In each issue, the “Fashion Framework series” will help you explore basic elements of pattern make-up – things to know before you knit. Each article will provide a “lesson” for a basic type of garment. The lesson will describe in detail aspects of the garment as well as provide a basic pattern and show ways to alter the standard pattern to customize the garment. The lesson for this issue is vests.

ABOUT VESTS
A vest provides opportunities for shaping and finishing and is an excellent project for new as well as more accomplished knitters. (It is a required project for Level 2 of the TKGA Master Knitting Program.) Since most vests are simply sweaters without sleeves, the knitting takes much less time. Although vests tend to conform to a basic shape, they can be very simple or, with the addition of complicated stitch patterns, very challenging projects. Many of the techniques used to knit a vest apply to sweaters as well. By the way, for knitters who do not want to knit a vest, a shell can be substituted. A shell is basically a vest with higher armholes.

This lesson provides a pattern for a very simple man’s vest which illustrates techniques found in most vest patterns.

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Construction
When considering a vest pattern, look to see how it is knit. If it is a pullover, it may be knit in the round up to the armholes, or the front and back may be knit separately and seamed. If the vest has a buttoned front, it can also be knit in one piece to the armholes. This is the construction for the Fair Isle vest in this issue. For the Masters Program we ask that the vest be seamed to reinforce the finishing techniques which are the focus of Level 2.

The basic components of a vest encountered in patterns are quite straightforward — ribbing, body, armholes, neckline and bands. When you are looking at vest patterns, you should study how the pattern handles these various components.

Ribbing
Most tailored style vest patterns call for some type of ribbing at the bottom edge. Ribbing does not curl as does Stockinette and its elasticity helps prevent the bottom edge from stretching out. The pattern may be simple K1P1 or K2P2 or even cables. The cabled woman’s vest (see member exclusive) illustrates a type of ribbing where cables have been incorporated into the ribbed pattern.

When there is ribbing at the bottom, one concern you should have if the sides are to be seamed, is that the ribbed pattern is maintained over the seam. For example, if the first row of a pattern says, “*K2, p2; rep from *, to end” the seam will disrupt the ribbing pattern. Before working the first row, consider how the sides will be seamed. If necessary you can use graph paper to chart out the stitches. Remember, the first and last stitches do not count. They will be hidden in the seam. If the pattern does not accommodate the seam, you can always change the rib pattern so that it does.

Some more casual and unconstructed vest styles have a rolled edge which uses the natural tendency of Stockinette Stitch to curl. Others may have a garter stitch or seed stitch border.

Body
After the ribbing is finished the pattern for the body of the vest is established. If the body is not knit in the round or in one piece, generally the back is knit first, then the front. Even if a pattern specifies that a vest is to be worked flat, there is generally no reason you cannot work it in the round. If you do this, first check the original pattern to see if you need to subtract stitches for the selvedge since there are no seams. For example, if you change an all over cable pattern which has two Reverse Stockinette Stitches between each cable to circular knitting, check to see if there are two stitches at each side. If there are and you do not subtract one stitch from each side, there would be four Reverse Stockinette Stitches between the cables under the arms.

If you knit the back and front(s) separately, don’t rely solely on measurements to begin the armhole shaping. It is a better idea to count the rows. To make this task easier you may want to place elastic row markers every ten rows or so. You may also want to place lifelines. Seaming is easier when there is the same number of rows. If the vest is not a pullover but has buttons, a zipper or some other type of closure the fronts can be worked separately or together. Many knitters like to knit fronts at the same time to make sure that the armhole and neckline shapings match exactly.

Armhole Shapings
Typically armholes are shaped by binding off a specified number of stitches and then making decreases for several rows. A common format found in a pattern for a vest back might read, “BO 3 sts at beg of next 2 rows, 2 sts at beg of next 4 rows, then dec 1 st each side EOR every other RS row 4 times, then every RS row 2 times.” What exactly does this mean and what isn’t it telling you? It does tell you that you bind off 3 stitches at the beginning of 2 rows. On the right side of the vest, the stitches are bound off on the RS of the work. After the stitches are bound off, you work to the end of the row and then bind off on the WS of the work. You repeat this procedure binding off the number of stitches indicated and a total of 7 sts are bound off on each side.

