



Knitting in COLOR

Rochester Knitting Guild

December 10. 2018

A rose, by any other name, would smell as sweet

Knitting with TWO or more colors in any given row is known the world over and by many, many names.

Fair Isle

Norwegian (Lithuanian, Latvian, Swedish, or any other
Scandinavian or Baltic nation)

Stranded

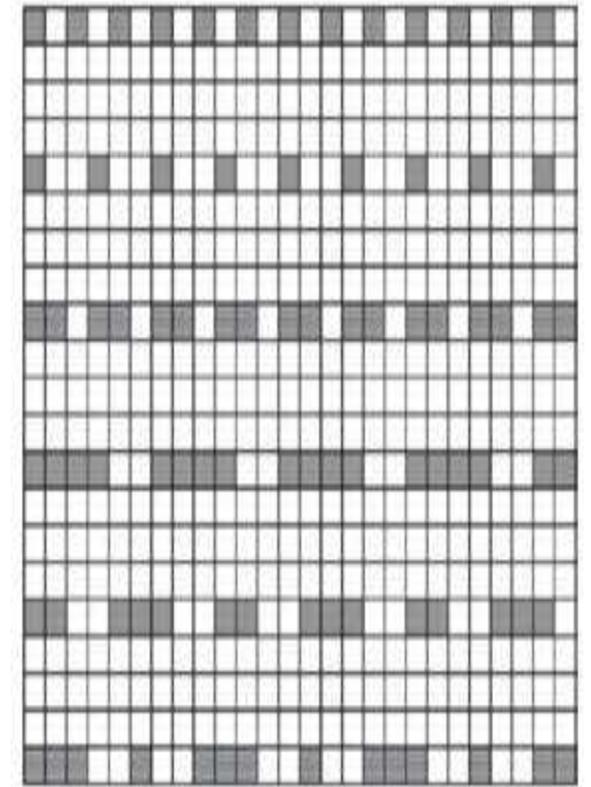
Andean

etcetera, etcetera, etcetera

Charts

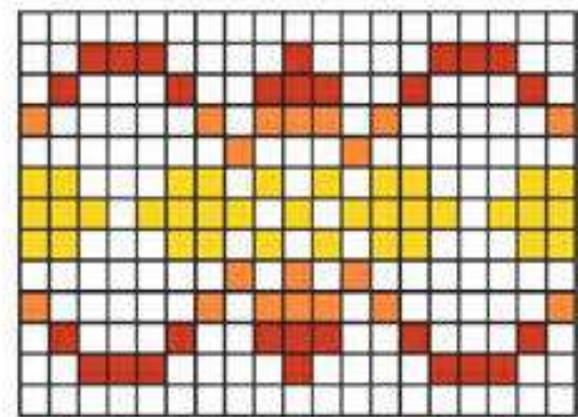
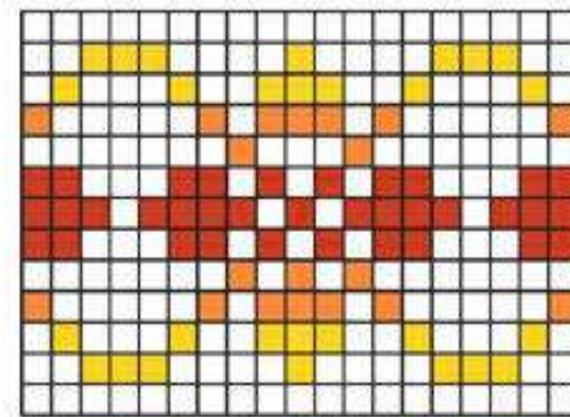
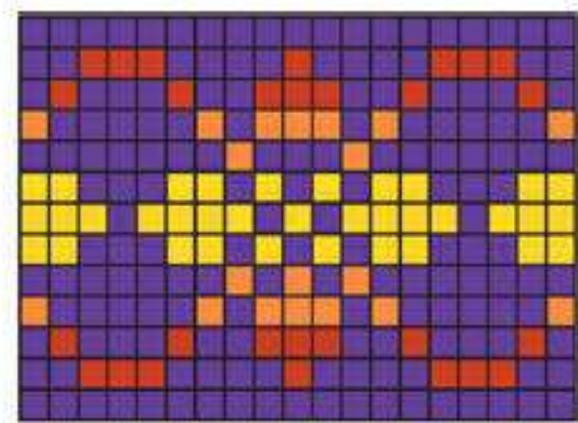
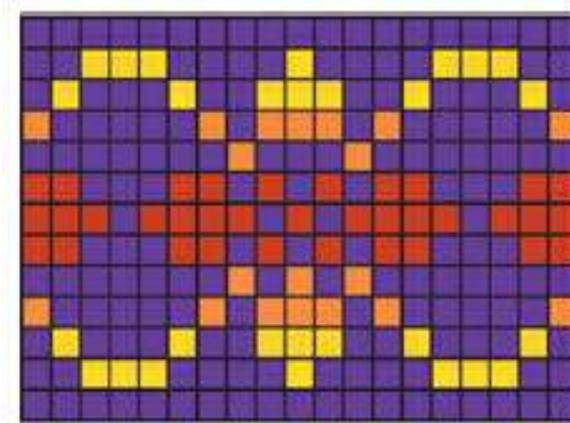
- Graphs
 - Charts are read right to left on knit side rows
 - Left to right on purl side rows

