

Chapter 24-C

“RIGHT FRONT: WORK AS FOR LEFT FRONT, REVERSING ALL SHAPING” FOR MIKS

Who doesn't hate these words in a cardigan pattern? On the flip side, it's easy to understand why project instructions use them! But if we chart the given front's shaping, then it's easy to reverse it all for the other front.

The Basic Cardigan

This cardigan is simple in the extreme. It

- ☉ has only one size
- ☉ has unshaped shoulders
- ☉ is worked flat
- ☉ uses worsted weight yarn
- ☉ is one-color stockinette
- ☉ has a crew neck

Instead of showing complete instructions like we had for “The Basic Vest,” we'll focus on just the details we need. We don't need to chart the back (or sleeve), and we'll limit the extent of the left front's chart by showing only the rows between the beginning of the underarm and the end of the crew neck (since the shoulders are not shaped). The only bit of written-out instructions we'll mention tells us when and how to start the underarm shaping on the cardigan's back.

At desired length from CO, BO 6 sts at beg of next 2 rows.

A Few Preliminaries

As with other chapters in part three, the charts will show and the text will talk about working decreases “at the beginning/end of the row” or in “the first/last two stitches of the row.” We are at liberty to work the decreases where we like as well as to use the decreases we prefer. Some locations and decreases work better in some situations than in others. Don't be afraid to experiment.

We'll again decide to bind off only at the beginning of rows, although it is certainly pos-

tional knitters would work from. Our traditional knitter chart shows the explicit shaping symbols specified by our imagined written-out instructions.¹

Each shaping area is in its own table column. There are no spaces anywhere in the chart (except in the column headings), because all five columns are set to be left- or right-justified, which automagically moves the stitch symbols in the proper direction as others are removed.

The MIK Adjustments

If we follow the procedures from either of the MIK supplements to “Bottom-Up Shaping: In the Computer” exactly as described, we’re going to wind up with a problem. Let’s see why.

The supplements told us that we move the shaping on the right edge of the chart up one table row and the shaping on the left edge down one table row. We’ll do exactly that with our designed front, along with swapping the row numbers for complete clarity as we discuss our results.

	Mirror-Image Knitter Adjusted Left Crew Neck Trial Version	MIK Adjusted Left Shoulder	MIK Adjusted Left Underarm	
				28
27		N		
		N		26
25		N		
		N		24
23		N		
		N		22
21		N		
		N		20
19		N		
		N		18
17	o o o o o o o o o o			
			/	16
15			/	
			/	14
13			/	
			/	12
11			/	
			/	10
9			/	
			/	8
7			/	
			/	6
5			/	
			/	4
3			/	
			/	2
1			/	
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43	

Let’s compare this trial version with the designed front.

¹ Don’t try to make this garment. It’s purely for demonstration purposes.

Do the Fronts Match?

In the designed left front chart, how many rows do we have between the underarm bind-offs and the neck bind-offs? Rows two through seventeen inclusive separate those major project milestones, so there are sixteen rows between those two points.

In this trial version of the MIK adjusted chart, those same sets of bind-offs are separated by rows three through sixteen inclusive. That's just fourteen rows.

Now for the blindingly obvious: sixteen is not equal to fourteen.

What happened?

What happened is that the “Bottom-Up Shaping” supplements could simplify the details a bit, because “The Basic Vest” has a one-piece front. We now have a two-piece front, which isn't surprising, of course, because that's the essence of a cardigan: it opens down the front.

When the front is split in half, then instead of treating the two edges of each half the way we treat the two edges of a one-piece front, we instead treat the entire half the way we treat just that edge of the one-piece front's chart.

So instead of moving the two edges of a half front in opposite directions, we move both edges or, more accurately, the entire half front in the same direction. Which direction do we move the given front's chart? It depends on which half of the equivalent one-piece front we're dealing with.

- ☉ If the designed front would be in the right half of a one-piece chart, we move the entire designed front up one table row.
- ☉ If the designed front would be in the left half of a one-piece front chart, we move the entire half chart down one table row.

Note that in both of those statements, “right” and “left” refer to the right or left as we're looking at what would be a one-piece chart, not the wearer's right and left.

The Proper MIK Adjusted Chart

Since the designed left front would be in the right half of a one-piece front's chart, we move the **entire** chart (just the stitch symbols, not the row numbers) up one table row to make the proper MIK adjusted chart.

	Mirror-Image Knitter Adjusted Left Crew Neck Correct Version	MIK Adjusted Left Shoulder	MIK Adjusted Left Underarm	
29		N		
		N		28
27		N		
		N		26
25		N		
		N		24
23		N		
		N		22
21		N		
		N		20
19	o o o o o o o o o o			
				18
17				
				16
15				
				14
13				
				12
11				
				10
9				
				8
7				
				6
5				
				4
3				
				2
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43	

Let’s Double-Check

In the designed left front, we have sixteen rows between the underarm bind-offs and the neck bind-offs. Does our second go at adjusting the chart keep that distance?

We bind off on rows two and nineteen, giving us rows three through eighteen inclusive between those two milestones. That’s a total of sixteen rows, just like the designed front.

Lesson Learned: Mirror-Image Knitters

When MIKs have to adjust a traditional knitter chart that shows shaping for only one part of a garment’s front, we must move the symbols of the **entire** chart in the proper direction, up or down, depending on whether the piece is in the right or left half of a one-piece chart (right or left as we’re looking at the chart, not the wearer’s right or left).

