

Chapter 350

MORE CHART TIPS

I've used most of these tips at one time or another (or wished I had after I'd finished a project).

Use Really Big “Paper”

If we're combining lots of small patterns across the width of a big project, like a sweater or blanket, it would be nice to see the entire chart at once. That way we can compare the effect of having this pattern here and that pattern there.

Instead of using a four-point font size, make your “paper” forty inches wide and keep the knitting symbols at ten or twelve points. No, you can't actually print it, but if you're just playing with patterns, keeping this one, adding that one, moving a third pattern from here to there, you're not really needing to print it.

Number the Stitches

If you want to enter stitch numbers quickly, you can type

0987654321

then copy and paste it multiple times instead of using Insert | Special Character to select the boxed numbers or letters in the knitting font.

So the bottom row of the chart might look like

21098765432109876543210987654321

for a project that's thirty-two stitches wide.

Create a Basic Chart Template

There are certain pieces you'll want in every project file, such as the basic three-column table set up with the knitting font, stitch numbers, pattern name, pattern source, information about stitch and row repeats, tricky bits in the pattern, and so on.

Since the boxed numbers are already all on one line in chapter 390, you can just copy and paste them from that file to the bottom chart row in your template file.

Create a basic file with all these components, then in your file manager, copy and paste the entire file to a new filename for each project.

Substitute Numbers Strategically

Suppose you had a public-side chart row that looked like this:

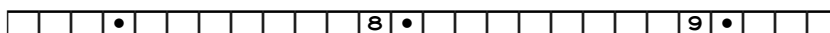


Quick! How many knit stitches are there in the two groups between the three purl stitches?

If the project is small, it might not matter much, but on a larger chart it would be convenient to substitute a number for the first symbol to indicate the number of stitches in a run of the same stitch.



You could also use the boxed numbers, though they might be a little hard to read if you have to use a small font size.



This way, you do your counting one time, and it's recorded forever in the chart. When you've worked the first purl stitch, you can immediately work nine knit stitches (without first having to count the number of symbols on the chart), purl one, then immediately knit eight (again without counting them first on the chart). Altering the chart this way would save some time, especially for patterns with row repeats.

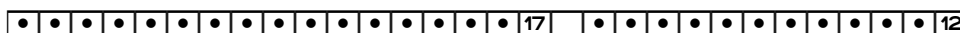
If you have ten or more of the same stitch,



just type over two stitch symbols



or use the boxed numbers instead.



Add Special Rows to Do Addition

In the Aran sampler, the top row of the chart had the names of each pattern. If you're rearranging your chart's table columns to get the exact layout you want, keeping the pattern name with the pattern rows is a nice convenience.

Let me suggest two more special rows: pattern width and stitch count.

Pattern Widths

From working up a swatch with the cable and twist patterns, I knew exactly how wide each pattern would be. So I could have added a row to the chart to capture that information:

Braid	Cable 3/3 R	Fishbone	Wavy Cable	Hugs and Kisses
0.75	0.8	1.2	0.9	1.2

Now I add a column at the end with a heading like “Total,”

Braid	Cable 3/3 R	Fishbone	Wavy Cable	Hugs and Kisses	Total
0.75	0.8	1.2	0.9	1.2	

then I put in the dark-bordered cell a formula to add up the numbers. How? As soon as I type an equals sign in that cell, my word processor goes into “formula mode.” I click and drag across all the cells to the left of the highlighted box (shown with a dark border in the next chart), then press Enter. The computer adds up all the numbers for me.

Braid	Cable 3/3 R	Fishbone	Wavy Cable	Hugs and Kisses	Total
0.75	0.8	1.2	0.9	1.2	4.85

If we click in the total box, and perhaps open a toolbar, the word processor will show us the actual formula it uses to do the sum.

Braid	Cable 3/3 R	Fishbone	Wavy Cable	Hugs and Kisses	Total
0.75	0.8	1.2	0.9	1.2	=<A4:I4> ¹

If I add or delete a pattern column, my word processor is usually smart enough to update the formula accordingly. If I want to be sure the answer is right, I can either click in the

¹ Table rows are usually numbered with row one at the top, and table columns are usually lettered with column A at the left. That means the first cell in the top row is A1. In a table four rows tall and ten columns wide, then on the bottom row, the first cell is A4, and the next-to-last cell is I4.

“Total” cell and look at the formula, or I can just delete the formula and re-create it the same way I did originally.

Stitch Counts

In the exact same way, we can add another row with the stitch counts for each pattern

Braid	Cable 3/3 R	Fishbone	Wavy Cable	Hugs and Kisses	Total
0.75	0.8	1.2	0.9	1.2	=<A4:I4>
6	6	9	7	8	

and make the computer add up these numbers too.

Braid	Cable 3/3 R	Fishbone	Wavy Cable	Hugs and Kisses	Totals
0.75	0.8	1.2	0.9	1.2	4.85
6	6	9	7	8	36

Now, the Aran sampler was small, and we can do this arithmetic ourselves. But imagine a sweater that’s forty inches around. It’s apt to have lots of patterns, and I for one would rather concentrate on pattern selection and positioning than repeatedly doing mental arithmetic (which I’ll almost certainly do wrong), so I let the computer do it.

