

# 13 Top Tips & Techniques

for more successful knitting



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Series 400

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## Fearless Ripping

What do you do when you made a mistake in your knitting and you need to unknit (a.k.a. tink or frog) a few stitches, or rip out many rows of knitting?

### Here's how to rip out a few stitches in a row without pulling out the whole row:

If you're in the middle of a row, take the working yarn and hold the needle it's attached to in your right hand. (The working yarn comes off the back of knit stitches and front for purl stitches.) Place the left needle into the stitch right underneath the live stitch on the right needle from front to back (Figure 1). Slip the stitch from right needle to left needle, pulling the working yarn to unknit the stitch (Figure 2.)

If you have to **rip out many rows**, take the knitting off your needle and pull the yarn out of the stitches, row by row, winding the ripped out yarn on a ball winder or a swift as you go.

If you have to **rip out the entire piece** and the yarn is "crinkled" from the knitting, you can remove those crinkles in a few ways. (This works very well for natural fiber yarns.) Wind the yarn into a skein and secure it firmly in a few places. Wash it according to yarn label instructions; hang it with light weights on the bottom of the skein, and let it dry. The light weights will pull the skein taut. A quicker way to remove crinkles instead of washing is, once you've made a skein, use a steam iron and give the yarn steam bursts, pulling the skein taut as you work your way around the skein. A steaming tea kettle also does the trick in place of an iron. But be careful to keep your hands out of the steam.

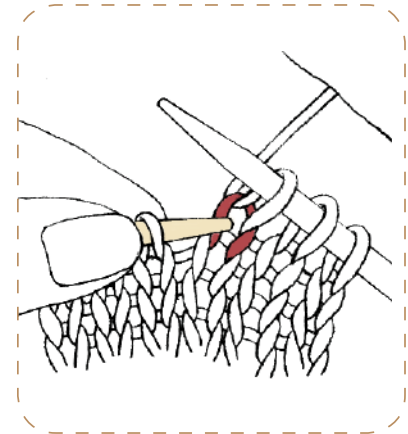


Figure 1

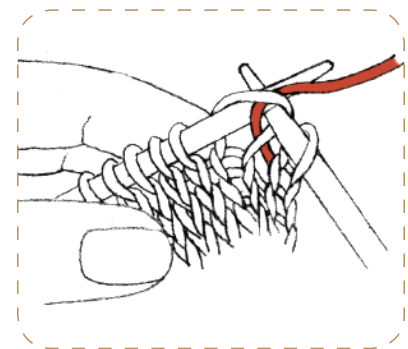


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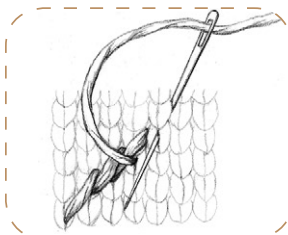
## Tip2

### Make Your Project Uniquely You

Embellish your knitting with easy embroidery stitches—a great way to customize a project.

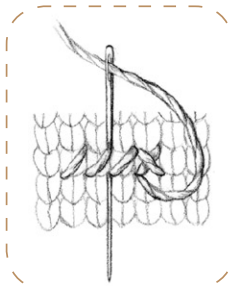
#### Stem Stitch Embroidery

Bring needle out from back to front at center of a knitted stitch. Insert needle into upper right edge of next stitch to right, then out again at center of stitch below.



#### Cross-Stitch

Bring threaded needle out from back to front at lower left edge of the knitted stitch (or stitches) to be covered. Working from left to right, \*insert needle at the upper right edge of the same stitch(es) and bring it back out at the lower left edge of the adjacent stitch, directly below and in line with the insertion point. Work from right to left to work the other half of the cross.



#### Daisy Stitch

Bring threaded needle out from back to front at center of a knitted stitch. \*Form a short loop and insert needle back where it came out. Keeping loop under needle, bring needle back out in center of next stitch over. Beginning each stitch at the same point on the knitted background, repeat from \* for desired number of petals (six shown).

