

**Knitting Increases
and Decreases:**

***How to Increase
and Decrease
Stitches in Knitting***



Knitting Increases and Decreases: *How to Increase and Decrease Stitches in Knitting*

SHAPING IS WHAT MAKES KNITS FIT YOU PERFECTLY.

Increasing and decreasing are what make knits curve around our unique curves, clinging to our bodies when we want them too, and adding ease when we'd like a little more room.

But there are many different types of increases and decreases, and they all look different.

I've put together a guide to increases and decreases for you, so you'll know where to use the correct stitch to get the look you want.

I hope you find this free eBook useful!

Cheers,

Kathleen

Kathleen Cubley
Editor, *KnittingDaily.com*



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KNITTING INCREASES AND DECREASES: HOW TO INCREASE AND DECREASE STITCHES IN KNITTING

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Increasing: More of a Good Thing

Ann Budd

Most knitting patterns specify that stitches be increased at some point to add width to a piece and/or give an angled shape to an edge. Over the centuries, knitters have devised a number of ways to accomplish this goal. Some methods create decorative holes, others are nearly invisible; some create stitches that slant to the right, others to the left. Knitting patterns don't always specify a particular type of increase, but instead leave it up to the knitter to decide how to perform this task. Often, knitters choose to use the same type of increase (usually the type first learned) all the time. However, knitters who have a repertoire of methods, and understand the subtleties of each, can choose the method that is best suited for the project at hand, and thereby obtain a more refined, finished look.

When increases are worked to add width to a piece, several are generally worked at even intervals across a single row, such as at the top of a ribbed waist or cuff or at the boundary between stitch patterns that have different gauges. In these cases, a single type of increase is repeated the specified number of times. A number of increase methods are equally suitable here, and whether the increase slants to the left or right is of little consequence. However, when the purpose of the increases is to form an angled edge (such as along the edges of a sleeve that is knitted from the cuff to the armhole, or around the upper body of a sweater that is knitted from the neck down), care should be taken to choose a method that follows the direction of the slant. Many increase methods can be worked with left or right slants for just this purpose. Moreover, these directional increases can be paired around a center stitch or group of stitches to give a symmetrical appearance. Here are several of the most common types of increases with ideas on when to use each. To learn how these increases are used in pattern stitches, look for “Increasing—Part II” in an upcoming issue of *Knits*.



Yarnover increases create decorative holes. In this sample, the increases are worked on right-side rows in stockinette stitch.



Figure 1. Yarnover worked between two knit stitches.

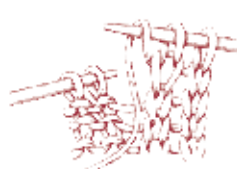


Figure 2. Yarnover worked after a knit and before a purl stitch.



Figure 3. Yarnover worked between two purl stitches.



Figure 4. Yarnover worked after a purl and before a knit stitch.

Yarnover Increase

The simplest of increase methods, the yarnover increase is usually specified for openwork patterns. This decorative increase produces a visible hole that is the basis for knitted lace. Many knitters mistakenly wrap the yarn in the wrong direction, especially when they're working a yarnover between a knit and purl stitch. Although the visual difference is slight, incorrect yarnovers can produce different-sized holes. To make all yarnovers consistent, it is important that you work the motion separately from the next stitch and that your motion always brings the yarn from below the needle in front, around and over the top of the needle, ending below the needle in the back, at which point the yarn is positioned for the next stitch. On the following row, work the yarnover as a normal stitch (unless otherwise directed).

Work a yarnover between two knit stitches by wrapping the yarn around the needle from front to back (Figure 1). Work a yarnover after a knit stitch and before a purl stitch by bringing the yarn to the front under the needle, around the top of the needle to the back, and then under the needle to the front (Figure 2). Between two purl stitches, work the yarnover by bringing the yarn over the top of the needle (front to back), then around the bottom of the needle and to the front again (Figure 3). Work a yarnover after a purl stitch and before a knit stitch by bringing the yarn over the top of the needle (again, from front to back), then around to the back of the needle (Figure 4).

Bar Increase

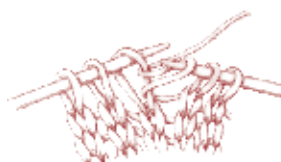
Unlike the yarnover method, a bar increase does not produce a hole. When worked in stockinette stitch, it forms a visible horizontal bar (that looks much like a purl stitch) to the left of the increased stitch. However, this increase can be quite invisible when used correctly in ribbing—worked in a knit stitch immediately before a purl stitch. The bar will fall after the knit stitch and recede into the ribbing with the purl stitch, and, therefore, is far less visible than most other increases worked in ribbing. A bar increase is worked by knitting once into the front loop of a stitch as usual, then knitting into the back loop of the same stitch (or purling into the front, then back of the same stitch). The advantage to this method is that the visible horizontal bar can be used to count and keep track of the number of increases that have been worked. Use this type of increase for shaping sleeves. Do not use this method in colorwork patterns if the increased stitches are different colors (the horizontal bar will interrupt the color change). To get a symmetrical appearance, work the bar increase one stitch farther in from the left edge than the right edge.



In this sample, bar increases were worked three stitches in from the right edge.



For this symmetrical look, bar increases were worked two stitches in from the right edge and three stitches in from the left edge.



Step 1. Knit into a stitch and leave it on the needle.



Step 2. Knit through the back loop of the same stitch.



Step 3. Slip both stitches off the needle.

