

Chapter 24-P

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

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 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.

Each grid cell represents a public-side knit, so we'll need boundary segments to separate actual stitches from the rest of the grid. To decrease clutter, the charts will not show any explicit bind-off or decrease symbols, but if we prefer to use them, the procedures would all be the same.

We'll again decide to bind off only at the beginning of rows, although it is certainly possible, and in some cases almost mandatory, that we bind off at both ends of one or more rows. That alternative is discussed in the chapter "Optional Shaping Tweaks."

As we did in the chapter "One Chart, Six Sizes," we'll label the stitches starting with one at the center of the wearer's body and increasing out to the highest stitch number at each underarm. Doing so automatically runs the stitch labels in the opposite direction for the reversed front, which will help us during the reversal process and when we double-check our results.

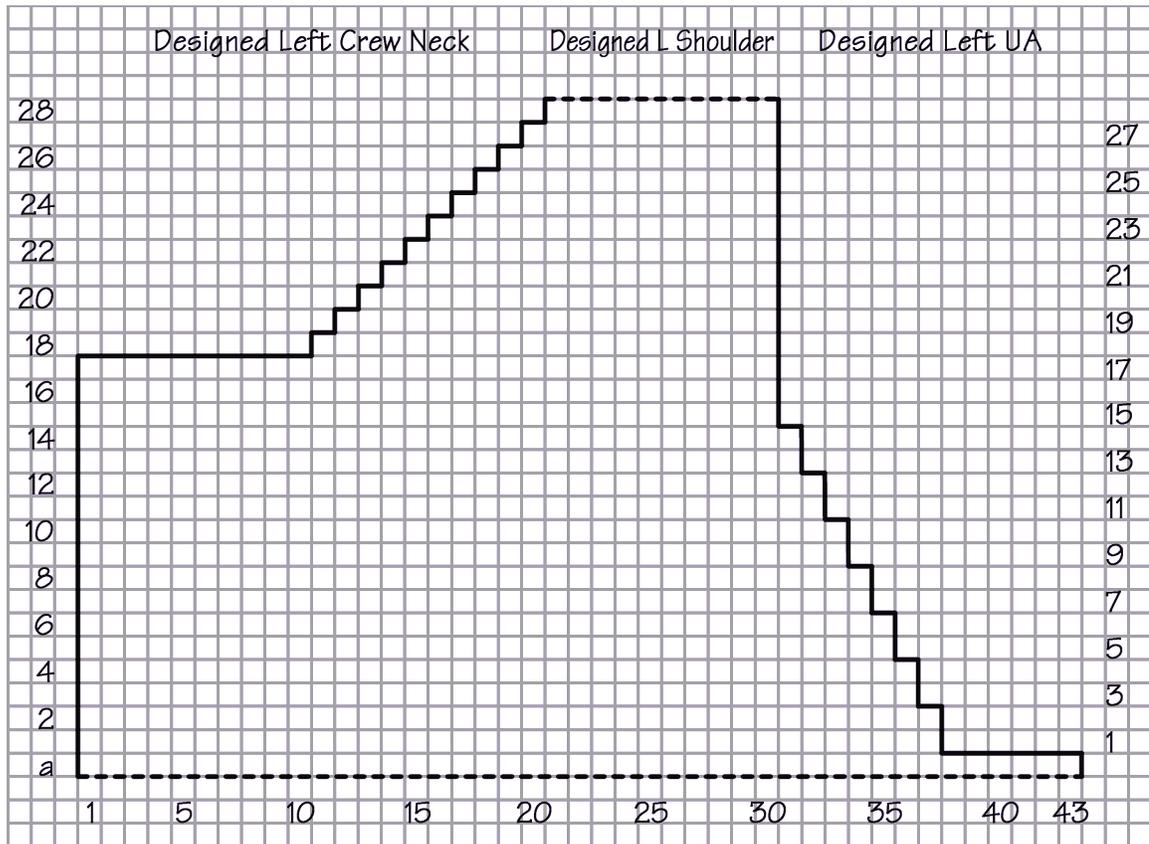
The charts will show plain old one-color stockinette, but if the project had any kind of stitch pattern, we would still do all the steps the exact same way. If the stitch pattern has multi-stitch operations like cables, we alter the shaping around and through them as we did in "One Chart, Six Sizes."

The Cardigan's Designed Front

Since the project doesn't have charts, the first thing we do is chart the given front, using the procedure described in "Bottom-Up Shaping: On Paper."¹

The solid lines represent the edge of the fabric, and the dashed lines indicate where this area joins the fabric above and below.

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



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

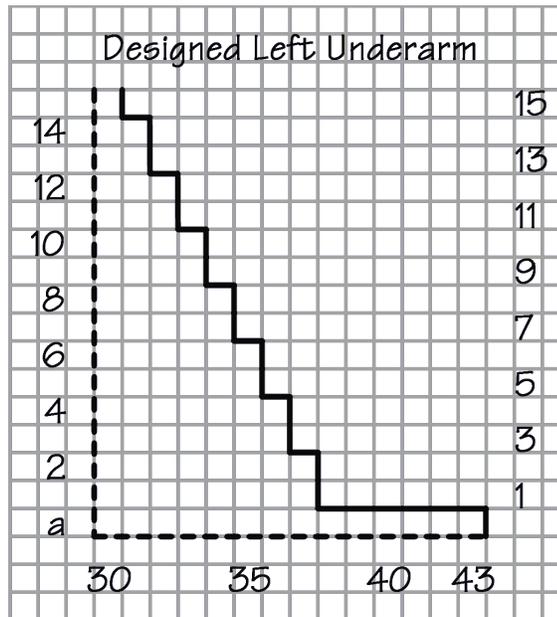
Note that the underarm bind-offs have been put in the chart's row one. There's no real reason to label that row as anything else.

Having put the left front's underarm bind-offs on row one, 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 one.

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

The Underarm Shaping

To minimize confusion, we'll reverse the two shaping areas one at a time.



A Reminder

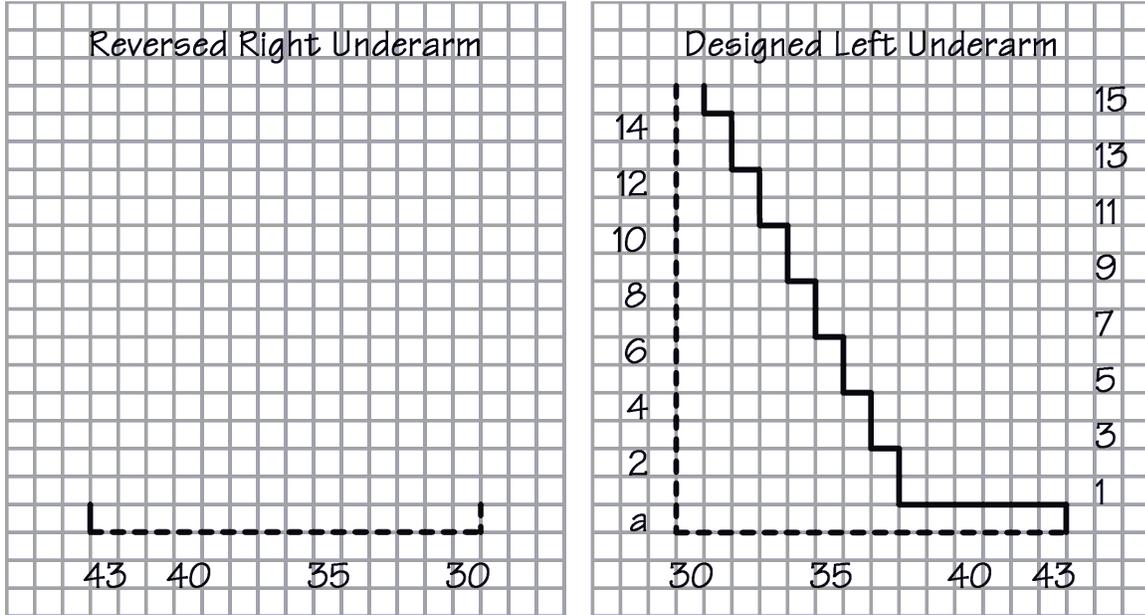
We have the same choices for charting the designed and reversed fronts that we saw in the section “Charting in Pieces” at the end of “Bottom-Up Shaping: On Paper.”