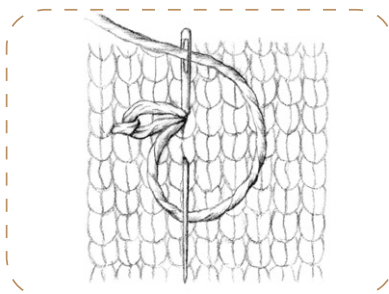


Figure 1

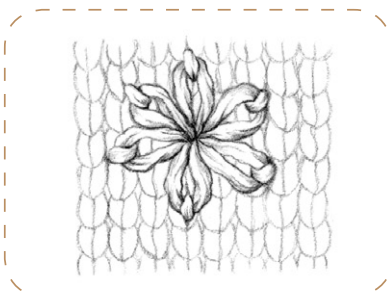


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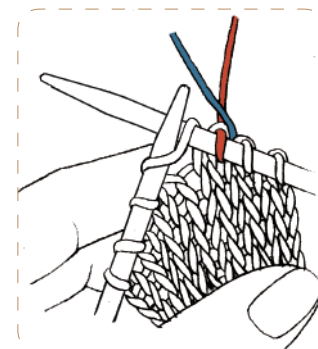
### Picking or Throwing? Weave in Yarn Tails as You Go

## Tip3

It may be faster for you to knit Continental style (picking) and tension the yarn in your left hand, or throw the yarn using your right hand (English style). Either way, there will come a time when you want to do both—particularly working ribbing, seed stitch, or Fair Isle. (See Tip 13). But when working with many colors, as in intarsia, the one tip that will save you hours of working in ends is to weave in the tails as you go.

#### Weaving in Tails

Place the needle in the next stitch and, before wrapping it, lay the yarn tail over the working yarn (Figure). Now work the next stitch; the tail is now fastened in. Repeat this for a about 1½ to 2 inches making sure to carry the yarn tail loosely to avoid puckering.



# Tip4

## Basic Seams

Choosing the right seam in sewing a garment or project together is important. Some seams are flexible, others provide stability and reinforcement. Sewing stitches to stitches vs stitches to rows require different seaming techniques. Always use a blunt-end needle and the yarn used for the project. If your yarn is a novelty-type that isn't a good seaming yarn, use a smooth, sturdy yarn that matches the color of the main project yarn.

### A few good seaming stitches to know:

#### Mattress Stitch Seam

With RS of knitting facing, use threaded needle to pick up one bar between first two stitches on one piece (Figure 1), then corresponding bar plus the bar above it on other piece (Figure 2). \*Pick up next two bars on first piece, then next two bars on other (Figure 3). Repeat from \* to end of seam, finishing by picking up last bar (or pair of bars) at the top of first piece.

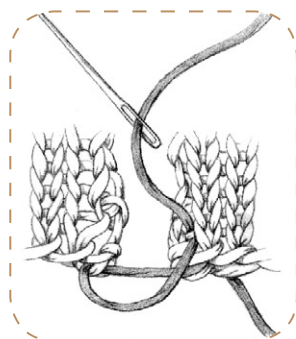


Figure 1

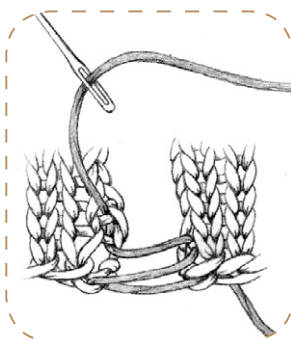


Figure 2

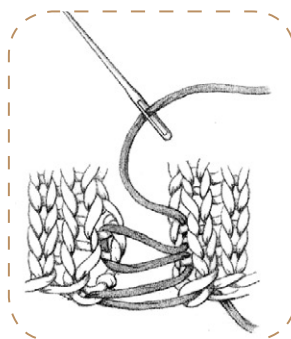
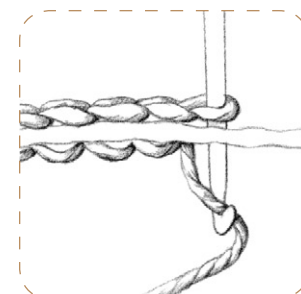


Figure 3

#### Crochet Chain Stitch

Holding the yarn under the background, insert crochet hook through the center of a knitted stitch, pull up a loop, \*insert hook into the center of the next stitch to the right, pull up a second loop through the first loop on the hook. Repeat from \*.



