LACE-DIAMOND DETAILS

Maybe it's just me, but the easy-lace sampler from chapter 180 doesn't look that great. Yes, there are yarnovers in a diamond shape, but some of the fine details are unappealing.

Half of the Decreases Are Noticeable

The decreases on the two lower sides of the diamond are fairly prominent, but there's no corresponding prominence on the two upper sides.

Or if we want the decreases to not be noticeable, then we haven't achieved that effect either.

The Holes Look Different

The yarnovers on the bottom half are pretty large, since they have just two twisted strands of yarn separating them from one another.

The yarnovers in the top half are actually separated with weird-looking stitches, which make the yarnovers practically invisible.

The Top Yarnover Is Crooked

The top yarnover leans to the left. Perhaps one of the other three decrease/positioning options (yo–K2tog, SSK–yo, and yo–SSK) would look better.

The yarnover at the bottom point isn't as bad, but maybe we should try some different techniques to see what looks best.
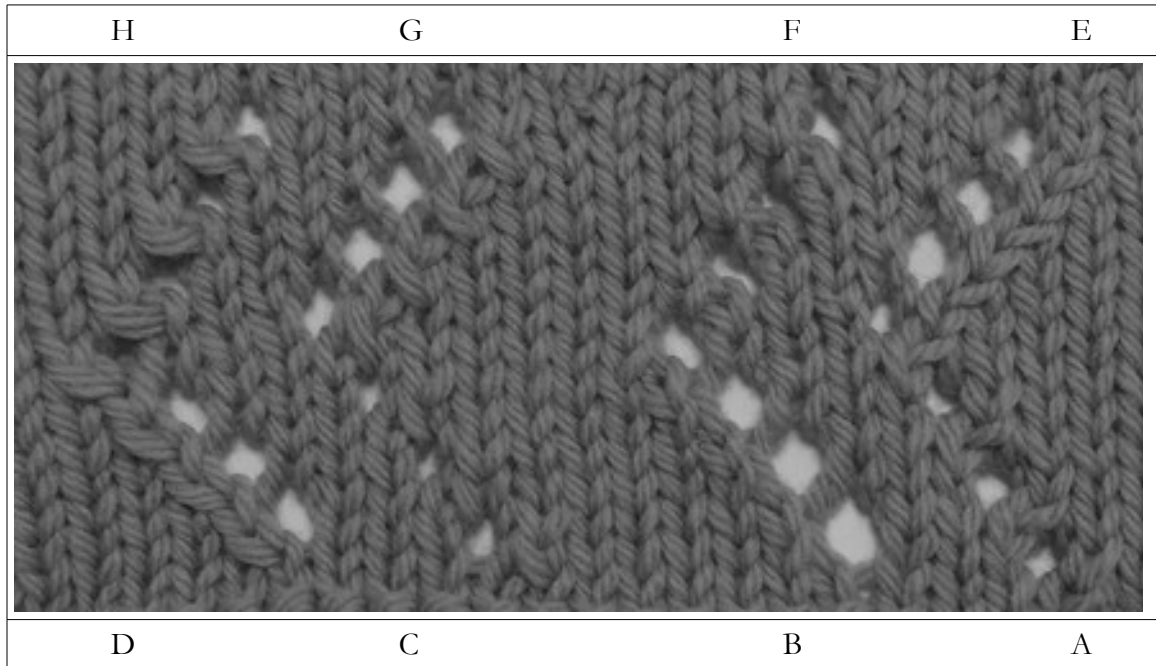
What Can We Do?

Can we pretty up the sampler?

I'd like to tell you that after I completed the typical easy-lace diamond, I immediately sat down and got scientific, by making a swatch with all possible combinations of yarnovers and single decreases to form diagonal lines of yarnovers, but, like so many knitters, I hate swatching.

So instead, I kept tweaking the chart, trying to determine the proper decrease to use in

each spot to get rid of all the ugliness I saw in the original sampler. I think I got up to version O or P before I gave it up.

Only **then** did I draw up a chart and make a full swatch with every combination.

The Chart and Swatch of All the Possibilities

How many different ways could we work yarnovers and two different decreases to make diagonal lines?

- 🧶 We have yarnover lines that slant two directions: left and right.

- 🧶 We have decreases that slant two directions: left and right.

