

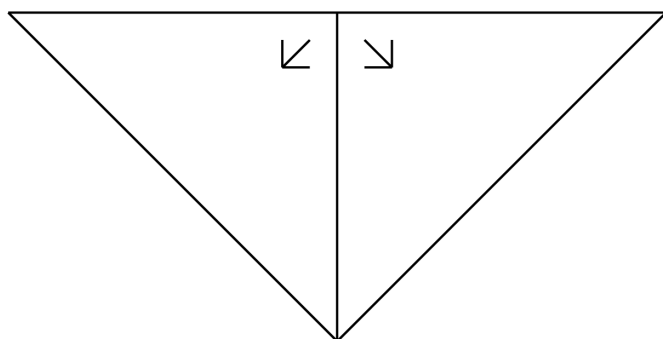
The two big things to remember about shawl design (and knitting geometry in general) are:

1. The **number** of increases per row dictate the shape of the wingspan of the shawl (its originating angle)
2. The **placement** of those increases dictate the shape of the hem (its resultant angles)

With these two ideas in mind, you can experiment as much as you want in combination. Let's start with a few traditional shapes to learn the ropes, and then see where it takes you!

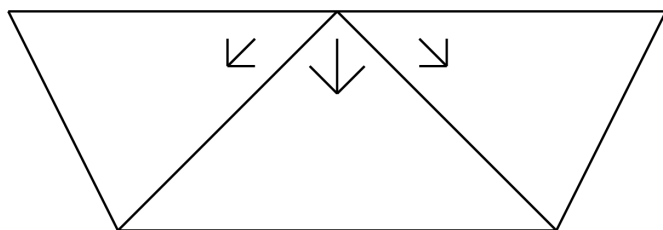
Top-Down Shapes: increase rate of 2 stitches every row.
CO 6 sts.

Basic Top-Down Triangle



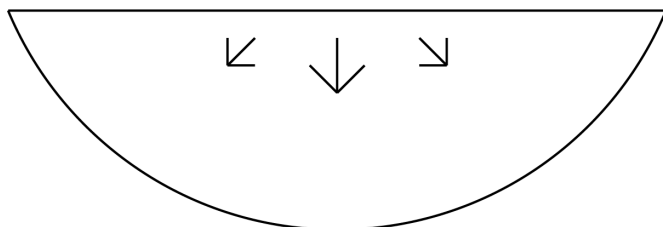
Row 1 (RS): [K1, yo] twice, k1, pm, [k1, yo] twice, k1.
Row 2: Purl.
Row 3: [K1, yo, k to 1 st before m/end, yo, k1] twice.
Row 4: Purl.

Top-Down Trapezoid



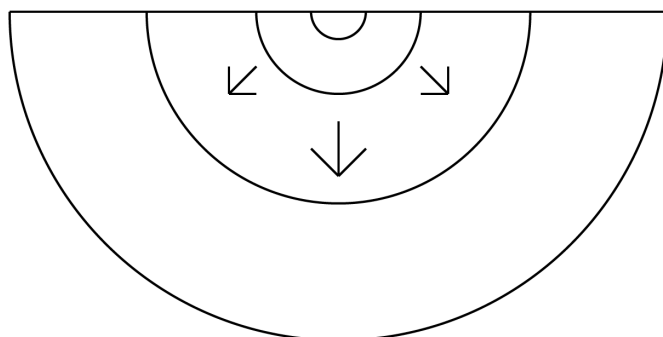
Row 1 (RS): K1, yo, pm, k1, yo, k2, yo, k1, pm, yo, k1.
Row 2: Purl.
Row 3: K1, yo, k to m, sm, k1, yo, k to 1 st before m, yo, k1, sm, k to 1 st before end, yo, k1.
Row 4: Purl.

Top-Down Crescent



Row 1 (RS): K1, yo, k to 1 st before end, yo, k1.
Row 2: P1, yo, p to 1 st before end, yo, p1.

Half-Pi Shawl



CO 7 sts.
Set-Up Row (WS): Purl.
Row 1 (RS): K2, [yo, k1] to last 2 sts, yo, k2.
Rep this increase row after 2 rows, then after 4 rows, then after 8 rows, then after 16, then 32, then 64. . .

Important Things to Know

Bind Offs

You want a stretchy bind off for your shawl to match the elasticity of your fabric! Here's my favorite, a variation on Jeny's Surprisingly Stretchy Bind Off:

On the WS of your fabric, k1, *backwards yo (start with the yarn in back of the needles like you're getting ready to knit, bring yarn over the top of the right needle toward you, then bring it back between the needles to the back), k1, pass the first two stitches over the third; rep from * to end.