#### Backstitch Seam

Working from right to left, one stitch in from selvedge, bring threaded needle up through both pieces of knitted fabric (Figure 1), then back down through both layers a short distance (about a row) to the right of the starting point (Figure 2). \*Bring needle up through both layers a row-length to the left of backstitch just made (Figure 3), then back down to the right, in same hole used before (Figure 4). Repeat from \*, working backward one row for every two rows worked forward.

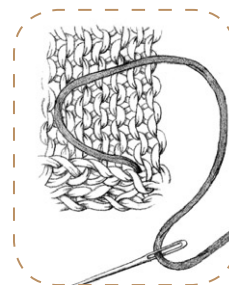


Figure 1

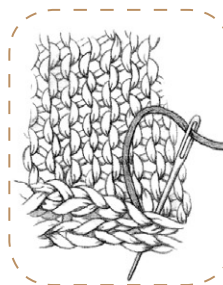


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

# Tip5

## Spinning Simple— Washing Fleece in the Washing Machine

To wash fleece, you need very hot water and a mild detergent, a container to keep the fleece together (a few lingerie bags exclusively for this use), and a bottle of white vinegar. Keep the unwashed fleece organized in lock formation (Figure 1). If there is too much fleece to fit in one bag, gently pull sections apart to divide it up.

Fill the tub with hot water and mild detergent. **Turn off the machine.** Put in the lingerie bags (Figure 2), close the lid to keep in the heat, and let the fleece soak for 10 to 15 minutes. Take out the fleece, drain the washer, refill it, and do a second wash just like the first one using a bit less detergent.

Next step is rinsing the fleece. Fill the washer again with hot water and this time pour in about a ½ cup of white vinegar. Put the fleece in the machine again and let it soak for about 5 to 10 minutes. **Always remember to turn off the machine.** If you forget and let the machine agitate, your fluffy wool will turn to felt. Do one final rinse in hot water to remove the vinegar smell.



Figure 2



Figure 1

Once the fleece is washed, you can use the spin cycle to get rid of the excess water, but only if you're using a top-loader machine. If your spin cycle adds cold water, turn off the cold water tap. After spinning, spread your damp fiber out on a towel and let it dry. Don't ever put your fleece in the dryer.

## Low Tech Ways to Wind Yarn

# Tip6

A **nøstepinde** is a Scandinavian yarn-winding stick. You can substitute a handle of wooden spoon or even a dowel if you don't have a nøstepinde (Figure 1).

Here's a way to **wind a center-pull ball** with your fingers. Wind the yarn in figure-eight fashion around your thumb and forefinger to start, keeping the end of the yarn hanging free. Fold the section in half to form a core, then continue to wind loosely around the yarn and your thumb and forefinger in circular fashion. After each 10-12 wraps, hold the ball at a different angle and wrap again, always around both the yarn and your thumb and finger (Figure 2).

**Use your arm to wind yarn into a skein.** Wind between your elbow and thumb being careful not to wind too tightly. Or, you can **use a niddy-noddy**. Hold a niddy-noddy in the center and rotate your wrist as you wind the yarn directly from your knitting or ball to form a skein (Figure 3).