ONE-ROW PERIES



Get out your markers & colored pencils!

Make the chart easy to follow by making a copy or two and coloring the squares to represent the colors of yarn you're planning to use.



Color

Even the same colors make a project look very different when you switch MC and CC from the first hat to the second.

Lineate Hat Pattern
by Elizabeth Doherty, available
for purchase on Ravelry



Knit in the Round or Knit Flat

- Depends on project
 - In the Round –
 - Always looking at the right side of the project
 - More likely to have consistent gauge
 - Easier to follow pattern chart
 - Knit Flat (back and forth)
 - Keep in mind that purling back in pattern means reading the chart differently
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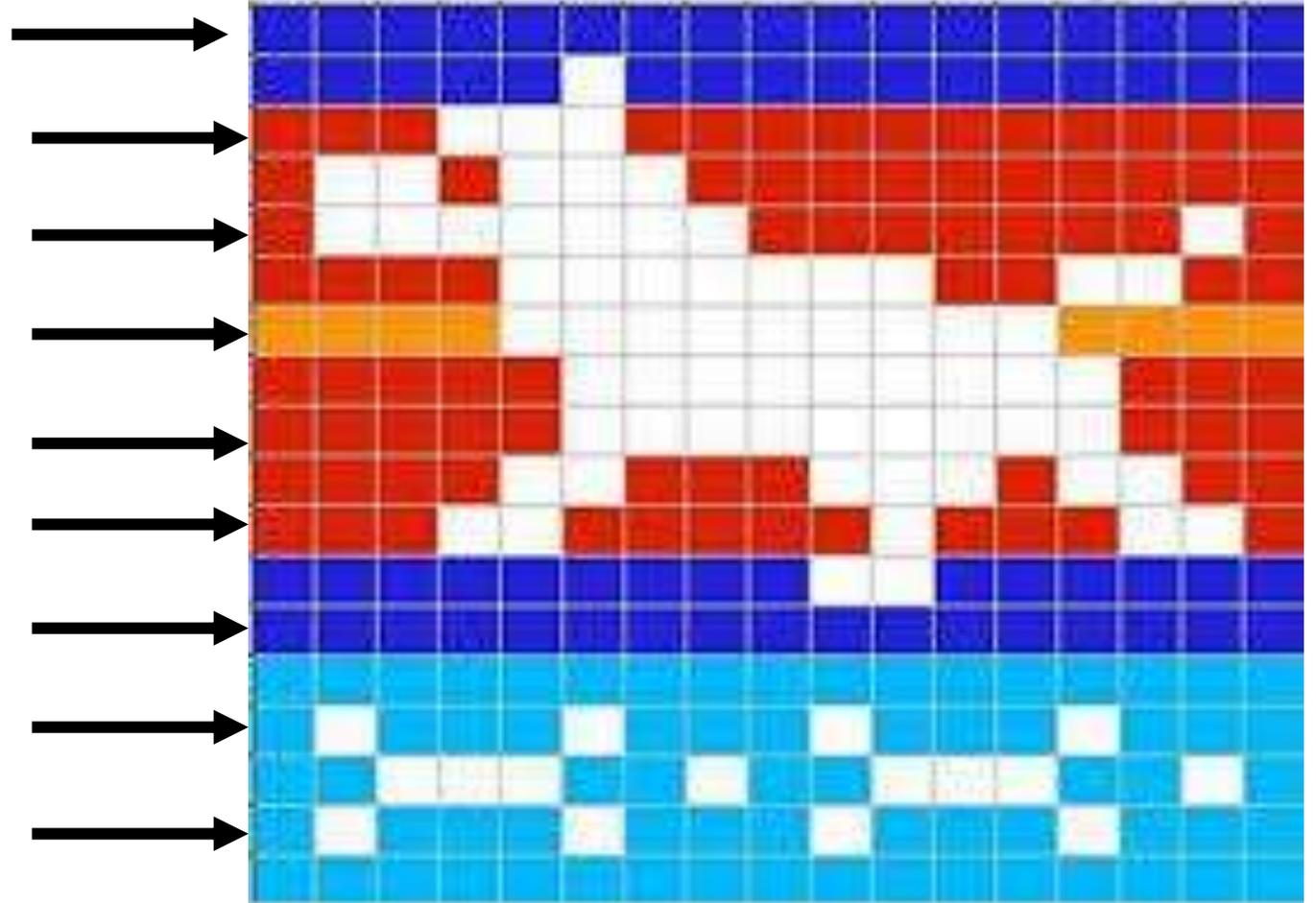
If you are knitting this chart in the round, it's easy to see how each row fits into the pattern.