- ☉ We set up a single sheet of grid paper that’s wide enough to accommodate the project’s stitch count and label the stitches according to our preferences. We use additional sheets as necessary if we want to chart every unshaped row as well.
- ☉ We draw the designed and reversed shaping charts on a strip of grid, putting each one on the proper half of the strip and leaving an optional gap of our preferred width between them. If the strip is just a section of a larger sheet, we may, if we so choose, align the stitches with charts above and/or below them on the grid.
- ☉ We use a separate scrap of grid paper for each shaping area, designed and reversed.

The charts here in the book will look like they’re using the third option. Before we worked from them with needles and yarn, we’d want to assemble them as shown in “Bottom-Up Shaping: On Paper.”

The New Scrap

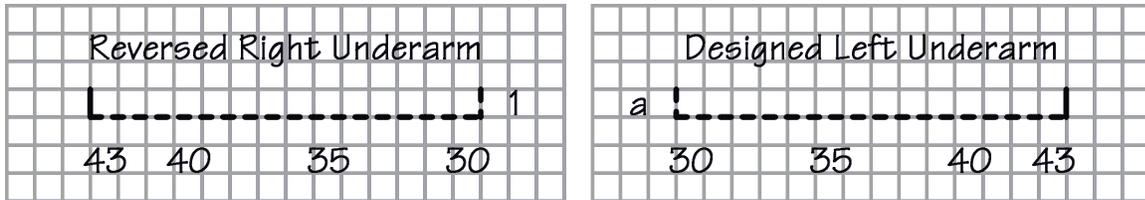
Here’s the new piece of grid paper we’ll use to reverse the designed front’s shaping, and we’ve set up the stitch labels, running them in the opposite direction. Note one important thing about the new scrap: the row numbers are **not yet** filled in.



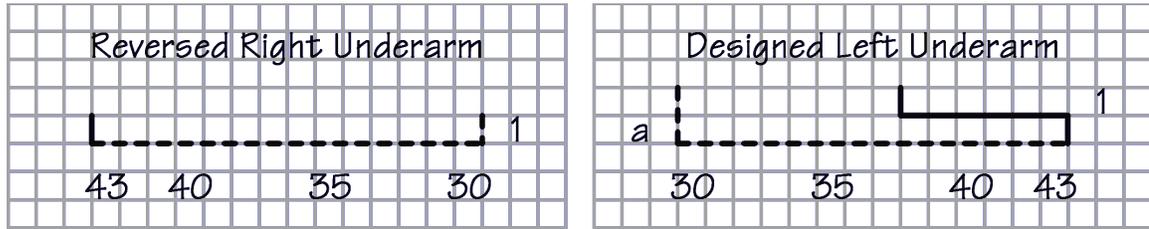
Here in the book, we'll reveal one row at a time from the designed left front chart to help us focus.

The Underarm Bind-Offs

The designed left front chart includes the private-side foundation row A so that the bind-offs shown by the horizontal segment at the beginning of row one are unambiguous. The reversed right front's "foundation" row is therefore the public-side row one.

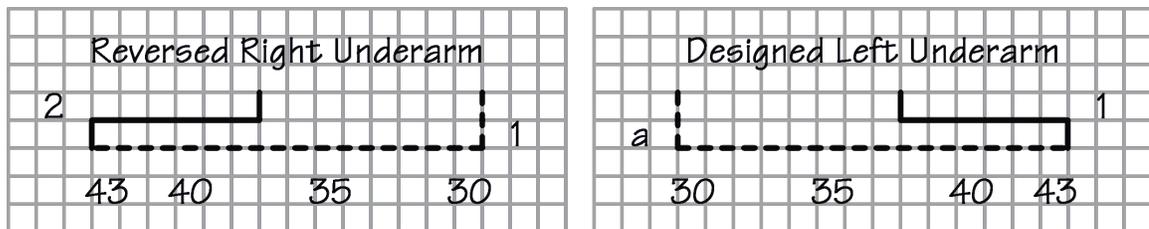


Here's the first shaping row in the designed left front's chart, the bind-offs at the left underarm.



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

We start the right underarm shaping with six bind-offs, represented by the horizontal segment across stitches forty-three through thirty-eight. The vertical segment between stitches thirty-eight and thirty-seven separates from the rest of the grid the first live stitch we have after binding off.



The Same Row Has Different Numbers?

Since we’re showing the designed and reversed fronts on “separate scraps of paper,” it doesn’t matter that rows one and two look like they’re aligned with each other. If we decide to work from these scraps, we would align them properly and tape them together.

If we’re working with a single piece of grid paper wide enough to show the underarm shaping (as if there were grid lines running across the gap here in the book), then we have to decide if we want to draw the reversed right front’s row two in the proper place: one grid row higher than the designed left front’s row one. It’s our choice. If we reverse the front as shown here, we can always cut the two underarm pieces apart, align the rows, and tape them together. Once we’re comfortable with the process, we can immediately draw row two in the correct location relative to row one if that’s what we prefer.

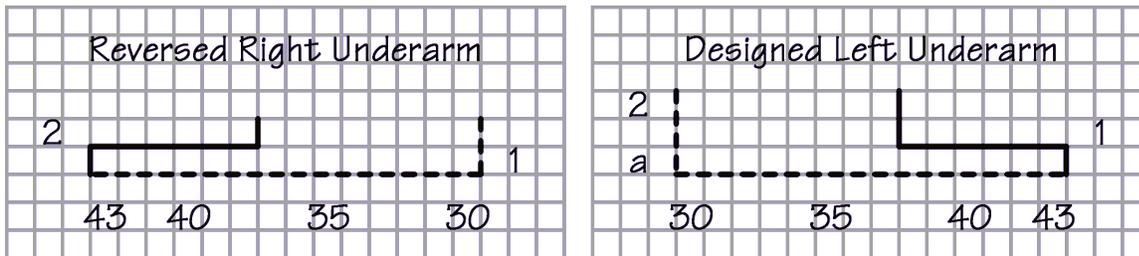
If we’re using grid paper wide enough for the entire project, we’ll probably want to put each row’s boundary lines in the proper places from the beginning. But we could again align them as we see here, then cut them apart and tape them back together properly.

