

This knit-along was designed to help a knitter get started on top down knitting and to help visualize how the garments are constructed. If you are an intermediate or advanced knitter, but have never knitted a top down sweater before, these patterns might be confusing at first. This method of construction is very different from other sweater construction. I do not recommend knitting a top down sweater as your very first knitted garment unless you have a patient knitter to help you get started. To knit these patterns, as any other pattern, you will need to know how to knit, purl, increase, decrease, cast on and bind off with confidence. The following photos were taken as I knitted a top down pullover for a baby. The basic construction is the same for all of the Knitting Pure & Simple raglans. As always, you are encouraged to change edgings, body and sleeve length to customize your garment. The patterns are a perfect blank canvas for your color and stitch ideas.

CHECKING THE GAUGE

A very important first step! A small difference in gauge will make a large difference in finished size. Please don't make the mistake of ignoring this step. There are lots of sweaters banished to thrift shops and dark closets because new knitters think that gauge doesn't matter! If your sweater is to be knitted in the round, your gauge swatch will need to be knitted in the round. This is because most people purl looser than they knit. A stockinette stitch swatch knitted in the round has no purling, so may be tighter than one knitted back and forth. The swatches shown on this page are knitted in the round on doublepoint needles on 34 stitches. A gauge ruler with a little window is used to make it easier to see halves or quarters of stitches. If you measure a lesser amount of stitches, your gauge swatch will not be accurate.



This photo shows a gauge of 4 1/2 to the inch. You can count the stitches, which look like little right-side up v's. There are 9 v's in the little window, which shows I have a gauge of 4 1/2 to the inch. My pattern calls for 4 stitches to the inch, so this gauge is too tight. It will make the sweater smaller around than I want. I need a larger size needle to make the knitting looser. Every knitter is different and lots of people need a larger or smaller needle to get the right gauge.



I have changed to a larger size needle and have knitted another swatch. This photo shows a gauge of 4 to the inch, which will make my sweater the correct size. I will use the larger size needle to knit the sweater.

Casting on

The markers I use are made from scrap yarn. They are easier for me to use than plastic or rubber. If I lose one, I can easily make more. You should use the ones that you like. The photo below shows how I make the markers.



The markers are placed on the needle between stitches as you cast on.

Use your favorite cast on, but I don't recommend the single loop cast on here. The cast on needs to be slightly tight, since it will be supporting the weight of the body and sleeves.



The photos above show the beginning of the cast on and then the stitches all cast on. You are ready to knit row one. You will turn the work and work back on the stitches that you just cast on.

First row

When you follow the pattern, you will be increasing in the stitch before and after each marker, and in the first and last stitch in this row. When you get to a marker, just slip it from the left tip to the right. The knit in the front and back of the stitch increase gives you a little purl bump, which will help you keep track of increases when you begin working in the round.



First increase done



Second increase done



Third increase done



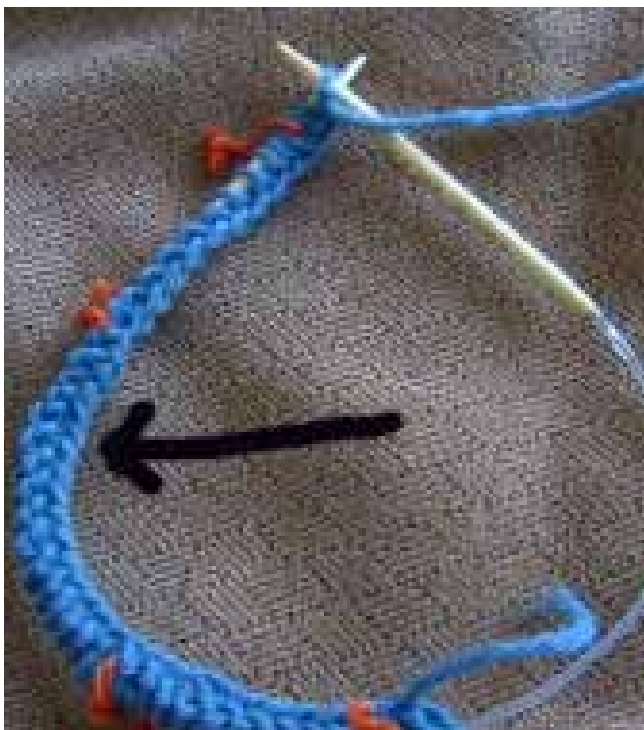
The first row is finished. You have increased 10 stitches.

Beginning row 2.

