

Chapter 125

WORKING FROM CHARTS

Once we have a project chart, we need to know how to work from it.

Photocopy the Original

Instead of carrying an entire knitting book in our project bags, we should make photocopies of the project's instruction pages.

Don't Cheat the Pattern's Author

Most knitting books have a statement on the copyright page that gives us permission to copy instructions for our *personal* use. That means two things:

1. We must own the book we're making the copy from. If we take a copy from a book owned by a friend or checked out from the library, we've turned ourselves into thieves, and knitters tend to be generous people. Let's not be selfish lawbreakers.
2. We are not allowed to work up a book's project to sell it. So make that cool sweater for yourself or as a gift, not to put on eBay or elsewhere to make a profit. (At least, that's my interpretation of the language. Others think that authors can't control what we do with projects we've made from their patterns, so that we are free to sell them. I'm more conservative, so I would refrain from doing so.)

As an added benefit, working from a (legal) photocopy means we don't have to struggle to keep a book open to the correct page while our hands are full of needles and yarn. And of course a few pieces of paper don't weigh near as much as an entire book.

Mark Up the Instructions

Mark up your photocopy to make it easy to avoid errors. Circle or highlight anything that applies to the size you're making. If anything looks tricky or confusing, jot a note to help you get through that portion.

This tip is the main reason why you should be working from a copy instead of the original. This year you're making a size large, but next year you may need to make a size small. If you've marked up the book itself for the large, you'll have a confusing mess on your hands as you try to make the small.

Make Multiple Projects from the Same Book

If we photocopy the charts and instructions, then we can have more than one project in work from the same book.

Instead of trying to remember to shift the book from one project bag to another as we're dashing out the door to the kids' soccer practice, we already have each project's instructions right in the project's bag.

Mark Your Place on the Chart

When we are working from charts, we may want to use some kind of marker to help us keep track of the row we're currently working. There are several ways to mark our current row on a chart.

Colored Tape

Some knitters use transparent, colored, movable tape. This tape comes in a standard tape dispenser, but its sticky coating is more like the glue on Post-it notes. We reposition the strip of tape multiple times, moving the tape up row by row as we progress up the chart.

Post-It Notes

We could use ordinary Post-it notes themselves to mark the row in work. It can be hard to find wide Post-it Notes, though, because the square sizes tend to be the ones on the shelves. There are narrow strips useful for bookmarks or other page indicators, but the glue is on one of the narrow ends. It would be easy for them to be dislodged, especially if we shove the chart into our knitting bag in a hurry.

Magnetic Boards

There are also steel boards with long, skinny magnets. The magnets both hold the chart to the board and show us which row we're working on.

Use the Chart Marker Correctly

If we use the magnets and metal board, or if we use a Post-it note, we need to put the magnet or Post-it **above** our current row. We might be inclined to put it below the current row (and a few chart enthusiasts say the same), but that placement will keep us from realizing one of the most important benefits of charts: making sure that ***we're working the stitches of the current row in the correct place relative to the stitches of the previous row.***¹

¹ If we turn the chart upside-down for private-side rows, it will be a bit harder, but not impossible, to make sure we're working the current row's stitches in the proper place with respect to the previous row.

Instead of This	Do This
photo	photo

If we put an opaque marker *below* the chart row we're currently working, then we won't see that, for example, the K2 that we need to work next must be exactly above the P2 of the previous row. If the next two stitches on the left needle are a purl and a knit, then the fact that the chart shows they ought to both be purl stitches will allow us to recognize immediately that we have made an error somewhere. If we had covered up the previous row with a Post-it note or magnet, we wouldn't realize that we're about to K2 over a P1–K1 instead of a P2.

Don't Mark Through the Completed Rows

One way we should *never* mark our place on a chart is by drawing through rows as we complete them. Why? Well, er, ahem, there is just a *slight* chance that we might make an error and need to frog. If we've crossed through chart rows, especially with some kind of felt-tip pen, we might not be able to see through the crossed-out rows to rework them.

Also, some charts have us work a group of rows over and over again. If we cross through each chart row the first time we work it, how can we read it when we have to work it the second time?