All of these options will work for a plain, one-color cardigan. If there’s any kind of stitch pattern, then it gets a bit trickier. Depending on the pattern’s complexity, we may have

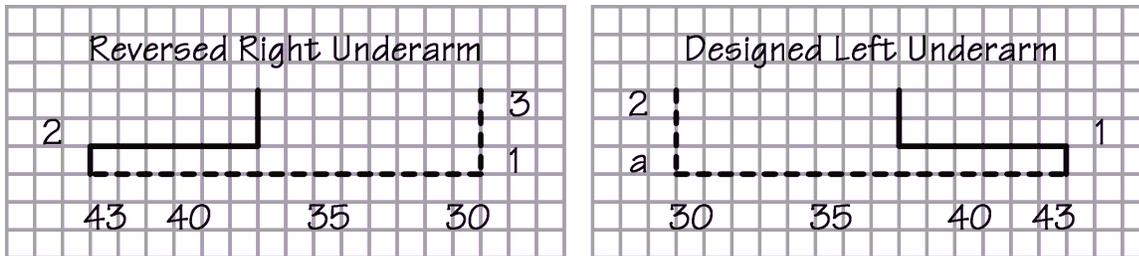
to reverse the boundaries into the proper places from the very beginning, putting the reversed right front row two above the designed left front row one. For other stitch patterns, we might be able to do the simpler reversing shown here.

The Plain Row

When we add row two to the designed 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.



For the reversed right underarm, we'll end row three by working evenly, again ending with stitch thirty-seven. Why row three? Because the right front's shaping needs to occur one row later than the same shaping on the left front based on our command decision to work the shaping in left front-right front order.

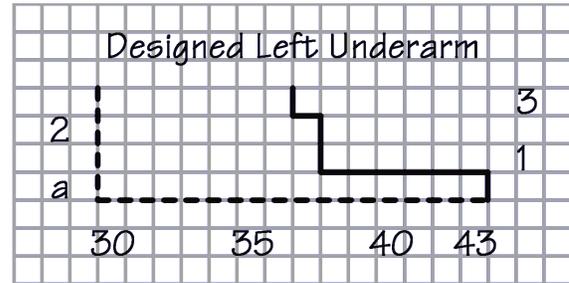
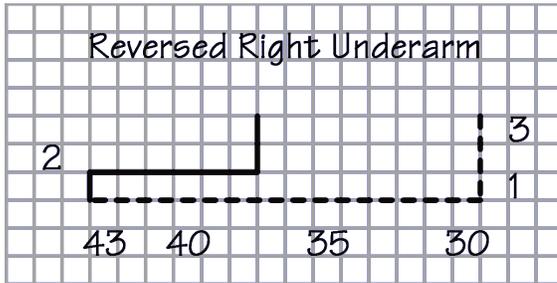


The Underarm Curves

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

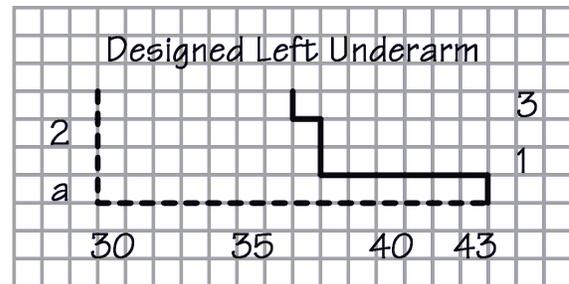
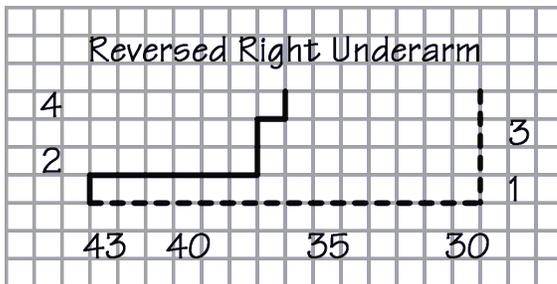
The First Decrease Row

Let's add the designed left underarm's row three to our working chart.



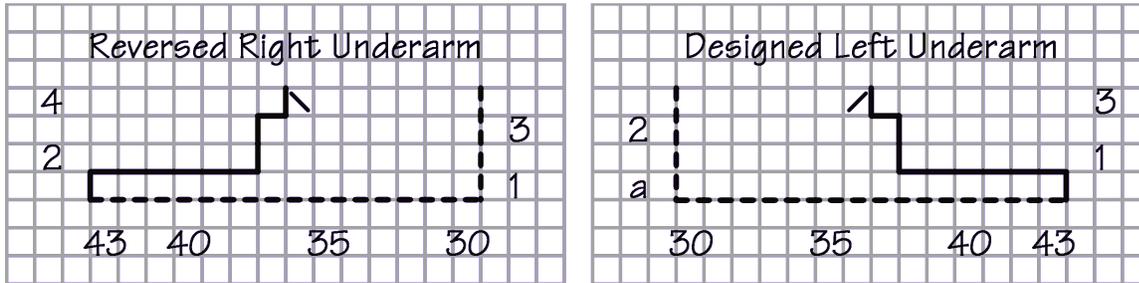
The designed left underarm shows a decrease at the beginning of the row via the boundary segments around location thirty-seven. We work the remaining stitches as public-side knits since we’re doing a plain stockinette cardigan.

At the reversed right underarm, we do what we did at the left underarm, except that we do it one row later. That means that on row four 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.



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.



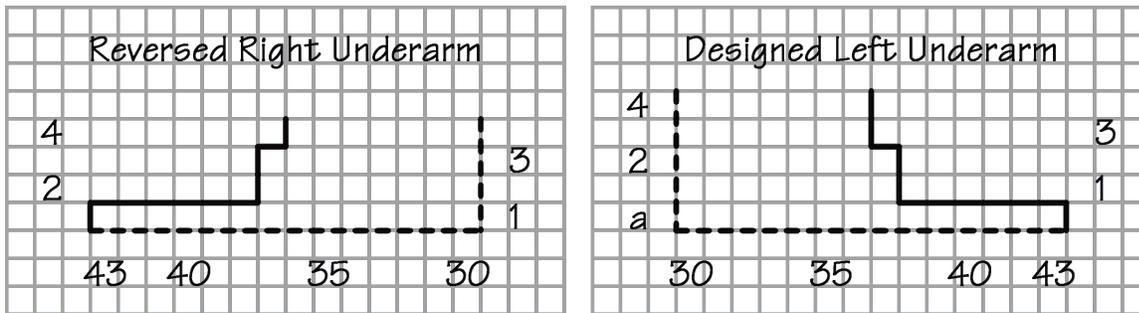
Lesson Learned

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.

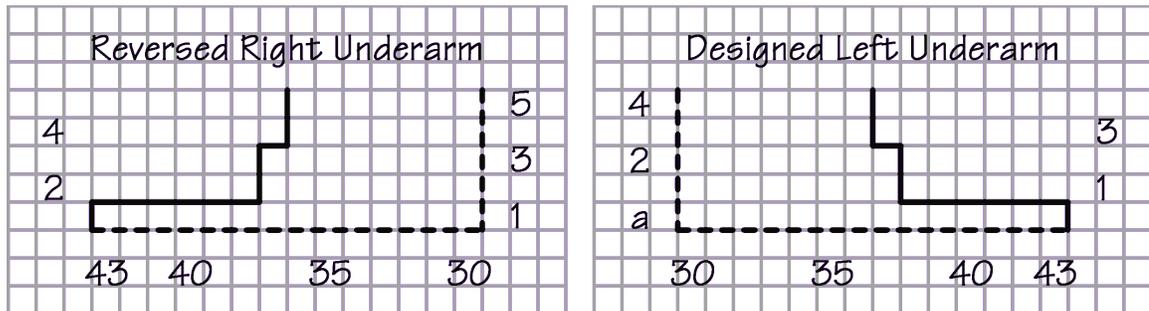
Note that we don't have to use explicit decrease symbols. The bending boundary lines at both underarms tell us that we decrease on both rows whether the chart shows one-color stockinette or any kind of stitch pattern.

