KNITTING 911:
KNITTING EMERGENCIES HAPPEN

KNOW HOW TO CORRECT YOUR KNITTING MISTAKES!

by Binka Schwan

Dropped Stitches in Stockinette

Do you remember the game Chutes and Ladders? It was always a quick trip down the chute and a careful step-by-step up to the top of the ladder. Believe it or not, we can equate that children's game to a dropped stitch in our knitting. When a stitch drops through several rows of knitting, the fabric takes on the appearance of a ladder with a "rung" left at each row of knitting. The stitches on either side of this rung become the upright portions of the ladder. A stitch that accidentally drops from the needle can often quickly fall vertically through many rows of knitting, just like falling down a chute. But, that dropped stitch can easily be rescued as it is "laddered up", rung by rung, to the working row on the needle.

Fixing a single dropped stitch is very easy to do. The technique that will be discussed here will not only help you to fix dropped stitches, but also twisted stitches, split stitches, incorrectly knit pattern stitches, and even an extra stitch if caught soon enough. This article will concentrate on how to fix dropped/errant stitches in Stockinette and Reverse Stockinette fabric.

Let's talk about Stockinette first. The public side of the Stockinette fabric should be facing you as you locate the dropped stitch. The dropped stitch can be on the row that is being worked, on the row below the working row, or many rows below. There are tools that are needed to help you fix a dropped stitch. As soon as the stitch is discovered, and depending on where in your knitting that stitch is, you may need to place a safety pin or locking stitch marker in the stitch so that it will not unravel any further. Slippery yarns may drop very quickly, but "stickier" yarns such as wool may not drop as fast. Depending on how far down the dropped stitch has fallen, either the working knitting needles or a crochet hook will be needed to help rescue the stitch. The next step is to reach the location of the dropped stitch. You will need to either knit to the location of the dropped stitch or unknit back to the stitch.

First, let's talk about a dropped stitch that is located on the CURRENT row of knitting.

Figure 1. Once the dropped stitch is noticed, it is best to unravel the last row of knitting back to the point of the dropped stitch. Take the right knitting needle and place it into the live stitch, from front to back. Then put that stitch back on the left needle. Make certain that the stitch is placed on the needle with the correct stitch orientation so that when it is knit the stitch does not become twisted. Once the stitch is rescued and it is placed correctly on the left needle, continue knitting across the row.

Figure 2 shows Stockinette fabric with a dropped stitch on the ROW BELOW the current row of knitting and how it is fixed. This time there is a live stitch and one "rung" of a ladder that need attention. Again, the working right knitting needle can be used to capture the stitch. Pick up the stitch with the right needle from front to back so that it is not twisted. Next, insert the right needle under the rung of the ladder and place it up on the needle behind the live stitch. You will now have the live stitch AND the rung or strand on the right needle. Finally, as you would do when binding off, take the live stitch with the left needle and bind it off over the strand. The rung of the ladder (strand) then becomes the rescued stitch. Be sure to slip the repaired stitch back to the left needle and check to make sure it is untwisted before you work it.

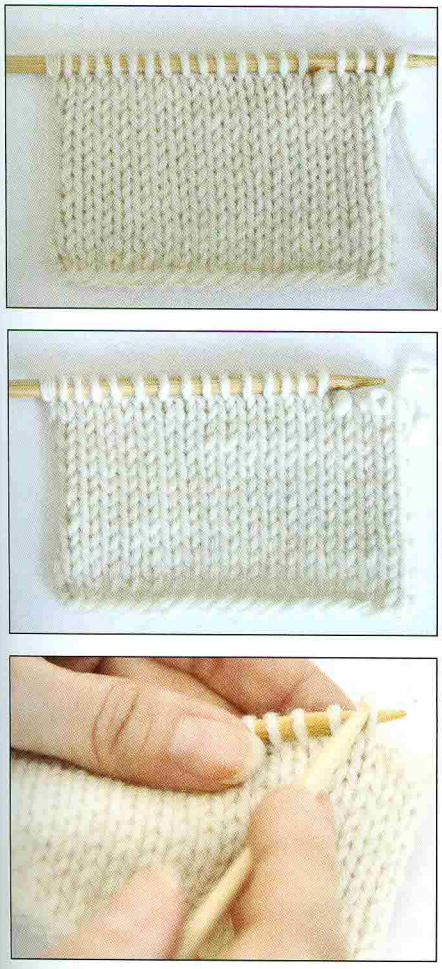
The final scenario is when the dropped stitch has fallen many rows below the current row. This can be seen in **Figure 3**. I prefer to use a crochet hook that is smaller in size than the working knitting needles. The smaller crochet hook will be easier to insert into the live stitches. The crochet hook should be inserted into the front of the dropped stitch, making certain the stitch has not become twisted. The dropped stitch should be sitting in front of the rung of the ladder making certain that you are at the lowest rung of the ladder. With the crochet hook in the live stitch, point it upward and hook the strand from below and bring that strand through the live stitch. There is now a new stitch on the crochet hook and the next strand is ready to be captured and pulled through to form a new stitch. Make certain that you have repositioned the crochet hook after

pulling the strand so that you are in the correct position for each subsequent strand to avoid twisting the stitch.

