

Picking Up Stitches Along a Curved Edge

by Binka Schwan

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This is the third of three Skill Building articles that will address picking up stitches on various edges of a knitted garment. We've already covered horizontal and vertical edges, and this article will cover curved edges. As with horizontal and vertical edges, the key to picking up stitches on a curved edge is to know where to pick them up and how many to pick up. Curved edges are primarily at necklines and armholes. These edges are composed of both bound-off and selvedge stitches, so it is important to remember how to correctly pick up stitches at these edges.

The first Skill Building article on picking up stitches described how to do so on a horizontal edge. This was published in the Winter 2023 *Cast On* and can be found [here](#). Picking up stitches on a horizontal edge is easy since for every bound-off stitch, one stitch is picked up.

When picking up stitches on a selvedge or vertical edge, a ratio is used, and one stitch is not picked up for every row. Please refer to the second Skill Building article on picking up stitches, on a vertical edge, that was in the Spring 2024 issue of *Cast On*; it can be found [here](#). This article describes how to determine the correct ratio of picking up stitches along the vertical edge. The ratio for picking up stitches on a curved edge is similar to that for a vertical edge, but it is important to note that some tweaking of this ratio may need to occur so that the band lies flat. Too many stitches picked up will cause the band to splay outward, and too few will cause it to pull inward.

Figure 1 shows a swatch with both bound-off and selvedge stitches that are horizontal, curved, and vertical. This swatch mimics the left neckline on a pullover sweater, and stitches will be picked up at these edges to make a single rib band.

In Figure 1, you can see that the horizontal portion of this swatch has bound-off stitches, but the stair-step bind off makes it curved or sloped. This swatch also shows arrows pointing to the 3 different sections. The vertical arrows at the right side of the swatch show the horizontal bound-off stitches. The two horizontal arrows frame the portion of the swatch where left-leaning decreases were used to continue the curve, and the section above the top horizontal arrow to the end of the swatch show the vertical edge where no decreases were used, and the curve has stopped.

When working a garment where decreases will be used as shown in Figure 1, remember that the decreases should never be worked at the selvedge edge. In the example swatch shown here, the decreases were worked in the second and third stitches at the neck edge. There is a selvedge stitch followed by the decrease. Therefore, the stitches should be picked up between the selvedge and the decrease. The decreases are not affected and become a decorative part of the garment.

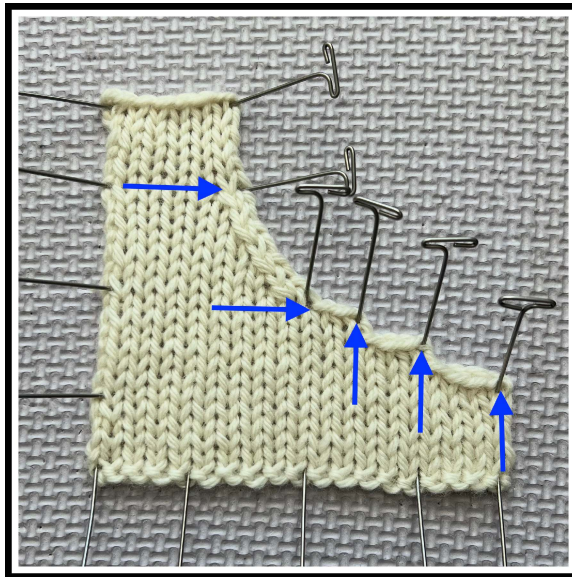


Figure 1. Curved edge swatch

In the Summer issue of *Cast On*, the Skill Building article discussed how to seam stair-step edges. I suggest you also refer to this Skill Building article for more information about stair steps. It can be found [here](#). This article is a good reference for not only seaming but also for picking up stitches in a stair-step edge. One of the problems with a stair-step edge is that holes are created at the stair steps, and, just as in seaming, the holes can cause a problem when picking up stitches.

Figure 2 shows an example of a stair-step edge. In Figure 2, the arrows point to the holes. Note that these holes are between stitches and not within a stitch. Many knitters think that the stitches should be picked up in the holes, but that will only make the holes larger and very visible. Stitches should always be picked up in the center of an existing stitch and not between stitches. By picking the stitches up across the hole, either within each stitch as on a horizontal edge, or between a selvedge stitch and next stitch as on a vertical edge, the holes will be closed.

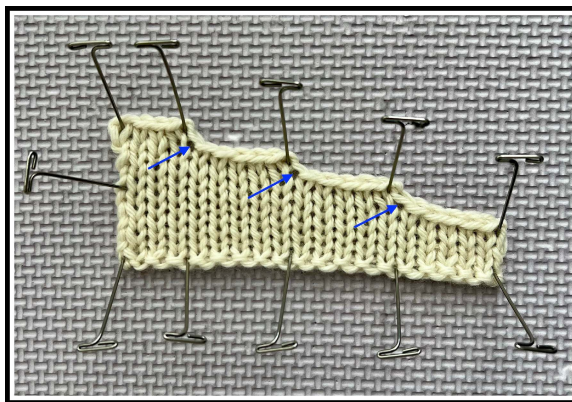


Figure 2. Stair-step bind off swatch

Figure 3 shows the original swatch where I have picked up 10 stitches from the stair-step, bound-off edge. You can see in this figure that all stitches that were picked up flow from the center of a stitch in the column directly below the bind-off edge and not between stitch columns. I stretched this swatch

so that you could see the hole between the last picked-up stitch and where the decreases begin on the swatch. Ten stitches were picked up, with the blue arrow pointing to the hole between the stitch columns. The red arrow shows where to pick up the next stitch. Horizontal pickups will change to vertical here, and the stitch should be picked up between the selvedge stitch and the next stitch, as described in the above referenced article on picking up stitches on a vertical edge. You are no longer picking up stitches within stitch columns, but between the selvedge stitch and the decrease stitch.

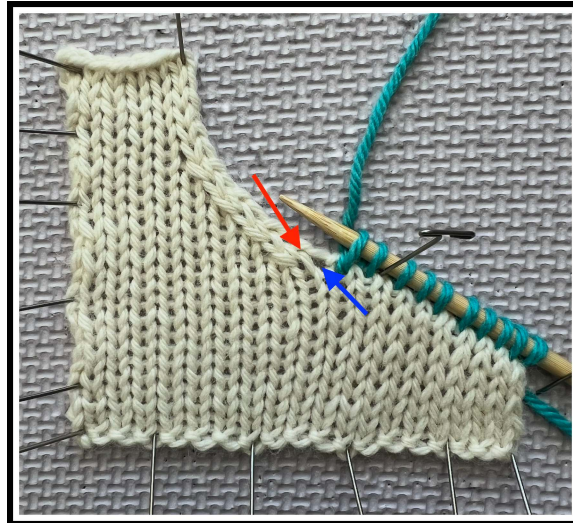


Figure 3. Horizontal pick-up edge changing to vertical

Figure 4 shows the completed swatch with all stitches picked up and a single rib band added. The band lies flat and all picked up stitches are coming from the correct stitch columns or rows. There are no holes.



Figure 4. Completed swatch with single rib band

Arenda Holladay has a [video](#) demonstrating picking up stitches on curved edges. Also see Arenda's [blog](#) on picking up stitches on a curved edge that corresponds to the video. Both the video and the blog are excellent, and I hope you watch them.

This is the final article in the miniseries explaining how to pick up stitches at horizontal, vertical and curved edges. The next article in the Skill Building series will be the first in a mini-series on weaving in yarn tails correctly.