



Part 2 Average Gaffes

by Robin Melanson

In [part one](#) of this series, we discussed various methods of fixing minor knitting errors in ways that did not involve ripping out a whole lot of work. I am perhaps a lazy knitter; I do not like tearing out hours of effort (who does, really?) when there is a clever shortcut that will produce the same result with less of a headache. When I read Franklin Habit's [Process This](#), I immediately recognized myself as a product knitter, not a process knitter (exception: colorwork—I love to knit colorwork). Once is enough for me; I just want the darn sweater, thank you very much. If you too would like to reach the finish line faster, read on. We will focus on the mistakes that are usually made in cabled patterns and colorwork, and the best timesaving tricks to fix them.

Cable Repair

The crosses and twists that create the wonderful texture of cable designs can cause their share of headaches. Let's start with the crosses, which can be worked either left- or right-crossing. The stitches that pass in front determine the direction (left or right) of the cross. If you accidentally hold the cable needle to the front when you were meant to hold it to the back, your cable will be crossed in the wrong direction.

Twists too, can also be worked either left- or right-crossing. The knit stitches *a/ways* pass in front of the purl stitches in situations where the background is reverse stockinette and the pattern is made by the traveling knit stitches. If it twists to the right, you will encounter the purl stitches first and hold them to the back; if it twists to the left, you will encounter the knit stitches first and hold them to the front. If you accidentally cross the purl stitches in front of the knit stitches, there will be a definite interruption in the pattern, which you will likely find on the next right-side row. It's unlikely that you'll keep going unaware and have to fix one of these mis-twists very far down, because the next time you need to move that traveling cable, it will very apparently look "wrong."

If you made an error a few rows back (figure 1) and the cable pattern is columnar (as in each successive cable is worked over the same stitches) the fix is a fairly simple matter of dropping down the affected stitches to the row on which you crossed the cable (figure 2), rearranging the stitches so that they cross in the correct direction (figure 3), and then working the stitches back up again using the raveled strands of yarn (figure 4). This is most effective if there have not been subsequent crosses since the error was made. If you have to work back up, crossing subsequent cables after fixing the error, it becomes more likely that you could introduce new errors (such as working too many or too few plain rows between the crosses). If the pattern is a rambling one, where the cables travel quite a bit, intersecting with other rambling cables, this method is usually only the best answer if, a) the cable was mis-crossed just a few rows ago and, b) there have not been any subsequent crosses involving any of those stitches.



figure 1 *Rope cables on a background of reverse stockinette stitch, in which one has been mis-crossed three rows ago.*



figure 2 *Work is pulled back over the rope cable stitches only, to the point where the mistake was made.*



figure 3 *Rearrange the stitches in the correct orientation.*



figure 4 *Work the stitches back up correctly.*

If you catch an error later on and quite a bit of work has been done since the error was made (work that you would be rather devastated to rip out), don't despair, there are a couple of options to fix it. One involves cutting the yarn; the other does not. Both end with Kitchener stitch (grafting). The first method (cutting) produces a superior result and can be used on cables of any number of stitches. However, if you are uncomfortable with the idea of cutting the yarn, you may prefer the second method. It produces a bulkier result, but if the cable is relatively narrow (such as two stitches over two stitches) and the mistake is in an unobvious section, it will barely be noticeable.

Method 1

Locate the row on which the cable was worked (figure 5). You will see that the yarn tends to pull a bit at the side of the cable, where the stitches were stretched as they were crossed. Thread a strand of waste yarn into the row *below* this row (figure 6). Turn the piece upside down and thread another strand of waste yarn into the row *above* the cabled row (you should work into one more stitch on each side than you have in the cable, because these stitches are offset in relation to ones below the cabled row, which are in the normal orientation). Carefully cut the yarn of the cabled row in the *center* of the cable (figure 7) and pull the two sides out to the edge of the cable (figure 8). Put the lower stitches on a double-pointed needle (dpn) and rearrange them in the correct orientation (figure 9). Put the upper stitches on another dpn. With a new strand of yarn, graft the upper and lower stitches together using Kitchener stitch (figure 10). You must now secure the ends that you cut, as well as the ends of the new strand, by weaving them in carefully on the wrong side.



figure 5 *Rope cables on a background of reverse stockinette stitch, in which one has been mis-crossed many rows ago*



figure 6 Weave in waste yarn below and above the cabled row.



figure 7 Cut the strand at the center of the cable.



figure 8 *Pull out the yarn to each side of the cable.*



figure 9 Use a double-pointed needle to rearrange the stitches in the correct order.



figure 10 Graft stitches together correctly with Kitchener stitch, using a contrast color for clarity.

Method 2

Locate the row on which the cable was worked (figure 11). Put a dpn through the stitches that *should* have gone in front, working into the row below the cabled row (figure 12). Join a new strand of yarn and knit one row over the picked-up stitches (figure 13). Cut the yarn leaving a six-inch tail, ~~and graft the stitches you just knit to the row above the "old" cable (figure 14), so that it appears as though the cable were worked correctly.~~



figure 11 Rope cables on a background of reverse stockinette stitch, in which one has been mis-crossed many rows ago.



figure 12 *Put the stitches that should have been crossed in front on a double-pointed needle.*



figure 13 *Knit one row into the picked-up stitches, using contrast yarn for clarity*



figure 14 *Grafted new stitches to the other side of the cable, using contrast yarn for clarity.*

Common Errors in Colorwork

The most common colorwork misstep is knitting a stitch in the wrong color. It is easiest to make a mistake on the first row of colorwork, when you have no previously patterned stitches to act as a reference point. After the first row, even when you make a mistake, there is a tendency to self-correct if you are looking at the previous rows and you resume stacking the new stitches in the correct sequence.

~~If you only knit a few stitches in the wrong sequence (figure 15), and then continued in the proper~~

sequence (so that the stitches stack correctly upon earlier rows); you can fix the problem simply by duplicate stitching with the correct color over the incorrect color (figure 16).



figure 15 *A few stitches have been knit in the wrong color in a colorwork pattern.*



figure 16 Duplicate stitch with the correct color.

Sometimes it is not such an easy fix: if your sequence was something along the lines of "3 MC, 1 CC, 3 MC, 1 CC, 3 MC, 1 CC" and instead you stitched "3 MC, 1 CC, 1 MC, 1 CC, 3 MC, 1 CC " and repeated the "3 MC, 1 CC" all the way to the end, everything that follows after the error is not going to stack properly with previous or subsequent rows. In this case, you will have to rip back the work to the row before the error was made. A good way to do this is to weave a finer needle through all the stitches of the row to which you would like to return (figure 17), making sure that the right leg of each stitch is in the front. This is similar to using a lifeline while knitting lace, except that ~~you can decide after the fact where you would like that lifeline to be.~~ Since you are working in stockinette rather than a lace pattern, it is much easier to see which stitches belong to which row.

A finer needle is used because it is easier to work that needle into the tighter space you have when

trying to maneuver through previous work. Once you have the needle woven into the appropriate row, you can pull the working needle out of your knitting and rip out without fear that you will be spending three days picking up all those stitches and trying to sort out the main color and contrast color yarns (figure 18).



figure 17 Weave a finer needle through the row to which you would like to return.



figure 18 *Pull the work to that row.*

In the next issue, we'll explore how the methods introduced here— grafting and duplicate stitching— can be used to correct grave errors in construction.

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