

Introduction to Shawl Design

with Karie Westermann

Agenda:

- Brief introduction of students & teacher.
- Lace Basics: how we think about and work with lace.
- Chart Basics: how to read and make charts and how to make one.
- Shapes & designs
- Numbers are nice: how to think about numbers and make them work
- Variations on a theme
- Questions?

Introduction to Shawl Design

Lace Basics

Lace is a series of strategically placed holes matched with decreases.

Choosing your yarn:

- **Make sure it can be blocked;** use at least 50% natural fibres (preferably more).
- **Make sure you like the fabric** you are getting with your needles. Look at the ball band to see recommended needle size – then go up at least 2 needle sizes (i.e. 3.25mm → 4mm; 4mm → 5mm). Adjust if you are a tight/loose knitter.
- **Make sure the colour of your yarn will work with your stitch pattern.** Think about colour repeats, the level of variegation, and the amount of light in your yarn.

Choosing your needles:

- Use relatively sharp-pointed needle as you will be manipulating your stitches a lot.

Making “holes”:

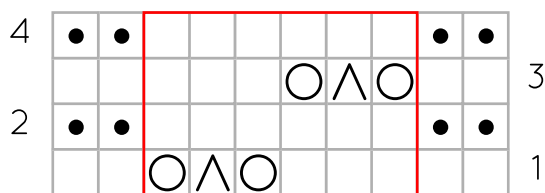
- You use a yarn-over to make an extra stitch. This is abbreviated YO (standard abbreviations; Brit. Eng. may use additional abbreviations).

Making decreases.

- **Make sure that every increase is matched by a decrease** – the *only* exception to that rule if you use increases to shape the item.
- **Make sure you are using the right decrease** to give you the fabric you desire.
- To form a line that slopes to the right, knit two stitches together (k2tog)
- To form a line that slopes to the left, knit two stitches together through the back loop (k2togtbl) or slip-slip-knit (ssk)
- For a central decrease (that eliminates two increases) you have 3 options:
 1. Double decrease that slants to the left (also known as an sk2p): sl 1-k2tog-pssso
 2. Double decrease that slants to the right: k3tog
 3. Double decrease that is centred (also known as CDD): sl 2-k1-p2sso

Think about how the increases work with the decreases. How is the fabric manipulated?
In which direction is the fabric pulled? How does that affect the increases?
How do the repeats work? Are they stacked or do they stagger?

Basic Lace Chart



Key

□ RS: knit
WS: purl

○ yo

△ RS: sk2p

● RS: purl
WS: knit

□ Pattern repeat

Row 1 (RS): K2,*k3, yo, sl1, k2tog, pssso, yo; rep from * to last 2 sts, k2. (22 sts)

Row 2 (WS): K2, p18, k2.

Row 3: K2, *yo, sl1, k2tog, pssso, yo, k3; rep from * to last 2 sts, k2)

Row 4: Rep row 2.

Introduction to Shawl Design

Now try to make your own stitch pattern:

1. Mark off a big square 10 x 10 squares wide and tall.
2. Decide upon a motif, shape or direction before you start sketching (e.g. zig-zag? Vertical lines? Arrow?)
3. Cast on 24 sts (20 sts for pattern, 2 sts for either edge and swatch your design).

- ✓ **Remember:** draw with the yarn-overs to give your pattern a shape.
- ✓ **Remember:** you cannot have two yarn overs next to each other.
- ✓ **Remember:** every increase **must** be matched by a corresponding decrease
- ✓ **Remember:** decreases lean different ways; **choose the right decrease** for the look you want
- ✓ **Remember:** you cannot start or end with a yarn over, so you may need to add additional stitches.
- ✓ **Remember:** only lace stitches on the RS side
- ✓ **Remember:** the stitch will be repeated across several stitches and rows.
- ✓ **Remember:** Some charts actually **eliminate the WS rows** because they do not contain any information except “just purl across”.

Think about how the increases work with the decreases.
How is the fabric manipulated? In which direction is the fabric pulled?
How does that affect the increases?
How do the repeats work? Are they stacked or do they stagger?
How would they look in stocking stitch vs garter stitch?