- 🧶 We can put the decreases in two different places: before the yarnovers or after them.

Since we have two options for each of three different things, we need to multiply two times two times two, which equals eight. So there are eight possibilities that we have to swatch.

The following chart shows left- and right-leaning diagonal lines formed by yarnovers, and each line puts one of the decreases on one side of the yarnovers.

The symbol key is

☐	Knit on RS, purl on WS
☉	Yarnover
◪	K2tog
◩	SSK

The resulting swatch is very informative.

H	G	F	E

D	C	B	A

Let's talk about the results as they apply to trying to form a diamond with yarnovers.

The Bottom of the Diamond

Only the bottom half of a diamond can have prominent decreases on the **outside** of the V. That's clear from lines D and E. Line D is the one we want for the bottom left, and line E is what we want for the bottom right. These two lines formed the bottom of the typical easy-lace diamond in chapter 180.

Lines A, C, F, and H have yarnovers separated by stitches with varying degrees of messiness. Only lines B, D, E, and G have yarnovers separated by two strands of yarn twisted together.

Lines D and E have prominent decrease lines, but the decreases next to lines B and G are less obvious, especially line B, which is made with K2togs. Line G suffers a bit in its just-off-the-needles appearance because it is made with SSKs, which tend to look a bit looser than their K2tog counterparts before washing, blocking, and wearing.

The Top of the Diamond

Note that the eight lines show that we cannot get prominent decreases on the **outside** of an

inverted V. We simply cannot make a diamond with bold decreases on the outside of all four sides. For inverted Vs, we can only get prominent decrease lines on the **inside**.

Neither can we get a centered yarnover at the top of an inverted V by using a K2tog or an SSK/SKP, no matter which side of the yarnover we put either decrease on. Fortunately, there is a different kind of decrease we can use for this situation.

These results are for worsted-weight yarn at five stitches per inch. Many lace projects are made with much thinner yarn but with biggish needles, relatively speaking. These effects may not be as apparent in lace-weight yarn as they are in worsted weight, so some experimentation would be in order.[1]

Almost Symmetrical Easy-Lace Diamonds

We now know enough about how decreases and yarnovers mix and match to state how to make two different versions of easy-lace diamonds. Whichever way we choose for the two lines in the lower half, we copy that line to its parallel counterpart on the upper half.

If we want to emphasize the decrease lines, then we need to use line D on the bottom left, and we also use it on the upper right. We need line E on the bottom right to match line D, so line E must also be used on the upper left. The chart on the left shows this version of the diamond.

If we want to use line B for the lower-left side of the diamond, then we also use it for the upper-right yarnover line. Since we need line G on the lower right to match line B, we also use line G on the upper left. These selections will give us a diamond that minimizes the decreases, as shown in the chart on the right.

Prominent Decreases		Minimized Decreases
· · · · ? o ? · · · ·	13	· · · · ? o ? · · ·
· · · o ? o · · · ·	11	· · · o ? o · · ·
· · o ╱ · ╲ o · · ·	9	· · o ╲ · ╱ o · ·
╲ o · · · · · o ╱ ·	7	╱ o · · · · · o ╲
· ╲ o · · · o ╱ · ·	5	· ╱ o · · · o ╲ ·
· · ╲ o · o ╱ · · ·	3	· · ╱ o · o ╲ · ·
· · · · o ╱ · · · ·	1	· · · o ╲ · · ·

Note that both versions have issues on what is labeled here row eleven and row thirteen.[2] Let's take them in turn.
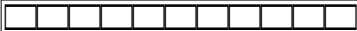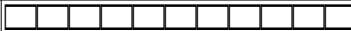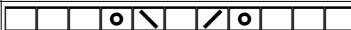
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[1] This is what we call "leaving it as an exercise"!

[2] If we were making a really big diamond, then we'd have lots more rows than these small charts, so of course the row numbers would be different.

The Next-to-Last Row

Note that whether we want the decrease lines to be prominent or minimized, we have to do the decreases for the bottom half of the diamond on the **outside** of the yarnover lines, and we have to do the decreases for the top half of the diamond on the **inside** of the yarnover lines. But on the next-to-last row (row eleven above), there are only three stitches between the two yarnovers. We don't have four stitches to do both decreases with.

