



by Sandi Rosner

Many of our favorite designs feature an all-over pattern—lace, cables, or some other interesting texture. When the time comes to shape the waist, armholes, or neckline, you are expected to maintain the established pattern in spite of a changing stitch count.

In this issue, we'll take a detailed look at how to maintain a lace or cable pattern while increasing or decreasing.

Lace Patterns

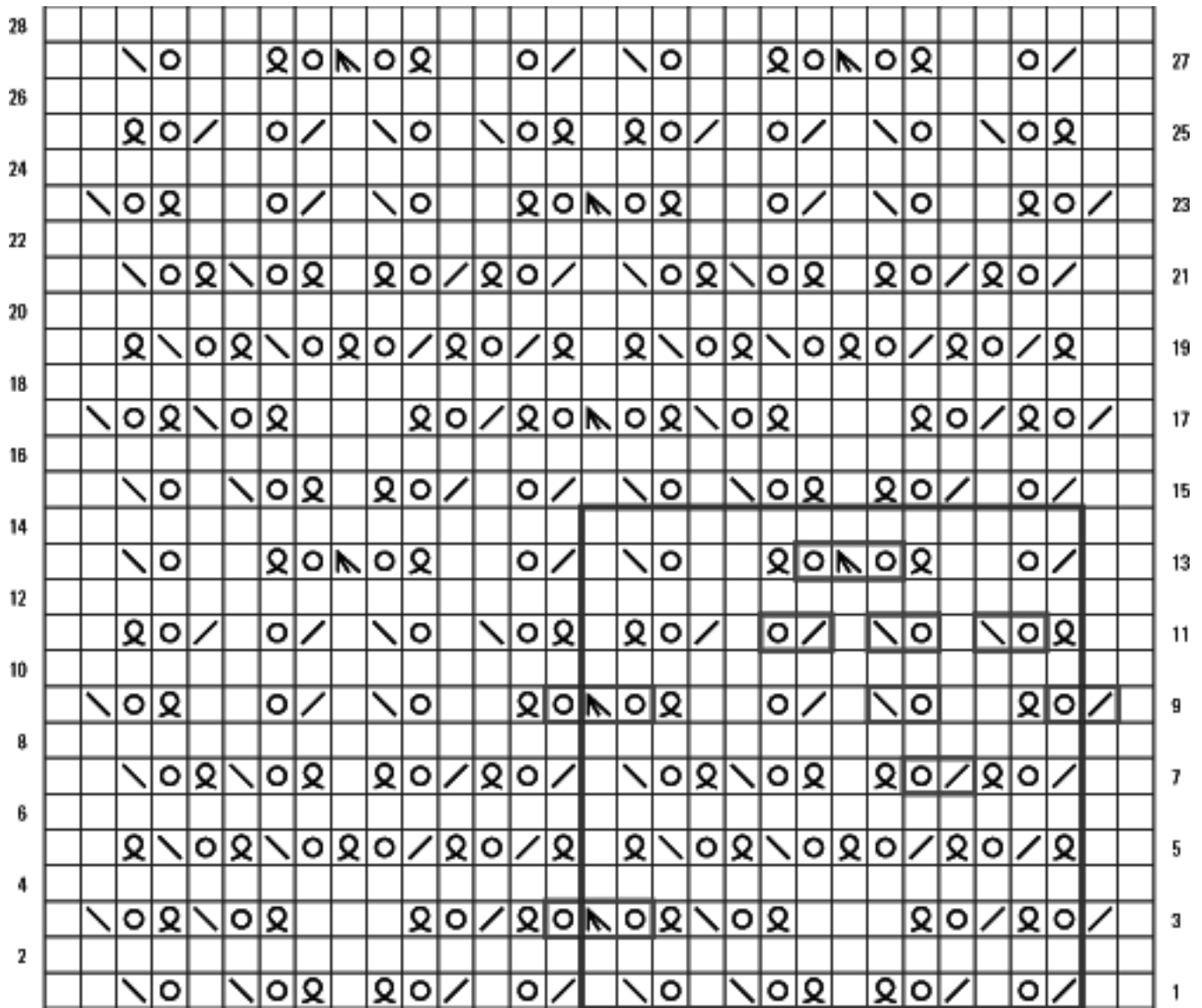
The defining feature of knitted lace is a pattern of decreases and accompanying yarn overs that create holes in the fabric. In order to maintain a consistent stitch count (and a consistent fabric width), most lace patterns group the yarn overs and decreases in pairs or sets. Each decrease is balanced by a corresponding yarn over.

