

By Kay Gardiner and Ann Shayne

Stockinette Curl Up: Disaster? Or Opportunity?

Dear Problem Ladies,

Is there a way to bind off (when knitting from the top down) so as to prevent stockinette stitch from curling up? Drives me crazy!

Curled Up on the Barcalounger

Dear Fetal Position Person,

Craving some order, are you? Wishing things weren't so warbly around the edges? Welcome to the club! Story of our lives!

The plain fact is that stockinette curls. The structure of the stitches is what causes this. All those V-shaped stitches, narrow at the bottom and wide at the top, cause an inexorable—and we mean inexorable—curling at the sides. Steam it, pin it, beat it with a skillet: it doesn't matter. When left alone, it will eventually return to its curly natural state.

We'll point out that a rolled edge can be quite attractive, but we sense somehow that you are not interested in a curling edge as a design feature. The closest we have come to achieving a flat edge on a stockinette garment is to make a knitted hem.

(image)

Hems like this are most often worked from the bottom up. This particular hem was worked that way. Here's how. Using a smaller needle, provisionally cast on your stitches. Work six rows of stockinette to form a facing, then switch to larger needles and knit one row (on the WS) to create a nice folding line (an excellent example of using the natural structure of stitches to do something cool like make a crisp edge in yarn). Then work six more rows of stockinette.

The next row is ultra-exciting. Place the provisional stitches on a needle, hold it alongside the left needle, and knit those provisional stitches together with the stitches on the left needle. So elegant! The curly tendencies of these two pieces of stockinette fabric cancel each other out, and you have a regular Switzerland of neutrality down there at the edge of your sweater.

This bottom-up hem is no help to you, we know, having started your sweater from the top.

However, you can get a similar result by working your hem as you arrive at the bottom of your garment.

We assume you're working in the round. When you arrive at the desired length for your body or sleeve, stop knitting and admire how nicely everything is coming along.

Next row: Begin making the facing for the hem. Purl 1 row. This will form a sharp fold line.

Next row: Using a smaller needle, knit 6 rows. This forms the hem facing. To finish this, either a) bind off all stitches, then whipstitch the facing to the WS of the work. Or if you want a slightly less bulky hem (and plenty of fiddliness), keep the stitches live, on waste yarn, and stitch them in place one by one.

This all assumes that you would rather die than have an edging of some non-curling stitch such as garter stitch or seed stitch or ribbing.



Knit Strong! Keep those cards and letters coming in to problemladies@twistcollective.com. Write a letter that Kay and Ann choose to answer in the fall issue and we'll send you a Twist Collective tape measure.