Oh, sorry, from the chart above, it actually looks like we have only one stitch between the yarnovers, not three. Let's look at rows nine and eleven with the private-side row between them.

Prominent Decreases		Minimized Decreases
⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜o|?|o⬜⬜⬜⬜	**11**	⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜o|?|o⬜⬜⬜⬜
⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜	**10**	⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜
⬜⬜⬜o/⬜⬜\o⬜⬜⬜	**9**	⬜⬜⬜⬜o\⬜/o⬜⬜⬜
K J I H G F E D C B A		K J I H G F E D C B A

In chapter 160, we learned that a knitting chart really shows the results of various knitting operations, like a knit, a purl, a yarnover, a K2tog, an SSK, and a cable. Here we can see the truth of that statement in action.

On row eleven, we work stitches A through D, then make the yarnover. At that point, we need to do something with stitches E through G, follow that something with the second yarnover, then work stitches H through K to finish the row.

Did you catch it? We have to do something with the **three** stitches that remain between the yarnovers we made on row nine. We only have three stitches, and we need to decrease two of them away. A K2tog and an SSK/SKP would require four stitches, but we only have three.

Can we turn three stitches into one? We sure can. If you've never used a double decrease before, you'll get to now. On row eleven, instead of trying to do a K2tog and an SSK (in either order) on four stitches we don't have, we instead do a double decrease, which turns the three stitches we do have into just one stitch.

We have several choices for the double decreases, as we saw in chapter 160. But the one we'll use here is S2KP, whose resulting one stitch will stand straight up. And it doesn't even matter whether we want the decreases to be prominent or not. We use the same double decrease for either case.

So now rows nine and eleven now look like this:

Prominent Decreases		Minimized Decreases
⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜o/\\o⬜⬜⬜⬜	**11**	⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜o/\\o⬜⬜⬜⬜
⬜⬜⬜⬜o/⬜⬜\o⬜⬜⬜	**9**	⬜⬜⬜⬜o\⬜/o⬜⬜⬜

With certain yarns at certain gauges, we may get a better result in the S2KP if we just slip the third stitch purlwise instead of actually knitting it. (But we have to slip it separately from the first two, which we slip at the same time as though we were starting a K2tog.)[3]

Only One Row Left

We have just the very top row left to finish off our two easy-lace diamonds made with cunningly positioned yarnovers and decreases (single **and** double, thank you very much).

Let's look at the last row again.

Prominent Decreases											Minimized Decreases									
				?	o	?				**13**					?	o	?			
			o	/\	o					**11**				o	/\	o				
		o	/		\	o				**9**				o	\		/	o		

We already know from the swatch at the beginning of this appendix that if we do a single decrease, whether a K2tog or an SSK/SKP, on either side of that last, supposed-to-be centered yarnover, the yarnover won't in fact be centered.

A Quick Trip to the Past

In the book *Victorian Lace Today*, which re-creates patterns from books published in the nineteenth century, there is only one pattern (pages 68–69) that tries to cross diagonal lines of yarnovers, and it does so with a K2tog–yo. The rest of the projects with diagonal lines of yarnovers don't have single yarnovers for the top and bottom points of the diamonds. Instead, there are actually pairs of yarnovers separated with a single stitch, whether the diamonds are small

			o		o			
		o				o		
			o		o			

or large.

			o		o			
		o				o		
	o						o	
o								o
	o						o	
		o				o		
			o		o			

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[3] Slipping the third stitch instead of knitting it means that it will be slightly shorter, which will help make the top yarnover (made in the next public-side row) look a bit bigger. Again, this effect occurs in worsted-weight yarn at five stitches per inch. In lace-weight yarn on biggish needles, whether we just slip purlwise or actually knit the third stitch may not matter as much.

Could that shape be common simply because no one had figured out how to make two diagonal lines meet symmetrically in a single yarnover? Maybe. This difficulty means that we can't make a truly symmetrical diamond either, since the top and bottom points of a diamond are just the rows where the two diagonal lines cross.