Continue up the ladder, forming new stitches from each rung of the ladder until there are no more strands to pick up. The final stitch on the crochet hook should be placed on the left needle, in the correct orientation, to be ready to knit. Make certain that you turn your work over to look at the non-public side to be sure that all the rungs of the ladder have been picked up. You do not want an errant strand of yarn left behind!

If there are many rows that have been dropped, it may be necessary to manipulate the repaired stitches after they have been laddered up. The stitches should all be of uniform size across every row. The technique of manipulating stitches was discussed in a previous article of this series.

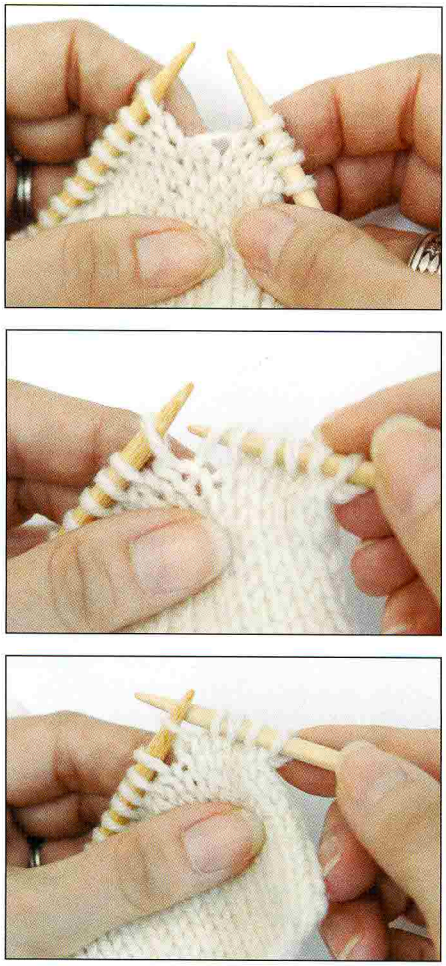
Figure 1
Dropped stitch on current row of knitting.



We have discussed how to repair dropped stitches in Stockinette fabric, with the knit side as the public side. But, what about Reverse Stockinette, where the purl side becomes the public side? As Maggie Righetti states in *Knitting in Plain English*, p.180, there is a way to pick up a dropped stitch on the purl side of the fabric, but it is a bit more difficult and cumbersome. She turns her Reverse Stockinette fabric over to the non-public knit side and repairs the stitches as described above on the knit side. I agree with her. It is much easier to repair on the knit side and I use that technique all the time. Just remember that the purl side is the public side in Reverse Stockinette. Any forgotten rungs of the ladder will be very obvious if left in place and not caught in time.

The next article in the series will discuss dropped stitches in garter, seed stitch, and other patterns.

Figure 2
Dropped stitch on row below current row of knitting showing stitch and rung of the ladder that needs to be picked up.



References
Knitting in Plain English, Maggie Righetti, St. Martin's Press, New York, NY, 2007.
Reader's Digest Knitter's Handbook, Montse Stanley, Reader's Digest, Pleasantville, NY 1993.
Vogue Knitting, Editors of Vogue Magazine, Sixth and Spring Books, New York, NY, 2002.
The Principles of Knitting, June Hemmons Hiatt, Simon and Schuster, New York, NY 1988.

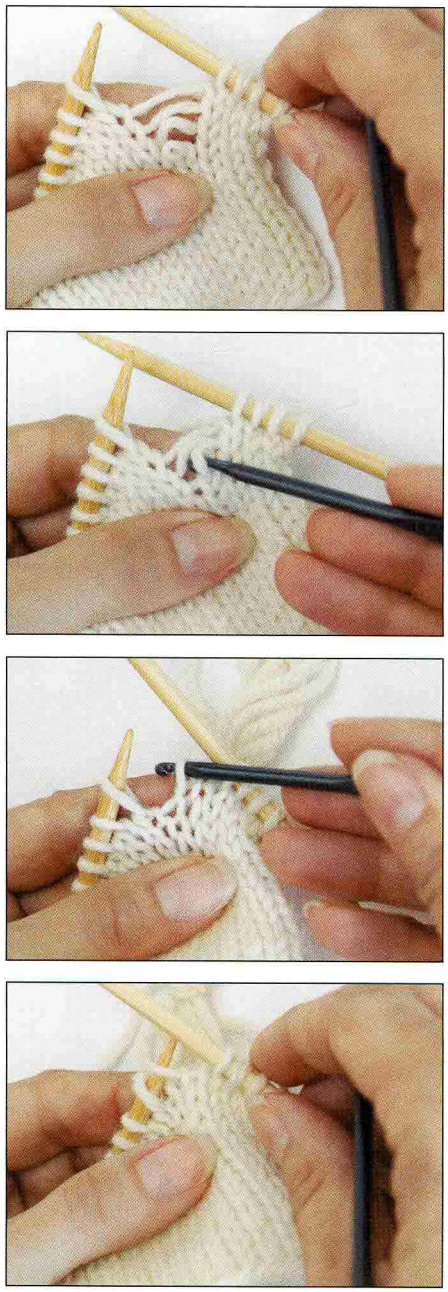



Figure 3
Dropped stitch many rows below the current row of knitting and how this stitch is recovered using a crochet hook.