The Plain Row

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



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

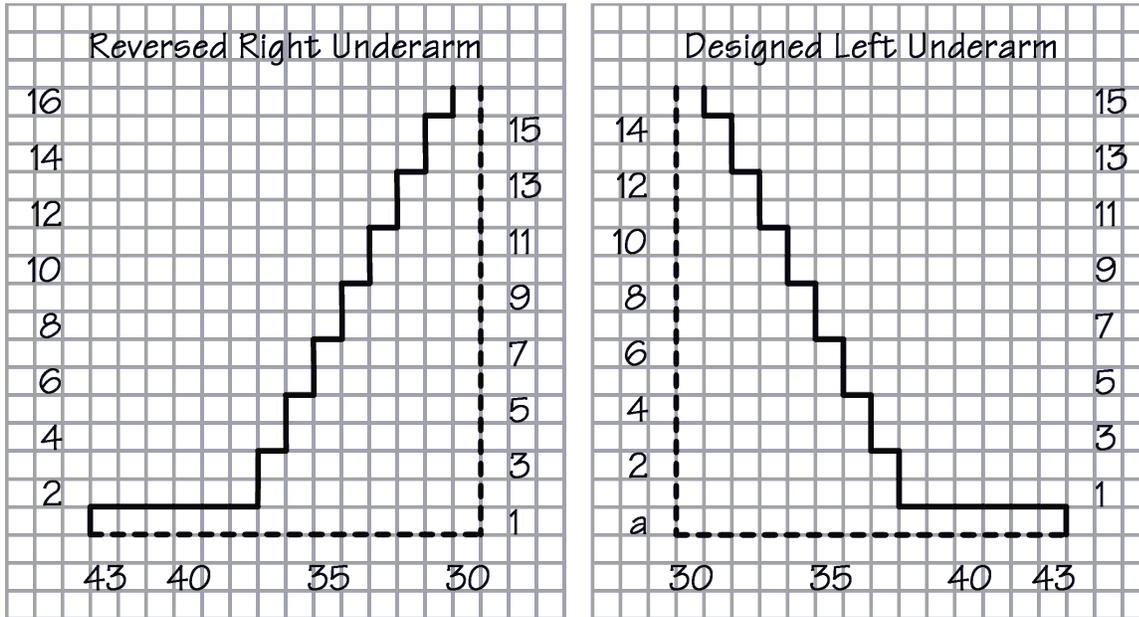


Finishing the Underarm Curves

We would continue to look at one row at a time in the designed left underarm’s chart, then do the shaping in the same stitch locations for the reversed right underarm, except that it occurs one row later because of our command decision.

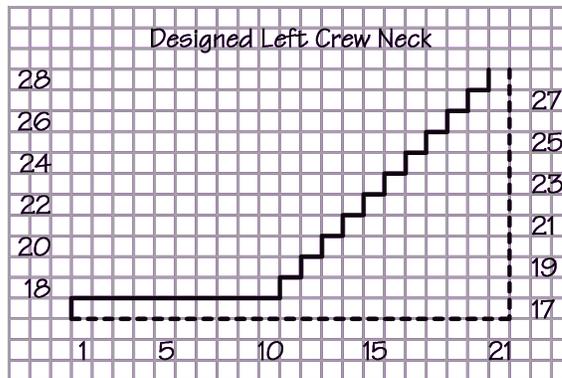
The remaining underarm rows are charted (and worked) the same way.

- ☉ At the left underarm, we
 - ✓ decrease at the beginning of each public-side row and
 - ✓ work evenly the end of the following private-side row.
- ☉ At the right underarm, we
 - ✓ decrease at the beginning of each private-side row and
 - ✓ work evenly the end of the following public-side row.



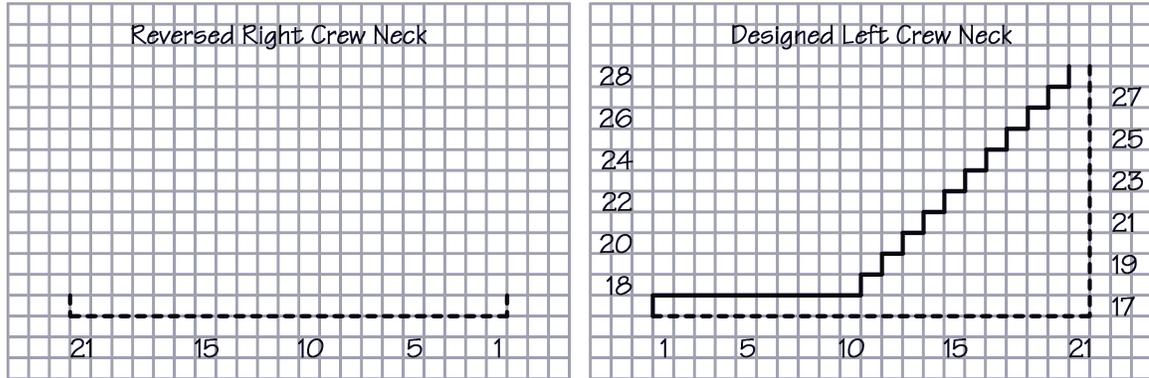
The Crew Neck Shaping

Here's the left crew neck on its own scrap of grid paper.



We have the same situation as at the underarm, so we'll again set up stitch labels on a separate scrap of paper (or in the left half of a neck-only strip of grid paper or at the proper spot on a full-width piece of paper, depending on our preferred charting method).

As before, the stitch labels run the opposite direction, and we haven't yet put in any of the right neck's row numbers, since we'll add them as we reverse the shaping.

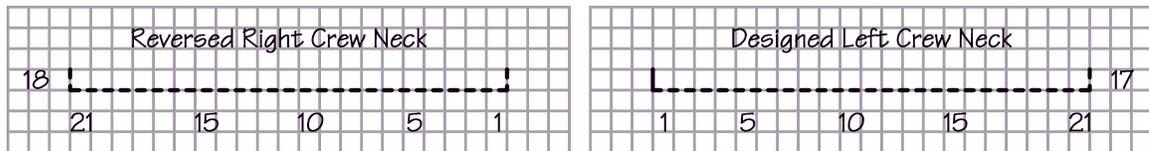


We’ll again reveal one left neck row at a time as we work through the process.

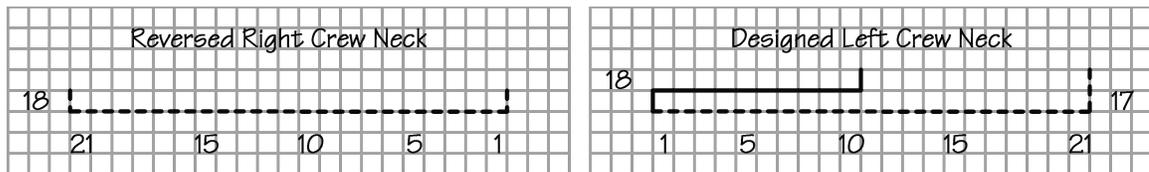
The Crew Neck Bind-Offs

Crew necks can be wide and shallow, narrow and deep, or anything in between (though the variations might not all be referred to as “crew” necks). Regardless of the number of stitches and rows involved, we do the exact same steps.

The final row before the designed left crew neck shaping starts is row seventeen. Because of our command decision, the right front shaping all occurs one row later, so its final unshaped row is row eighteen.