Before We Start Reversing

The back's written-out instructions tell us

At desired length from CO, BO 6 sts at beg of next 2 rows.

One set of bind-offs will occur on the public side, the other on the private side. These instructions don't specify which set to do first, so does it make any difference which order we choose?

Generally not. In very bulky yarn, we might actually need to bind off at both ends of the same row, instead of at the beginning of consecutive rows, as explained in "Optional Shaping Tweaks." Otherwise, we're probably free to choose to start the underarm bind-offs on either the public or private side.

If the front had been a single piece of fabric, we probably would have done its bind-offs in the same order as we did them on the back (assuming we worked the back first). Does the order make a difference now that the front is split in two?

Again, probably not. Projects with stitch patterns or with very low stitch and row gauges might need some special handling, but for plain stockinette in worsted weight? Nope.

Decide the Order

Note that the underarm bind-offs in this traditional knitter chart were put in the chart's row one. There was no real reason to label that row as anything else.

When we made the MIK adjustment, that original row one became row two. Now we need to decide which row we'll do the right front's bind-offs on. If we're going to do the fronts' underarm bind-offs on consecutive rows, which would mimic as far as possible what we would be able to do on the back (or a one-piece front), then the reversed right front's shaping needs to start on either the row before or the row after the designed left front's row two.

We'll make a command decision to put the right front's first shaping row on the row before the left front's, which puts it on the right front's row one. That means we'll work all the shaping in right front–left front order.

The Underarm Shaping

To minimize confusion, we'll reverse the two shaping areas one at a time. The easiest way to do so here in the book is to put each shaping area into its own new table. As a bonus, we can use a bigger font size.

Because the final underarm decrease is actually in the shoulder shaping table column, we'll include just that column's outermost symbol in our working charts.

The Underarm Bind-Offs

Here’s the first shaping row in the adjusted left front’s chart, the bind-offs at the left underarm.

	MIK Reversed Right Underarm		
	43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32 31 30		

		MIK Adjusted Left Underarm	
		30	31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43

We made the command decision that we would work all shaping in right front–left front order on consecutive rows. Since we work the left front underarm bind-offs on the private-side row two, we need to work the right front underarm bind-offs on the preceding row, the public-side row one. We start the right underarm shaping with six bind-offs

	MIK Reversed Right Underarm		
1	⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒		
	43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32 31 30		

		MIK Adjusted Left Underarm	
		30	31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43

then finish the row with public-side knits, since we’re working one-color stockinette.

	MIK Reversed Right Underarm		
1	⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒		
	43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32 31 30		

		MIK Adjusted Left Underarm	
		30	31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43

The Same Row Has Different Numbers?

If we’re bothered by **chart** rows one and two being in the same **table** row, we need to keep in mind that at this point, we’re zoomed in to reverse the given front’s shaping. The intermediate charts we’re using here are not the charts we’d work from. The right front’s rows will be aligned properly with the left front’s when we finish the reversing and combine both shaping areas.

Until then, one thing we can do is simply omit the reversed chart’s row numbers. We’ll be able to put them in correctly in the final chart.

The Plain Row

When we add row three to the adjusted left underarm chart, we see that we work evenly through stitch thirty-seven, which was the first live stitch we had after we finished the underarm bind-offs.

	MIK Reversed Right Underarm		
1	⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒		
	43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32 31 30		

		MIK Adjusted Left Underarm	
	3		
		30	31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43

For the reversed right underarm, we’ll end row two by working evenly, again ending with

stitch thirty-seven. Why row two? Because the right front’s shaping needs to occur one row earlier than the same shaping on the left front based on our command decision to work the shaping in right front–left front order.

MIK Reversed Right Underarm		
		2
1	⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒	2
	43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32 31	30

MIK Adjusted Left Underarm		
3		4
		2
	30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43	

The Underarm Curves

For the left underarm curve, the chart shows us that we decrease one stitch every other row.

The First Decrease Row

Let’s add the adjusted left underarm’s row four to our working chart.

MIK Reversed Right Underarm		
		2
1	⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒	2
	43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32 31	30

MIK Adjusted Left Underarm		
	⌒	4
3		2
	30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43	

The adjusted left underarm shows an essentially invisible decrease at the beginning of the row, based on the fact that the symbol’s lean points at the fabric edge that we’re starting to create.³ We work the remaining stitches as public-side knits since we’re doing a plain stockinette cardigan.

At the reversed right underarm, we do what we did at the left underarm, except that we do it one row earlier. That means that on row three of the right underarm, we decrease at the beginning of the row and work the rest of it evenly as public-side knits for our plain stockinette fabric.

MIK Reversed Right Underarm		
3	⌒	2
1	⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒	2
	43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32 31	30

MIK Adjusted Left Underarm		
	⌒	4
3		2
	30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43	

If we want our two pieces to be mirror-image, we have to work the opposite decreases on the reversed front, whether the chart shows explicit symbols or not.

When we chart with directional decrease symbols, we need to reverse them as we reverse the rest of the row’s shaping if we want the two pieces to remain mirror-image.

³ See part one’s “Decreases” for information on making decreases either prominent or minimized.

Lesson Learned

When we reverse shaping, we must reverse the lean of all directional decreases, whether they're minimized or prominent, if we want the pieces to be mirror-image.

Note that we don't have to use explicit decrease symbols. The fact that location thirty-seven has no stitch symbol on the first decrease row of both underarm curves, when there is a stitch symbol in that location in the preceding rows, is enough to tell us that we decrease on both rows even if the chart showed only public-side knits instead of the K2tog and SSK symbols.

