

# Attached I-Cord

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### Special Topics in Finishing Spring 2024

Attached I-cord, also called applied I-cord, is a way of joining an I-cord to a finished edge of knitting as you're creating the I-cord. It makes a pretty and unobtrusive trim along cardigan fronts, sleeve cuffs, necklines, and any edge that could use a bit of refinement.

The technique is similar to the I-cord bind off, the main difference being that there are already live stitches when working an I-cord bind off, whereas the stitches need to be picked up when working an attached I-cord. The section below about keeping the I-cord flat is also applicable to the I-cord bind off.



Swatch 1

### How to Work It

I-cord is often worked on double-pointed needles so that you can easily slide the stitches to the other end of the needle to begin the next row. But you can also use straight needles or a circular needle. Rather than sliding the stitches, transfer the stitches from one needle to the other (without twisting) at the end of each row, in preparation for the next row. If the cable of your circular needle is short, you might prefer to slide the stitches.

Begin by casting on the number of stitches for the I-cord. This might be anywhere from 2 to 6 stitches. Long-tail cast on works well because once you slide the stitches to the other end of the needle, the knit side is facing, and the yarn is at the far end of the stitches, ready to work the first row.

To work attached I-cord, pull the working yarn from the last stitch, across the back of the I-cord, then knit all stitches to the last stitch of the I-cord. Slip the last stitch purlwise, pick up and knit 1 stitch in the fabric, pass the slipped stitch over, then slide the stitches to the other end of the needle. Repeat this sequence to create the attached I-cord.

## Some Refinements

If you have more than 3 or 4 stitches in your I-cord, there can be a gap on the wrong side where the yarn is pulled from the last stitch to the first. To fix this, work the first I-cord stitch as usual, then insert the needle into the second stitch. Give a good pull on the working yarn and keep the tension while wrapping and completing the second stitch.

If this doesn't help, then—after finishing the I-cord—you could work a Make 1 (M1) at the base of the I-cord and ladder the new stitch up. This will take up the slack in the I-cord.

At the end of the I-cord (if not joining the beginning and end together), instead of binding off, run the yarn tail through the stitches on the needle (like finishing a hat) so the stitches don't splay. You can mirror this at the beginning of the I-cord by using the cast-on tail to gather those stitches. You could even begin with a provisional cast on, then remove it and gather the live stitches.

## Keeping It Flat

As with so many things in knitting, gauge is a factor with I-cord edgings. Because stitch gauge and row gauge are not the same, when working along a cast-on or bind-off edge, you cannot just pick up one stitch for each stitch and expect your I-cord to lie flat. For many stitch patterns, if you pick up one stitch for each stitch, your I-cord would be too short for the edge that it's attaching to, so the edge would pull in. You can see that in Swatch 2, below, where I've picked up one stitch for each stitch, and the I-cord falls forward. Contrast that with Swatch 1 where the I-cord lies flat. See the directions below for working I-cord on a horizontal edge.



Swatch 2

## Horizontal Edge

When working along a horizontal edge—for example, joining your I-cord to the cast-on or bind-off edge—the rows of I-cord will be attaching to stitches on the main fabric. In this case, you should use the stitch gauge of the fabric and the row gauge of your I-cord to determine a pick-up ratio.

For example, if the gauge of your main fabric is 18 stitches per 4", and your I-cord row gauge is 24 rows per 4", then the ratio would be 18 to 24. This means you would pick up 18 stitches for every 24

rows of I-cord. Those are big numbers. It's more manageable to reduce this ratio by dividing each number by their greatest common factor: in this case, 6. If you divide each number by 6, you'll have 3 to 4, which means you'll pick up 3 stitches for every 4 rows of I-cord.

There are a couple of ways to accomplish this. One way is to work 3 rows of attached I-cord, then work 1 row of unattached I-cord. (To make unattached I-cord, work all of your I-cord stitches, but don't do any slipping, picking up, or passing over; just slide the stitches to the other end of the needle.) You can see an example of this along the top right of Swatch 1.

Another way is to work 3 rows of attached I-cord, then work 1 row of attached I-cord into the same stitch as the previous attached I-cord row. You can see an example of this along the top left of Swatch 1. On my sample, the unattached rows are more obvious than the attached rows, but you may find the opposite to be true depending on your yarn and stitch pattern.