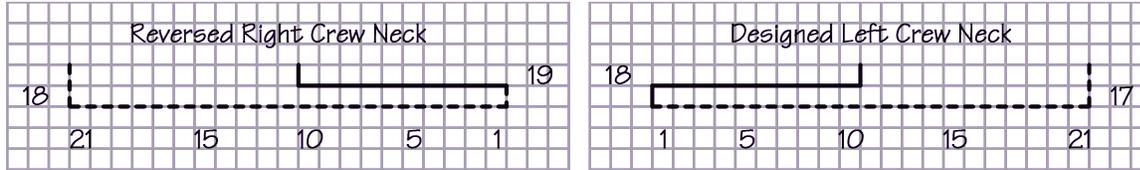


If we were looking at someone wearing this finished cardigan, we would see that the left edge of the left front runs up the center of the wearer’s body. Since that edge is where the private-side rows begin, we start the left neck shaping by binding off on a private-side row, then work evenly the rest of the row as public-side knits, because the cardigan is simple, one-color stockinette.



Because of our command decision to work all the reversed right front shaping one row later than on the designed left front, we bind off at the beginning of the public-side row

nineteen, as indicated by the horizontal segment across stitches one through ten, and again finish the row with public-side knits.



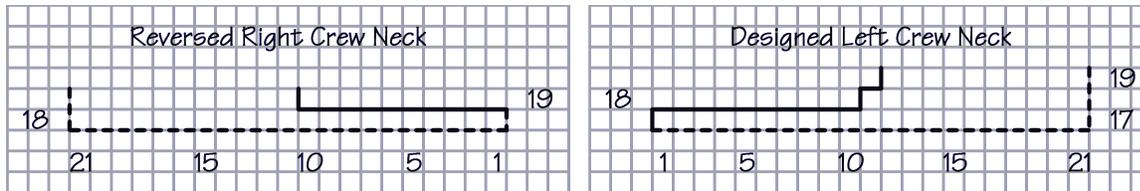
Both charts need vertical segments between locations ten and eleven to separate stitch eleven, the first live stitch left after we complete the bind-offs, from the rest of the grid.

The Crew Neck Curves

The transition area between the horizontal bind-offs and the vertical edge of the crew neck shows decreases on every row. We can reverse this shaping just as easily as the every-other-row underarm decreases.

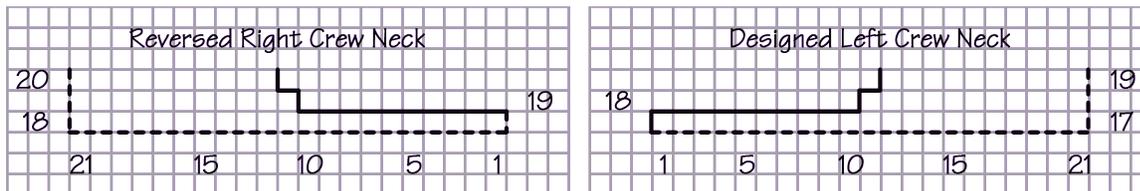
The First Decrease Row

We start the decrease rows immediately, which on the designed left neck is at the end of row nineteen.



Note that even without an explicit decrease symbol, we know we must decrease at the end of the row because the bending boundary line makes the shaping quite clear.

On the reversed right neck, our first decrease row will be one row later than the designed left neck's row nineteen, so on row twenty, the decrease will be the last knitting operation we work on the right front, having worked public-side knits before that point for a plain stockinette cardigan.

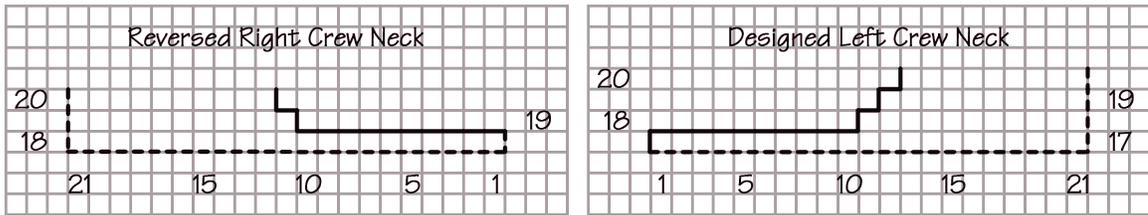


Both boundary lines show that stitch twelve is the innermost stitch on this pair of rows, which is the primary reason for running the stitch labels in opposite directions. Mirror-imagining the labels makes it very quick and easy for us to double-check that we’ve put everything in the proper place, since we don’t have to count grid cells before we add the new boundary segments. We just make sure the segments are in the same location on the reversed row.

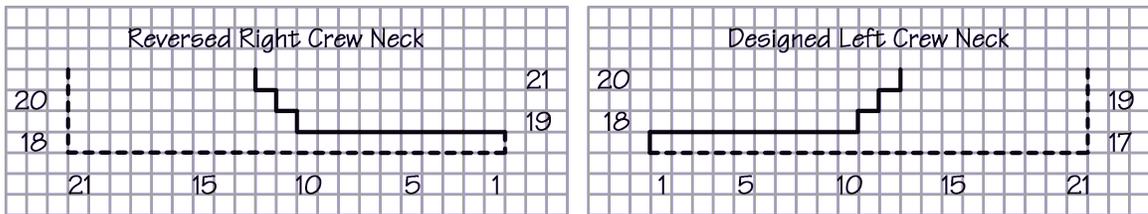
Exactly as we saw with the underarm curves, if we use directional decrease symbols, we must reverse their lean as we reverse each row if we want the two pieces to remain mirror-image.

The Second Decrease Row

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

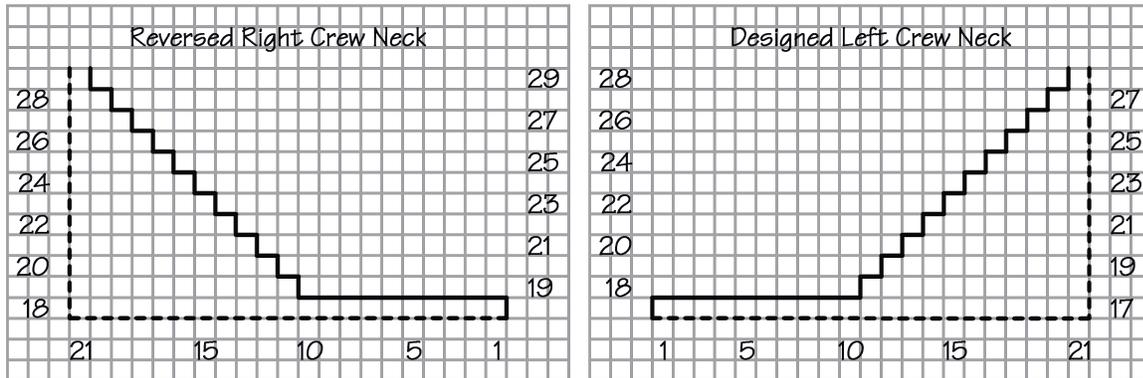


We’ll do exactly the same thing on the reversed right neck, except that its second decrease row is a public-side row.



Finishing the Crew Neck Decreases

We reverse the remaining neck shaping rows the same way.



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 later than on the designed left front according to our command decision to work the shaping in left front–right 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 designed left front, we have sixteen rows (rows two through seventeen inclusive) between the underarm bind-offs and the front neck bind-offs. When we reversed the underarm bind-offs, we put them one row later, on the right front’s row two.