The pattern does not tell you what type of decreases to use for the “then dec 1 st” section of the shaping. When decreases are used to shape armholes and necklines, they should be mirrored. This means that the same type of decreases should be used but they should slant in opposite directions. You have two options. If you want the decreases to blend in with the slant of the shaping, you use SSK decreases at the right side since they slant to the left and the shaping is slanting to the left. You use K2tog decreases at the left side which slants to the right. If you want your decreases to be more noticeable or decorative, use K2tog decreases on the right and SSK decreases at the left. They will slant in opposition to the slant of the shaping for “full fashioned” armholes.

Rarely does a pattern give you much information about where to work the decrease. If you work them in the first or last stitches, it will be difficult to seam the piece or pick up stitches along the edge. Finishing will be easier if you work at least two stitches before decreases. Illustration 1 (see page 47) shows a close up of the left armhole. Notice that the decreases follow the slant of the piece.

Two plain stitches were worked after the decrease but only one is visible since the stitches for the band were picked up between the selvedge stitch and the next stitch.

For some types of stitch patterns it is better to bind off all of the stitches rather than use decreases. For example, in a color pattern or cable pattern the decreases may disrupt the pattern.
Illustration 2 shows the armhole shaping for a Fair Isle vest where the shaping is made by binding off stitches rather than decreases.

Another factor to consider is the armhole depth. How loose or tight do you want the armholes? You can always change a vest pattern to a shell by making the armhole smaller.

**Neckline**

Traditionally necklines for vests are v-neck, crew or scoop. The same rules for bind off stitches and decreases for the armholes apply to necklines as well. Because decreases along the neckline are more visible than those around the armholes, care must be taken that they are properly mirrored. Illustration 3 shows a close-up of the neckline shaping. Notice that K2tog decreases are used on the right side of the neck (as you look at the photo, not as the garment is worn) and SSK decreases are used on the left. As for the armhole, two stitches have been worked to the side of the decreases. This produces the symmetrical column of stitches at both sides.

Depending on the type of neckline, you may be shaping the neckline at the same time as the armholes. Be sure to check your pattern carefully.

**Bands**

Stitches around the armholes, neckline and fronts are picked up for bands. The bands hide the selvedges, generally not the prettiest part of knitted fabric and also help keep the garment from stretching out. These bands generally match the bottom ribbing or band. Most patterns indicate a specific number of stitches to pick up. This causes many knitters great difficulty. How important is it to pick up the exact number of stitches? What if you have made your armholes smaller or larger? A better plan is to use the rules in the following paragraphs to pick up an appropriate number of stitches. (If the band is K1P1 ribbing, be sure to pick up an even number of stitches. If the band is K2P2 ribbing, pick up a multiple of four stitches.)

A beautifully knit garment can be spoiled by a poorly picked up band. When picking up stitches along a bound off edge, be sure to pick up the stitch in the stitch below the bound off edge. If you use loops in the bound off edge, the stitches in the band will not line up with the stitches below. Since many armhole and neckline edges have a series of bound off stitches, the edge looks like stair steps. Many knitters pick up stitches in these gaps to try and fill up the hole. All this accomplishes is making the hole larger. Use the rule above and skip the stair step. The hole will be closed. If you look at illustrations 1 and 2, notice there are no noticeable stair steps.

When picking up stitches along selvedge edges, pick up stitches in the spaces between the horizontal bars between the selvedge stitch and the next stitch. Each horizontal bar represents a row. You cannot pick up a stitch for every row since there are more rows per inch than stitches. The band will be puckered. The general rule is to pick up 3 stitches for every 4 rows or 4 stitches for every 5 rows. When in doubt, you can use your gauge to determine the ratio for picking up stitches. If you have saved your gauge swatch, you can use it to practice ratios. Some patterns call for the bands to be worked flat and then seamed. With the popularity of the Magic Loop technique, working the bands in the round works just as well.

