

Knitting Terminology

I am a traditional, Western-mount knitter, which means two things.

- ☉ I hold in my left hand the source needle (the one with the existing stitches), so I form new stitches on the needle in my right hand (the working needle).
- ☉ I wrap the working yarn for all stitches so that each stitch's leading leg (the one closest to the tip of the needle) will be in front of the source needle the next time I come to it.

I also turn the project to work wrong-side rows.

Other knitters do these things differently, so it's very easy for all of us to get confused when we talk about knitting.

- ☉ Mirror-image knitters reverse the needle placement, so they hold the source needle in the right hand and the working needle in the left hand.
- ☉ As combination knitters form knit and purl stitches, they usually wrap the yarn in opposite directions, so the leading legs of their knits and purls won't be in the same place. One type of stitch will have its leading leg in front of the needle and the other type's leading leg will be behind the needle.
- ☉ Some knitters don't turn to work wrong-side rows, preferring to do what's called "knitting back backwards" or "purling back on the right side."

To overcome these differences, I've tried to explain ideas and techniques with neutral language whenever possible.

For example, I refer to the "the source needle" instead of "the needle in our left hand." This generic phrasing helps minimize the amount of language I need to use to address all knitters, traditional and mirror-image (or any other style).

If knitters don't know they're combination knitters, they may inadvertently form twisted stitches, because they follow the rule to work all stitches in the leg in front of the needle, even if that leg is the trailing leg (the one farthest from the needle tip). We avoid twisting stitches by working in the leading leg instead. Of course, if we want twisted stitches, then what's traditionally called "knit tbl," meaning "knit through the back loop," is more accurately called "knit through the trailing leg."

This issue doesn't make much difference when we're constructing knitting charts, but it greatly affects how we work certain decreases in needles and yarn. I've decided to not explain in detail how we work those decreases. You may need to talk to other knitters or look for an Internet video if you don't know how to make a particular decrease mentioned in the book.