If we had then drawn the reversed right front’s neck bind-offs on row seventeen, one row earlier than on the designed left front, then we’d have fourteen rows (rows three through sixteen inclusive) between those two areas on the right front. In bulky weight, that difference might be apparent to everyone (even non-knitters) as well as uncomfortable for the wearer, since it would make the right armhole a good fraction of an inch shorter. In worsted weight, the armhole might still be a bit too short to be comfortable.

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 later than on the designed left front, then to make the reversed front’s shaping truly match the designed left front’s, we had to do **all** of its shaping one row later.

- ☉ The final underarm decrease occurred on the left front’s row fifteen, so the right front’s final underarm decrease had to occur on row sixteen.

- ☉ In the designed chart, the left front crew neck bind-offs were on row eighteen, so in the reversed chart for the right front, those bind-offs were on row nineteen.
- ☉ The final neck decrease on the left front was on row twenty-eight, so the final neck decrease on the right front had to be on row twenty-nine.

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 designed 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 boundary segments needed to separate the public-side knits in the unshaped areas from the rest of the grid. 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 and reversed it exactly as we reversed the underarm and front neck.

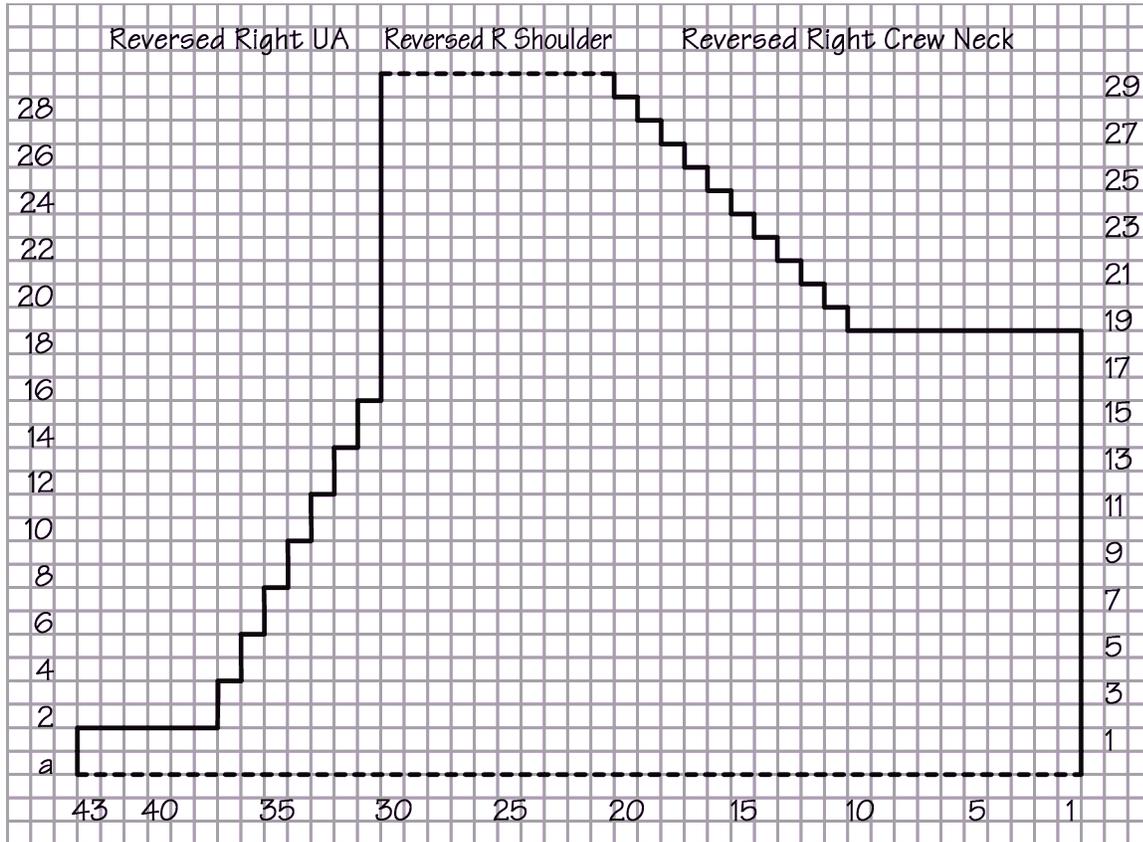
On a good day, I might be able to keep track of all the reversing in my head and have no trouble knitting the “other” front without charting it. But my days are filled with the same interruptions yours are filled with. Working the reversed front from a chart means we have a much smaller chance of making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

If we want to match the row numbers here, we'll need to chart the reversed left front's



shaping on the row before the right front's shaping. If we put the reversed left front's shaping on the row after the right front's shaping, what would be the effect on the left front's row numbers?²

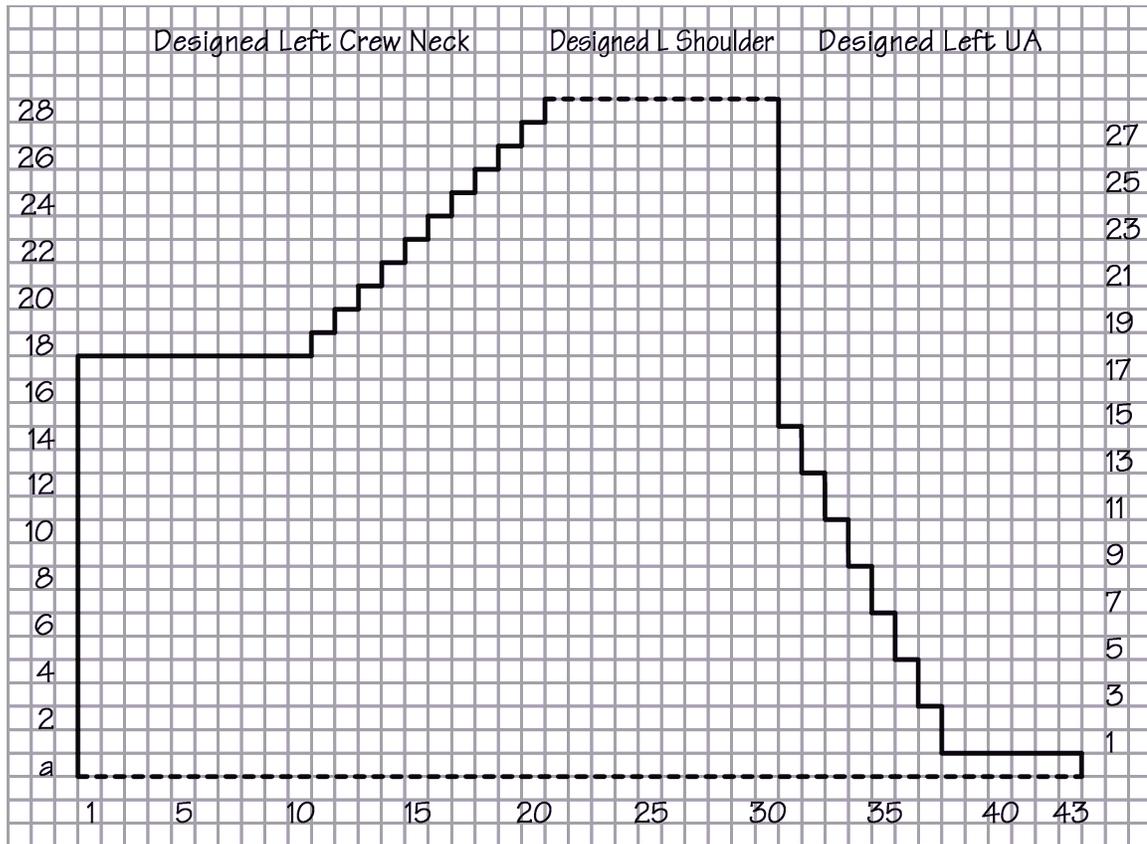
Working Both Fronts at the Same Time

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.³

Working both pieces simultaneously if they're absolutely identical, like sleeves usually are,

² They'd all increase by two compared to the original left front.