**V-Neck Bands** Many vests have V-necks. For the band to lay flat, decreases must be made at the center of the V. If the vest has a V-neck, check the instructions to see how the pattern makes these decreases. Illustration 3 shows one way to make these decreases.

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For K1P1 ribbing, the S2K1P (or CDD) decrease works well. This technique decreases two stitches on either side of a center stitch. For K2P2 ribbing another technique must be used. Decreases are made next to two center stitches. Illustration 4 shows this type of neckline.

**Buttonbands** – If the vest is to be buttoned, work the buttonband first and determine how you want to space the buttons on it before knitting the buttonhole band. Your gauge swatch can help you here as well. Use it to try out the type of buttonholes you may want to use instead of practicing on the actual buttonhole band.

**VEST LESSON**
The pattern in this lesson is for a very simple man’s vest. Before designing this vest, I conducted a very informal survey of several men. These men indicated that they preferred very simple designs, no complicated stitch patterns. They wanted the armholes deep and the neckline high. A loose fit was desirable as well. The vest in this lesson conforms to these standards. There will be an explanation of each step in the construction preceding the pattern section. Pattern instructions are boxed to set them off from the explanations.

**Pattern Information**
This section provides general information you need to work the pattern.

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**Basic Men’s Vest**
by Arenda Holladay

**Yarn Symbol:** Light (3)

**Level of Experience:** Easy

**Sizes:** XS (S, M, L, 1X)

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**Finished Measurements:**
- Chest: 36 1/2 (39, 41 1/2, 44, 46 1/2)”
- Length: 21 (21, 22, 23, 24)”

**Materials:**
- Rowan FELTED TWEED (1.76oz/50g, 191yds/175m, 50% Merino Wool, 25% Alpaca, 25% Viscose):
  - 4 (4, 5, 5) skeins #159 Carbon
- Sizes 5 & 6 (3.75 & 4.00mm) needles & size 5 (3.75mm) 16” (40mm) circular needle or size needed to obtain correct gauge
- Tapestry needle
- Stitch markers

**Gauge:**
- In K7P1 Pat, 22 sts & 33 rows = 4”/10 cm.
- To save time, take time to check gauge.

**Special Abbreviations:**
- Inc1 – Right slanting lifted increase. Knit into the purl nub below the stitch. Then knit the stitch.

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**Preparation – Measuring Gauge**
The most important part of the general pattern information is the description of the expected gauge. Before beginning it is necessary to knit a gauge swatch even if you are using the recommended yarn. Using the recommended needle size and the yarn, cast on at least 30 stitches and work at least 2” in Stockinette Stitch. (Row gauge is not as important for this pattern.) Block the swatch and measure the width (do not include the selvedge stitches) to an eighth of an inch and note the decimal measurement on the worksheet below. Also note the number of stitches you measured.

**Gauge Worksheet**

**Width:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fraction</th>
<th>Decimal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/8</td>
<td>.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/8</td>
<td>.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/8</td>
<td>.875</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of Stitches:** Don’t include the selvedge stitches. Divide the number of stitches by the width. This gives you the number of stitches per inch. Do not round off the number.

**Number of Stitches Per Inch:** Multiply the number of stitches by 4. Round this number up or down.

**Number of Stitches in 4”:** Repeat this procedure to determine the row gauge.
The pattern is bordered by four knit stitches at each side. It is necessary to increase one stitch but to line up the purls in the K7P1 pattern with the purl stitches in the ribbing, this stitch is increased at the end of the row. A lifted increase is used as it is more invisible. Remember, since a lifted increase is made in an existing stitch, the abbreviation for this increase includes the stitch and the increase.

With larger needles, work as follows:

Est Pat: K4, *p1, k7; rep from * to last 4 sts. P1, inc1, k2
- 105 (113, 121, 129, 137) sts.
Row 1 (WS): P4, *k1, p7; rep from * to last 5 sts. K1, p4.
Row 2: K4, *p1, k7; rep from * to last 5 sts. P1, k4.
Work in Pat as est until piece meas 13 (13, 13 1/2, 14, 14 1/2)" ending on a WS row.