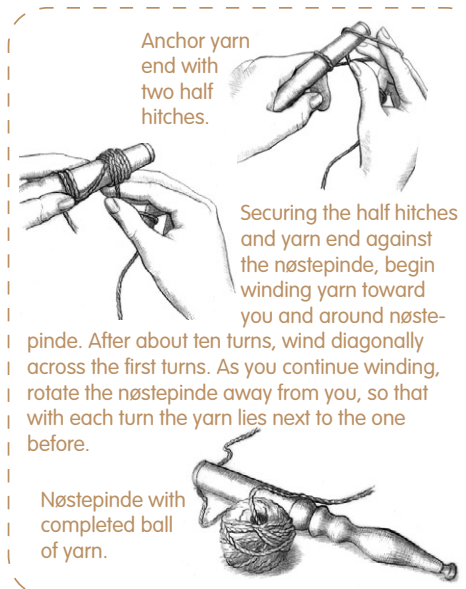


Figure 1

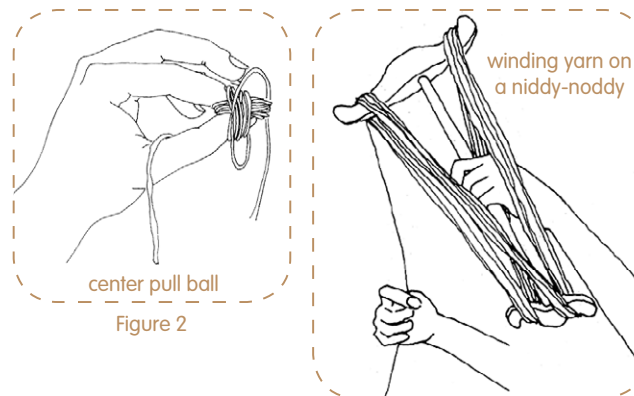


Figure 2

Figure 3



## Spinner's Roving Makes a Great Yarn

Roving is an unspun wool yarn but that needn't stop you from knitting with it. In fact, it works really well for projects that you'll eventually felt. Or use it unfelted in projects that won't get a lot of wear.

The first step to working with roving is to separate the fibers and then draft them so you can knit with them. Split the roving lengthwise into thinner strips by splitting the full roving in half, then each half into another half, and so on until you're close to the weight of yarn you desire. Next, determine the average fiber length—usually about 3-6 inches—and grasp the fiber firmly, keeping your hands a little farther apart than the average fiber length (Figure 1). Pull with one hand maintaining and even thickness. As you repeat, keep moving the roving through your hands (Figure 2). You're then ready to knit.



Figure 1

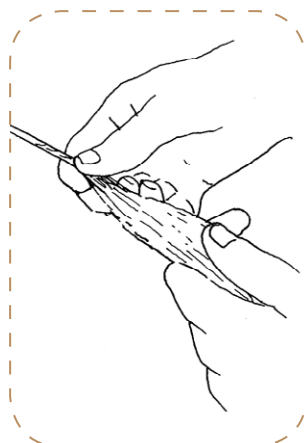


Figure 2

Work gently so the roving doesn't pull apart. If it breaks, overlap the ends by a distance equal to the fiber length and continue working with it. The action of knitting gives the roving a bit of a twist too.



## Minimize "Rowing Out"

"Rowing Out" occurs when working stockinette stitch and your knit and purl rows are knit at different tensions. This is a common occurrence particularly for Continental (picker) style knitters. One very easy fix is to work in the round on circular needles, so all you're doing is knitting. It's easier to maintain an even tension when knitting in the round. If your project doesn't work for circular needles, you may need to adjust a needle size down or use more tension when working your purl rows.



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# Tip9

## Recycle Fabric to Make Yarn

What a great way to recycle t-shirts or old clothes—make yarn with them. Start with clean garments. Remove the pockets, waistbands, collars. Then you're ready to make strips.

For making quick strips, use a rotary cutter on a cutting board. Otherwise, scissors will do.

Use a ruler and cut your strips about  $\frac{3}{4}$  -  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in width depending on the fabric.

Have a bunch of t-shirts or other clothes ready to go. Test the width of your "yarn" with different needles and stitches. Let the yarn dictate what stitch to use or what the best final project should be.

### There are a number of ways to join the fabric strips:

- Use overhand knots to join the lengths and let the knots show.
- Strip the fabric (Figure 1) so there will be few ends to join.
- With woven fabric, take an end and fold over  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch and snip a slit at the end of each side. Take the fabric and slide one end through and then pass the next one through—like a half hitch (Figure 2 and 3).
- With circular strips (like t-shirts), you can loop the pieces together (Figure 4).

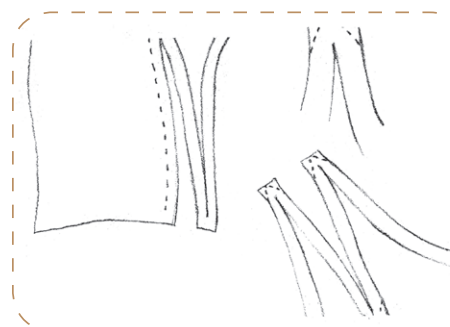


Figure 1

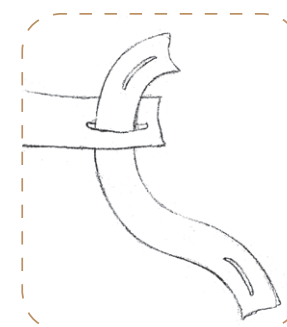


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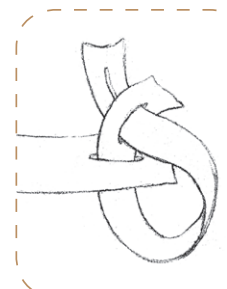


