

STEEKS

Knitting in the round is a very efficient way to knit stranded patterns. However, we need a way to create openings for armholes, necks, and cardigans (as well as pockets and welted hems and whatever else you can imagine that requires an opening in the knitted fabric). The way we do this is by adding extra stitches where we intend to cut—these stitches are called steeks.

NOTE: Steek stitches are not counted when planning the garment.

1. SETTING UP THE STEEK

The steeks consist of 9 stitches:

The 2 outer stitches are knit in either the background or the pattern color of the garment—these edge stitches are intended to anchor the bands or sleeves so they are often called the knitting-up stitches.

The inner 7 stitches are knit in a stripe pattern.

When you are instructed to set up a steek you will place some body stitches (as instructed in the pattern) on a holder and then you will cast on 9 stitches in alternating colors.

Spit splice color changes in the steek; this leaves a clear ground for the crochet and cutting. If you choose to knot your yarns, do it outside of the 3 center stitches of the steek.

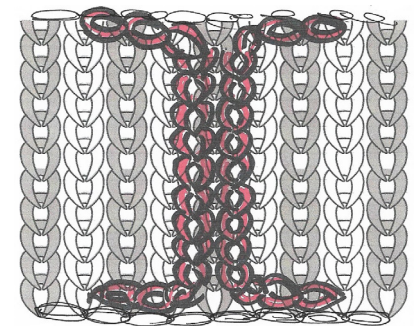
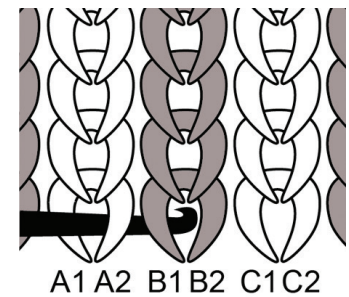
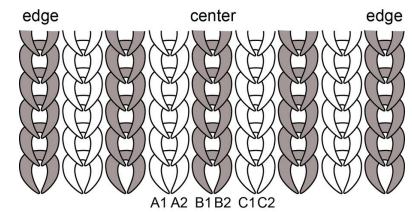
2. STABILIZING THE STEEK

You will now prepare for cutting by crocheting a chain up each side of the center steek stitch. (See Chain Stitch, right, for a description of how to make a chain stitch.) You will be working on the center 3 stitches of the steek (identified as stitches A, B, and C in the diagrams), no matter how wide you choose to make the steek.

To get started, using the same yarn you knit the garment with, make a slip knot over a small (approximately 2.5 mm) crochet hook and chain over a couple of the cast-on stitches before heading up the center of the steek.

Which color should you crochet with? You can choose the least noticeable or one that contrasts wildly—it's easier to see what you are doing when you use a lighter color. The crochet chain is only noticeable at an unbuttoned cardigan opening, so use whatever color is easy to work with.

Now chain up the steek center, capturing the right leg of stitch A (A2 in the diagram) and the left leg of stitch B (B1). Move up row by row,



CHAIN STITCH

1. Form a slip knot over the crochet hook.
2. Insert the hook into the knitting.
3. Hook the working yarn and pull the loop through the knitting and through the loop that is already on the hook. If you are dextrous you can do this in one movement—I'm slower with the crochet hook so it takes me two movements. Doesn't matter. Just do NOT create a second loop after you pull one through the knitting! That's called single crochet and it doesn't work well.

Now turn your work and chain down the other side, crocheting the left half of stitch C (C1) with the right half of stitch B (B2).

Make the chain stitches firm—the chain should be a bit tighter than the knitted fabric (but don't go overboard and strangle the knitting!). You don't want it to pull a lot, but you also don't want it to float loosely on top of the knitting.

3. CUTTING THE STEEK

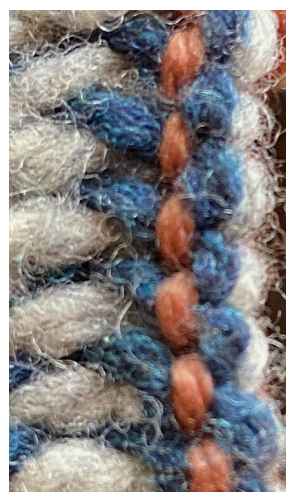
Carefully tease apart the chains to reveal the bars between them. Using small embroidery scissors cut the bars, a few at a time. Don't be in a hurry and don't yank at the edges! Keep steady and try not to cut the crochet chains in the process. If you do, don't panic—you can do a little repair work after the bands are added. When you knit with a grabby yarn like Shetland you don't technically need to stabilize the steek—the stitches aren't going to run away from you!



Crochet chain on a checkerboard steek



Crochet chain after cutting



Crochet chain (back) after cutting



PICKING UP THE BANDS

Holding the band yarn underneath the fabric pick up a stitch through the center of the edge stitch. Repeat in each edge stitch (stitch/row gauge adjustments will be made in the next round).