Chapter 350

MORE CHART TIPS

I've used all 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, we can make our "paper" forty inches wide and keep the knitting symbols at ten or twelve points. No, we can't actually print it, but if we're just playing with patterns, keeping this one, adding that one, moving a third pattern from here to there, we're not really needing to print it.

Chart ALL Shaping

I mentioned in the book's introduction that we can chart the shaping of the "other" front of a cardigan, because so many cardigan patterns merely tell us that we need to "reverse all shapings" of the front that has the complete instructions for neck, armhole, and shoulder decreases. 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.

Because I could use a huge "sheet of paper," 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 hadn't left the correct number of stitches at the center front.

Number the Stitches

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

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0987654321
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then copy and paste it multiple times instead of using Insert | Special Character to select the boxed numbers or letters in the knitting font.

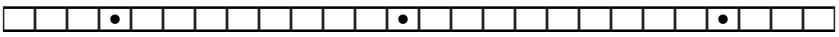
So the bottom row of the chart might look like

21098765432109876543210987654321

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

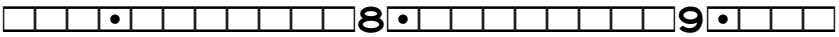
Substitute Numbers Strategically

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

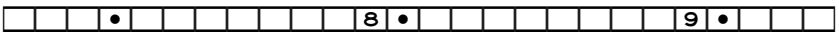


Quick! How many knit stitches are there in the two groups between the three purl stitches?

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.

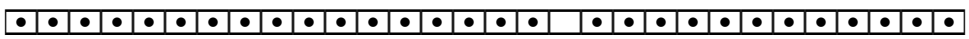


We could also use the boxed numbers, though they might be a little hard to read if we have to use a small font size.



This way, we do our counting one time, and it's recorded forever in the chart. When we've worked the first purl stitch, we 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 we have ten or more of the same stitch,



we can 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 we're rearranging our chart's table columns to get the exact layout we want, keeping the pattern name with the pattern rows is a nice convenience.

Let me suggest two more special rows: pattern widths and stitch counts.

Pattern Widths

From working up a swatch with the cable and twist patterns, I knew exactly how wide (in inches) 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

After adding a column at the end with a heading like *Total*, I can put in the dark-bordered cell a formula to add up the numbers.

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

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 (shown with a dark border in the next chart) to the left of the Total cell, 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 cell, 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 Total cell and look at the formula, or I can just delete the formula and re-create it.

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's chart, I stumbled on this technique completely by accident. If your word processor works the same way, you'll save lots of time and effort making project charts.

[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.

Filling a Column with Copies of One Row

Since I 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 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 your word processor adds extra table rows at the bottom because you pasted more cells than the column needed, then just delete those table rows when you're done making the chart.

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 in the exact same way.

Suppose we had a ten-row pattern and 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

We might need copies of the same pattern in several places across the width of a project chart, exactly the way we put two purl stitches between each pattern in the Aran sampler.

Once we have an entire column filled, we select the entire column and copy it. Then we put the cursor in the top cell of the column (or select the entire 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 we have to remove it, should we need to.

If we're using tables, then we can just set up empty columns to indicate the boundaries of the stitch repeat. A single space character in the knitting font somewhere in the column keeps the column wide enough for us to see it clearly. We may prefer to let the column be its

default narrow width (which would be the sum of the cell's left and right margins), perhaps to help the chart fit on a single sheet of paper.

If we want to show the row repeat, then we 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 empty columns and/or rows is a great, and quick, alternative if we have enough space on the page.

Color Can Be Our Friend

Suppose we're making a sweater that has, among other patterns, both Braid and Hugs and Kisses Cable. If we make the sweater symmetrical on the front and back, then we'll have both patterns on the wearer's left and right.

To help us keep things straight, we'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 our chart did the same thing?

It can. We put an empty column to the right of Braid, select it, and change the highlight color[2] (not the font's color) to green. Then we put another empty column to the right of Hugs and Kisses, select it, and change the proper thing's color to pink.

If we're really squeezed for space, we can change the proper attribute of the patterns' own cells to the needed color. We could also change the color of the pattern cells' right borders, but as with stitch- and row-repeat boundaries, sometimes it's hard to make the computer do something different for just one border of a table cell.

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

Show Needle Intersections

If we're using double-pointed needles or two circulars to make an item in the round, we 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 different pattern, or the beginning of the round.

[2] The proper attribute might be called the *background* or *fill* color instead of the *highlight* color, depending on our word processor.

Create a Basic Chart Template

There are certain pieces we'll want in every project file, such as the basic three-column table set up with the knitting font, stitch numbers, row 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, we can just copy and paste them to the bottom chart row in our template file.

Our word processor will also want to spell-check our knitting chart. We can forestall that and prevent the misspelling indicator from ever appearing by selecting the entire table, then setting the language to None.

After we create a basic file with all these components, then in our file manager, we can copy and paste the entire file to a new filename for each new chart.