Shapes & designs

- Before you start, **sketch your idea** and **make your design decisions**.
- Find suitable stitch patterns – stitch dictionaries are great for this but also look through your patterns. Maybe there’s a cardigan with the perfect stitch?
- **Line up charted repeats** so you get an idea of what the flow will look like.
- **Swatch your pattern** using the same yarn & needles you are going to use for the actual design. Block your swatch to open up the stitches. Do you like what you see?

Numbers are Nice:

Try to avoid:

- Prime numbers (numbers than can only be divided by 1 and themselves) – eg. 17, 23, 31.
- Large numbers (big repeats can be hard to insert into shapes or grade) – eg. 31, 83, 101.

Lovely numbers:

- Small even numbers – eg. 4, 6, 8, 10.

- Abundant numbers (the sum of its proper divisors is greater than the number itself) – e.g. 24, 48, 60.
- Try to use numbers with a low common denominator. Example: You are using a pattern that runs over 8 sts and one that runs over 10 sts. The lowest common denominator is 40 sts.

Introduction to Shawl Design

If the common denominator is too big/small a number, you will need to add/subtract sts. This is easiest to do through charting.

- ✓ Keep adding lifelines to aid you.
- ✓ Use highlighter pens to indicate sts: yellow for yarn overs, green for k2tog etc. This will enable you to see at a glance if every increase is paired with a decrease.
- ✓ Make sure your numbers work before you commit your ideas to the needles. How many sts do you need to start with for your shaping to work?

Trouble-shooting:

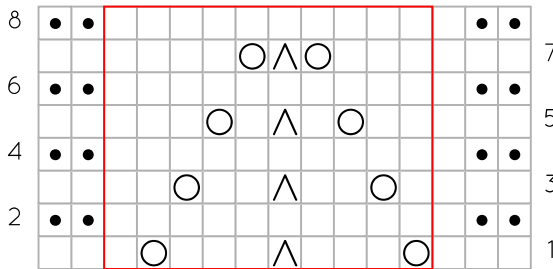
- ✓ Use stitch markers (or safety pins) to keep you right when knitting lace. Putting them between repeats lets you see your work clearer & lets you keep track of mistakes.

You shape a piece by increasing in set places on specific rows.

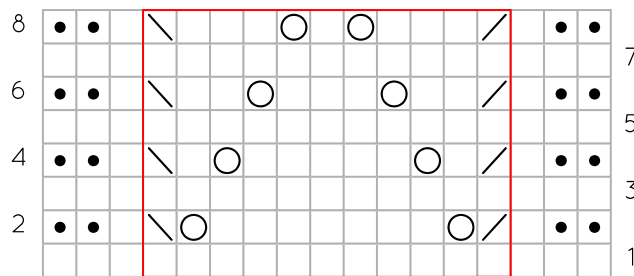
- **Triangular shawls:** increase 4 sts every RS row. Increase points: at edge, at either side of central spine, and again at edge.
- **Crescent shawls:** increase 6 sts every 2 rows – it is up to you to decide whether to place only on RS rows or distribute the increases across both RS and WS.
- **Pi-shawls:** Double your sts every time you have doubled your rows (it is not quite as straightforward as this but this works as a very rough guideline. Don't design anything based upon this advice). Your row gauge matters here as this determines when you will double your sts. Swatching is essential as is a copy of Elizabeth Zimmerman's *The Knitter's Almanac*.
- **Asymmetric Triangles:** increase 2 sts every RS row. Increase point: at start of row.
- Have fun exploring what shapes occur when you place increases without matching decreases!

Motifs: Variations Upon a Theme

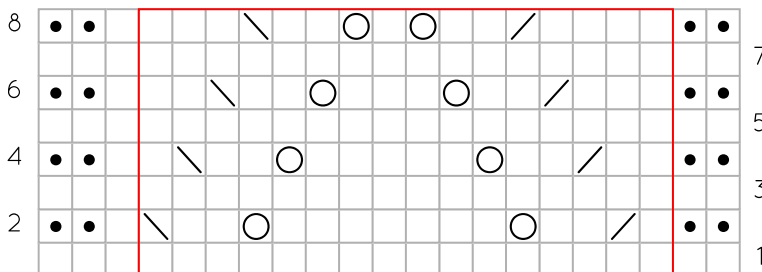
Shetland Horseshoe



Faroese Horseshoe



Orenburg Horseshoe



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□ Pattern repeat