Back to the Present

Amy Detjen figured out the solution for symmetrically crossed diagonal lines of yarnovers (which also lets us have a diamond with a nicely centered top yarnover) when she contributed a good beginner's lace shawl to *A Gathering of Lace*, edited by Meg Swansen. Since she was crossing diagonal lines throughout the shawl, she was bothered by the asymmetrical look she got from trying to do a single decrease on either side of the yarnover at each crossing point. When her supply of knitting books gave her no solution, she talked to friends about it and eventually figured out a solution, which she calls a *centered eyelet*.

If you don't have access to the book, you can find instructions, drawings, photos, and videos by searching for "centered eyelet" on the Internet.[4]

We Need One More Step

The chart now needs to show the explicit private-side row fourteen as a reminder to work the final step of the centered eyelet, which means when we work the next row, we have to work that stitch in the row below to pull the horizontal strand up and out of the yarnover.

	Prominent Decreases				Minimized Decreases	
14	↓		**14**	↓	
	╱ ○ ╲	**13**		╱ ○ ╲	**13**
	○ ⋏ ○	**11**		○ ⋏ ○	**11**
	○ ╱ ╲ ○	**9**		○ ╲ ╱ ○	**9**

The symbol key for these partial charts is extensive:

☐	Knit on RS, purl on WS
◉	Yarnover
╱	K2tog
╲	SSK (or SKP)
⋏	S2KP (could just slip 3ʳᵈ st P-wise)[5]
╱◉╲	Centered eyelet
↓	Knit (on the RS) or purl (on the WS) in the row below

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[4] Once we've worked it once or twice, we realize that the centered eyelet is really an SKP–yo–K2tog worked on three stitches. The middle stitch is used as both the knitted stitch in the SKP **and** as the first stitch in the K2tog. That's why the middle stitch stays on the left needle while we pass the slipped stitch over the one made from the middle stitch.

The Other Three Points of the Diamond

Now that we've got the top of the diamond nicely centered and finished off, let's look at the options for the other three points.

With the top point fixed, some of us may look with a pretty critical eye at the bottom point of the diamond as well.

The Bottom Point

Since the centered eyelet worked so well for the top point, maybe it would be good for the bottom point also.

Option 1: Centered Eyelet

Rows one through five show prominent decreases, and rows seven through eleven show minimized decreases.

Neither of these options looks very good, but that's something each of us must decide. Let's look at the four possible combinations that work a single decrease on either side of a yarnover.

Option 2: A Single Decrease and a Yarnover

In the next set of charts, rows one through eleven show prominent decreases, and rows thirteen through twenty-three have minimized decreases.

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[5] If we simply slip the third stitch of the S2KP, we need to be careful when we work the next row that the yarnovers stay on each side of that stitch, because one yarnover will want to migrate across it.
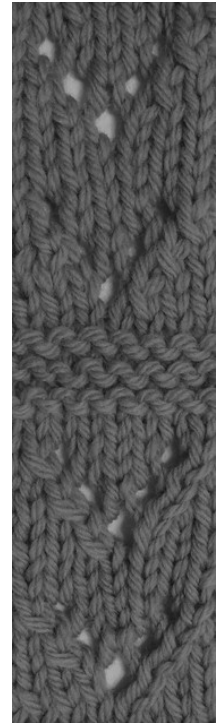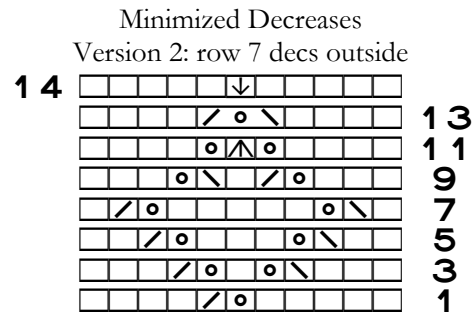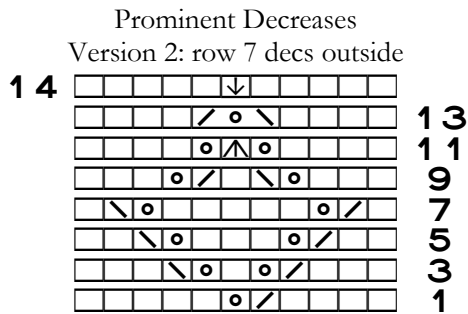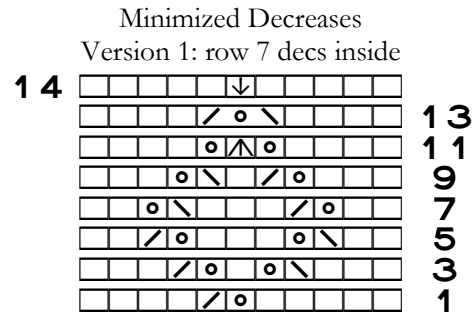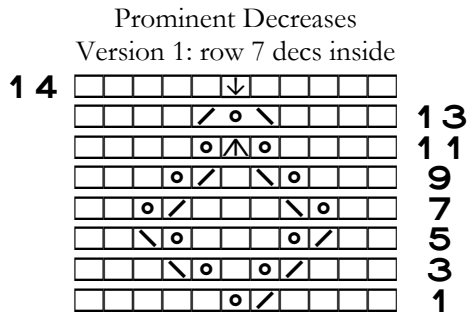
From this swatch, it looks like the best option for prominent decreases is row seven's yo–SSK, and the best option for minimized decreases is row nineteen's yo–K2tog. Again, in certain projects, or for certain knitters, one of the other options might be preferred.

