet (with the same number of rows). Swatches in the same stitch are therefore mandatory. – Carolyn Hinton
- To spice up a plain sweater, incorporate a number of different stitch patterns in the body and borders. Be sure to swatch all the stitch patterns and adjust your stitch count accordingly. – Diane Callen

KNITTING FROM CHARTS

Enlarge charts on copier to make them easier to read. Use sticky notes to keep your place. Place the note *above* the line you are knitting so you can see what is on the row below.

WORKING FROM MULTIPLE CHARTS WITH DIFFERENT ROW COUNTS

Carol Anderson shared this hint with us when she was here teaching at a retreat. When working on an Aran pattern with multiple charts containing different row counts spanning the width of a garment, color key your charts then use stitch markers in the same color as the charts to show where each starts in your knitting. To make the markers, take a piece of yarn, fold it in half, then tie knots to create the same number of loops as are in that chart. As you come to each marker in your knitting, move it down to the next loop to keep up with the row count. You can always tell what row you are on for each chart by counting the loops in the marker above the needle.

ROW COUNTS AND PATTERN REPEATS – Roddie Shelley

Write each row of your pattern on a note card. Punch a hole in the upper left corner and place the cards on a key ring. As you finish knitting a row, flip to the next row. When storing your knitting, hold the cards together with a large paper clip or binder clip so you know what row to start when you return.

MORE PATTERN TIPS

- Make a copy of your pattern to work from. If it gets lost, you still have the original. Make notes of any changes as you work on the copy. You can copy these notes to the original when finished, if desired. Keep these copies in a binder along with your swatches and the ball band from your yarn for a record of your project.
- Page protectors keep patterns neat and keep multiple pages together without stapling. Just move the page you are working on to the front. Make a separate copy of the page with finished garment dimensions to keep on the back side for reference. Keep all the needles

necessary for the project in the protector (rib, body, double points) until the project is finished.

- Be sure to note the row number that you begin the armhole bindoff. This is much more accurate than measuring to see if you're in the same place for fronts and backs.
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INFALLABLE PATTERNS? – Linda Walke

Don't assume that all patterns are correct. If something doesn't work, analyze your pattern and check for mistakes. If you are a beginner, have someone else go over the instructions with you. Never rip until you verify the mistake and how to correct it. And if it is going to require a lot of ripping back, set it aside and look at it again the next day. (I ripped out a couple of days work when I got tired and lost one night, and there wasn't really a mistake – theresa)

MATCHING FRONTS AND SLEEVES

Knit both sides or both sleeves at the same time to make sure they are the same length and have the same shaping. This is most easily done on a circular needle with two balls of yarn.

STITCH MARKERS

- Lots of things can be used as stitch markers in a pinch. Cut a plastic soda straw into small rings, make loops of cotton yarn (doesn't fuzz up and catch in your knitting), twist ties, hair pins, safety pins, rubber bands from the orthodontist.
 - To keep from losing your tiny rubber ring markers, tie a 6" piece of colored thread on each one. Makes them easy to find when they fall off, and they don't accidentally slide under a stitch and move (very common in lace knitting with yarn overs).
 - When casting on, place a marker every 10-20 stitches to make it easier to keep count.
 - When knitting lace, place a marker after every pattern repeat.
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DOUBLE POINT STITCH HOLDERS – Linda Walke

Cut the elastic band from a bunch of broccoli into squares. Poke each end of the double pointed needle through a square to keep your stitches from falling off when you're not knitting. This is also useful when you're knitting a large piece, such as a shawl or tablecloth, using several circular needles.

SLIPPERY RIBBON YARN

Place the skein in a small ziplock bag that has one corner clipped out. Run the working end of the ribbon through the hole. The bag keeps it from unwinding all over the place.

TANGLED SKEINS – Gika Rector

When untangling a skein of slippery yarn, wind it onto an empty paper tube. This helps keep it from falling apart again. As you work with the skein, don't pull any of the yarn too tight. The idea is to work at loosening the yarn. If you get tired and are losing patience, stop and take a break. It will save you time in the long run.

YARN HOLDERS

Old knee-hi stockings make great “yarn bras” to keep your skeins from falling apart. Some liquor stores use “yarn bras,” like the ones from Patternworks, to keep bottles from clinking together in your bag. They will often throw in a few extras if you ask nicely. When knitting doilies from a small ball of cotton, place the ball in a coffee cup to keep it from running away.