The Plain Row

On the adjusted left underarm's row five, we simply work the end of the row evenly, finishing with the stitch that resulted from the decrease at the beginning of row four.

	MIK Reversed Right Underarm													
3														
											2			
1														
	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30

		MIK Adjusted Left Underarm												
5														
														4
3														
														2
	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43

We do the same thing at the end of the reversed right underarm's row four, where the stitch that resulted from the right underarm curve's first decrease on row three is the final stitch.

	MIK Reversed Right Underarm													
											4			
3														
											2			
1														
	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30

		MIK Adjusted Left Underarm												
5														
														4
3														
														2
	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43

Finishing the Underarm Curves

We would continue to look at one row at a time in the adjusted left underarm's table column, then do the shaping in the same stitch locations for the reversed right underarm, except that it occurs one row earlier because of our command decision.

The remaining underarm rows are charted (and worked) the same way.

- ☉ At the left underarm, we
 - ✓ decrease at the beginning of each private-side row and

The Second Decrease Row

On the adjusted left neck, we decrease at the beginning of the next row, as soon as we turn the work to the public side.

		MIK Reversed Right Crew Neck																				
19		[Z]																				
		[Z]																				
		[Z]																		18		
		21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

		MIK Adjusted Left Crew Neck																				
21		[N]																				
		[N]																				
19		[N]																		20		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21

We'll do exactly the same thing on the reversed right neck, except that its second decrease row is a private-side row.

		MIK Reversed Right Crew Neck																				
		[Z]																		20		
19		[Z]																				
		[Z]																				
		[Z]																		18		
		21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

		MIK Adjusted Left Crew Neck																				
21		[N]																				
		[N]																				
19		[N]																		20		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21

Finishing the Crew Neck Decreases

We reverse the remaining neck shaping rows the same way, with the final decrease shown as the innermost symbol of the shoulder shaping table column of both fronts.

		MIK Reversed Right Crew Neck																				
		[Z]																			28	
27		[Z]																				
		[Z]																			26	
25		[Z]																				
		[Z]																			24	
23		[Z]																				
		[Z]																			22	
21		[Z]																				
		[Z]																			20	
19		[Z]																				
		[Z]																			18	
		21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

		MIK Adjusted Left Crew Neck																				
29		[N]																				
		[N]																		28		
27		[N]																				
		[N]																		26		
25		[N]																				
		[N]																		24		
23		[N]																				
		[N]																		22		
21		[N]																				
		[N]																		20		
19		[N]																				
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21

When we see the completed charts next to each other, we can confirm that the shaping is mirror-image. We also see that the shaping on the reversed right front all occurs one row earlier than on the adjusted left front according to our command decision to work the shaping in right front–left front order.

We Must Be Consistent

Once we decide which direction we're going to shift the initial row of the reversed shaping, either up or down, we need to shift the rest of the reversed rows in that same direction. If we don't, then sections of the two pieces that should be the same height will instead be off by two rows.

On the MIK adjusted left front, we have sixteen rows (rows three through eighteen inclusive) between the underarm bind-offs and the front neck bind-offs. When we reversed the underarm bind-offs, we put them one row earlier, on the right front’s row one.

If we had then typed up the reversed right front’s neck bind-offs on row twenty, one row later than on the adjusted left front, then we’d have eighteen rows (rows two through nineteen inclusive) between those two areas on the right front. In bulky weight, that difference might be apparent to everyone (even non-knitters) and may cause some gaping, since it would make the right armhole a good fraction of an inch taller than it ought to be. In worsted weight, the armhole might still gape at least a little bit.

Shift Each Row the Same Direction

Since we chose to do the reversed right front’s first bit of shaping, the underarm bind-offs, one row earlier than on the adjusted left front, then to make the reversed front’s shaping truly match the adjusted left front’s, we had to do **all** of its shaping one row earlier.

- ☉ The final underarm decrease occurred on the left front’s row sixteen, so the right front’s final underarm decrease had to occur on row fifteen.
- ☉ In the adjusted chart, the left front crew neck bind-offs were on row nineteen, so in the reversed chart for the right front, those bind-offs were on row eighteen.
- ☉ The final neck decrease on the left front was on row twenty-nine, so the final neck decrease on the right front had to be on row twenty-eight.

Lesson Learned

Whichever direction, up or down, we shift the first shaping row on the reversed piece, we must shift the rest of its rows in the same direction. That way, the heights of corresponding areas of both pieces will be the same.

The Cardigan’s Front Shaping Charts

Now that we’ve reversed the MIK adjusted left front to chart the right front, let’s put the two pieces of the right front shaping together in their proper locations along with the rest of the stitch symbols in the unshaped areas. Both charts are on the next spread so we can see them at the same time.

For a garment with shaped shoulders, we would have charted the designed shoulder shaping as usual from the written-out instructions, remembering to type it up the way a traditional knitter would work it. When we made the MIK adjustments to the designed front,

	MIK Reversed Right Underarm	MIK Reversed Right Shoulder	Mirror-Image Knitter Reversed Right Crew Neck	
27		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	28
		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	
25		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	26
		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	
23		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	24
		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	
21		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	22
		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	
19		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	20
		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	
17		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	18
		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	
15		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	16
		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	
13		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	14
		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	
11		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	12
		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	
9		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	10
		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	
7		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	8
		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	
5		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	6
		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	
3		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	4
		□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	
1	□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□	2
	43424140393837363534333231	30292827262524232221	2019181716151413121110987654321	

we'd adjust the shoulder shaping along with the other shaping. We would then reverse the left shoulder shaping the exact same way we just did for the underarm and front crew neck.