Shaping the Armholes

Once the body of the vest has been knit to desired length, the armholes can be shaped. The armholes are shaped by first binding off stitches at both sides and then by making decreases. If these decreases are made in the first and last stitches, it will be difficult to pick up stitches for the armhole band. In this pattern, there are two stitches before the decreases at the right edge and two stitches after decreases at the left side.

The vest will look better if the decreases are mirrored. This means that the decreases at each side slant in the opposite direction. Most patterns call for "blended" decreases. Blended decreases slant in the same direction as the shaping. SSK decreases are used at the right side and K2tog decreases are used at the left side.

Shaping the Armholes: BO 5 sts at beg of next 2 rows, 3 sts at beg of next 2 rows − 89 (97, 105, 113, 121) sts.
Dec Row: K2, ssk, work in Pat as est to last 4 sts, k2tog, k2. Rep Dec Row every RS row 4 times more (a total of 5 times) − 79 (87, 95, 103, 111) sts. Rep Dec Row EOR 5 (5, 6, 8, 8) times − 69 (77, 83, 87, 95) sts. Work in Pat as est until armpholes meas 8 (8, 8 1/2, 9, 9 1/2)" ending on WS row.

Shaping the Shoulders with Short Rows

Short rows are used to shape the shoulders. The pattern will guide you through this process. If you have not worked short rows before, you may want to research this topic additionally. The magazine's Reference Section provides sources for short row techniques.

K7P1 pattern with the purl of the row. A lifted increase is used as it is more invisible. Remember, since a lifted increase is made in an existing stitch, the abbreviation for this increase includes the stitch and the increase.

With larger needles, work as follows:

Est Pat: K4, *p1, k7; rep from * to last 4 sts. P1, inc1, k2
- 105 (113, 121, 129, 137) sts.
Row 1 (WS): P4, *k1, p7; rep from * to last 5 sts. K1, p4.
Row 2: K4, *p1, k7; rep from * to last 5 sts. P1, k4.
Work in Pat as est until piece meas 13 (13, 13 1/2, 14, 14 1/2)" ending on a WS row.

Shaping the Armholes

Once the body of the vest has been knit to desired length, the armholes can be shaped. The armholes are shaped by first binding off stitches at both sides and then by making decreases. If these decreases are made in the first and last stitches, it will be difficult to pick up stitches for the armhole band. In this pattern, there are two stitches before the decreases at the right edge and two stitches after decreases at the left side.

The vest will look better if the decreases are mirrored. This means that the decreases at each side slant in the opposite direction. Most patterns call for "blended" decreases. Blended decreases slant in the same direction as the shaping. SSK decreases are used at the right side and K2tog decreases are used at the left side.

Shaping the Armholes: BO 5 sts at beg of next 2 rows, 3 sts at beg of next 2 rows − 89 (97, 105, 113, 121) sts.
Dec Row: K2, ssk, work in Pat as est to last 4 sts, k2tog, k2. Rep Dec Row every RS row 4 times more (a total of 5 times) − 79 (87, 95, 103, 111) sts. Rep Dec Row EOR 5 (5, 6, 8, 8) times − 69 (77, 83, 87, 95) sts. Work in Pat as est until arumpholes meas 8 (8, 8 1/2, 9, 9 1/2)" ending on WS row.

Shaping the Shoulders with Short Rows

Short rows are used to shape the shoulders. The pattern will guide you through this process. If you have not worked short rows before, you may want to research this topic additionally. The magazine's Reference Section provides sources for short row techniques.

K7P1 pattern with the purl stitches in the ribbing, this stitch is increased at the end of the row. A lifted increase is used as it is more invisible. Remember, since a lifted increase is made in an existing stitch, the abbreviation for this increase includes the stitch and the increase.

With larger needles, work as follows:

Est Pat: K4, *p1, k7; rep from * to last 4 sts. P1, inc1, k2
- 105 (113, 121, 129, 137) sts.
Row 1 (WS): P4, *k1, p7; rep from * to last 5 sts. K1, p4.
Row 2: K4, *p1, k7; rep from * to last 5 sts. P1, k4.
Work in Pat as est until piece meas 13 (13, 13 1/2, 14, 14 1/2)" ending on a WS row.