The Left and Right Points

The last thing we have to check is whether the center row of the diamond, the one with the left and right points, should have the decreases on the outside of the diamond or on the inside. The next group of charts shows all four possibilities, all in row seven.[6]

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[6] Note that the charts already include what I think are the best-looking options for the top and bottom points.

Prominent Decreases
Version 1: row 7 decs inside

Minimized Decreases
Version 1: row 7 decs inside

Prominent Decreases
Version 2: row 7 decs outside
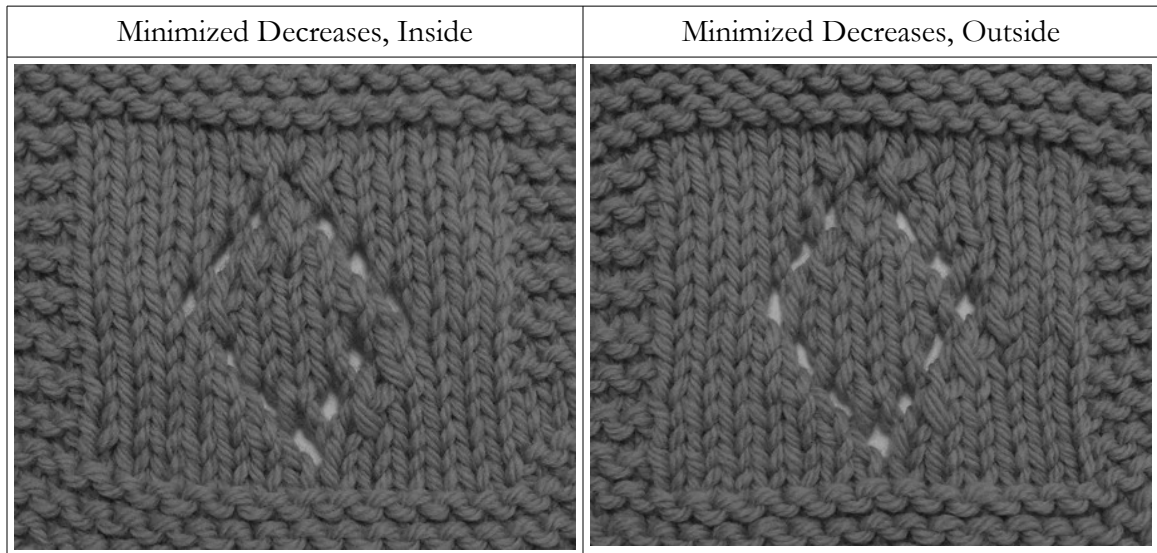
Minimized Decreases
Version 2: row 7 decs outside

⚠	S2KP: sl 2 tog K-wise, K1, pass 2 sl sts over (or sl 3rd st P-wise)
╱◦╲	Centered eyelet
⬇	Knit (on the RS) or purl (on the WS) in the row below

Let's see what these charts look like in yarn.

