

STITCHING TIPS & TRICKS FROM MEMBERS

Helpful tips & tricks gleaned from Club Members' years of yarny experience and wisdom!

Inspiration

If you lose your knitting mojo, or you're fed up with all of your WIPs, find a colorful yarn and make a basic hat or scarf to donate to charity.

-Leigh G.

I will use a well loved top/sweater to grab measurements from to choose the best size for a sweater pattern. -Liz D.

When struggling with finishing a WIP that I want to finish but am not excited about I put it by my chair and commit to working on it 15 min each day before picking up the project that is currently exciting me. This usually results in a finished object! -Kris O.

When buying yarn for a sweater always grab an extra skein. -Liz D.



If you have a glass of wine as you knit your gauge swatch then that means you need to drink wine as you're knitting your item - Liz D..

I use clear-top Bento Boxes for my travel tool kits. I have a snack size that is made for carrots & dip. It holds folding scissors, darning needles, lip balm, stitch holder, stitch markers. My next size holds so much more. The great thing is is when the lid is off, it has ridges so if I take a needle out and put it down, it can stay on the lid (important on an airplane) without rolling off. -Lisa W.

If you are worried about flying internationally with your knitting, put your work on interchangeable knitting needles with the tips screwed off and secured by end stoppers. Place the needle tips in your carry-on next to your pens/pencils. After clearing security, re-attach your tips and knit away! -Sarah K.

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Keep project notes in a graph paper journal. It's easier (and neater) for making charts to check off. Also good for drawing diagrams. -Pam F.

The #1 tip for new or experienced fiber artists is find a community of others that share your love of fiber and spend time with them. There is no better way to learn, grow and love. -Izetta G.

If you are sick of your stash but trying to stick to a budget, arrange a secret stash swap with 4-5 knitting friends. Everyone brings one quality wrapped skein (or two, or three - you decide!), and everyone goes home with something new!
-Sarah K.

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Unless you would like or need a minimum six-month hiatus from knitting, do not adopt a two-month-old kitten.

-Janice T.

Remember that You are the only person who knows the pattern you used when you knit your garment. You are the only person who knows if there is a "mistake". Patterns should be thought of as a guide not as an absolute. A pattern is just a designer's opinion of what they like and you can have a different opinion. -Liz D.

When really feeling uninspired, try this: browse patterns on Ravelry in order of "Hot Right Now". Find 3 you have some interest in, and create a post in our Club Facebook group asking the group what you should cast on first. Whether you take their advice or not, it will stimulate your knitting brain. -Sarah K.

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How I keep track of my rows - Let's say I have to repeat 6 rows 3 times. I'll write down 1, 2, 3,.....6. The first time around I will put a diagonal through the number, the second repeat I'll add a diagonal in the opposite direction to make an "x" and the final round I will circle the number. -Liz D.

One of the tricks I use the most is using lifted increases in place of Make 1 Right and Make 1 Left (see cocoknits.com for demos).
-Rene M.

One of my favorite knitting tips - when I do my first sleeve on a sweater, I mark the exact stitch where I do any decrease (or increase if bottomup) with a removable stitch marker. Then, when I do my second sleeve, I move each of those stitch markers in turn over to the new sleeve when I come to the corresponding decrease or increase. That way I can make sure that both sleeves match and I get a good sense of progress because I can see the stitch markers dwindling from the first sleeve as I finish the second sleeve.

-Bekah F.

I will only knit a few inches of my bind-off to see if I like it - too loose/ too tight - before I complete the entire bind off.
-Liz D.

When picking up stitches for your sleeves I somewhat ignore the number of stitches the pattern tells you to pick up because it's never enough and there always seems to be a hole. I pick up the number of stitches I need and in the corner of the sleeve - where your pickup stitches meet the stitches on hold - I will usually pick up stitches down one row to make the join really clean. I learned this trick from a sock class. I'll keep track of the number of stitches I added and then gradually decrease them within the next few rows of the sleeves. It's typically 1-2 stitches extra. -Liz D.

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Light-bulb shaped wire locking stitch markers will go through the eye of many tapestry needles. You can hang a needle and a few stitch markers on a marker and then pin it to the top inside of your project bag for easy access.

-Leigh G.

I use magnetic bookmarks to keep my place in patterns, they're great to move up and down the page and they don't fall off. -Michelle S.

It's worth the time to swatch and swatch in pattern. It gives you a chance to practice the pattern and a 4"x4" swatch can be sewn inside of a garment for a secret pocket or as a way to save age matched yarn for any future repairs. -Judy R.