If you're knitting it flat you have to be careful to knit every other row on the chart from Left to Right.

The 2nd dark blue row: 6 blue, 2 white, 9 blue

The next row is red and white (and would be the Purl side row) needs to be knit 3 red, 2 white, 5 red, 1 white, 3 red, 2 white, 1 red.

If you knit that row starting from the right side of your chart, with 1 red, 2 white, the pattern won't come out as charted.



THE STRAND

- Stranding – the “float” from the last stitch of a color to the next time it’s used again. The strand lies across the stitches of the *other color* at the back of the work.



How do I do it?

With one color in each hand.

It's habit to carry the darker color in my left hand and lighter color in my right.

The yarn in my left hand is dominant in that it lies closer to the fabric, even when carried across the back. The yarn in my right hand is carried over the dark stitches and dark floats.

Why? Light carries are less likely to show through dark stitches than vice versa. That's my theory and I'm sticking to it.







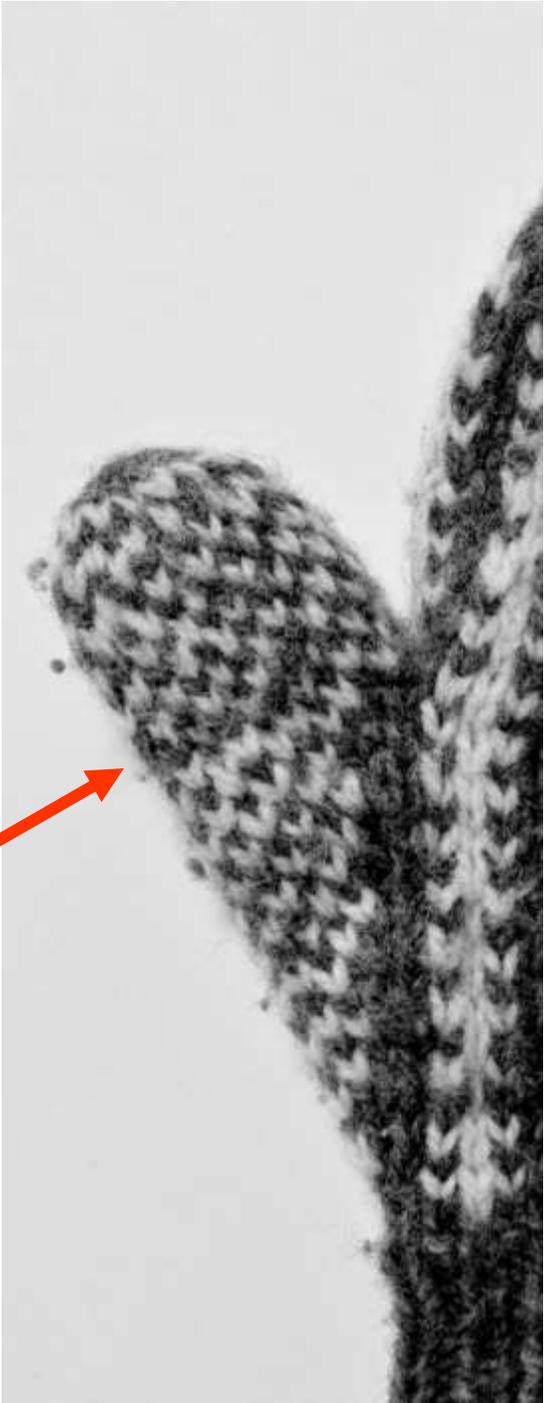


Floats are carried loosely across the back of the work.