Shaping the Armholes

Once the body of the vest has been knit to desired length, the armholes can be shaped. The armholes are shaped by first binding off stitches at both sides and then by making decreases. If these decreases are made in the first and last stitches, it will be difficult to pick up stitches for the armhole band. In this pattern, there are two stitches before the decreases at the right edge and two stitches after decreases at the left side.

The vest will look better if the decreases are mirrored. This means that the decreases at each side slant in the opposite direction. Most patterns call for "blended" decreases. Blended decreases slant in the same direction as the shaping. SSK decreases are used at the right side and K2tog decreases are used at the left side.

Shaping the Armholes: BO 5 sts at beg of next 2 rows, 3 sts at beg of next 2 rows − 89 (97, 105, 113, 121) sts.
Dec Row: K2, ssk, work in Pat as est to last 4 sts, k2tog, k2. Rep Dec Row every RS row 4 times more (a total of 5 times) − 79 (87, 95, 103, 111) sts. Rep Dec Row EOR 5 (5, 6, 8, 8) times − 69 (77, 83, 87, 95) sts. Work in Pat as est until armpholes meas 8 (8, 8 1/2, 9, 9 1/2)" ending on WS row.

Shaping the Shoulders with Short Rows

Short rows are used to shape the shoulders. The pattern will guide you through this process. If you have not worked short rows before, you may want to research this topic additionally. The magazine's Reference Section provides sources for short row techniques.

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To work short rows you turn the work before reaching the end of the row. To avoid a hole at the turn, it is necessary to wrap the stitch when the short rows are worked, the wrap is knit (or purled) with the stitch. This closes the hole.

Shaping the Shoulders: Row 1 (RS): Work in Pat as est to last 7 sts. Sl next st to right needle, bring yarn to front, sl st back to left needle. Turn.
Row 2: Work in Pat as est to last 7 sts. Bring yarn to front, sl next st to right needle, move yarn to the back, sl st back to the left needle. Turn.
Row 3: Work in Pat as est to last 15 sts. Sl next st to right needle, bring yarn to front, sl st back to left needle. Turn.
Row 4: Work in Pat as est to last 15 sts. Bring yarn to front, sl next st to right needle, move yarn to the back, sl st back to the left needle. Turn.
Row 5: Work in Pat as est to the first wrapped st. *Insert right needle into the wrap and the st and knit them tog. **Work in Pat as est to next wrapped st. Rep from * to **. Work to end of row. Turn.
Row 6: Work in Pat as est to the first wrapped st. *Lift wrap from behind and place on left needle. Purl wrap and st tog. **Work in Pat as est to the next wrapped st. Rep from * to **. Work to end of row. Turn. BO.

Front
The front is worked much the same as the back. To maintain the K7P1 ribbing pattern over the seams, it is necessary to have 2 additional stitches. The armholes and shoulders are shaped as for the back. The v-neck is shaped by binding off the center stitch and then making blended decreases at both sides of the neckline. At some point before beginning the armhole shaping, place markers on either side of center stitch.

Shaping the Armholes and the Neckline
The armholes for the front are shaped as for the back but at the same time it is necessary to shape the neckline as well. The neckline is shaped by binding off the center stitch. Decreases are then made at each edge. Some knitters work one side of the neckline first but most knitters find it easier to attach a second ball of yarn. Once you divide the stitches the working yarn cannot be carried from side to side. A new ball of yarn must be attached. As for the armholes, blended decreases are made every RS row.

Front
Bottom Ribbing – With smaller needles and long tail technique, CO 106 (114, 122, 130, 138) sts.
Row 1 (WS): P5, *k1, p7; rep from * to last 5 sts. K1, p5.
Row 2: K5, *p1, k7; rep from * to last 6 sts. P1, k5.
Place Markers: Work in Pat est for 53 (57, 61, 65, 69) sts. PM, work next st, pm. Work to end of row. Cont in Pat until piece meas 13 (13, 13 1/2, 14, 14 1/2)” ending on a WS row.