On a good day, I might be able to keep track of all the reversing in my head and have no trouble knitting the “other” front without charting it. But my days are filled with the same interruptions yours are filled with. Working the reversed front from a chart means we have a much smaller chance of making a mistake.

If We're Given the Right Front's Shaping

Some projects might have explicit instructions for the right front instead of the left front. The techniques here would still apply, and we would still do the same steps.

If we want some extra practice, we can use our completed right front chart to create a reversed left front chart. On the reversed right front, we saw we could work each shaping row on either the row before or the row after that shaping row on the designed left front. We have the same option if we have the designed right front and reverse it to chart the left front. We can work the reversed left front's shaping on either the row before or the row after we work that bit of shaping on the designed right front.

	Mirror-Image Knitter Adjusted Left Crew Neck	MIK Adjusted Left Shoulder	MIK Adjusted Left Underarm	
29		N		
				28
27		N		
				26
25		N		
				24
23		N		
				22
21		N		
				20
19	o			
				18
17				
				16
15				
				14
13				
				12
11				
				10
9				
				8
7				
				6
5				
				4
3				
				2
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43	

If we want to match the row numbers here, we’ll need to chart the reversed left front’s shaping on the row after the right front’s shaping. If we put the reversed left front’s shaping on the row before the right front’s shaping, what would be the effect on the left front’s row numbers?⁴

Working Both Fronts at the Same Time

Some knitters have trouble getting the same gauge on what are supposed to be identical pieces if they work them one at a time, especially if the project goes into time-out for any reason. Other knitters like to avoid the equivalent of second-sock syndrome. The frequent suggestion for both issues is to work both pieces simultaneously with two balls of yarn.⁵

Working both pieces simultaneously if they’re absolutely identical, like sleeves usually are, is easy because we’re doing the exact same things in the exact same places on the exact same rows.⁶

⁴ They’d all decrease by one compared to the traditional knitter left front.

⁵ To avoid the annoying repetition of a long phrase, *two balls of yarn* means “two balls of yarn or both ends of the same ball.”

⁶ Sleeves that have certain kinds of shaping, like elbow gussets, may have to be worked the way we’re about to

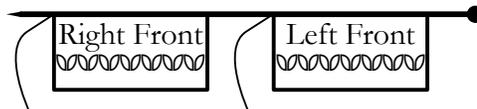
But cardigan fronts are not identical the same way that sleeves (usually) are. The neckline, no matter what shape it is, will be in opposite locations on the two fronts, as we saw in the charts on the facing pages. The left front has its neck shaping on its left edge, while the right front has its neck shaping on its right edge.

If we want to work both cardigan fronts at the same time and minimize the confusion of working mirror-image shaping, then perhaps the easiest thing to do is work the two fronts together while thinking about them as though they're actually the one-piece back.

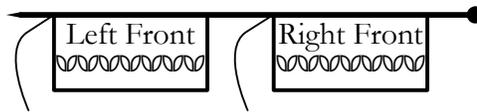
Left–Right or Right–Left?

Does it matter which front is first on our needles? Initially, and especially in plain old one-color stockinette, not really. By the time we get to the underarm shaping, we might want to make a firm decision between the two choices, shown below with the public side facing us.

- ☉ We can have the left front on the right and the right front on the left.



- ☉ We can have the left front on the left and the right front on the right.



As with so many things knitting, we can each decide which setup we prefer.

The first option is the “wearing arrangement,” and we’ll use it in the rest of this section. If we get confused about anything, we simply hold the needles up and look at the pieces, since they’ll be positioned as they would be when someone is wearing the cardigan. We can even hold the work in progress up against ourselves to figure out where we are.

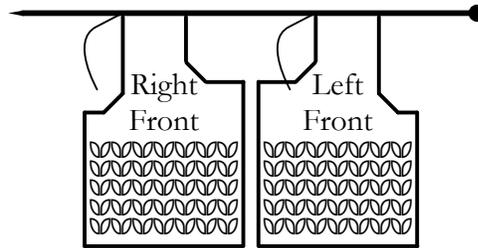
The End Result

Let’s look at our cardigan fronts worked to the point where we’ll do the shoulder bind-offs.

The stylized knit stitches indicate the public side of one-color stockinette, and the underarm bind-offs and curves are apparent. Then a bit later, we start the crew neck shaping with a wide area of bind-offs and another set of decreases. We work evenly at both vertical edges

see for the fronts.

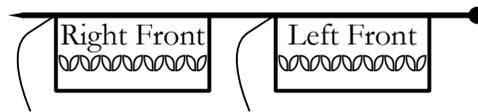
until we have the necessary armhole depth, then we bind off all the shoulder stitches on one row.



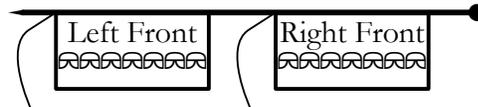
Getting Started

So we cast on for both fronts with two balls of yarn. Then we * work across the first front, drop its yarn, pick up the other yarn, and work across the second front. We turn the entire work, and repeat from *.

Here are the fronts at the beginning of a public-side row.



When we finish a public-side row on both fronts and turn to the private side, indicated by the stylized purl stitches, we work the left front first.



