

Tips & Techniques!

Tips & Techniques #11

ALTERNATIVES TO RIBBING

Knitters who own simple hobby knitters or single bed machines without ribbers are always looking for interesting ways to begin their sweaters. Sometimes these alternative edgings actually provide better, more interesting detail for a garment than the same old ribs! Lets take a look at some of the possibilities and when and why you might use them.

In addition to the hems and mock ribs illustrated in most manuals, you can knit patterned hems or add embroidered or duplicate stitch detail the way the designers do. These less elastic edgings are often preferred on jackets and straight garments that should not hug the hipline, but need to hold their shape.

If you have a linker, its a snap to enclose edges in sandwich bands and the possibilities are nearly endless. Narrow stockinette bands are often the perfect choice for three quarter sleeves, necklines and straight, boxy tops, producing a slightly more tailored look than ribbing. Wider bands may include picot edges, fair isle or tuck patterns, lace borders, cables and other textural effects. If you need to gather the edge of a sweater or sleeve to attach the trim, this is much easier to do on the linker where you can rely on the point needles and the number scales to help you. You can also add 1" elastic, strips of interfacing or polyfil batting between the layers of a band before closing it on the linker.

Most knitters are familiar with latched up 1 x 1 ribbings, but there are other variations that are either faster to do or produce more decorative results. For example, its much faster to latch up every third stitch for a 2 x 1 rib and the ribbing is only slightly less elastic. If you latch up every other stitch in tuck, the rib becomes more textural. To latch in tuck, pass the latch tool under two ladder bars, catching only the second one in the hook. Vertically striped ribs are the standard choice for traditional fairisle sweaters and these can be simply produced by knitting a vertical fairisle stripe and then reforming all the stitches in one color. If you allow the floats to catch as you latch up, the effect is a striped tuck rib. It can be tricky to keep the tool clear of the floats unless you reform stitches every two or three rows, but if you do it this way, the rib is identical to the two color (knit/purl) ribs hand knitters produce. Incidentally, this effect cannot be automatically produced on a double bed machine anyhow!

One of the other obvious choices is to hand knit your ribs and either hang them on the needles of the machine and knit the garment off them or to begin the garment on waste knitting and go back to pick up the live stitches and knit the ribbing down. If you begin by hanging the ribbing, you may not be able to hang it over the full width required and will have to make increases in the first few rows. Many knitters prefer to pick up the live stitches and knit the ribbing down because

they can also reduce some of the garment stitches to bring the sweater in. Also, you can knit the ribs on circular needles after the side seams have been joined.

CROCHET is often used for skirt hems, necklines and cardigan bands. Lately, the big name British designers have also been using lots of fancy crochet in place of sleeve and lower edge ribbings. For beginning and ending garments with crochet, you should cast on/scrap off with waste yarn. A row of ravel cord between the main knitting and the waste knitting makes it even easier to find your stitches. With the right side facing you, fold back the waste knitting and do one row of slip crochet if the edge needs to be stabilized or use single crochet as a base row for additional crochet. Backwards crochet (also called crab stitch) works nicely at necklines as the final row after one row of single crochet. If you can possibly work a strand of rayon with your crochet yarn, you won't have to worry about edges curling because, once steamed, rayon absolutely will not curl.

As long as there is a hole or space you can fit a latch needle through, many commercial edgings and trimmings can be hung (or gathered) directly on the needles of the knitting machine to begin knitting. The November/December 1990 issue of *Studio by White Design* featured a glitzy mohair sweater with bands of elasticized sequins for sleeve and lower edges and a strand of sequins bound off with the neckline stitches. If your tastes don't run to sequins, check your local fabric store for some of the sportier elastic edgings that would complement cotton yarns.

Sequin Elastic: Available in 1" or 2" widths. We used 2" for the lower edges of the garment and 1" for the sleeves. We've added 1" to each measurement to allow for seams. Mark center of each sleeve band and mark garment band in quarters. Tape cut ends to

prevent losing sequins during handling, but remember to remove tape later. Lower edges of garment: one piece. Sleeve edges: two pieces, each measuring 8". Plain (non-elastic) Sequin Trim for neckline edge is available in several widths. You will need approximately 21" to 24".



With the wrong side of the sequin band facing you, bring NDLS into WP. Insert a transfer tool into a loop along one of the long edges (about 3/4" from one end to allow for seam) and hang on first needle. Hang the loop marked at the center of the band on the other end needle and then the quarter mark on the center NDL, stretching the band to fit. Hang one loop on all NDLS, pulling NDLS to HP. (Note that one half of the band will not be hung until you knit the front in order to eliminate one seam in the band.) RC000. Tie yarn to left clamp and then hand knit each NDL back to WP by placing the yarn into the hook, closing the latch to avoid catching the band and then pushing the NDL butt back to WP.

(You can knit this row with the carriage, but may risk damaging the band.) Thread the carriage and knit.

Join one shoulder seam. With the wrong side facing you, hang the non-elasticized sequin trim on the NDLS. Then, with the wrong side facing you, hang the neckline STS on the same NDLS, hanging two STS on the same needle at each end and at the shoulder seam. Bring all NDLS to HP, set Russell Levers II, stitch size 9. Knit 1 R and B/O loosely.

All knitting machine manuals have instructions for knitting three stitch circular cords. These cords can also be knitted on as many as 6 needles, although they tend to become less round as the number of needles is increased. These cords can be hung sideways on the needles and used as the lower edge for sleeves and garments. If you knit extra length, you can also carry the cord up the front of a cardigan and seam it to the front edge every two rows. Just pick up one stitch from the side of the cord and hang it on the edge needle of the sweater. If you twist two cords together and alternately hang one, then the other on the needles, the effect is that of a braided edging or you can just braid several cords together before mounting on the needles. With the wider, flatter cords, make sure the flat side of the cord is on the wrong side of the garment.

One of the most decorative edgings we've seen was developed by fiber artist Judith Duffey and can be applied to live stitches, selvage edges, vertically or horizontally on a finished fabric or as the bind off edge for a rib (knitted down) after all the stitches have been transferred to the back bed! Begin by hanging the entire fabric edge on the needles of the machine with the right side facing you. With the carriage on the right and set to hold needles in holding position, put all needles

except the first three on the carriage side into hold. Knit 8 (for example) rows on these three needles and then use a three pronged transfer tool to remove the stitches; pass the tool under the next three needles and deposit the stitches on the following three needles. Put the three empty needles in non-working position. Nudge the three needles nearest the carriage into upper working position and knit 8 rows on them. Remove the stitches and replace on the second group of three needles to the left. Continue until only six needles remain working. On the second to last group of three needles, knit 4 rows and then immediately reduce all three stitches to a single needle. Move this single stitch to the last group and bind off the remaining stitches. To turn corners (great for afghans!) knit extra rows on the groups of stitches at the corners so they don't tighten up as they turn.

Bias bands can be folded to enclose edges or applied flat if the band's edges are crocheted for stability and strength. Begin by casting on ten stitches at the left end of the bed. *Knit two rows. Make a full fashioned decrease on the left edge of the knitting and a simple decrease on the right edge.** Repeat from * to ** until the knitting has moved to the right end of the machine. If the strip is not long enough, remove all the stitches on a garter bar or waste knitting and replace them on the left end of the bed to continue knitting. You can easily produce biased stripes by alternating two colors. If you use the band flat, attach the increased edge to the garment because the decreased edge is stronger and more finished looking.

Even if you have a double bed machine, you may find that these rib alternatives inspire the designer in you!