Figure 3

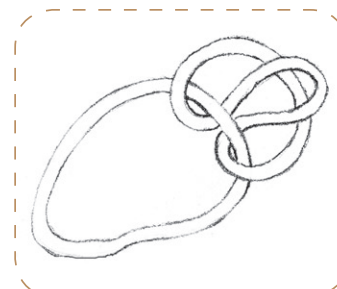


Figure 4



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# Tip10

## Cable Without a Cable Needle

Progress on a heavily cabled project is much speedier when you don't need to constantly pick up and put down a separate cable needle. Cabling with two working needles alone is an easy technique to pick up—one that you can apply to almost any cable.

### Understanding a Cable

All knitted cables are formed by knitting stitches out of sequence. For a standard six-stitch cable, the first three stitches of the group are held either to the front or to the back of the work on a separate needle, the next three stitches are knitted as usual, and the held stitches are finally worked. The result is a group of stitches that cross either over or under another group. When you work without a separate holding needle, you must reposition the waiting stitches on the left-hand needle instead.

#### Step 1

On a cable crossing row, work to just before the full cable group. With the yarn in back, slip all the stitches from the group purlwise to the right-hand needle to loosen them.

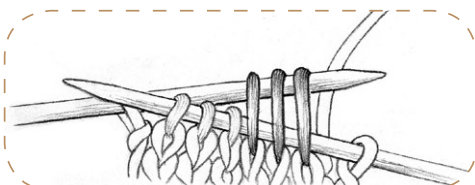


Figure 1

#### Step 2

For a cable crossing **right** (standard instructions: hold the cable needle to the **back** of the work), bring the left-hand needle to the **front** of the work and insert it into the fronts of all stitches that need to be held (Figure 1). For a cable crossing **left** (standard instructions: hold the cable needle to the **front** of the work), bring the left-hand needle to the **back** of the work and insert it into the backs of all stitches that need to be held (Figure 2).

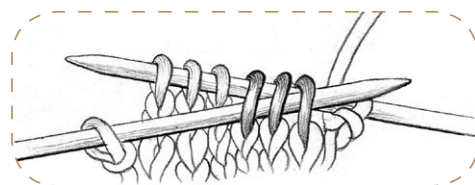


Figure 2

#### Step 3

Between the left thumb and forefinger, pinch the base of the slipped stitches firmly. Pull the right-hand needle completely free of all the slipped stitches (Figure 3; half will be on the

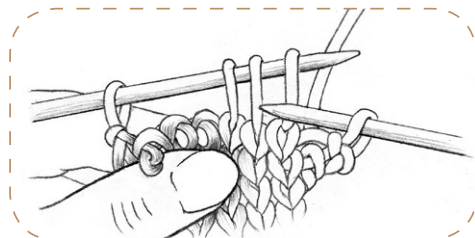


Figure 3

left-hand needle; half will be free for a moment) and maintaining front/back position as established, quickly reinsert it into the free stitches. Make sure all the stitches are seated correctly on the needle; if they're held firmly, the stitches won't have twisted or moved at all during the time that they were dropped.

#### Step 4

Slip stitches on the right-hand needle back to the left-hand needle. The stitches are now out of order and will be crossed when they're worked (Figure 4). Work as directed.

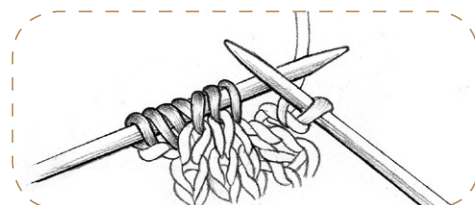


Figure 4

### Standard instructions for a six-stitch cable right cross

Slip 3 sts to cn and hold in back, k3, k3 from cn.

### Modified instructions for a six-stitch cable right cross

Slip 6 sts to the right-hand needle; insert the left-hand needle into back loops of the first 3 sts slipped; pull the right-hand needle free of all 6 sts and reinsert it into the 3 dropped sts, keeping right needle to the front of work; slip the 3 dropped sts back to the left-hand needle; k6.