Warning!

Remember that we’re working two pieces simultaneously. We’re **not** doing intarsia, so we do **not** twist the two fronts’ yarns around each other when we switch to the second yarn. Doing so deliberately or even accidentally would join the two fronts together in such a way that we’d have almost no recourse except to frog.

There are some solutions that don’t require frogging, which we’ll look at at the end of the chapter.

If There Is Intarsia

Note that if either front actually has intarsia as a stitch pattern, we must twist those yarns as usual when we change from one to the other.

The warning here is that we must not twist yarns **across the gap** between the two fronts.

Lessons Learned

When we work two pieces at the same time, we must remember we are **not** doing intarsia, so as we finish the first piece’s stitches and start the second’s, we must **never** allow their yarns to twist around each other across the gap.

When we work two pieces at the same time and either piece has an intarsia stitch pattern, the intarsia yarns must be twisted in the usual way when we switch between them.

The Underarm Bind-Offs

When we make a garment’s back, the instructions usually tell us to bind off at the beginning of one armhole, work all the way across, turn, and bind off at the beginning of the other armhole. When we’re working both fronts at the same time, we can essentially do the same thing, the only difference being that our “back” is now split from bottom to top.

Let’s look at the charts for both fronts with all the row numbers aligned.

	MIK Reversed Right Underarm	MIK Reversed R Shoulder	MIK Reversed Right Crew Neck			MIK Adjusted Left Crew Neck	MIK Adjusted L Shoulder	MIK Adjusted Left Underarm	
29					28				
27					26				
25					24				
23					22				
21					20				
19					18				
17					16				
15					14				
13					12				
11					10				
9					8				
7					6				
5					4				
3					2				
1									

On this cardigan’s back, the underarm instructions said, “BO 6 sts at beg of next 2 rows.” We’re going to do the same thing here on the fronts, because we can think of them as a single piece of fabric by considering their combined stitches as a complete set.

We complete the last unshaped row (not charted here) before we start the underarm

shaping. Thinking of all the stitches on the needles as a single group, we start the (right) front by binding off its first six stitches, then work the rest of that front. We must now remember to switch to the right front’s yarn—without twisting the two yarns together—before we continue with the rest of the stitches on the needle, which we’re otherwise thinking of as the second half of a single group. We’ve completed the first full-width underarm shaping row, so we turn.

Only now, on the private side, do we bind off at the beginning of the full-width second row, again considering all the stitches on the source needle as one single set. It just so happens that on this cardigan’s two fronts, the “beg of next 2 rows” means at the beginning of a right front public-side row and the beginning of the left front’s very next private-side row. However, even though we’re **thinking** of all the stitches as belonging to a single large group, we must still remember, when we get to the middle of the row, to change which **working yarn** we use.

As we do so, we must also avoid doing any form of intarsia’s “pick up the new yarn from beneath the old yarn,” because it’s absolutely imperative that as we work the two fronts, we keep them as two separate, isolated pieces.

The Underarm Curves

Still considering the stitches as just one big group, we decrease at the beginning of row three on the right front, according to both the blank area in location thirty-seven and the explicit decrease symbol in location thirty-six. We finish the rest of the stitches on the needle by working evenly, because we’re considering all the stitches as a single set, exactly as they were one set on the back. But we must not forget to switch—without twisting—to the other working yarn when we start working what is really the left front.

When we work row three across all the stitches on our source needle, we turn. Since we’re now on row four, we decrease at the beginning of the row, again because of both the blank area and the explicit decrease symbol in the left front chart. We work the rest of the stitches on the “entire” row evenly, but changing yarns, er, untwistingly at the proper place.

We continue making the underarm curve decreases this same way, * decreasing at the beginning of all the stitches on our source needle, then working evenly on the rest of the stitches while also changing yarns in the middle of the row. We turn and repeat from * until we’ve decreased away all the stitches in the two table columns showing the underarm shaping. Once all those stitches are gone, we complete the underarm curves on each side as indicated by the decrease symbol in location thirty, the outermost stitch in the table column for each front’s shoulder.

The Neck Bind-Offs

The shaping at the neck edges can be confusing when we’re working both fronts at the same time. Let’s look at just those table columns of the combined chart. (The right front’s row twenty-nine, worked evenly at the neck edge, shows a public-side knit so both charts have stitch symbols on all rows.)

MIK Reversed Right Crew Neck												MIK Adjusted Left Crew Neck																																
29												29																																
27	/											27																																
25	/	/										25																																
23	/	/	/									23																																
21	/	/	/	/								21																																
19	/	/	/	/	/							19																																
18												18																																
	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21

By the nature of the case, we’ll have to do something a bit different than what we did at the underarms, which is what can cause the confusion. Let’s walk through it one row at a time.

On row eighteen, we work the left front evenly, drop its yarn, and pick up the other strand of yarn, but we do **not**—say it with me—twist the yarns around each other the way we would when we’re working intarsia. We bind off for the bottom of the right crew neck, then complete the row by working evenly public-side knits in our one-color stockinette cardigan.

Note that we’re still doing the shaping in right front–left front order according to our command decision, but at the crew neck, that means we must do the private-side bind-offs first, which is the opposite of which underarm bind-offs we worked first.

As we look at row nineteen, we see that we’ll do the first neck decrease at the end of the row on the right neck, even though **we still haven’t worked the other set of neck bind-offs yet**. We need to pay a bit of attention here, so that we don’t try to work the two sets of neck bind-offs in the same order that we bound off at the underarms.