Other options include Elizabeth Zimmermann's Sewn Bind Off, a Tubular Bind Off, a Lacy Bind Off, and many more. We have to crank it up a notch for the crescent shawl, though. For that shape to work, we need the following two-row bind off:

Set-Up Row (WS): K1, [yo, k1] to end.

BO Row (RS): K1, *k1, pass the first stitch over the second; rep from * to end.

Increases

We're using yarnovers in this class because they're the easiest to see and understand the patterns emerging in your fabric. However, you don't have to use those! The shapes will work just the same with closed increases. For those, I recommend working a two-row Make 1: yarnover on the RS and then knitting or purling it through the back loop on the WS. This will twist it closed without pulling on the fabric like a regular Make 1. For mirrored Make 1s, the above will get you a M1L, while doing a backwards yarnover on the RS and knitting it through the front loop on the WS will get you a M1R.

Adding Stitch Patterns

The big thing to keep in mind when incorporating stitch patterns is the stitch repeats. This is the number of stitches wide and rows tall it takes to perform the stitch design. If you're working with a shawl shape that increases at a regular rate, you can use that to see how long it would take to incorporate a stitch pattern into the shape.

Stitch Pattern as a Border

If you're adding the stitch pattern as an edging, then the only point you really need to worry about those stitch repeats is when you're figuring out where you want to add your border. Once you feel like the shawl is getting close to big enough to add an edging, calculate how many more rows it will take for you to get to a place where the pattern will repeat smoothly. For example, if you have a stitch pattern that's 9 stitches wide, you know that the number of stitches between your increases (not including your edge or spine stitches, if there are any) needs to be a multiple of 9. You'll then work your shawl until you reach a point where it's both long enough and it meets that requirement, and then start working your stitch pattern as a border.

You'll continue increasing as you have previously as you work your border, so take a look at the chart or the written instructions for the stitch pattern beforehand to make sure that you can incorporate your new stitches into pattern without problem. Will there be a time when you won't have enough stitches to work a cable cross? Figure out ahead of time what you'll do in that situation. What happens if you have enough stitches to work an increase in your lace, but not a corresponding decrease? Decide how you'll handle that ahead of time so you don't have to mess too much with it on the needles, or try to figure out why there are suddenly four extra stitches than there should be!

If you decide you want to use a stitch pattern that calls for an even number of stitches and you have an odd number, I would either make note of that from the beginning and cast on extra stitches as needed, or decrease stitches as needed right before the border starts. I suggest decreasing rather than increasing because it's easier to block out a little loss of width than it is to contain a little extra width.

Stitch Pattern over the Whole Shawl

If you decide that you want the whole shawl to be in a stitch pattern, that gets a bit trickier. The numbers of rows and stitches in the stitch repeat will need to line up with the number of increases over a certain number of rows (for example, 8 stitches wide and 16 rows tall, or 30 stitches wide and 10 rows tall), so that you don't have a 400 row chart to keep track of! Keep an eye out for stitch patterns where the rows and the stitches are multiples or divisors of each other; that will help keep the total chart size smaller since the number of stitches increased and the number of rows worked will have a workable relationship to each other. This is where graph paper comes in handy, too—you'll want to map the path of the stitch pattern as new stitches get added. Keep an eye on the stitches on the edges; at some point you'll find a place where the pattern repeats and the same series of edge stitches begin again. That tells you how many rows it will take to repeat the pattern entirely.

If that repeat point is a long, long way off, start thinking about how you could change the pattern so that there were fewer or more stitches, widening the repeat to be a multiple of the row count, or lengthening the row count to be a multiple of the repeat. What will the pattern look like if you add a few rest rows, or change it from an every other row pattern to an every row pattern? What if you take out the border between stitches? Play with it and see if you can find a place that's both comfortable for you aesthetically and knitter-wise.

Changing Shapes in Your Shawls

While we've explored the basic shapes and stitch patterns in shawls, there's nothing that says this is the be-all, end-all. Everything that we've talked about here can be played with—you can use a stitch pattern on one half of a shawl and not the other. You can increase one side at a fast rate than another. You can knit one angle of a shawl, then pick up along an edge and knit in an entirely different direction. You can add short rows to extend certain portions, change the angle, add curves, or turn a corner. You can change the increase rate halfway through. You can increase along one edge at one rate and decrease along the other edge at a slower rate. This is your project and you get to decide where you want to take it!