³ 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."



is easy because we’re doing the exact same things in the exact same places on the exact same rows.⁴

But cardigan fronts are not identical the same way that sleeves (usually) are. The neck-line, 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.

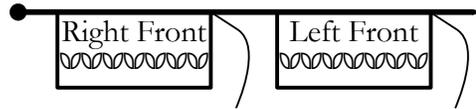
Left–Right or Right–Left?

Does it matter which front is first on our needles? Initially, and especially in plain old one-

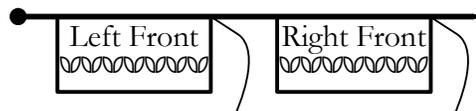
⁴ Sleeves that have certain kinds of shaping, like elbow gussets, may have to be worked the way we’re about to see for the fronts.

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.



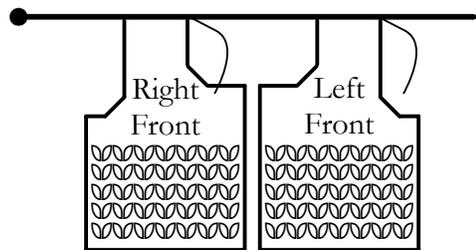
As with so many things knitting, we can each decide which setup we prefer.

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

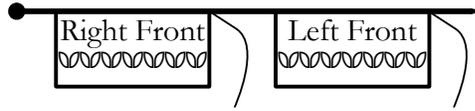


Getting Started

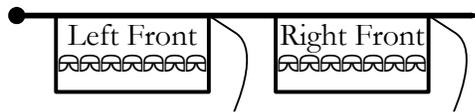
So we cast on for both fronts with two balls of yarn. Then we * work across the first front,

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 right 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

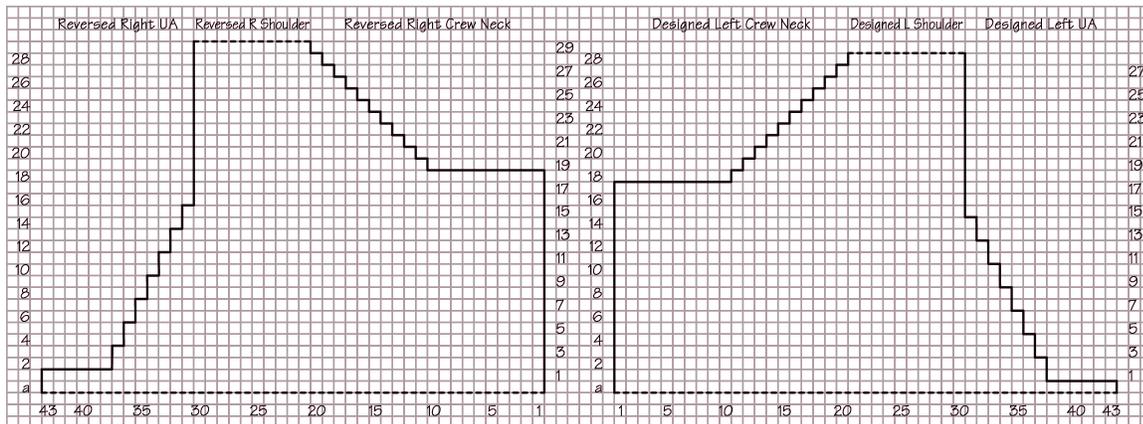
When we work two pieces at the same time, we must remember we are **not** doing intarsia, so as we finish the first piece’s stitches and start the second’s, we must **never** allow their yarns to twist around each other across the gap.

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.



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 "foundation" row A before we start the underarm shaping. Thinking of all the stitches on the needles as a single group, we start the (left) 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 left front public-side row and the beginning of the right 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

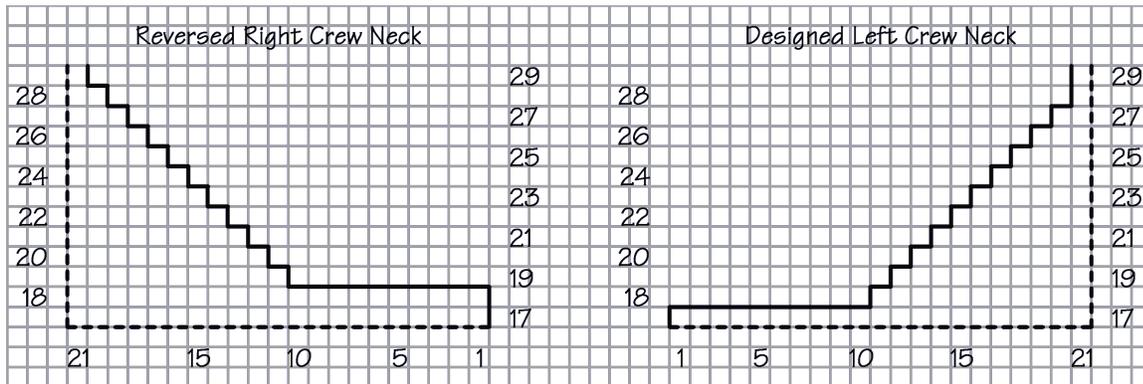
Still considering the stitches as just one big group, we decrease at the beginning of row three on the left front, according to the horizontal segment below location thirty-seven and the vertical segment on the outside of stitch thirty-six. We finish the rest of the stitches on the needle by working 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 right 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 the boundary segments below location thirty-seven and on the outside of stitch thirty-six in the right 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 through stitch thirty-one on both fronts.

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 that portion of the combined chart. (The left front’s row twenty-nine, worked evenly at the neck edge, shows a public-side knit so both charts indicate stitches on all rows.)



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.

We work the unshaped public-side "foundation" row seventeen in the usual way, except for changing yarns in the middle, then turn.

On row eighteen, we work the right 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 left 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 left front–right 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 left 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 left front on row nineteen, then do the decrease. Before we start the right 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 right front and at the beginning of the left 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 left front and decrease at its end, and on the right 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 neck stitches.

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?⁵

Since we interact with other humans and have various daily requirements that cut griev-

⁵ I guess we could smarty-pants it by saying the rule doesn’t apply since the knitter is technically working rounds, not rows!

ously 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 right 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 right 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 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 right 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 two, which meant we did all the shaping in left front–right 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.⁶

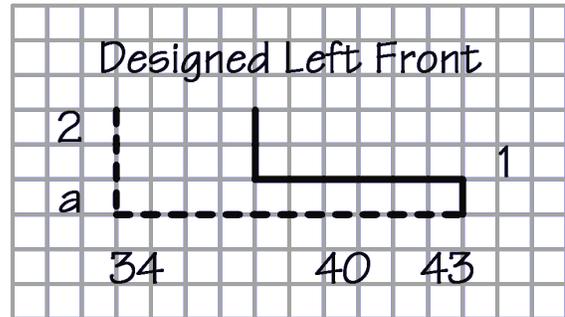
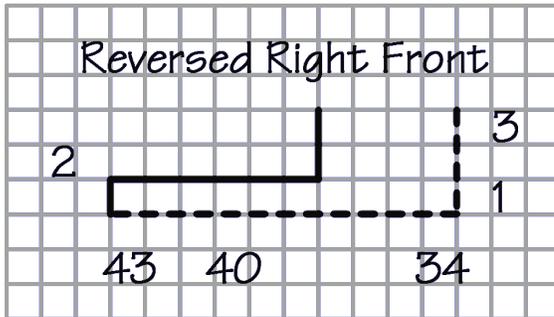
⁶ The paired partial underarm charts in this section are positioned in the “wearing arrangement.”