Prominent Decreases, Inside	Prominent Decreases, Outside
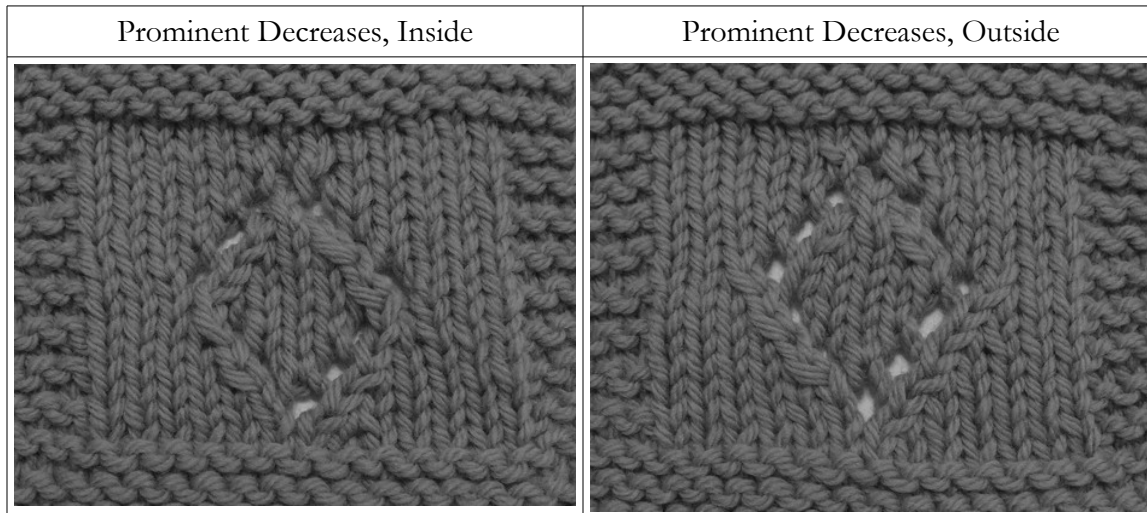
If we're making the decrease lines prominent, having the decreases inside the yarnovers in the center row means that the stitches between the yarnovers actually connect the decrease lines in the lower and upper halves of the diamond. That effect might be wanted in some projects but not in others.

Minimized Decreases, Inside	Minimized Decreases, Outside

When the center row's decreases are on the inside of the diamond, they make full stitches between the yarnovers, which doesn't look good when we minimize the decreases. So if we want to emphasize the yarnovers, we want the diamond's center row to have the decreases on the outside of the lower sides.

Hard Lace: Lace Action on All Rows

Having gone through all that pain for easy lace, I didn't want to repeat it for hard lace. Instead, I went straight to swatching all eight permutations, working decreases and yarnovers on both the public side and private side.[7]

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[7] The chart starts on row fifteen because it is actually the top half of the chart at the beginning of the appendix.

(Knitting chart, rows 15–27; columns show knit stitches, yarnovers (○), SSK (\) and K2tog (/) decreases, and a Make 1 (+) at row 15.)

The symbol key is

Symbol	Meaning
□	Knit on RS, purl on WS
○	Yarnover
+	Make 1 (by any method)
/	K2tog on RS, P2tog on WS
\	SSK on RS, SSP on WS (or SKP and SPP, if preferred)

Evaluating the Hard-Lace Swatch

The hard-lace swatch looks almost the same as the easy lace, with some subtle differences.

H	G	F	E

D	C	B	A

- All the same issues of the decrease lines' prominence or near invisibility remain the same as in easy lace.

- In the same places where some of the easy-lace combinations have a twisted pair of yarn strands between the yarnovers, hard lace has only a single strand.

- Where easy lace had smaller holes because messy stitches separated the yarnovers, hard lace magnifies that effect so much that the holes are to all intents invisible.

Again, these results reflect a swatch made with worsted yarn at five stitches per inch. Results in lace-weight yarn with biggish needles (relatively speaking) might be quite different.

Using the Results

These hard-lace results were used for the two variations of the hard-lace diamond in chapter 180.

As noted earlier in this appendix, the hard-lace diamond's charts can in some circumstances be used to work easy-lace versions by considering each row to be a public-side row and working the private-side even.

One other issue is that some knitters may find it difficult to work the centered eyelet in hard lace. Because the first and last "stitches" of the three are actually yarnovers, not regular stitches, the strands can be a little skittish and hard to manipulate.