

# TIPS &

# TECHNIQUES

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## SLICK TRICKS

All machine knitters have little tricks they develop and use as they gain experience. Many of us don't even realize that we've come up with a better, easier way to do something. It just becomes second nature. Perhaps some of the following tricks will make your knitting easier, faster or more perfectly finished.

Terri Burns developed this plated elastic method for an LK150 cut and sew sweater she demonstrated on the PBS television show "The Art of Sewing". Its a great way to **add shape to cotton or acrylic mock ribs** on any machine. Select the required number of needles to D position, then push every other needle back to A position. Use the main yarn to e-wrap cast on then thread feeder #1 of the carriage. Hang the cast on comb and knit 8 rows. Insert matching elastic thread into feeder #2. Knit 24 rows. Cut elastic thread. Bring alternate empty needles to working position and pick up lower edge of fabric, hanging e-wrap cast on loops onto empty needles. Ribbing is complete and you are ready to continue knitting the garment.

Anne Rajotte likes this **method for LK150 latched up ribbing**. Cast on every other needle by knitting the first row across every fourth needle, then bringing every other needle to working position. With a stitch size two numbers larger than you'll use for the garment itself, knit the desired number of rows for the rib. Latch up the ladder bars between stitches and hang the last stitch on the empty needle above. This method eliminates having to drop every other stitch for latching up and seems to produce more even stitches and better elasticity.

Once you've tried this **method for beginning ribs**, you'll find yourself relying on it for every rib you knit. Because the stitch size is increased

gradually, it removes the tendency for ribs to flare and it also allows you to get a good, tight edge without breaking or stretching the yarn because the comb is hung in the waste rather than in the main yarn. This is especially important when working with nonelastic yarns like cotton or very fragile yarns like angora. With waste yarn, cast on and knit the zig-zag row, hang comb and weights and knit 6-8 rows across all needles. Increase to a large stitch size and knit two circular rows. Change to main yarn. Knit one row with stitch size 0/0, two circular rows with 1/1 and then set carriages to knit all needles, increasing your stitch size by one number (or one dot) every row, until you reach the desired stitch size for your rib. Knit required number of rows.

**Knitting on the main bed only with the ribber arm** can be tricky, but there are times when you only want to knit a few rows of scrap at the end of a rib piece and changing arms can be such a bother. Terri Burns found that it could be done easily by using the ribber bed cover and leaving the ribber in working position. If the carriage seems too close to the ribber sinker posts, drop the bed slightly by lowering the pile levers at each side.

**Weaving in ends** can make finishing a very tedious business if you have lots of color changes or if you are working from balls of yarn that run out frequently. Every time you change yarns you have an old end and a new end to deal with and it all starts to add up! If you weave them in as you knit all the end can simply be clipped off when you're done knitting. It takes a lot less time to work them in as you go than it does to thread a needle for each one and work it in by hand later. Here are some of our favorite methods for working in ends as you knit:

**For stockinette fabrics**, bring 8 needles at the edge of the knitting out to D position. \*Weave the

yarn tail over and under the shafts of the needles and then, with Russel Levers (II) knit the next row\* with the new color or ball of yarn. Repeat \*to\* for the new yarn tail. Continue knitting. If you are knitting lots of narrow stripes with even numbers of rows and you are changing colors by hand, you might want to free pass the carriage to the opposite side for starting the new yarns to avoid building up bulk on one side.

If you use **this weaving method with intarsia** (where it really cuts your finishing time!) make sure the yarn weaves over the needles behind the latches and that the latches are open before knitting the next row.

Gini Woodward developed this method for working in ends when you're **knitting fairisle** and can't leave needles in D position without disturbing the pattern. Cut pattern yarn A leaving an 8" tail. Do not remove the tail from yarn feeder #2. Insert pattern yarn B into the #2 feeder with the cut end. Both pattern yarns will knit for an inch or two; the cut tail will run out and the new yarn will continue alone. To make sure the tail knits on the back of the stitches (so it won't show) follow this simple rule: If the carriage is moving right to left, keep the cut end on the right of the feeder. If the carriage is traveling left to right, keep it at the left of the feeder.

Gini uses another method that you'll also find helpful, but she cautions that it will add bulk with too many color changes. Simply weave the cut tail over the end needle at the beginning of the following 8-10 rows. She also tells us that when she has to **weave in ends by hand** she finds this the fastest method. Rather than taking the time to thread a needle for each cut end, she simply weaves the latch tool through the stitches, grabs the yarn tail and pulls it through.

Using the **Garter Bar to make** increases or decreases on wide fabrics can sometimes be tricky because you have to hook the bar onto all the needles to move just a few stitches, then lift and shift the bar to move the next group. Sometimes a single latch will close and you'll have trouble hooking on the bar. The fewer needles there are in D position, the easier it is to do. So, try nudging all the completed needles and any needles you won't be using right away back to C position while you continue working. That way you only have to hook the bar onto a few needles at a time. As you work your way across the bed just nudge the necessary number of needles from C to D position.

**Dealing with floats** is easier than you think! Sometimes you just can't avoid having long floats on the back of a fair isle fabric, but you don't have to leave them floating where they can catch and pull. For a single float, simply hook it on a needle above before knitting the next row. For a column of floats you can use a latch tool and pull one float through the next, hanging the last on the needle above. For a short column of floats, simply pull the top float under and then over all the others and hang it on the needle. For more staggered floats, try using a strand of the background yarn (split the ply if it is very heavy) or matching sewing thread to "cage" the float to the back of the fabric. Begin by hooking the thread over a needle, knit one row and then hook the thread over the same needle or a nearby needle, depending on the position of the float. Knit the next row and hook the thread above it again. This is really just vertical weaving used for structural rather than decorative purposes! Incidentally, sewing thread also does an excellent, smooth job of wrapping the edges of isolated motifs because it doesn't add bulk.

Terri Burns uses this slick trick for **joining two sets of stitches on the machine** (for a shoulder seam, for example). Rather than pushing the needle butts back to pull the stitches in the hooks through the stitches behind the latches, she simply pulls the garment forward. The stitches behind close the latches as they slide over them and over the stitches in the hooks.

Terri also recommends **knitting ravel cord** at half the stitch size of the main knitting. First of all, the smaller, tighter stitches don't get pulled so easily when handling the work. Second and more important, the tight ravel cord stitches force the main stitches to pop out, making them easier to pick up and rehang with a transfer tool or to crochet through.

Anne Rajotte likes this method of **joining rib bands to necklines** because it produces a smooth, decorative edge. This is especially useful for neckline edges that are less than perfect to begin with and it also enhances the seam where the band joins the garment. Rehang the neckline of the garment on the machine with the right side facing you. Loosely work one row of chain (with the same or a contrasting color) keeping the latch tool below the needles and the free yarn above. Hang the rib band with the wrong side facing you and then bind off. If you're confused about what is the right or wrong side of the rib, just remember which side you cast on from and look for the yarn tail.