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.

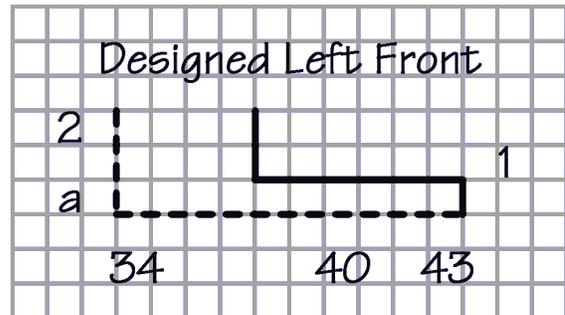
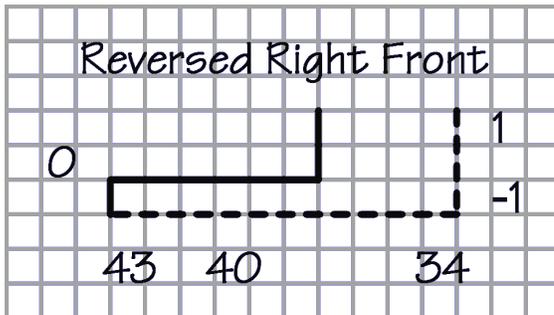
To Work Left Front–Right Front

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

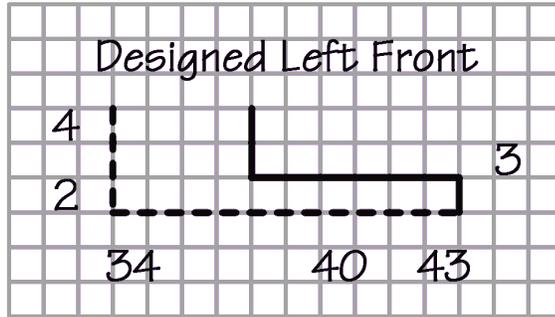
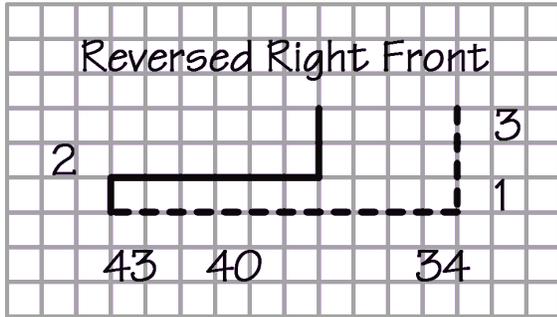


To Work Right Front–Left Front

Instead of drawing the reversed rows one row later in their chart, we draw them one row earlier. Doing so, however, puts the right front underarm bind-offs on the private-side row, er, “zero,” preceded by row “negative one.”



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



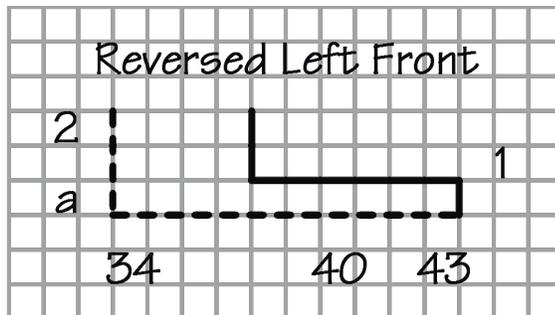
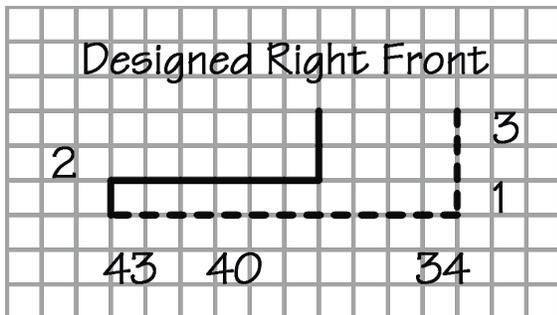
No matter which way we number the rows, we work each shaping row first on the right front, then on the left front.

Given the Right Front

When we draw the designed front's chart, we would probably label its first shaping row, the underarm bind-offs, as row two, since it would be a private-side row.

To Work Left Front–Right Front

As we reverse the designed right front, we must draw all the left front shaping to occur one row earlier than it does on the right front.



To Work Right Front–Left Front

For this preference, we draw all the reversed left front rows one row later than they occur on the designed right front.

If We Twist the Strands

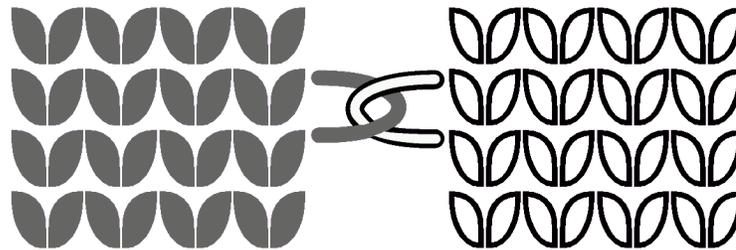
If we find we have accidentally twisted the two fronts' yarns around each other, there are at least two non-frogging solutions.

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

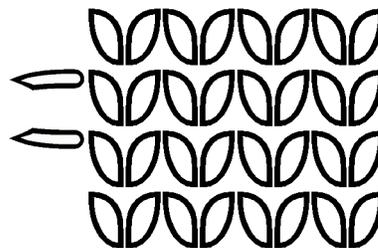
If there are just a few twists, then we can use duplicate stitch on just one of the fronts to replace stitches at the ends of the two rows joined by the twisted strand.

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.⁷ In yarn, both loops would actually be the height from the top of one row to the top of the row above it.



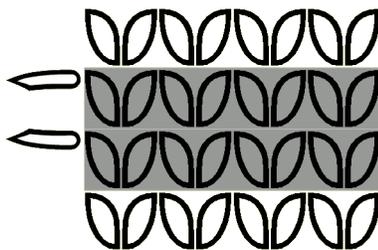
If we cut **either** the gray **or** the white strand, then if this is the only place the fronts are joined, they will now be separated. If we had done this twisting in other locations, we would again need to snip only one strand at each location to allow the fronts to separate.

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

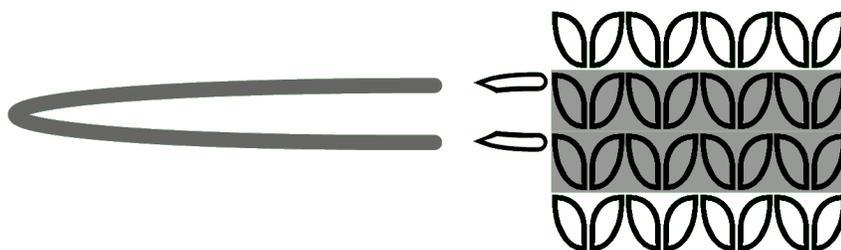


So **before** we actually snip, we need to do some duplicate stitch on several stitches at the ends of the two affected rows, highlighted in gray.

⁷ 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.



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.



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.