Let's use my design from the Spring 2012 issue, [Sanderling](#), as an example. The chart on the top (Illustration 1) shows the pattern repeat. The blue boxes on the chart show the sets of corresponding increases and decreases. Double decreases are grouped with two yarn overs, since they decrease away two stitches. In the example, the decreases are right next to their corresponding yarn overs, but that's not always the case. In some lace patterns, a yarn over may be separated from its balancing decrease by several stitches. Don't let that throw you.

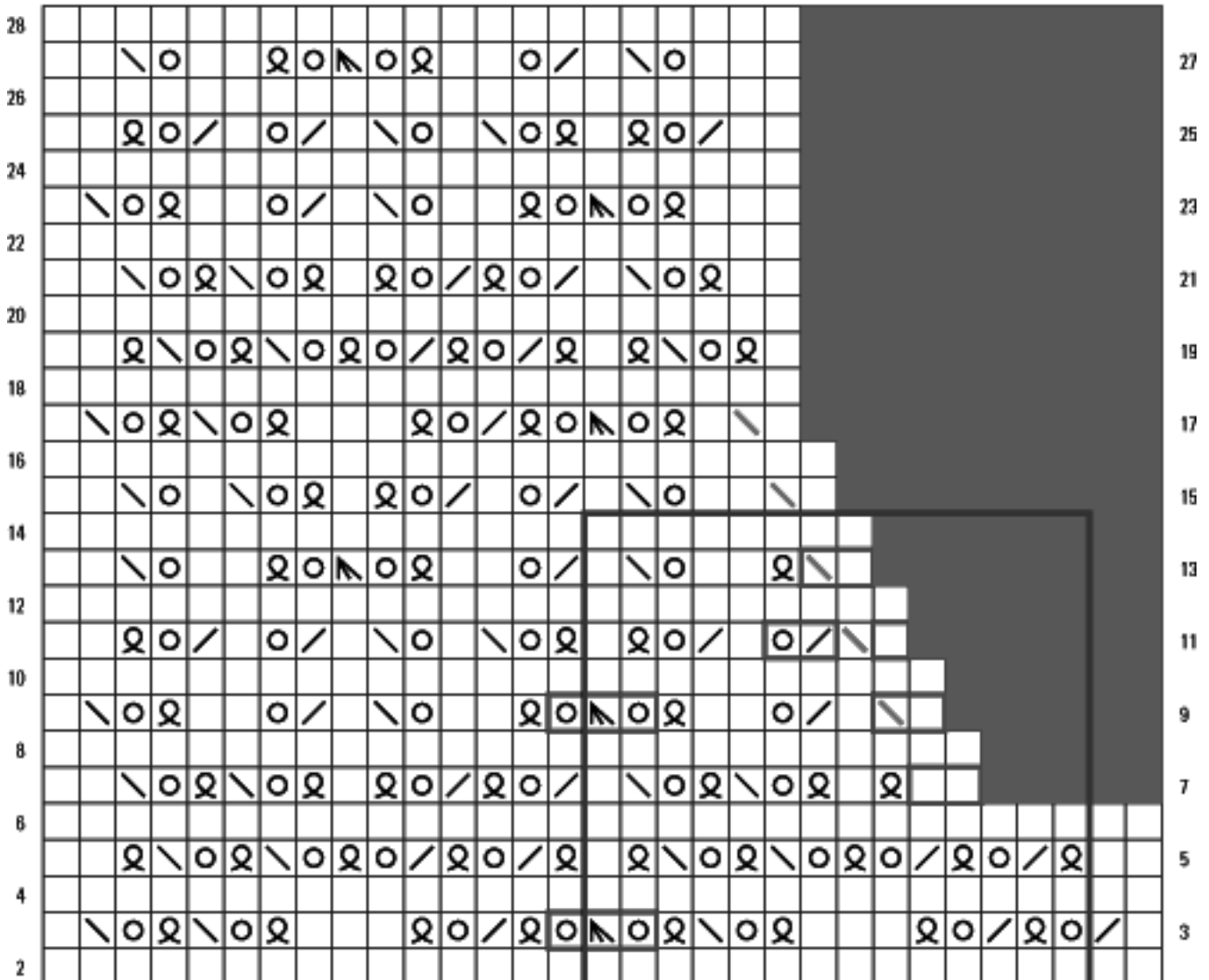
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Underarm in Lace Pattern



1. The chart on the top shows the pattern repeat. The chart on the bottom shows how the armhole shaping will intersect with this pattern.