I love my "Ranunculus" sweater but the neckline was stretching to a point where it would fall off one shoulder or the other... So, I did a single crochet across the back of the neck, below the neck ribbing. I tried it on and it still fits relaxed but not too big. For two of my long cardigans, I ran a strand of yarn horizontally, under every few purl bumps on the WS, to help hold the sweater and structure at the neck and upper shoulders. I worked back and forth with the darning needle for a total of 3-4 rows about 0.5" apart. -Ingrid S.

When making a SSK, slip the first stitch knitwise and the second one purlwise before knitting through the back loop. -Rene M.

Caught knitting in public without a tape measure? - You can measure with your hands and fingers to get a good estimate if you know your approximate finger and hand measurements. For example, my thumb is about 2 inches long, and the tip of my thumb to the first knuckle is about 1 inch. From the tip of my middle finger to the base of my palm is about 6 inches. Knitting with 6 inch DPNs or 4-inch interchangeable tips? Use the length of the needle to help you make an educated guess about the measurement. -Leigh G.

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ALWAYS (always always) tighten interchangeable needles with the tool that comes with the cable. Never assume you can hand tighten them sufficiently. Sad things happen when you don't do this. -Judy R.

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In a pinch a toothpick or coffee stirrer can double as a cable needle - if you forget your cable needle when you're traveling.

-Liz D.

I know folks like to use Purl Strings (try-on cords) for provisional cast-ons, and it is a super great hack. Recently I realized that they are also great for when you need to pick up stitches. For the January block in Anniversary Afghan over in Knit Camp, the pattern has you pick-up the side stitches to add in the border. It occurred to me that I might be able to pre-pick up those stitches by wrapping my yarn around a purl string at the beginning of each row. Then when I have finished the block bottom to top, I can just slide my needle into the purl string, pull it through and have all those stitches already picked up. It worked surprisingly well. I didn't even have to go through and drop any stitches to make sure the border bands sat flat (although I did do a k2tog on one side where I had an extra stitch on one end, because I wanted the stitch counts on both sides to be equal to one another. Can I just say, it turned out beautifully, the sides laid nice and flat and look perfect. I can't wait to try this on necklines, or cardigan bands, or other places where I know I am going to have to come back and pick up stitches. -Rachael R.

{ Always mark your RS - I use a locking stitch marker or a safety pin or other item. Makes picking up your work so much easier. -Liz D. }

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I have found, if I hold the stitches close to the needle tips and the yarn held close to the needle tips too, my knitting is a lot faster. And, after binding off in the round, pull your last stitch through your first bind off stitch, to the inside, then bind it off.

You'll have a clean edge.

-Sharon P.

When binding off on your gauge swatch - look at the bind-off on the pattern and if it's an unusual bind off practice on the gauge swatch. -Liz D.

My favorite tool is a food scale - when I'm getting close to the end of a pattern and want to use all of my yarn I will start weighting my yarn so I know how far I can go without playing "yarn chicken". -Liz D.

My lifesaver when knitting lace is "Use lots of stitch markers" between every pattern repeat and count frequently.

It's so much easier to find an error in a small repeat, especially when there are multiple yarn overs. -Sally W.

Choose the tools that work for you, not against you. For example, if you are knitting on the body of a sweater and choose short needle tips (I use Chiaogoo interchangeables) and a short cable that is joined with another short cable, you are going to be constantly managing your stitches to avoid the bump of the connector and scooting them up onto the short tips. If you use longer needles and a, say, 30" cable, you will find your knitting is much more efficient and the tools are working with you to easily slide the stitches around the cable and to the tips of your needles. On the other hand, if you are working with a small circumference (sleeve, sock), using the longer needles will always be a struggle, so pick short needles and a shorter cable if you have it. -Judy R.

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Lifelines!!! Always use lifelines and the best item to use for a lifeline is dental floss - it's cheap, thin, never gets stuck and we should all have some. -Liz D..

When you have to cast on a large number of stitches with a long-tail cast on, pull the yarn ends from both the inside and the outside of the ball, make a slip knot holding both yarns together, and then put one strand over your thumb and one over your index finger in slingshot position as usual. Cast on the required number of stitches, and then cut one of the yarns leaving a tail long enough to weave in and continue with the pattern. Treat the first stitch (slip knot with two strands) as a single strand. -Leigh G.

If you're struggling with a sloppy edge to your fabric, try this: Work the first stitch of the row, insert your needle into the 2nd stitch as you would work it but PAUSE. Hold both needles in one hand and with the other hand, pull any excess slack out of the first stitch as you create the 2nd stitch. This will firm up that first stitch. This also works well when you are bridging the gap between double-points or two circular needles in the round and can eliminate laddering.

-Sarah K.

{ When crocheting amigurumi use yarn-under instead of yarn-over to prevent holes where the stuffing can peek out. - Tanisha P. }