Shaping the Shoulders with Short Rows
The front shoulders are shaped as for the back but since the work is divided the procedure is slightly different. Instructions are provided for Left and Right shoulders. The terms “Left” and “Right” refer to the garment as worn.

Shaping the Shoulders
Row 1 (RS): Left Shoulder – Work in Pat as est to end of row.

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Right Shoulder - Work in Pat as est to last 7 sts. Sl next st to right needle, bring yarn to front, sl st back to left needle. Turn.
Row 2: Right Shoulder - Work in Pat to end of row. Left Shoulder - Work in Pat to last 7 sts. Bring yarn to front, sl next st to right needle, move yarn to the back, sl st back to the left needle. Turn.
Row 3: Left Shoulder - Work in Pat to end of row. Right Shoulder - Work in Pat to last 15 sts. Sl next st to right needle, bring yarn to front, sl st back to left needle. Turn.
Row 4: Right Shoulder - Work in Pat to end of row. Left Shoulder - Work in Pat to last 15 sts. Bring yarn to front, sl next st to right needle, move yarn to the back, sl st back to the left needle. Turn.
Row 5: Left Shoulder - Work in Pat as est to end of row. Right Shoulder - Work in Pat as est to the first wrapped st. *Insert right needle into the wrap and the st and knit them tog.** Work in Pat to the next wrapped st. Rep from * to **. Work to end of row. Turn.
Row 6: Right Shoulder - Work in Pat to end of row. Left Shoulder - Work in Pat to first wrapped st. *Lift wrap from behind and place on left needle. Purl wrap and st tog.** Work in Pat to next wrapped st. Rep from * to **. Work to end of row. Turn. BO.

**Finishing**

Finishing the vest requires seaming the shoulders and the side seams. Stitches must be picked up along the armholes and neckline. Note the pattern does not specify a number of stitches to be picked up. It is up to the knitter to determine how many stitches to pick up. One stitch should be picked up for every bound off stitch. To pick up stitches along a bound off edge, do not use the bound off edge. Instead, insert your needle in the stitch immediately below the bound off edge and pick up the stitch. Do not pick up a stitch in the "stair step" at the join of two bound off rows. Use the same rule. As for picking up stitches along rows or vertical edges, do not pick up a stitch for every row. Use the ratio which works best for you - 3 stitches for every 4 rows or 4 stitches for every 5 rows. You may want to try each ratio on the gauge swatch to see which one you like best. Since the armhole and neck bands will be K1P1 ribbing you should pick up an even number of stitches so that the pattern works out. Is it the end of the world if you pick up an odd number? No. You can knit or purl two stitches together at the end.

For any V-neckline, it is necessary to decrease stitches at the center. This vest has one center stitch so the best decrease to use is the S2k1p (or CDD) technique since it decreases two stitches while keeping the center stitch on top. Planning for how to work this decrease takes a bit of consideration. Use the rules above to pick up an even number of stitches but make sure the center stitch is a knit stitch. The S2k1p decrease uses this stitch and the two stitches on either side.

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**Finishing**

Sew the shoulder seams using the Invisible Horizontal Seaming technique. Use the Mattress Stitch to seam the sides tog. Refer to the Reference Section for sources for these techniques.

Armphole Bands: With circular needles, beg at the armhole seam, pick up an even number of sts around the armhole following the instructions above. (The magazine's Reference Section provides information about how to pick up sts.)

Neckband: With circ needle, beg at right shoulder seam, pick up an even number of sts around the neckband. Be sure to properly pick up the center st. It was bound off while shaping the neckline. Don't use the bind off edge. When picking up that st, place your needle in the center of the st, not the loops from the bind off. Before working the first rnd, make sure that the center st will be a knit stitch. Place markers around the sts to the right and left of this st. Work 1 rnd, Dec Rnd: Work in Pat to marker. Sl next two sts tog as if for a K2tog. Knit the next st. Sl the two sts tog over this st. (S2k1p or CDD). Work to the end of the rnd. It is not necessary to keep the markers in place after the first dec but should you choose to, remember to shift them one st to the right and left after the dec. Rep the Dec Rnd until the band meas 1", BO. Block and weave in ends.