

Lace Knitting tips

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For those of you interested in lace knitting (or knitted lace, take your pick), a few things that I do and have observed that might be of help. And what nobody told me about working lace when I first did it. Please note that these tips apply to whatever weight yarn you are using, be it laceweight or worsted, but are of especial help to those working with laceweight.

- I use Addi Turbos whenever I knit lace because I prefer sharp points. Decreasing in laceweight yarn is a royal pain in the ass, especially if you are doing a double dec. The slippery factor is always there but I have always been able to avoid stitches sliding from the needle. Some people prefer bamboo. Whatever.
- When decreasing, I give the two (or three) stitches to be decreased a tug with my fingers to open up the loops. If this doesn't help sufficiently, I insert the needle through all the stitches from back to front and open up the loops with the needle. I then reinsert it from front to back to decrease, presuming that the instructions don't read "k2togb."
- Yarn-overs are not complete stitches, insofar as they are loops and therefore lack a bar or "heel" to control their position on the needle. So, when working the yarn-over on the following row (generally the wrong side of the work), the loop will affect the position of the stitch that followed it, causing both the yarn-over and the stitch to roll on the needle. It's very easy to mis-knit these stitches, thus causing a big mess. Watch those rolling stitches and if you're not sure, move them back into order with your fingers.
- Faggoting, which basically is a vertical line or lines of yarn-overs, is often used to create one or both selvages of a lace edging (yo, k2tog), as a decorative increase (yo, k x sts, yo), as simply a design element that provides only esthetic appeal, and even as a raglan decrease (yo, k2tog or ssk, depending upon the edge being worked). The holes created by the faggoting will be proportionally larger than other yarn-overs that are set into either a garter stitch or stockinette stitch background. Why? Because a yarn-over placed two rows directly above the previous yarn-over has little or no supportive network—the more vertical yarn-overs you make, the less support they have. When yarn-overs are placed into a knitted field, the field provides a connective "tissue," as it were, that controls the size of the loops, keeping them in check. With faggoting, there is only the one plain row of knitting or purling between the two yarn-overs to support the fabric, and that's not much support. So the faggoting yarn-overs have room to open up quite a bit more. There's no correcting this, as far as I can tell. Just live with it and understand that it's the nature of the beast. Blocking will help somewhat to make them

look more orderly with respect to each other but will also serve to increase the size of the hole.

- The easiest mistakes to make in lace are: forgetting to make a yarn-over, forgetting to pass a slipped stitch over dec'd stitches and dropping a stitch. If you forget to pass that slipped stitch, you can do it on the wrong side when you come to the dec'd st and the slipped stitch. Just do it then, before you knit on.
- To protect against mistakes, some people use a lifeline, which is a thread (some people use dental floss) that is run through all stitches on a plain row so that if a mistake is made, there's a safe go-back. I don't bother with lifelines because I'm a pro at ripping out lace, much as I hate to admit it.
- Mistakes occasionally can be fudged but if you want it to be right, you have to rip out. I rip back stitch by stitch. I never take the whole mess off of the needles, as I might with, say, an Aran.
- Pay attention. This is not sissy knitting but it's not that hard either. Watch what you do and why you do it. Read the pattern a thousand times. Work a swatch first (which you do as a rule of thumb anyway) until you completely understand the stitch pattern(s).

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