Armhole and neck shaping usually calls for binding off some stitches, followed by a series of decreases. For this example, let's assume we need to bind off five stitches, then decrease every right side row four times.

The chart on the bottom (Illustration 1) shows how the armhole shaping would intersect with this pattern. In order to create a clean edge for seaming, decreases are worked one stitch in from the edge. The bind off brings us right to a yarn over/decrease pair, so we'll eliminate both of those. In Row 9, we've eliminated only a yarn over; the accompanying ssk becomes our shaping decrease. In Row 11, both the yarn over and the ssk have been eliminated. In Row 13, the shaping

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eliminates a set of two yarn overs and a double decrease. Yarn over/decrease pairs are again eliminated in Rows 15 and 17.

Once the shaping is complete, the clean edge for seaming is maintained. Decrease sets which are interrupted by the new edge, as in Rows 19-25, are eliminated.

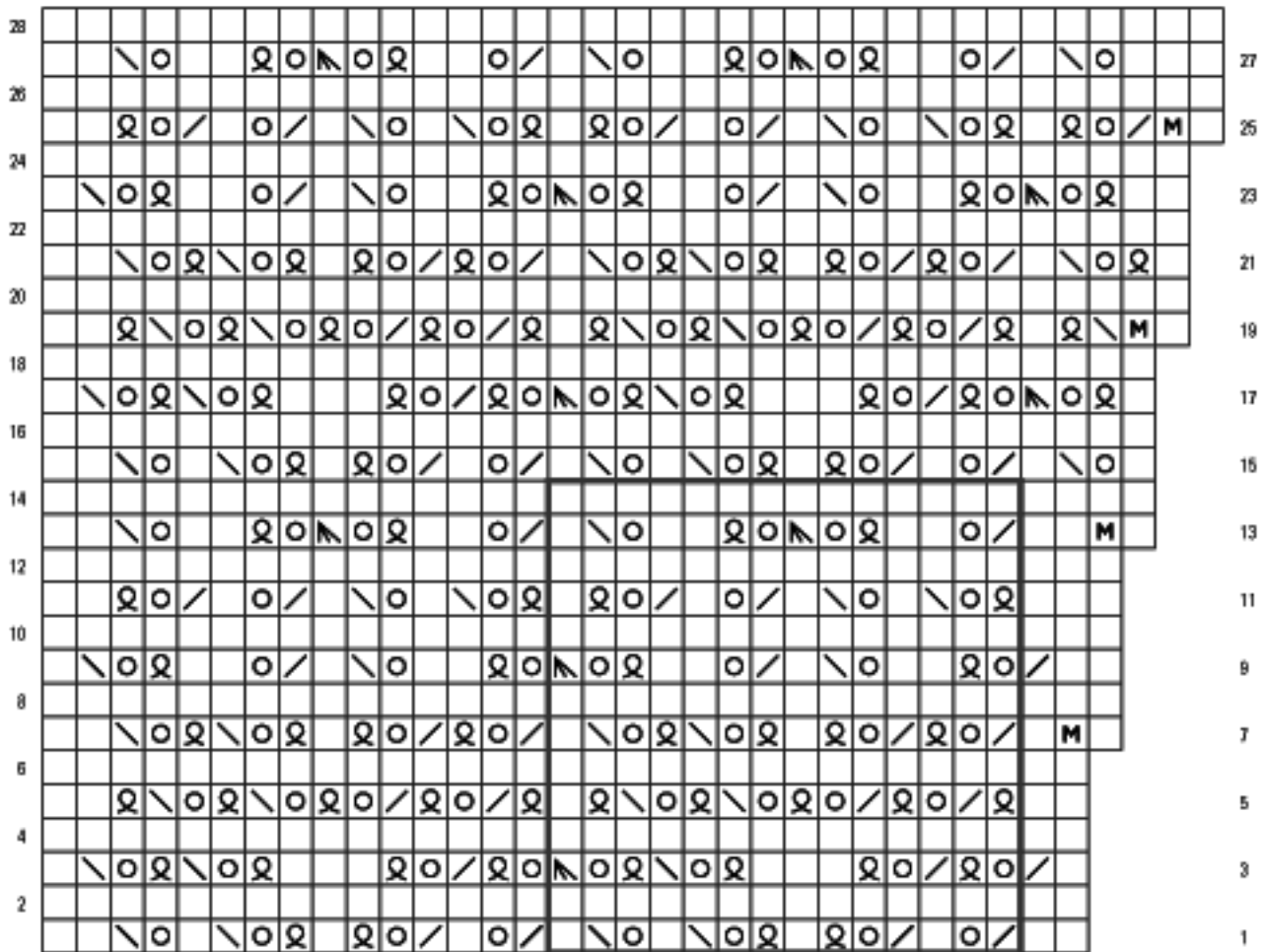
If you have trouble visualizing the impact of the shaping on the pattern while you are knitting, make a copy of your chart and mark out the shaping with colored pencils. Identify the yarn over/decrease pairs in the stitch pattern, draw in the shaping with a different color, and decide which of the pattern pairs will need to be modified or eliminated.