POSTAL SCALE

- Knitted one sock and need to know if you have enough yarn left to do another? Weigh the sock on a postal scale, then weigh the remaining yarn.
 - Bought some yarn and don't know how much you have? Make a large swatch. Weigh it on the postal scale, then unravel the swatch and measure the length of yarn used. Weigh the unused yarn. Divide the weight of the unused yarn by the weight of the swatch and multiply that by the number of yards in the swatch. That will give you an approximate number of yards of your unused yarn.
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GADGET STORAGE

Small fishing tackle boxes are great for storing those knitting tools like needles, ring markers, point protectors, crochet hooks, row counters, and other small items that are easily lost. They are cheap, too. The plastic zippered bags that nice pillowcases come in also work well. If you keep each working project in it's own carrying bag, simply move the gadget bag to the working bag and you'll have most anything you could need at your fingertips.

WHAT'S IN YOUR GADGET BAG?

Here's a list of handy things to keep in a gadget bag:

Yarn needle	Koozie	Stitch holders
Crochet hook	Bottle Opener	Coil-less safety pins
Stitch markers	Highlighter	Pencil or pen
Point protectors	Nail File	Nametag
Measuring tape	Hand lotion	Hand wipes
Row counter	Small ball of cotton yarn	Outline of your foot
Sticky notes	Salon Pass patches	Guild Directory
Needle gauge	Hand Ease gloves	
Note pad	Small scissors	

FINISHING SOCK TOES

Hate doing kitchener stitch? Put the stitches on a piece of yarn, turn the sock inside out. Put the stitches back on two needles and do a 3-needle bind-off – strong and neat.

KITCHENER STITCH (to close sock toes)

With right side facing, free end of yarn on right hand side of work, one needle in front and one in back, working right to left, and passing yarn under the needles back and forth between front and back as you go:

1. Thread yarn through first st on front needle knitwise, then through first st on back needle purlwise
2. Knitwise through first st of front needle and drop it off needle
3. Purlwise through next front st and leave on needle
4. Purlwise through first st of back needle and drop off needle
5. Knitwise through next back st and leave on needle
6. Repeat last 4 rows above til all sts are worked
7. Knitwise through last front st and remove from needle, purlwise through last back st and remove from needle

Or simply:

(preparation stitches)

- Front knit
- Back purl

(repeat two lines below to end)

- Front knit and off, purl
- Back purl and off, knit

(finishing)

- Front knit and off
 - Back purl and off
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CARE OF KNITTED TREASURES

Clean woolens in the Spring before storage. Moths particularly like soiled wool. – Carolyn Hinton

Store your woolens in breathable bags such as a pillocase, not plastic.

A recipe for cleaning old, discolored things:

1 cup Snowy bleach

1 cup Ivory Snow (this is impossible to find, so I use Ivory soap, grated

1 Gallon very hot water.

Mix all together and let cool. It will become thick and gooey. Add your item and be sure it gets really wet through. Squish a few times a day as you pass by. It may take a couple of weeks, but the yellowed item will come out clean and lovely. Rinse well and dry.

RUSSIAN JOIN

Thread the end of your working yarn in a fairly sharp yarn needle. Thread the end of the needle back through the core of the working yarn for a couple of inches. Pull through, creating a loop in the end of your yarn. Thread the end of the new yarn into a needle. Pull this yarn through the loop at the end of the working yarn, then thread the needle down through the new yarn for a couple of inches creating a loop in the new yarn connected to the working yarn. Gently pull on the ends of both yarns to close the loops.



Buy the BEST yarn, which may or may not be the most expensive, for your project. Your personal time and talent is worth it! – Denise Winter

LIFELINE – Donna Collins (also on the lace list)

When working on a complicated pattern (such as lace) run a safety line through the last plain row of a pattern repeat. You can use contrasting cotton waste yarn, dental floss, fishing line, etc. Use a darning needle to run through the stitches parallel to your knitting needle on the completed row. If you make a mistake you can't correct, you can at least rip back to the row with the lifeline without worrying about being able to pick up the correct number of stitches.

CROCHET TIP - Carla Sedan

Use bobby pins to help count chains and mark beginning and ending stitches. Makes working across a row hassle-free! (Coil-less safety pins and paperclips work well, too. – ted)

VARIEGATED YARN – Carolyn Hinton

To break up patterning of color in variegated yarn, knit 2 rows from one skein then 2 rows from a second skein with no cutting. Just leave a yarn "float" up the side. This is also useful when working with skeins from different dye lots.

CASTING ON

When casting on a large number of stitches, use a crochet or knitted cast on instead of guessing how much yarn you need for a long-tail cast on.

Thanks to everyone who contributed directly or indirectly to this list. I wish I had read these when I first learned to knit! -- Theresa Dunn