Be consistent about which color/yarn is carried closest to the fabric, it does have an effect on color dominance.

Look at the thumb of this mitten

at the base of the thumb the white yarn is floating over the brown, then it switches to brown over the white – probably because I wasn't paying attention to which color was in my left hand or my right hand.



To twist or not to twist, that is the question...

- Do you *really* need to twist the yarns around each other when carrying? Will you go to Knitters' Hell if you don't???
- ***It depends.*** My rule of thumb is if the carry is longer than 1 ½ to 2 inches, then either twist or anchor it on the next round/row
- If you're using wool, mostly wool, mohair, alpaca, angora and the like, the yarn float will stick to the knitted fabric – more and more over time which means you can stretch the float distance a bit.
- If you're using cotton or super slick superwash, keep your floats short and/or anchor/twist more often

As many methods as it has names

- Both colors in one hand
 - Drop after each color and pick up new color
 - One color over index finger, one over another finger
 - Both colors over index finger
 - One color in each hand
 - Drop after each set of stitches in non-dominant hand
 - One color is carried in each hand and knit with equal facility with each
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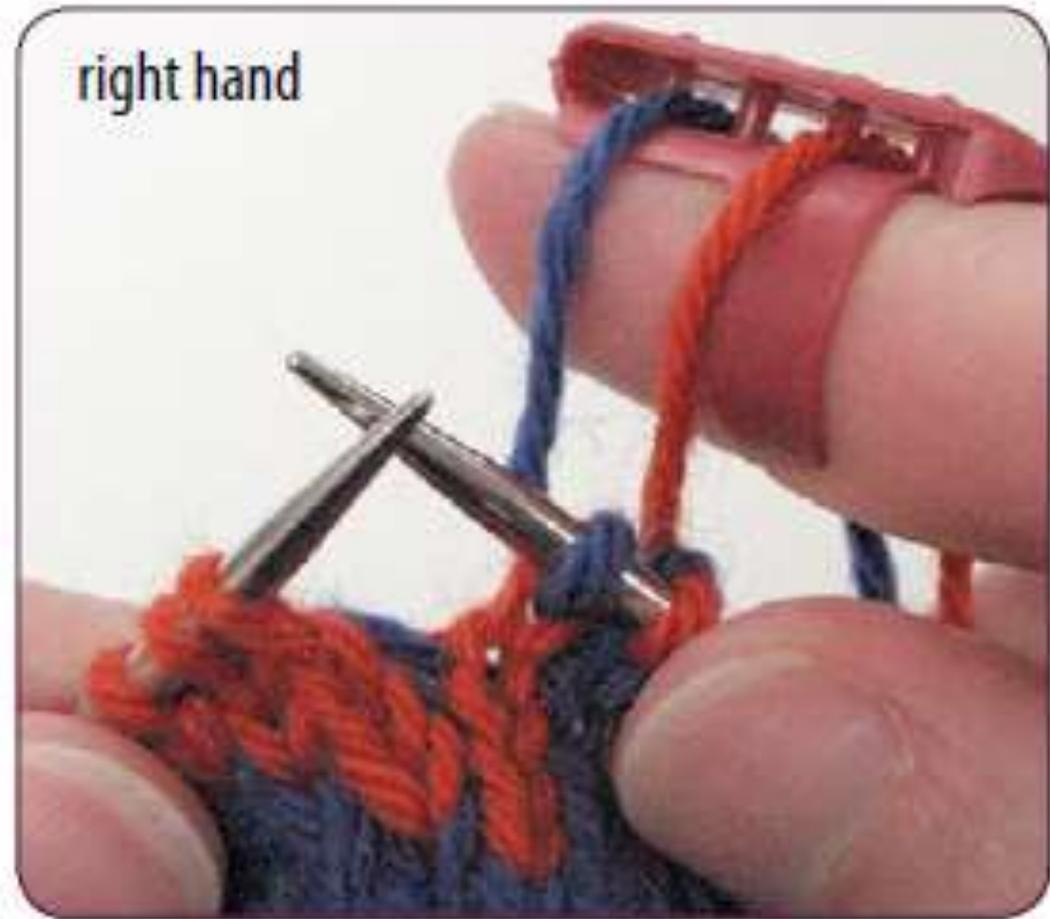
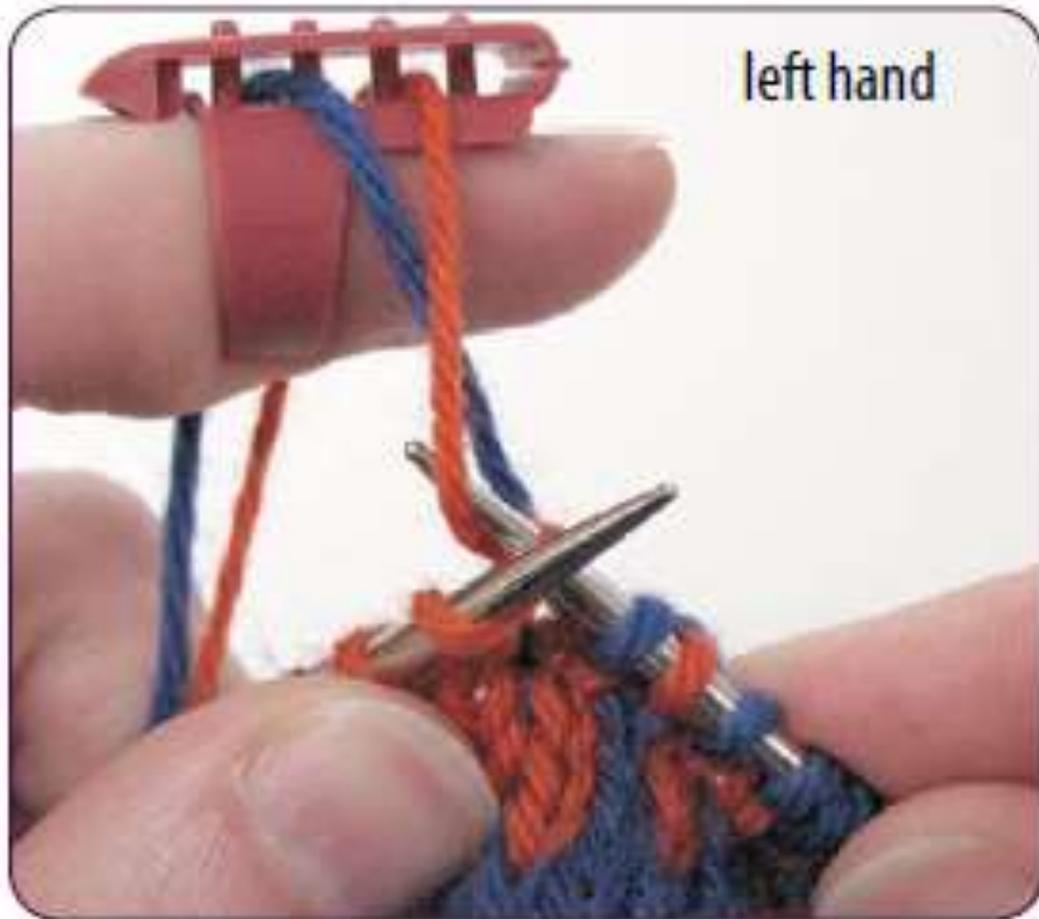
Some methods of knitting two colors at one time -