What about sleeves, where you need to increase instead of decrease in pattern? Using the same stitch pattern as our example, this chart (Illustration 2) shows increasing every sixth row (of course, you would mirror these increases on the other side of the sleeve).

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Sleeve Increases in Lace Pattern



2. This chart shows increasing every sixth row.

The pattern is extended as new stitches are added. In Row 15 there are enough new stitches to add a yarn over/decrease pair. By Row 23, we can change the k2tog/yarn over pair to a double decrease/2 yarn over set.

Again, colored pencils are invaluable tools. Draw in the increases, and then extend the lines of the pattern, keeping the edges clean for seaming.

Cable Patterns

Cable patterns present different challenges. When shaping interrupts a cable, the big question is, “to twist, or not to twist?” Let’s use a cable from Fiona Ellis’ [Breckenridge](#) as an example.

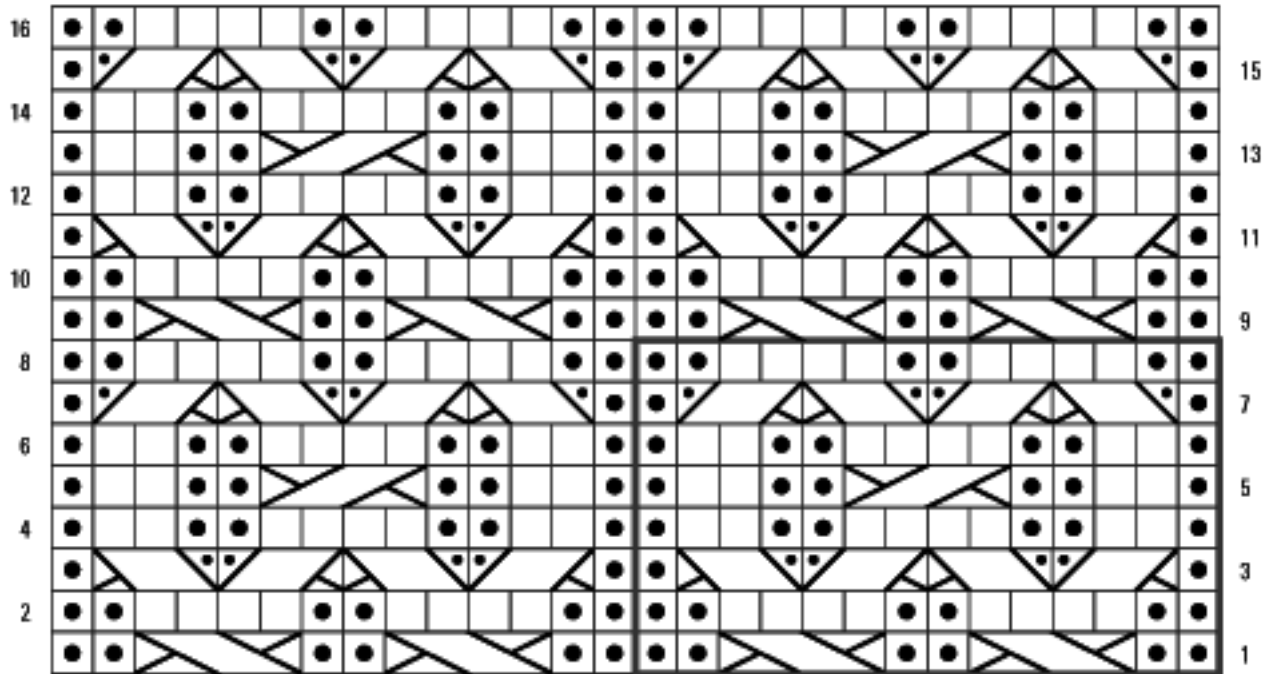
The chart on the top (Illustration 3) shows the original pattern. If the armhole instructions direct you