### Standard instructions for a six-stitch cable left cross

Slip 3 sts to cn and hold in front, k3, k3 from cn.

### Modified instructions for a six-stitch cable left cross

Slip 6 sts to the right-hand needle; insert the left-hand needle into fronts of the first 3 sts slipped; pull the right-hand needle free of all 6 sts and reinsert it into the 3 dropped sts, keeping right needle to the back of work; slip the 3 dropped sts back to the left-hand needle; k6.

This technique can be used for almost any cable crossing. Once the stitches are rearranged on the left-hand needle, you simply work them as directed. (Note that because the technique relies on being able to hold all the dropped stitches firmly in place for a moment, you may want to work very wide cables the traditional way.)

# Tip 11

## Gathered Ruffles and Ruches

Ruffles can be worked from the bottom up (going from a wide edge to a narrow gathered edge), from the top down (going from a narrow gathered edge to a wide edge), or from side to side. The gathered ruffle is the simplest type of ruffle, formed by working all the shaping on a single row—decreasing if worked from the bottom up; increasing if worked from the top down.

For a standard amount of flair, the wide edge should have twice the number of stitches as the narrow edge (Figure 1). Increase one stitch in every stitch.

For a more dramatic ruffle, the wide edge should have three to four times the number of stitches as the narrow edge (Figure 2). Increase one stitch in every stitch for two to three rows until desired number of stitches.

To work the gathered ruffle in a vertical orientation (Figure 3), pick up and knit one stitch in about every two-three stitches along the channel between columns of stitches. Purl a row, then double the number of stitches in the next row.

If you want to make a gather in your knitting (also known as ruching), take a blunt-end needle and sew a running stitch across the width of the fabric, gathering the fabric along the running stitch. Make sure you do this before you sew the piece into an edging. Ease the gathered fabric into the edging.

Gathered/Bottom Up



Figure 1

Crimped/Bottom Up



Figure 2

Gathered/Top Down



Figure 3

# Tip12

## Knit Your Edging as You Go

### Tip

**Knit your edging as a separate piece** and attach it to the main garment. Using open-end stitch markers, line up the pieces as you sew. Sew the edging using a mattress stitch (see Tip 4), right sides up, and facing you. Maintain an easy, steady tension. Use the same yarn as your base yarn or edging yarn so that the seam is invisible.

### Tip

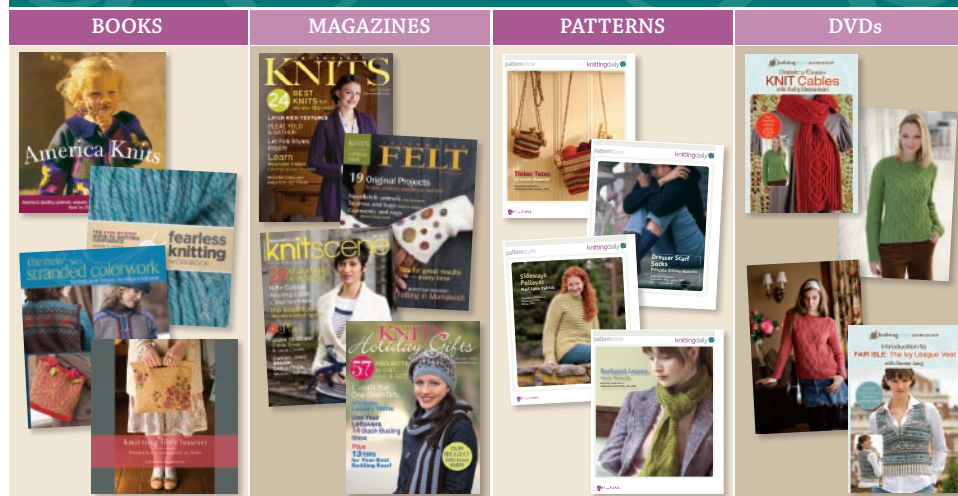
**Knitted-on garter stitch edging.** Work perpendicular to your project and live stitches on your needle. Cast on 5 edge stitches *next* to the live stitches on the main project.