So we work to the last two stitches of the right front on row nineteen, then do the decrease. Before we start the left front, we have to switch to the other working yarn. It’s only **now** that we finally do the second set of neck bind-offs, and we finish the row with public-side knits since we’re making a plain stockinette fabric.

To repeat, we work the second set of neck bind-offs on the public side, the opposite side compared to where we worked the second set of underarm bind-offs. If we get confused, we can hold up the work and look at it as though someone else were wearing it, and we can

also hold it up against ourselves as though we’re wearing it. Either or both will help us keep clear exactly where we are in the shaping, which is a major reason for placing them on the needle in the “wearing arrangement” shown earlier in the simplified drawings.

The Rest of the Neck Decreases

When we turn to the private side, we’ll do a decrease at the end of the left front and at the beginning of the right front, working both fronts with their own yarn without twisting them when we switch from one front to the other. When we’ve worked all the stitches on our source needle, we turn. On the public-side row, we work evenly across the right front and decrease at its end, and on the left front, we decrease at the beginning of the row and work evenly to the end. And what do we avoid doing in the middle???

We continue in this way until we’ve decreased away all the stitches in the two neck shaping table columns. Note that we do the final neck decreases on rows twenty-eight (right front) and twenty-nine (left front), because those symbols are charted in the shoulder shapings’ table columns.

Don’t Use the Same Working Yarn on Both Pieces

If at any time we forget to change yarns at the proper place, we’ll unfortunately have to make a tough decision among the options we saw earlier (or other options we may think of).

If we’re afraid of being distracted (who, us?) and heedlessly working across the gap without changing yarns (who, us?), we can put some kind of marker either on the needle itself or on the inner edge of one of the two fronts. If we do the latter, we’ll need to move it upward periodically so it’s near enough to the needles to keep reminding us to be careful.

Lesson Learned

We can use a marker on the needles or on the inner edge of either piece as a reminder to change yarns at the proper point.

When We Have to Stop Partway Across

Plenty of knitting resources tell us, “Don’t stop in the middle of a row. Finish the row before you put down the work.” Yeah. Right. Uh-huh. Sure. Those people clearly don’t live here on planet Earth, or if they do, they live alone in some remote area and have other people do all the normal life things for them. Such people can actually obey “Don’t stop in the middle of a row.”

For the rest of us, sometimes we have no choice but to stop in the middle of a row. And what about a knitter working a cardigan in the round using steeks, which means the knitter is always in the middle of a row?⁷

Since we interact with other humans and have various daily requirements that cut grievously into our knitting time, we're going to have to stop in the middle of a row at some point.

When we're working the one-piece cardigan back, it's easy to pick up the needles in the middle of a row and know which direction to resume knitting. The working yarn is attached to the stitch closest to the tip of one needle, and that needle is our working needle, so we put it in our left hand.

But when we're working two pieces at the same time, it would be very easy to pause in such a way that we can't be sure which needle should go in which hand when we pick them back up. Let's not even consider the situation if the project's been in time-out for a while, or even if we've simply had a week-long, month-long, however-long bout of startitis.

If we do have to stop in the middle of the entire set of stitches on the source needle when we're working two pieces at once, we need to stop partway through one of the two pieces, even if that means there's only one stitch of that piece on the other needle. When we pick the needles up, we'll know which needle goes in which hand, because one of the two yarns will be attached to the stitch closest to the tip of one needle, and, as with the one-piece back, that needle is the working needle we put in our left hand.

If we're together enough to have some kind of notion handy, we could actually stop right in the gap when we finish a row on the first piece. Because each piece is now isolated on its own needle, we put the notion on the needle or in the piece we're supposed to start with the next time we pull it out of our bag. I probably wouldn't be that organized, though if I were expecting constant interruptions (soccer practice, meal preparation, bathroom breaks), I would eventually remember to have my handy-dandy notion waiting in one of the pieces, ready to hand at the moment of crisis.

If We Stop in the Gap

If we do stop with each piece isolated on its own needle but don't use some kind of marker, how will we know which piece we should work on first when we finally get back to the project?

Suppose we've cast on and completed two rows on each piece, whether they're sleeves or fronts. We work row three on one piece, then we have to shove the project in our bag for the interruption of the hour. When we fish it back out, it's easy to tell there are only two rows

⁷ I guess we could smarty-pants it by saying the rule doesn't apply since the knitter is technically working rounds, not rows!

on one piece and three rows on the other. We’ll know immediately we need to work row three on the second piece. That’s all fine and dandy when we’ve completed so few rows.

What if we’re much farther along and can’t tell at a glance which piece to start with? Say we complete row fifty-seven on the first piece, then shove the whole thing in the bag. When we pull it back out, will we remember *Oh, I completed a public-side row on the first piece, so now I need to work the public-side row on the other piece?* If you can, kudos! The rest of us may not have paid enough attention to make that mental note, or if we did make it, we may not remember it by the time we get back to the project. But if we stop with at least one stitch of either piece on the other needle, we’ll know exactly where we are, no notion or memory trick required.

Some of us might think, *Well, I’d simply make a note of which piece I need to start on*, whether on paper or in an app. The problem with this solution is that it may simply be impossible to take the time to do so. Or we may have lost our pencil. Or our app’s device won’t turn on because we need to recharge its battery. Or... Fill in the blank with your own—or someone else’s—horror story.