Filling Chart Columns Quickly

When I was making the Aran sampler chart, I stumbled on this technique by accident. If your word processor works the same way, you’ll save lots of time and effort making project charts. I’m repeating the technique here in case you missed it in chapter 150.

Filling a Column with Copies of One Row

Since we wanted columns of reverse stockinette between each pattern in the Aran sampler, I started off by putting two purl stitches in row forty-eight in the column between Braid and Cable 3/3 Right. I selected the two purl stitches and copied them. Then I selected the forty-seven empty cells below that row, all the way to the bottom of the chart, and pasted. My word processor put two purl stitches in every cell. Yippee!

If your word processor won’t fill all forty-seven cells in this way, then put the cursor in the second cell down, and paste. Move the cursor down again, and paste. Once you have a

few rows of purl stitches, select them, and copy them. Then put the cursor in the highest empty cell and paste. Keep putting the cursor in the highest empty cell and pasting.

If you add extra table rows at the bottom because you pasted more cells than the column needed, then just delete those table rows.

If It Works, Copy an Entire Pattern

If the attempt to copy just one row into an entire column worked, then you should be able to use this technique to copy multiple pattern rows.

Suppose we had a ten-row pattern, and we knew we needed a total of twelve copies of it in a project chart. Instead of pasting each ten-row group eleven times, we make the project chart a hundred twenty rows tall (the pattern area itself, not including any heading rows the chart may have). Once we have the ten lines typed in, we select them and copy them. Then we select the hundred ten empty cells below them in the pattern column, and paste.

Copying a Whole Column

If we need multiple copies of the same pattern across the width of a project chart (the way we put two purl stitches between each pattern in the Aran sampler), then we can simply copy a complete column of the pattern into the space where we need it again.

Once we have an entire column filled, we select the entire column and copy it. Then we select the column that needs the same stitches, and paste it.

Alternative Stitch- and Row-Repeat Markers

Using the knitting font's repeat marker can be aggravating because of the special way you have to delete it, should you need to.

If you're using tables, then just set up empty columns to indicate the boundaries of the stitch repeat. I usually put a single space character in the knitting font somewhere in the column so the column stays wide enough for me to see it clearly. You may prefer to let the column be its normal narrow width (which would be the sum of the left and right cell margins), perhaps to save some width so the chart would fit on a single sheet of paper.

If you want to show the row repeat on the same chart, then just use empty rows as the boundaries between the row repeat and the plus rows.

Sometimes it can be hard to change just one border on a group of table cells, so using an empty column and/or row is a great alternative.

Color Can Be Your Friend

Are you working a project that combines lots of patterns? Suppose you're making a sweater that has, among other patterns, both Braid and Hugs and Kisses Cable. If you make the sweater symmetrical on the front and back, then you'll have both patterns on the wearer's left and right.

To help you keep things straight, you've put a green marker before each Braid and a pink marker before each Hugs and Kisses Cable.

Now wouldn't it be nice if your chart did the same thing?

It can. Put an empty column to the right of Braid, select it, and change the highlight color (not the font color) to green. Put another empty column to the right of Hugs and Kisses, select it, and change the highlight color to pink.

If you're really squeezed for space, you can change the patterns' own cells to the highlight color. You could also change the color of the pattern cells' right borders, but sometimes it's hard to make the computer do something different for just one of a column's borders.

If you don't have a color printer, then use colored pencils or markers to do any of the above on the printed black-and-white chart.

Needle Intersections

If you're using double-pointed needles or two circulars to make an item in the round, you can put blank columns in the chart at the places where the needles intersect.

Putting needle intersections at strategic spots is a handy way to mark the beginning of a pattern repeat, the start of a new pattern, or the beginning of the round.

Figure Out Any Shaping

We already mentioned in the introduction that we can chart the shaping of the other front of a cardigan (when the pattern merely tells us to "reverse all shapings" of the front that has the complete shaping instructions) so we know exactly where to do what. But we can do the same thing for any other shaping situation.

I did a really wild chart for one sweater. I was adapting a pattern for a sweater with set-in sleeves and a broad, shallow crew neck to have raglan sleeves and a deep, narrow crew neck. So I had to figure out how many stitches to leave unworked at the center front. If I left too many, I'd run out of stitches before I got to the neck at the sleeve/front raglan line, and if I left too few, the front-neck width would be too narrow. So I charted the entire sleeve/front raglan line from underarm to neck. Once I knew how many rows it would take

to get the armhole depth I wanted, I ran the crew-neck side shaping from the top of the sleeve/front raglan line back down to the desired depth of the center front. Then I knew exactly how many center-front stitches I had to cast off.

I did have to use a “wide sheet of paper,” as mentioned earlier, but I saved myself an enormous amount of trial, guesswork, and ripping, especially because—and I forgot to mention this—I was working in the round. That meant *all* the sleeve/neck shaping was happening at the same time. I didn’t want to get halfway done and realize I didn’t have the right number of stitches at the center front.