Knit 4 stitches, slip last edge stitch knitwise, slip first stitch from body knitwise, slip stitches back to the left-hand needle and knit together through back loop to join.

*Next row:* Slip first stitch purlwise, knit every stitch.

Keep repeating this sequence as your edging grows.

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# Tip 13

## How Can I Knit Faster?

In order to avoid repetitive stress injury and knit efficiently, use small hand movements. Work close to the tips of the needles.

### Continental Method

If you knit **Continental style** (picker), use your middle finger on your left hand as a bumper and helper to move the next stitch onto the needle tip. Tension the working yarn around your index finger. With your right hand, use your index finger to keep pushing the stitches down the needle that have been already worked.

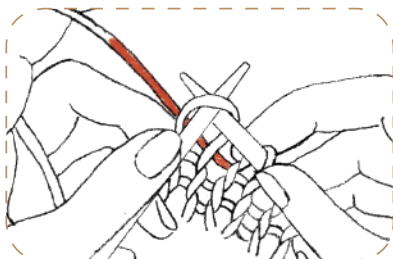


Figure 1

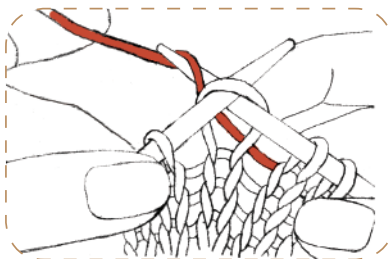


Figure 2

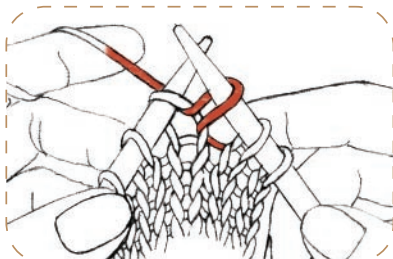


Figure 3

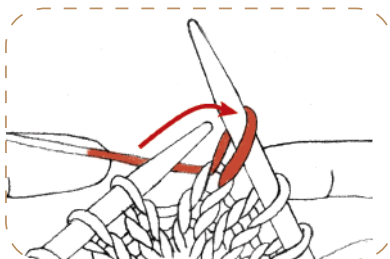


Figure 4

When working ribbing and making a purl stitch, push the working yarn down under the needle tip with your left index finger.

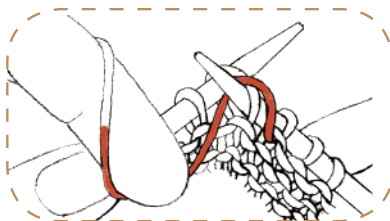


Figure 5

### English Method

If you knit **English style** (thrower), tension around your pinky finger. Keep the yarn close to the tip of your index finger and move just that finger as you flick the working yarn off the top of the finger.

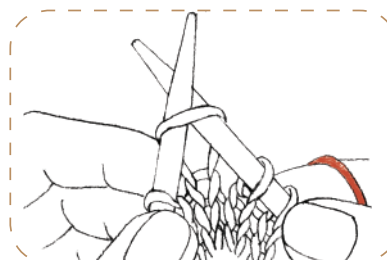


Figure 1

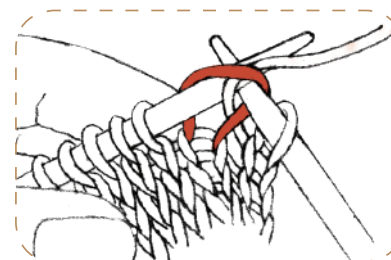


Figure 2

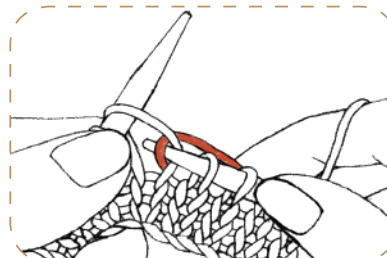


Figure 3

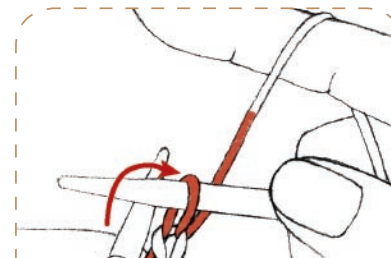


Figure 4

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