If we resume with the piece that already has fifty-seven rows, then we’ll work its row fifty-eight, while the other piece is still waiting for us to work its row fifty-seven. When we finally work the same direction on both pieces, we’ll be working row fifty-nine on one and row fifty-seven on the other. That’s why guessing is a bad idea. We need to know for sure where to start, because if we guess wrong, one piece will end up with two extra rows, which defeats part of the purpose of working both pieces at the same time, even if we’re just working plain old stockinette. (Is there an alternative to laboriously counting the number of rows already worked on each piece?)

We should seriously consider stopping in such a way that no matter how long it’s been since we last worked on the project, we’ll know immediately—and correctly—where to resume. We have at least two options besides jotting down a note somewhere.

- ☉ We use some kind of marker on the needle or in the fabric of the piece we’re supposed to start with, but it must be something that can’t fall off or be pushed out no matter what we do to the fabric, needle, or project bag.
 - ✓ If we’re also using a marker to remind us to change yarns at the gap, then the two markers must make clear which one has which meaning.
- ☉ We stop with at least the last (unworked) stitch of the first piece still on our source needle or with at least the first (worked) stitch of the second piece already on our working needle. We then use the working yarns to figure out which needle goes in which hand.

Lessons Learned

If we're working two pieces at the same time, then if we can't work the entire set of stitches on the source needle, we need some fail-safe way to mark which piece we'll start with when we get back to the project. We can jot a note on paper or in an app, but we might also want to be prepared to make some kind of indicator right in the work itself, just in case.

If we're working two pieces at the same time and need to stop partway through the entire set of stitches, we may not want to stop at the gap when we complete a row on the first piece. Instead, we can leave at least the last stitch of the first piece unworked on our source needle or work at least the first stitch of the second piece to put it on our working needle. When we get back to the project, we follow both working yarns to the needles. One working yarn will be attached to the stitch closest to one needle's tip. That needle is our working needle and goes in our left hand.

If we're working two pieces at the same time and need to stop partway through the entire set of stitches, we can stop at the gap when we complete a row on the first piece if we put some kind of marker either on the needle or in the fabric of the piece we should start with when we get back to the project. The marker must be absolutely secure so that it can't be dislodged, no matter what happens to the fabric, needle, or project bag.

Starting Shaping on Our Preferred Side

Early in the chapter, we made a command decision to reverse the shaping in such a way that the reversed right front bind-offs were on row one, which meant we did all the shaping in right front–left front order. But of course we had a second choice, so let's work through those details.

In cardigan patterns that give us explicit shaping for only one of two mirror-image fronts, the first underarm shaping row is likely to be bind-offs, and whether those bind-offs are worked on the public or private side depends on which piece we're given.

Regardless of which front is the designed front, can we fiddle the charts so that we start the shaping on our preferred side?

Of course.⁸

Given the Left Front

For the cardigan in this chapter, we had full instructions for the left front, and we put its underarm bind-offs on row one of the traditional knitter chart. Then we did the MIK adjustment, moving the entire left front chart up one row, which is the usual direction for the right half of a one-piece front (or back) chart.

To Work Right Front–Left Front

This case is the one we had in this chapter. As we reverse each row of the adjusted left front, we put the reversed right front’s rows one row earlier in their chart.

MIK Reversed Right		MIK Adjusted Left		Traditional Knitter Left	
	□□□□		□□□□		□□□□
1	⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒	3	⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒	2	⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒
	□□□□		□□□□		□□□□
	43424140393837363534		34353637383940414243		34353637383940414243

To Work Left Front–Right Front

Instead of typing up the reversed rows one row earlier in their chart, we type them one row later.

MIK Reversed Right		MIK Adjusted Left		Traditional Knitter Left	
	□□□□		□□□□		□□□□
3	⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒	3	⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒	2	⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒⌒
	□□□□		□□□□		□□□□
	43424140393837363534		34353637383940414243		34353637383940414243

Given the Right Front

When we type up the traditional knitter right front chart, we would probably label its first shaping row, the underarm bind-offs, as row two, since it would be a private-side row. We make the MIK adjustment by moving the entire right front down one row, which is the usual direction for the left half of a one-piece front (or back) chart.

To Work Right Front–Left Front

As we reverse the adjusted right front, we must type up all the left front shaping to occur one row later than it does on the right front.

⁸ The triple partial underarm charts in this section are positioned such that the traditional knitter chart is next to its MIK adjusted version and the two MIK charts are in the “wearing arrangement.”

	Traditional Knitter Right	
	□□□□	3
2		
	43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34	

	MIK Adjusted Right	
	□□□□	2
1		
	43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34	

	MIK Reversed Left	
3	□□□□	
		2
	34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43	

To Work Left Front–Right Front

For this preference, we type up all the reversed left front rows one row earlier than they occur on the adjusted right front. Doing so, however, puts the left front underarm bind-offs on the private-side row, or, “zero.”

	Traditional Knitter Right	
	□□□□	3
2		
	43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34	

	MIK Adjusted Right	
	□□□□	2
1		
	43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34	

	MIK Reversed Left	
1	□□□□	
		0
	34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43	

If we don’t like having row “zero,” we can renumber the rows on both fronts, putting the adjusted right front bind-offs on row three and the reversed left front bind-offs on row two.

	Traditional Knitter Right	
	□□□□	3
2		
	43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34	

	MIK Adjusted Right	
	□□□□	4
3		
	43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34	

	MIK Reversed Left	
3	□□□□	
		2
	34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43	

No matter which way we number the rows, we work each shaping row first on the left front, then on the right front.