Raised Increase

Also called “make 1,” this invisible increase is worked into the horizontal strand that lies between two stitches. The horizontal strand is lifted onto the left needle, then knitted in such a way as to twist it and thereby prevent a hole. This type of increase is typically used to increase stitches for thumb gussets in mittens and gloves, or in colorwork or other patterns in which it’s important that the increase not affect the stitches already on the needles. On a purl row, work the increase the same way but purl the stitches instead of knitting them. To get a symmetrical appearance, pick up the strand from back to front at the beginning of right-side rows, and from front to back at the end of right-side rows. Be sure that the lifted loop is twisted—otherwise a “decorative” hole will form, much as in a yarnover increase.

(continued on next page)

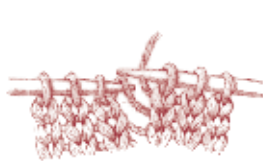


Work left-slanting raised increases at the end of right-side rows.



Work right-slanting raised increases at the beginning of right-side rows.

Left Slant

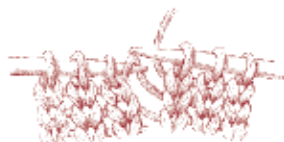


Step 1. With left needle tip, lift the strand between the needles from front to back.



Step 2. Knit the lifted loop through the back.

Right Slant



Step 1. With left needle tip, lift the strand between the needles from back to front.



Step 2. Knit the lifted loop through the front.

Lifted Increase

Another type of invisible increase, the lifted increase, is performed by working into the stitch in the row below the stitch that's on the needle, then working the stitch on the needle. This type of increase is ideal for increasing stitches in the middle of a piece where you want the increase to be as inconspicuous as possible. If the increases are to be stacked one on top of another in the same location, as down the front of a skirt worked from waist to hem, space lifted increases at least three rows apart. Otherwise, there is a good chance that the stacked increases will pull up the work and distort the overall appearance. ∞



Work left-slanting lifted increases at the end of right-side rows.



Work right-slanting lifted increases at the beginning of right-side rows.

Increase Tips

- ▲ Work increases two to three stitches in from the edge of a knitted piece to make seaming easier.
- ▲ To get the least conspicuous result, choose an increase that twists the stitch to avoid holes.
- ▲ When increasing within a ribbed pattern, work double increases to maintain the continuity of the pattern (increase on either side of a purl stitch and work the purl stitch as a knit stitch) or position bar increases in knit stitches that are immediately followed by purl stitches.
- ▲ When working increases along the edge to shape a piece, work the new stitches into the pattern as they become available—when there are enough stitches to work in the pattern repeat, do so. Otherwise, simply knit or purl the new stitches until there are enough.

Left Slant



Step 1. Knit into the back of stitch (in the “purl bump”) in the row directly below the stitch on the needle.



Step 2. Knit into the stitch on the needle, then slip both stitches off the needle.

Right Slant



Step 1. Insert left needle into back of the stitch below stitch just knitted.



Step 2. Knit this stitch.



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DECREASES

Decreases subtract stitches, usually one or two at a time, to make a knitted piece narrower. The most popular methods are knit two together (k2tog), slip slip knit (ssk), and slip knit pass (skp). The k2tog and ssk decreases are mirror images of each other; one slants right, the other slants left. They are generally used in tandem for symmetrical shaping, such as armholes on sweaters or insteps on socks. For a polished look, many patterns will specify for the decreases to be worked two to four stitches in from the edge, as shown here. In general, use an ssk at the beginning of a row and a k2tog at the end of a row.

Knit Two Together (k2tog)

This subtle right-slanting decrease is worked on a knit row.



Worked at end of row



Worked at beginning of row

Insert the right needle into two stitches (at the same time) knitwise and knit them as if they were a single stitch.



Slip Slip Knit (ssk)

This subtle left-slanting decrease is worked on a knit row and mirrors the shape of the k2tog decrease.

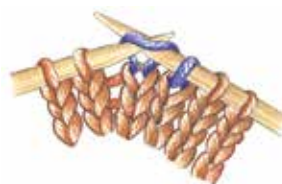
1. Slip two stitches individually knitwise onto the right needle.
2. Insert the left needle tip into the front of the two slipped stitches to hold them in place while you knit them together through their back loops with the right needle.



Worked at end of row



Worked at beginning of row



Step 1



Step 2

Slip Knit Pass (skp)

This decrease is worked on a knit row and produces a fairly pronounced left-slanting decrease. It is best used in lace patterns or with other textural stitches where a visible decrease is a necessary part of the finished look.



Worked at end of row



Worked at beginning of row

1. Slip one stitch knitwise, knit the next stitch.
2. Use the left needle tip to pass the slipped stitch up and over the knit stitch and off the right needle.



Step 1



Step 2

TIP: To minimize the prominence of the decrease, avoid stretching the stitch as you pass it over.

Purl Two Together (p2tog)

This decrease is worked on a purl row and forms a right-slanting decrease on the knit side. It looks the same as k2tog decrease (see page 6) on the knit side.

Insert the right needle into two stitches together purlwise and purl them together as if they were a single stitch.



Slip Slip Purl (ssp)

This decrease is worked on a purl row and forms a left-slanting decrease on the knit side. It looks the same as an ssk decrease (see page 6) on the knit side.

Slip two stitches individually knitwise to the right needle. Return these two stitches to the left needle in their twisted orientation, then purl them together through their back loops.



Slip Purl Pass (spp)

This decrease is worked on a purl row and forms a right-slanting decrease on the knit side. It forms a mirror image of the ssp decrease (above) and looks the same as a p2tog decrease (above) on the knit side.

1. Slip one stitch purlwise, then purl the next stitch.
2. Pass the slipped stitch over the purled stitch and off the right needle.



Step 1



Step 2