

# Tips & Techniques!

---

## Tips & Techniques #16

---

### Altering and Repairing Knits by Jean Knudsen

My daughter is growing like a weed! The sweaters and knitted pants made just a couple of months ago no longer fit. There is a lot of uncovered arm between the cuff of that sweater and her wrist and her ankles look mighty chilly, when they should be covered with warm, wooly, knitting.

You can alter and repair knitted clothing, whether you knit it yourself, or bought it. It's not difficult, here's how:

To lengthen sweater sleeves, bodies, or pants, first undo the sleeve seam up to the underarm. Remove the cuff from the sleeve: With right side facing you, locate the last stitch at either side of the second row of stocking stitch above the cuff. Cut one side of this stitch with the point of a sharp scissor. On the opposite side of the same row, use the point of a knitting needle to work the last stitch loose until you have enough yarn free that you can gently remove the entire row of knitting. (See Fig. 1) This will leave open stitches at the bottom of the sleeve as well as the top of the separated cuff. You have several different options at this point:

A) If you have enough of the original yarn to knit the added length you need, you can simply re-hang the sleeve onto the machine with the right side facing the machine, knit the added length you need, transfer to the rib technique of your choice, re-knit the cuff, then cast off in rib.

B) If you don't have any yarn left, or if this is a purchased sweater, you can unravel the separated cuff, re-hang the sleeve onto the machine, then use the yarn from the cuff to knit the extra length. Transfer to the ribbed pattern of choice, then use a complementary yarn to knit a completely new cuff.

C) Your third option is to create the extra length in the form of a contrasting band at the bottom of the sleeve. Here you may choose to knit in stockinette, fairisle, or any type of pattern stitch. This accent will give your garment a completely new look. When finished, either unravel the cuff and use the same yarn to re-knit it, or graft the original cuff back onto the open stitches at the bottom of the contrasting band.

The above techniques can be used to add length to sleeve, body or pants - any area of a knitted garment.

Repairing favorite knitted garments takes just a little ingenuity. A simple solution to a hole at elbow or knee is to make a knitted patch. If you use the same yarn as the original garment, the patch will be almost unnoticeable. Contrasting patches can brighten up an old favorite.

Cast on the number of stitches needed (this will depend on the original gauge of the sweater, or the gauge of the yarn used to create the patch) in waste yarn. Knit the number of rows needed for the patch. (Again, be creative - it doesn't have to be stocking stitch!) Use a tapestry needle to back stitch through the open loops at top and bottom of patch, then remove waste yarn. Tack the sides of the patch in place invisibly. Voila, neat patch and new life for your sweater! Note: You may also graft the open loops at the top and bottom of the patch invisibly to the existing knitting. This is especially effective if you have knitted the patch in the same yarn as your sweater.

Duplicate stitch, sometimes called Swiss Darning, is a valuable tool for knitting repair. (See Fig. 2) Use it to repair a worn area, (those elbows!) simply by recreating the weakened stitches in matching yarn.

Another tool, the Darning Egg, was used

---

when our mothers repaired knitted socks. It was slipped inside the sock to provide a base to stitch upon and to keep the knitting stable, so that darned areas didn't pull in, keeping the repaired area at the same tension as the original garment. Although you may not own a darning egg, and it is unlikely that you will easily find one in a store, you can use a smooth ball for the inside of a sleeve or a dressmaker's ham for a larger area, to provide the same kind of stability and support for your hand work.

When repairing an isolated hole in a sweater, with one or more rows of yarn missing, try this solution: Lay the knitting over your dressmaker's ham. Now you must create a structure upon which to remake the missing rows. Thread a tapestry needle with matching yarn, and create a framework by grafting with very large stitches over the open area of missing stitches, anchoring the yarn at each end around a stable unworn rows. Using the same stitching sequence as you would for duplicate stitch, recreate the missing stitches around the framework. Proceed across the open area to the opposite side, then attach the yarn making a traditional duplicate stitch over existing stitches. (See fig. 3) Work the yarn up to the next row from behind. (Most people find it easier to turn the work upside down at this point.) Again, work across the framework recreating the missing stitches and at the same time catching the loops from the row just made in the manner you would for grafting. Continue in this manner, working from side to side until all of the missing stitches have been recreated.

If the hole has occurred in a patterned area of the sweater, use the background color to recreate the knitting, then duplicate stitch using the contrast yarns in pattern.

A non-related additional thought: It has become apparent to me that many of you don't know that you can begin patterning at the left side of your knitting without "incident". Your second yarn guide is designed to automatically thread both the main and contrast colors when inserted at the RIGHT side of the knitting. Disaster occurs at the LEFT side because the main yarn can't automatically thread from this direction. (By disasters, I mean that all of your main color stitches drop.) To avoid this catastrophe, simply thread the main yarn into the lower hole of the second yarn guide yourself, before you attempt to knit that first row from the left. You need only do this once, and it will remain threaded for the duration of your patterning.

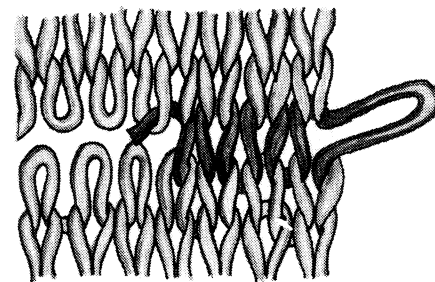


Figure 1

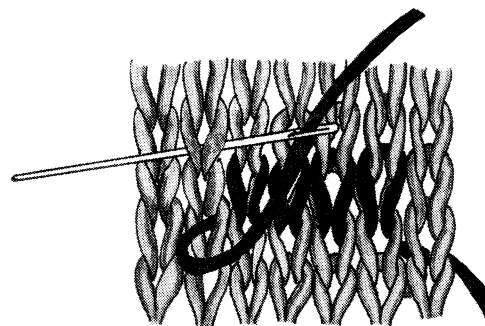


Figure 2

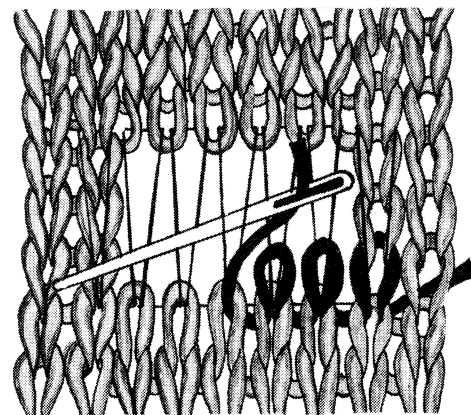


Figure 3