If We Twist the Strands

If we find we have accidentally twisted the two fronts’ yarns around each other, there are at least two non-frogging solutions.

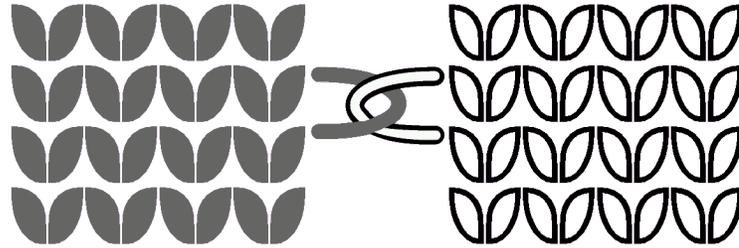
Each of us would have to decide for ourselves exactly how much effort we want to put in if our goal is to avoid frogging both fronts all the way back to the first twist.

Use Duplicate Stitch

If there are just a few twists, then we can use duplicate stitch on just one of the fronts to replace stitches at the ends of the two rows joined by the twisted strand.

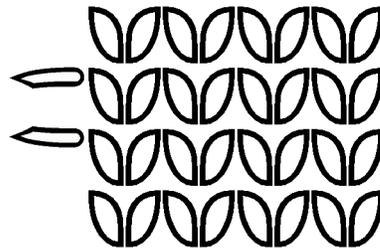
These rows of stylized knit stitches are joined by very exaggerated versions of the loops between the second and third rows, and we can clearly see where we’ve twisted the gray and

white yarns around each other by accident.⁹ In yarn, both loops would actually be the height from the top of one row to the top of the row above it.

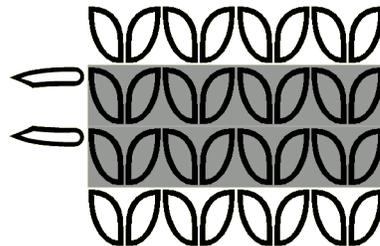


If we cut **either** the gray **or** the white strand, then if this is the only place the fronts are joined, they will now be separated. If we had done this twisting in other locations, we would again need to snip only one strand at each location to allow the fronts to separate.

If we cut the white yarn, the snipped strand will have two zero-length tails, which we cannot secure properly.

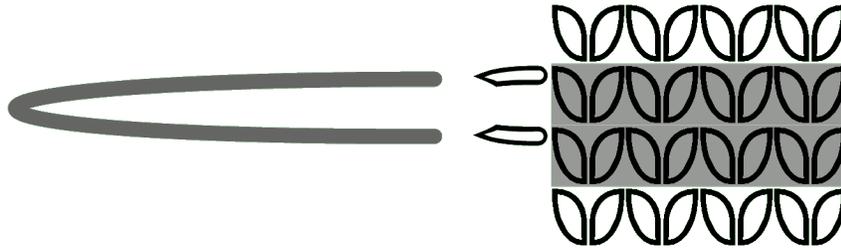


So **before** we actually snip, we need to do some duplicate stitch on several stitches at the ends of the two affected rows, highlighted in gray.



Using a fairly long piece of fresh yarn we fold in half, we duplicate stitch over some number of stitches at the end of the two rows, which is quite likely to be more than just the four shown here.

⁹ Since this chapter’s cardigan is one-color stockinette, the fronts would of course be the same color, but it’s easier to explain if the yarns are shown as different colors.



Once we've got a few stitches duplicated on each row, * we carefully work the snipped tails out of the stitches we've duplicated. If the snipped tails aren't long enough for us to secure them properly, we work a couple more duplicate stitches on both rows, and repeat from * until the tails are long enough to meet our particular level of paranoia about ends working themselves loose. We then weave in all the ends in our usual way.

Using a long strand folded in half has at least two benefits for the work in progress.

- ☉ We'll have a solid strand at the edge, which will be useful if we need to work along the edge in finishing.
- ☉ We'll have only four ends, the two from the strand we snipped and the two from the folded new strand, compared to the six we'd have if we used a separate length to work duplicate stitch on each of the two rows involved.

An Extra Bonus

Whether we use a folded strand or two separate strands, we add an extra skill to our knitting toolkit:

- ☉ Working duplicate stitch along an existing row of stitches is **exactly** the same as weaving two rows of live stitches together. As we follow the path of the strand we're duplicating, we can see the order in which we must work the stitches and whether we put the tapestry needle into each stitch from the front or the back.

The Worst-Case Solution

If absolutely necessary (because of a deadline, for example, or if we've twisted the strands in more than the "few" places that represent our personal limit for how much duplicate stitch we'd want to work), we **might** be able to treat two fronts accidentally joined this way as though they were connected with a steek that, unfortunately, is zero stitches wide. Since there's no field of stitches like we'd have for a planned steek, we probably need to use the sewing machine method to secure one edge.

Using a very short stitch length, we sew down the edge of one front (and maybe sew a second—and possibly a third—line on top of the first). We must be careful to sew on **only**

one front, because we’ll snip just that front’s strand at each twisted point, as explained in the previous section.

Since one front’s inner edge will feel different because of the machine stitching, we can sew along both fronts’ edges, even though we won’t cut any strands of the second front. We would have to be careful to keep some distance between the two edges’ stitching, because we definitely must not sew across the gap between the two fronts.

Your mileage may definitely vary, so sewing and cutting should probably be considered a last resort.