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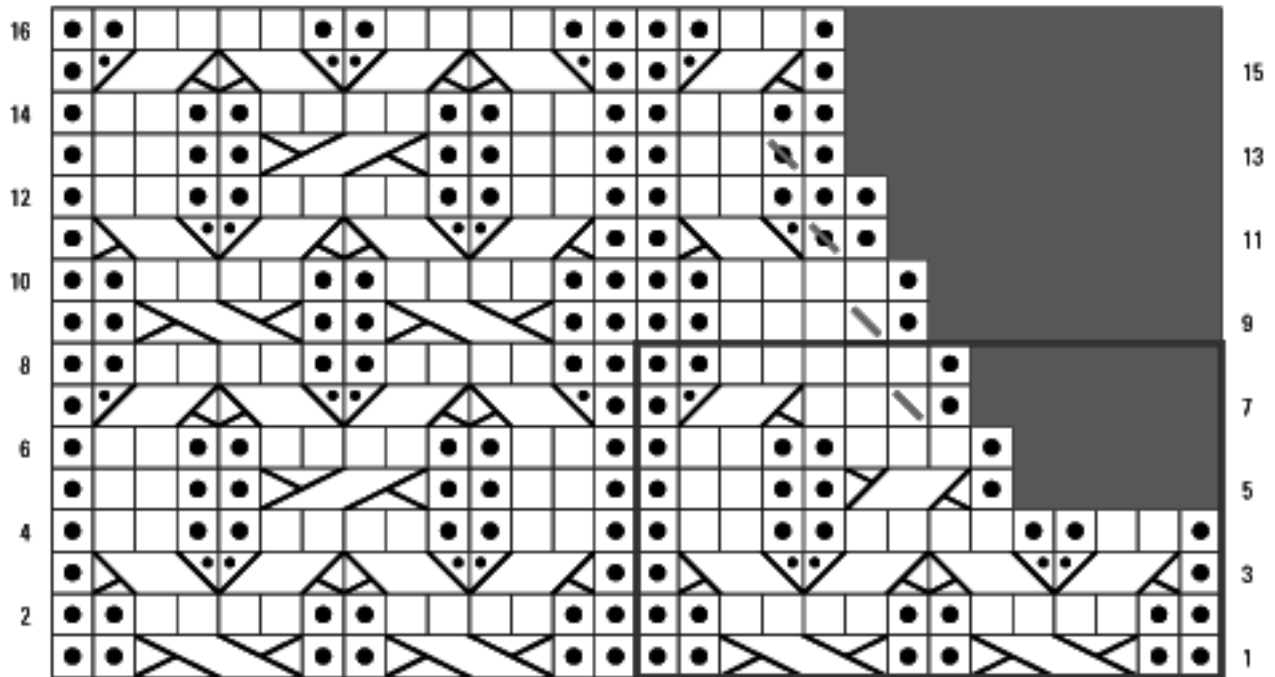
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to bind off five stitches, then decrease one stitch every other row four times, how does that impact the cables?



