

You Say Flat, I Say Round...

It's really just Personal Preference

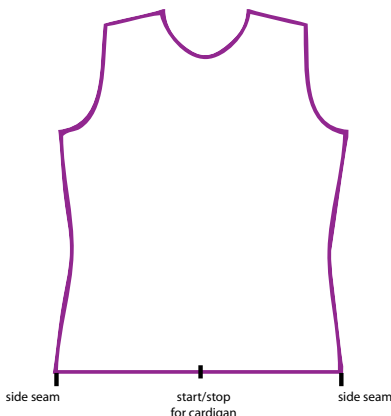
Some people prefer to knit their garments in flat pieces and assemble everything together at the end, while others prefer to knit in the round whenever possible. You can convert patterns from one method to the other, but there are a few guidelines to follow when making the changes. Here we'll outline the basic rules to convert your pattern, along with some common pitfalls to avoid.

Things to keep in mind when starting

- The purl stitch is the back side of a knit stitch.
- When you knit a garment flat, you turn your work. Stockinette stitch is worked by knitting one row, then purling the next row.
- When you knit in the round, you work in a one-way spiral around the garment. Stockinette stitch is worked by knitting every round.
- Calculate your gauge using the needles and technique you will use while knitting your garment. Knitting your swatch flat on US 8 needles may give you a different gauge than knitting with the same yarn on US 8 circular needles in the round. Knitting in the round will tend to give you a tighter row gauge because you have fewer starts and stops and no change between knitting and purling.
- Fair Isle knits are best worked in the round to avoid excessive yarn ends from changing colors and to keep from having to purl while stranding. These projects are usually knit in tubes and steeks are used to create arm openings, neck openings, and open-front cardigans.
- If you want to use a lace pattern, it's easiest if you choose one that has WS rows that are all knit stitches (or all purl stitches). Lace patterns that have special stitch instructions on every row (unless they are charted) are significantly more difficult to convert between flat knitting and knitting in the round.

Changing from knitting in the round to flat knitting

If you'd like to change a pattern from knitting in the round to knitting flat, you will first want to decide where your seams will fall on your finished garment. The body of a sweater, for example, will usually have side seams that run from the underarm down on either side of the abdomen. Think of it in terms of finding a place to "split" your tubes of knitting that won't be obvious on the finished garment. You could also take a seamed sweater that fits you nicely and use it as a guide for where to place your seams.



- Knit your gauge swatch flat.
- Add selvage stitches to both ends of your row so that you can seam the sides and sleeves of your sweater. If you just cast on half the number of stitches from the tube, you'll be short these selvage stitches and your finished sleeves or sweater body will be slightly smaller.
- Change even numbered rounds to WS rows by purling all knit stitches and knitting all purl stitches.
- Remember that you'll have to seam everything together when you're done knitting. Keep your edges neat!

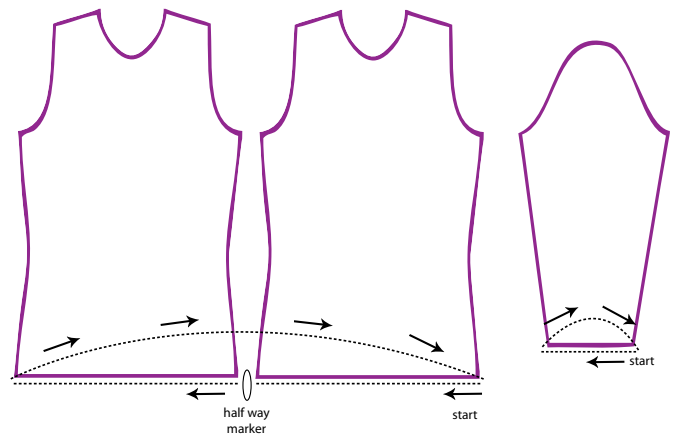
Changing from flat knitting to knitting in the round

You may want to change a pattern from flat knitting to knitting in the round. Some knitters find it faster to knit in the round, as they don't have to turn their work or switch to purling WS rows. Knitting in the round also allows you to try on your work as you go, helping you to customize the fit of your finished garment.

Another benefit is the ability to eliminate some of the seams from your finished garment. Getting rid of the seams is a good way to eliminate bulk inside your garment and it also speeds up finishing (fewer ends to weave in, for example). When eliminating seams in a pattern, you should take into account areas where the seams provide structural support. Some side seams and shoulder seams help shape a sweater and keep it from stretching too much at those points.

- Knit your gauge swatch in the round.
- Look at your flat pattern and eliminate any selvage stitches for seams.
- If working a lace pattern, remove any "balancing" stitches at the beginnings and ends of the pattern rows and only use the repeat instructions.
- If your flat pattern has you purling WS rows, K them instead. This includes WS rows for cable patterns.
- Place a stitch marker at the beginning of your round, and another stitch marker where the row would end on your flat pattern. This will help you keep track of the front and back of your garment and you'll be able to double-check your knitting against the original flat pattern.

- For sweater bodies, work row 1 of your flat pattern for a full round, then start row 2 on the next round. Remember that you're working row 1 of the front and row 1 of the back before starting row 2 of the front.
- The purl stitch is the back side of a knit stitch. Remember this relationship when translating stitch patterns – now that you're knitting in the round, you would knit any stitches that were supposed to be WS purl stitches on your flat pattern.
- If your pattern contains a chart, remember that you'll want to read the RS rows from right to left and the WS rows from left to right.



A Note about Cardigans:

To knit a cardigan in the round, you would set up a steek up the center front of the sweater body. If you are using a stitch pattern with a noticeable repeat or doing stranded colorwork, changing rounds at the steek (instead of under an arm) will help hide the jog in the pattern.