Both yarns in the left hand for Continental knitting

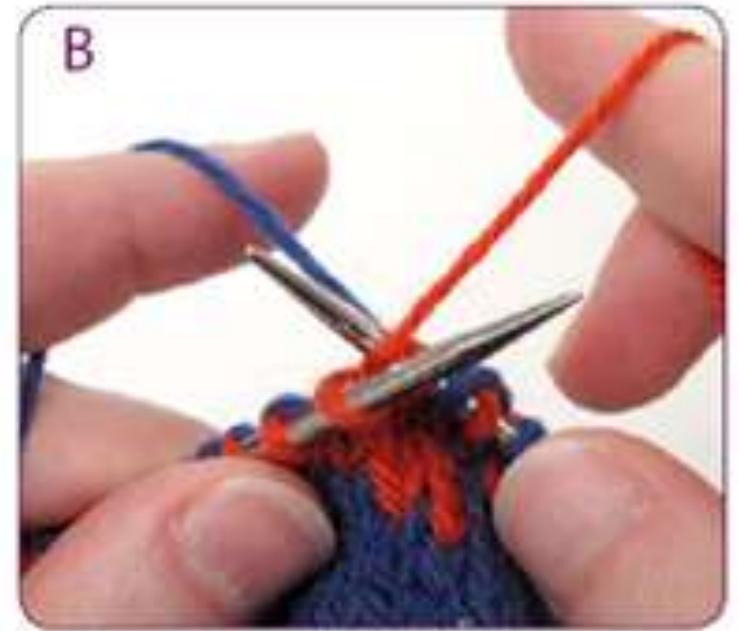


The Doohicky

Using a yarn guide in either the left or right hand



One color in each hand – left hand (blue yarn) is doing the Continental while the right hand knits the red yarn as the English do.



Slide the MC stitches down along the right hand needle and knit the next CC stitch



And you'll have nice, loose floats across the back



Then on to the next set of MC stitches.



As with any new skill, mastering a new technique is all about practice.

No, it won't feel natural the first time and it probably won't feel comfortable for some time. Neither did knitting when you first learned how to wrangle a couple of pointy things and some yarn together and come up with actual stitches.

Do not give up on a new skill simply because it's not as fluid as what you've already mastered doing OR because "my gauge isn't the same as the way I've always done it." Give yourself time and *practice* to learn and develop both the confidence and muscle memory that takes the "new" out of any skill.

Resources

- KnitPicks tutorial <https://tutorials.knitpicks.com/fair-isle-or-stranded-knitting/> I stole the methods pictures right from here. I disagree strongly with the “wrapping the yarn as you knit” bit at the end. Twisting the colors that often is superfluous and, frankly, a pain in the neck.
- TechKnitting Tutorial – nicely done <http://techknitting.blogspot.com/2007/04/how-to-knit-with-two-or-more-colors.html>
- TinCanKnits <https://blog.tincanknits.com/2015/05/26/how-to-knit-fair-isle/>

- Charts for Color Knitting by Alice Starmore
- Traditional Fair Isle Knitting by Sheila McGregor
- Traditional Scandinavian Knitting by Sheila McGregor
- Latvian Mittens by Lizbeth Upitis
- Lithuanian Knitting by Donna Druchunas
- Anatolian Knitting by Betsy Harrell
- Anna Zilborg's various books (great charts)
- A pad of graph paper and some colored pencils – *DOODLE* your own!
- Android app SQUID – note taking app that has various graph paper backgrounds, change the color of the pen and have fun.