Sometimes the ratio doesn't work out as nicely as 3 to 4 or 2 to 3. If your pattern stitch gauge is 20 stitches per 4" and your I-cord row gauge is 28 stitches per 4", then your ratio would be 20 to 28, or 5 to 7. In this case, you need to work 2 unattached rows over 7 rows (or work 2 rows in which you join to the same stitch as the previous row). It's best to distribute those 2 unattached rows, rather than doing them both at the same spot. So, you might work 3 rows of attached I-cord, then 1 row unattached, then 2 rows attached, then 1 row unattached. This would give you 5 attached rows and 7 total rows.

### **Changing Row Gauge**

Instead of figuring a pick-up ratio, you could change the row gauge of your I-cord to match the stitch gauge of your fabric. Usually this would mean using a larger needle and doing some experimentation. This might be a good method when you are using a different yarn for the I-cord than you used for the main fabric. If your I-cord yarn is a little thicker, you might be able to get a good gauge. If it is thinner, you might want to hold it double.

### **Vertical Edge**

When working along a vertical edge—joining your I-cord to the ends of rows—you can usually pick up one stitch for each row. Because the rows on the I-cord are going in the same direction as the rows of the main fabric, the I-cord will lie flat (assuming the same row gauge).

### **Working Around a Perimeter**

To work attached I-cord all the way around a piece (for example, a blanket), you could begin with a provisional cast on, work the I-cord around the edge, then graft the end of the I-cord to the beginning. If you begin with a provisional cast on, make sure to knit the waste yarn stitches with the working yarn before beginning the I-cord.

To make the I-cord lie flat around a corner, either work a couple of rows of unattached I-cord at the corner (as seen in the upper right corner of Swatch 2), or work two rows of attached I-cord into the

last stitch of one edge and the first stitch of the next edge (as in both upper corners of Swatch 1).

It's easier to make the corner look smooth and continuous if you don't begin your I-cord at a corner. Start a few stitches away or choose a different unobtrusive spot.

### **Contrasting Color**

When working attached I-cord using a contrasting color, after slipping the last stitch of the I-cord, make a yarn over, then pick up and knit a stitch in the fabric. When passing the slipped stitch over, pass both the yarn over and the slipped stitch over. The yarn over keeps the base fabric from showing through. In Photo 3 you can see where I've added the yarn over and where I have not.

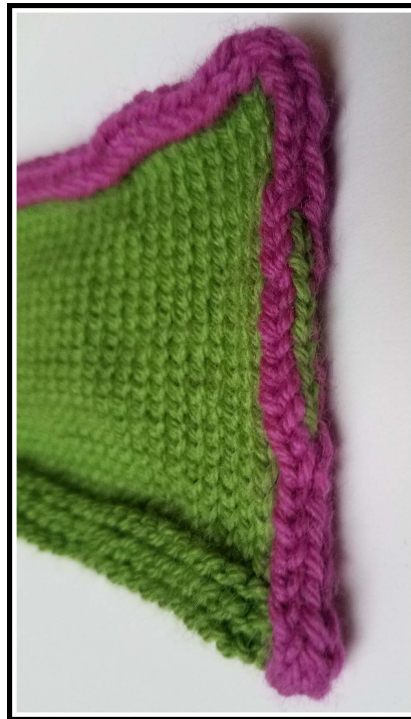


Photo 3

### **Buttonholes**

Attached I-cord can be used in different ways to make buttonholes along an edge. One method is to work attached I-cord to the point where you'd like the buttonhole to start, then work unattached I-cord until the unattached section is a little shorter than the diameter of the button. Resume working attached I-cord, skipping enough of the edge of the main fabric so that the I-cord lies flat. This produces a slit between the I-cord and the main fabric. This slit can be used as a buttonhole.

Another method is to work as above, but when you are ready to begin attaching again, rather than skipping part of the edge of the main fabric, attach in the stitch or row adjacent to the last attached I-cord row. This produces a loop of I-cord that protrudes from the edge of the main fabric. Make sure that the I-cord loop is large enough for the button to fit through.

## **Conclusion**

Attached I-cord is a simple and pretty edging for knitted pieces. I hope you now have some ideas for adding an I-cord edge to your knitting!