

Chapter 125

WORKING FROM CHARTS

Once we have a project chart, we need to know how to work from it. We might be working from a pattern we bought, or we might be working from our own, unique, one-of-a-kind original. The following tips apply to either situation.

Use a Photocopy

Instead of carrying an entire knitting book in our project bags, we should work from copies of the project's instruction pages. Most knitting books have a statement on the copyright page that gives us permission to photocopy instructions for our personal use. If we do so, then 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.

If we're making a project from our own unique design, it would be **much** safer to at least take the time to make photocopies of (and probably type up in the computer) all the charts and other instructions instead of diving in and casting on. I know, I want to get right to yarn and needles too. But if our only copy is the one in our knitting bag, well... Perhaps it better to not think about the consequences if our bag goes walkabout.

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. 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.

Marking Your Place on the Chart

When we're working from charts, it's a really good idea for us to use some kind of marker to help us keep track of the row we're currently working.

Some knitters use **transparent, colored, movable tape**. It 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 it up row by row as we progress up the chart.

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, not along the long side. It would be easy to dislodge them, especially if we shove the chart into our knitting bag in a hurry.

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 an Opaque Chart Marker the Better Way

If we use magnets on a metal board, a Post-it note, or any other kind of opaque marker, we have two options for where to put the marker: either below or above the current row. We might be inclined to put it below the current row (and some knitters do so), 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

Option 1: Below

In this photo, we are about to work row eleven from a chart we'll see in chapter 130, and the magnet is positioned below that row.

The Complete Chart

Since rows fourteen to twenty-five simply repeat previous rows in reverse order, we can just copy them and fix their row numbers. The entire chart is

24	••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••	25
22	••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••	23
20	••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••	21
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14	••••••~••••••~••••••~••••••~••••••~	15
12	••••••~••••••~••••••~••••••~••••••~	13
10	••••••~••••••~••••••~••••~••••~••••~	11
8	••••••~••••~••••~••••~••••~••••~••••~	9
6	••••••~••••~••••~••••~••••~••••~••••~	7
4	••••••~••••~••••~••••~••••~••••~••••~	5
2	••••••~••••~••••~••••~••••~••••~••••~	3
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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.

We can see that we alternate knits and purls at the beginning and end of the row. We also have some purls in the midst of the central stockinette. But we can't tell exactly where they go, unless we take the time to count the number of knits we have to work before we get to the purls.

Option 2: Above

Let's compare that setup with the other option: placing the marker *above* the current row.

The Complete Chart

Since rows fourteen to twenty-five simply repeat previous rows in reverse order, we can just copy them and fix their row numbers. The entire chart is

24	••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••	25
	••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••	
22	••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••	23
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20	••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••	21
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18	••••••••••~••••~••••••••••••••••	19
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16	••••••~•••~••••~•••~••••~•••~••••	17
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Now the relative placement of the two central purl stitches is clear: they're one stitch sooner and one stitch later than in the previous row, and we don't even have to count how many knits we need to work before each purl. In addition, we can see at a glance that those edge stitches need to be worked the opposite of what they were in the previous row.

When Working More Complicated Projects

Clearly, for this small and easy chart, it really wouldn't make much difference exactly where we put the opaque chart marker. But where the placement **does** make a difference is when we're working from a more complicated chart where the stitches we have to make don't lend themselves so readily to being recognized at a glance.

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 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 the chart marker, 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 a line 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 crossed through the chart rows as we worked them, especially with some kind of felt-tip pen, we might not be able to see the symbols to rework those rows.

Also, some charts have us work a group of rows over and over again, as we'll see later. If we cross through each row the first time we work it, we won't be able to read it when we have to work that row again.