A quick word about **steeks** –

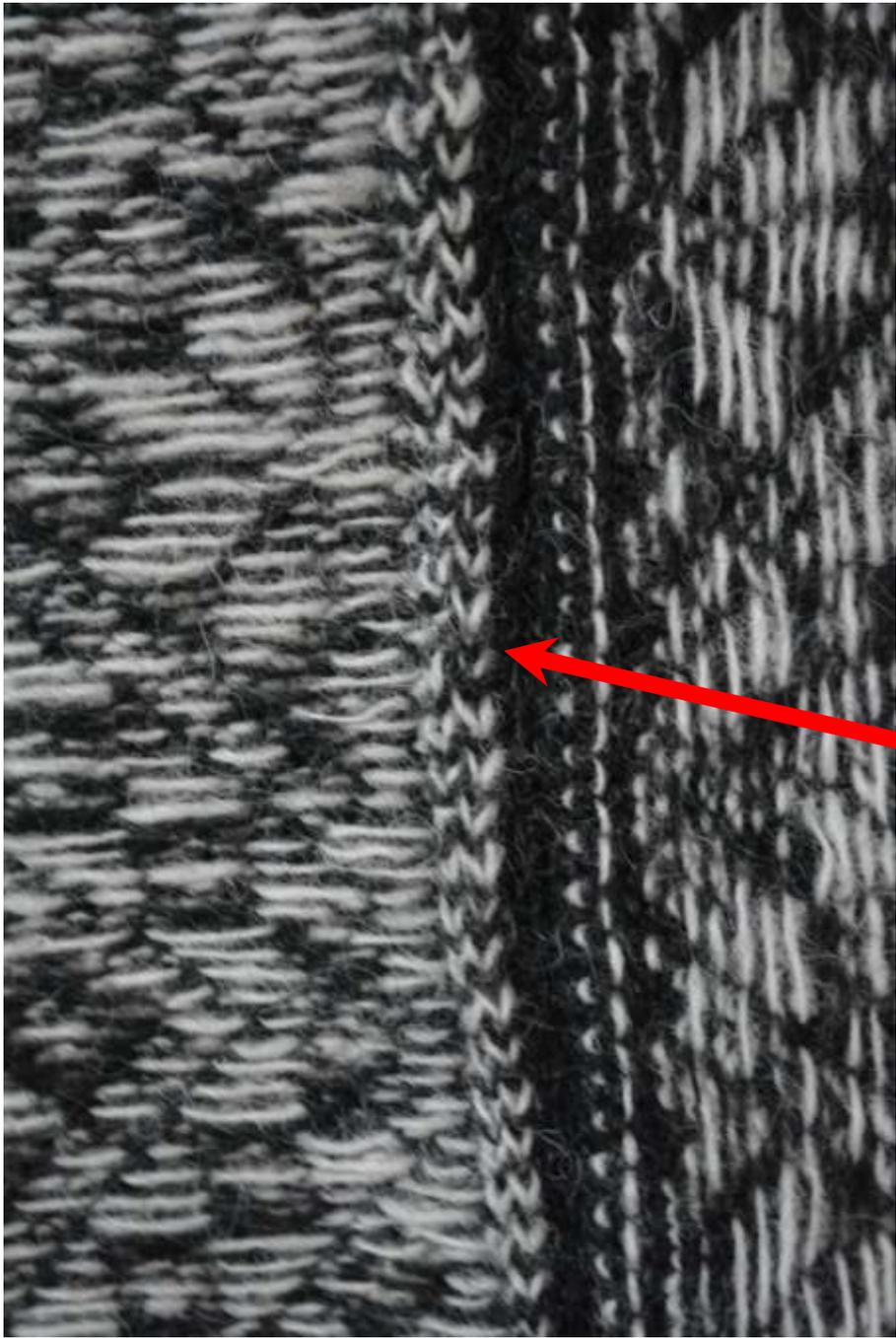
A steek is a bit of knitting between two parts of a circularly knit project that are meant to have an opening of some kind between them – between cardigan fronts, separating front and back to make an armhole, or in the front of a sweater to make a neck opening.

The steeked bit is usually knit in a simple striped or diced pattern over an odd number of stitches so the center stitch is easily found, marked and cut when the time comes.

You can steek any kind of yarn but the more clingy natural fiber yarns have a distinct advantage when it comes to steeks. Look at the black & white Norwegian sweater – “Northern Lights” is knit in single ply laceweight Icelandic yarn that clings to itself once it’s knit.

The steeks were 9 stitches wide and knit in a very simple diced pattern. When the time came to cut the steeks, I did not do any preparatory sewing or crocheting. I knit up around the armhole using several circular needles and a few double points to keep from distorting the armhole or straining the stitches in any way. THEN I cut the steek open, rolled the steek to the inside of the garment, tucked the cut edge under as I sewed the edge in place using a loose herringbone stitch with silk thread. The armhole is soft and mobile while the cut edge is securely contained.





Steek:
Cut and raw edge
tucked under as it
was sewn in place
against the body
of the sweater.



Steeks aren't difficult nor should they be scary, though I know many knitters are reluctant to use steeks.

The key is good preparation and careful planning. All of which takes place before and during your knitting not at the moment you cut the steek.

Keep your steek wide enough to have adequate fabric to turn under once it's cut. Alternate colors across the steek, on every round.

Mark the center stitch as you knit – I purl it every 5th round or so. Once the garment is all knit and you're prepping to cut, you can run a bit of contrasting yarn/thread up the center, skimming under the purls, to mark your cutting line. Cut right through the contrast yarn and through the purls – or skip the contrast yarn and use the purl bumps as your guide

Use natural fiber yarn that has some “grab” to it OR be prepared to machine stitch on either side of the center stitch before you cut – use a narrow zig-zag stitch for some give OR crochet up either side.

If this is something you want to do but fear making a mistake, PRACTICE! Plan and build steeks into stranded swatches and practice the whole process while you check your gauge. You may just end up with an impressive collection of coasters and doll blankets while you master a couple of new skills. Keep in mind that sometimes the learning IS the goal, not just a by product of making a thing. Give yourself permission to have practice knitting pieces that serve no other purpose than your mastery of a technique. Give yourself the gift of the time and materials you need to learn how to do something new.