

No-Roll Slipped Selvage

For manual single-bed knitting machines

By Brenda Bell

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What I wouldn't give to have a dollar for every time a new machine knitter has asked the question "How do I keep my edges from curling?". And each time the question is asked, there's always a discussion of the most common remedies:

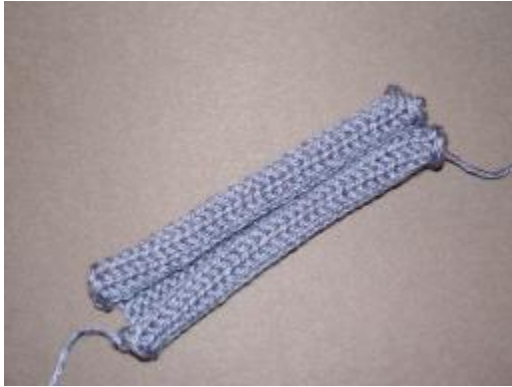
- Do a few rows of crochet around the edges
- Use an extra length of yarn to e-wrap a few needles on both edges before knitting each row
- Manually manipulate the edge stitches every other row to create a garter stitch edge

I think all of these methods are very effective, but there are cases where I'd prefer having alternatives. The crochet edge is nice on afghans, but seems to get in the way if you want fringe. E-wrapping the edge needles is easy, but I find it to be only marginally faster than converting one or two stitches from knit to purl.

I couldn't help thinking there are other fixes that are worth exploring. The technique described here is the result of a quick experiment.

The “Curl” Problem

A picture is worth a thousand words...



This should look quite familiar... an unsteamed 30 row x 30 stitch swatch knit in Caron's Simply Soft on a Studio SK-155 and left to rest overnight.



This is also a 30 row x 30 stitch swatch knit with the same yarn on the same machine using the same tension. The difference is in how the two edge stitches were manipulated while knitting.

The best part? This swatch hasn't been steamed either.

Instructions

Cut two lengths of yarn about 8 times the anticipated length of the knitting. If they're exceptionally long as for an afghan, wind each one around a small piece of cardboard to make them easier to manage; hook the yarn tail through a slit cut in the card to keep it secure.

Cast-on the required number of stitches, hang your weights and knit 1 row.

Pull the edge needle on the carriage side to hold position. Pull the 2nd needle from the edge opposite the carriage to hold position. Knit 1 row.

For each of the remaining rows, proceed as follows:

Using one of the extra lengths of yarn (shown here using a contrasting white), wrap the end needle opposite the carriage passing the yarn over the needle toward the carriage. Manually knit the end needle...



... and pull the 2nd needle to hold position.



Use the other extra length of yarn to wrap the 2nd needle from the edge on the carriage side; again, the yarn passes over the needle toward the carriage. Manually knit this needle...



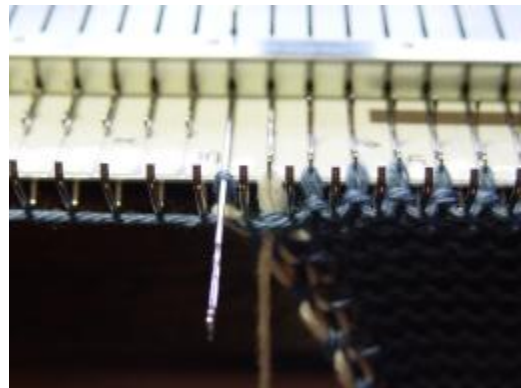
... and pull the edge needle to hold position. Note how the tuck stitch on the 2nd needle dropped off to form a purl-wise slip.



After knitting the row – in this case, from right to left – the HP needles contain floats and the manually knit needles contain stitches knit with the main yarn.



Now, knit the extra yarns and position the needles for the next pass of the carriage from left to right.



Continue wrapping and moving needles on every row. On the last row, wrap and knit the needles that are already in hold position, but do not pull any new needles to hold. This will give you a full row of stitches right before you bind off.

The following pictures illustrate what's happening on both sides of the fabric:



On the knit side, the use of a contrast thread makes it easy to see that the stitches on the two edge needles span two rows. This is barely noticeable when the extra yarns are the same as the main yarn.

On the purl side, the extra yarns are simply knitting their way up the edge while the main yarn slips every other row.

Tips

The technique will go surprisingly fast if you use a repetitive process that lets you develop a rhythm. For me, it's "wrap and knit, pull to hold" -- first on the side opposite the carriage, then on the carriage side, leaving my hand right next to the carriage ready to knit the next row.

When you introduce the extra lengths of yarn on the 3rd row, attach a clip to the working end of the yarn. It will put just enough tension on the yarn to keep those stitches stable. It also makes it a little easier to grab those yarns when you need them. If you're working with a slippery yarn, you'll probably want to knit several rows before attaching the clip.

Questions or comments?

Submit questions and comments via email to knitfits@theotherbell.com.

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