This row is all purl. You will continue to slip the markers from the left needle to the right needle as you come to them.

The pattern now tells you to work one knit row with increases and one purl row, until you have a certain number of stitches between the back markers.

The back markers are the second and third markers that you placed. At the end of the last increase row, the pattern says to cast on a certain number of stitches. This will be the front of the neck opening. In the photo below, the arrow points to the back section.



At the end of the last increase row, the pattern says to cast on a certain number of stitches. This will be the front of the neck opening. Above is a photo of how you cast on these stitches.

Yes, we have changed yarns! A variegated yarn will help you see the next steps.



The pattern now tells you to join the work into a round. To do this, just knit into the first stitch at the other end of the needle, being careful not to twist your work.

If you were making a cardigan, you would cast on at the end of the last increase row and at the end of the purl row. You would not join it into a round but would knit the body of the sweater back and forth.



Your work is now in a round, with a different color marker placed to mark the beginning of the round. You are knitting one round plain, with no increases. Your pattern now says to knit every round, working one increase round, then one plain round. Make sure that you do not increase at the pink marker which is the beginning of the round.

When keeping track of the increase and plain rounds, it is very easy to forget which round you are working. Making a mark on a piece of paper or using a counter are not reliable methods of keeping track. Here is a method of keeping track that is easy and foolproof. When knitting around, stop when there is one stitch before the next marker. Look carefully at that stitch.



Do you see that there is a little purl bump just under the needle? That purl bump is made when you do the knit in the front and back of the stitch increase. When it is just under the needle as shown, that means that you increased on the previous round. So when it looks like this, you should be doing a plain knit round.



Now look at that same stitch. The purl bump is not right next to the needle, but a bit below. This means that your last round was a plain knit round and that you should now be doing an increase round. So you will increase in that stitch. Seeing your increase is easier the more you look for it. Reading your knitting this way will make whatever you knit easier and more accurate.

The photo below shows how to use a darning needle and scrap yarn to hold the sleeve stitches. Hard metal holders are not recommended.





Here is the first sleeve on the yarn holder.



You have the left sleeve on a yarn holder, have knitted across the back stitches, and have put the right sleeve stitches on a yarn holder. You are ready to cast on more stitches and join to the front.



Above, the underarm stitches are cast on and a new beginning of round marker is placed. You are ready to join to the back stitches.



The old beginning of the round marker (pink) has been removed. The red marker is the new beginning marker. Yarn holders are tied and trimmed to stay out of the way.





Does it look more like a sweater now?
You will now be working on the body stitches only. You will knit every round until the work measures the length indicated on the pattern.



The body is almost done. Measure from the top of the shoulder. Our sweater will have a rolled lower edge, which is created by working several rows of plain knit on a smaller needle.
Change to the smaller needle by just beginning to knit with the smaller needle. Make sure you bind off with a larger needle to make your bottom edge loose. If it curls up too much, don't worry. This will be corrected in blocking.

The body finished, you are now beginning the neckband. The neckband is knitted before the sleeves so that if you need to try on the sweater to decide how long the sleeves should be, the neckband will be there to make the sleeve length accurate.

Below is a close up of how to pick up stitches. This is an important part of your knitting. It needs to be done neatly and carefully. Sloppy picking up can spoil the look of your sweater!

Insert the tip of the needle under the edge of the knitting, wrap your working yarn around the tip and pull a new stitch through. Your pattern will tell you exactly how many stitches to pick up in each section. The sections are divided by the 'seam' lines created by the increases.





Picking up the stitches across the front of the neck opening.



This photo shows the underarm stitches being picked up to begin knitting the sleeve.



The neckband stitches are all picked up and stockinette stitch begun. Notice the 'seam' lines created by the increases. When you bind off the collar, make sure you do it very loosely. Use a needle 3 sizes larger if necessary. The neckband needs to stretch to fit over a child's head.



Another thing that is hard to keep track of is decrease rows. It is much easier to count rows than to try to mark each row on a sheet of paper or use a counter. Above is a close up showing how to count rows to make sure your decreases are spaced correctly. The above decrease ratio is every 5th round. Go ahead and count the rows. It might be hard to see at first, but with practice you will have an easy time knowing when to decrease.



One sleeve done! The other is in progress. When both sleeves are done, only weaving in ends and blocking are left to do.

After binding off, you will notice a little "step" where you end the round. These photos show how to even this out. This end will be woven in also.



In the photo above, I show how I weave in ends. I use a sharp darning to run the end in at an angle, just catching the backs of the stitches for about 2 inches.