Underarm in Cable Pattern

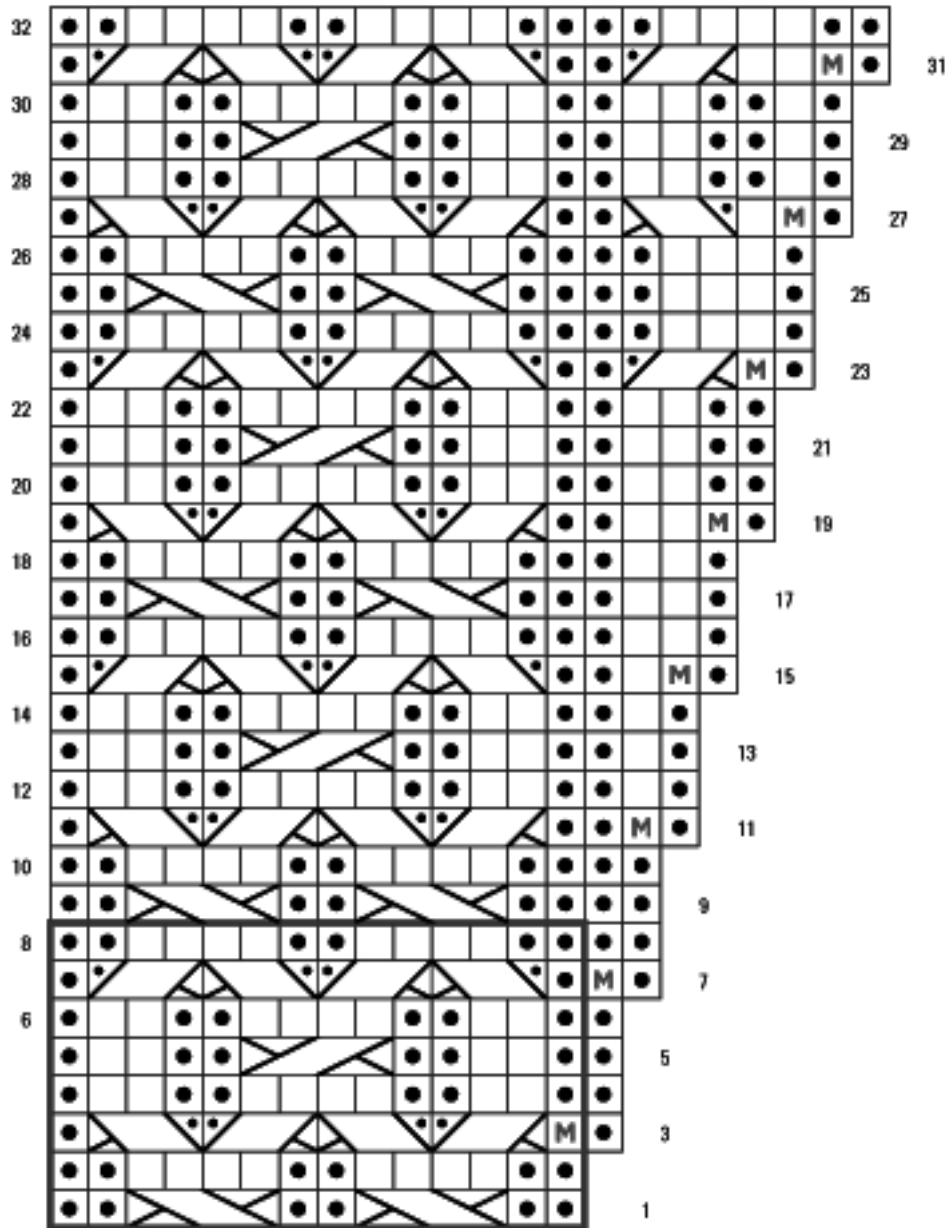


3. The chart on the top shows the original pattern. The chart on the bottom shows the armhole shaping.

Again, we want to keep a clean edge for seaming. In this case, Fiona has used reverse stockinette stitch for the background, so we'll use that for our edge.

In the chart on the bottom (Illustration 3.), the armhole shaping as been drawn in. We run into a cable twist right off the bat, in Row 5 (the bind-off row).

Sleeve Increases in Cable Pattern



4. Sleeve shaping is drawn in for one increase every four rows.

The pattern calls for a four-stitch cable, but we want to keep our clean reverse stockinette edge. Instead of crossing two stitches over two, we'll cross two stitches over one. This maintains the flow of the pattern without interfering with the edge. On Rows 7 and 9, the decreases fall on a cable. We'll eliminate the cable crossings and work these stitches in stockinette. On Rows 11 and 13, we'll work the decreases in reverse stockinette to maintain the flow of the pattern. When the last

decrease is done, we are left with a partial cable at the edge, which will look just fine at the armhole seam.

To increase for sleeve shaping, we focus again on maintaining the lines of the pattern. In this chart (Illustration 4), shaping is drawn in for one increase every four rows. We keep a clean edge in reverse stockinette for seaming. It is not until the third increase, on Row 11, that we have enough stitches to begin incorporating the pattern. It's not until the sixth increase, in Row 23, that we have enough new stitches to make a cable twist.

Other Patterns

The same strategy of mapping out your shaping on a chart will work for just about all stitch patterns. Draw in your increases or decreases, black out the stitches that will be eliminated, and focus on gracefully extending the lines of the stitch pattern. Think about how the pattern will intersect at the seams, and remember that you'll have an easier time in finishing if you keep a clean edge for seaming.

By the time you get to shaping maneuvers in a design, you have usually worked enough of the pattern to know it pretty well. You may no longer need to look at the chart to see what comes next. With practice, your intuition will tell you how to incorporate shaping into the rhythm of the pattern. Then you can dispense with the colored pencils and work shaping in pattern with ease!

Sandi Rosner is a knitter who wears many hats: designer, technical editor, writer and teacher. She loves the little details that elevate a knitting project from homemade to handmade. Follow Sandi's blog at <http://www.knittinginwinecountry.blogspot.com>.