

# Making Sense of Symbols: A Guide to Reading Charts

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**M**ANY BEGINNING KNITTERS pale at the sight of a knitting pattern, temporarily paralyzed by the seemingly complicated abbreviations and symbols (k2tog, ssk, brackets, parentheses, asterisks, . . .). But most knitters quickly realize that pattern language is actually quite simple; rather than an unbreakable code, it is truly a useful shorthand. Curiously, however, many knitters never make the jump to following charted patterns, failing to understand how logical and, yes, easy to follow, they really are.

Charts have several advantages over row-by-row knitting instructions written out in words: They let you see at a glance what's to be done and what the pattern will look like knitted; they help you recognize how the stitches relate to one another; and they take up less space than written instructions. These days, more and more patterns are being charted instead of written out row-by-row, and that means it is more important than ever to learn how to read them. Once you add this skill to your repertoire, your choices as a knitter expand nicely.

## The Anatomy of a Chart

Charts are a visual representation of a knitted fabric viewed from the right side. Charts are plotted on graph paper so that one square represents one stitch and one horizontal row represents one row of knitting. The symbols or colors in the squares indicate how to work each stitch. For colorwork charts, the colors represent yarn colors; for texture work, the symbols represent stitch manipulations. Unless otherwise specified, charts are read from the bottom to the top, right to left for right-side rows, and left to right for wrong-side rows. When knitting in the round (where

the right side of the knitting is always facing out), all rows are read from right to left.











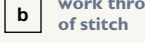

Most charts, including the ones in *Interweave Knits*, are plotted on a square grid. Because knitted stitches tend to be wider than they are tall, motifs worked from such charts will appear squatter in the actual knitting than they appear on the grid. To avoid this discrepancy when designing your own project, you can use proportional knitter's graph paper (available at knitting stores).

**Symbols:** Though not all publications use exactly the same symbols (for example, some use a horizontal dash to denote a purl stitch, others use a dot), for the most part, the symbols represent what the stitches look like when viewed from the right side of the knitting. Symbols that slant to the left represent left-slanting stitches. Symbols that slant to the right represent right-slanting stitches. Notice how the symbols in the charts at right mimic the stitches in the knitted fabrics.

Because charts are presented as viewed from the right side only, most symbols represent two different maneuvers—one for right-side rows and another for wrong-side rows. For example, for stockinette stitch, you knit the stitches on right-side rows and purl them on wrong-side rows. However, charted stockinette stitch shows only the right, or knit, side. A list of the most common symbols and their right- and wrong-side definitions is presented in the box at left.

**No stitch:** Many stitch patterns, especially lace, involve increases or decreases that cause the stitch count to rise or fall, thereby requiring the number of boxes in a chart to vary from one row to the next. For some patterns, these variations are simply represented by uneven chart edges. For other patterns, adding or subtracting boxes at the edge of a

**Common Chart Symbols & Definitions**

	right side: knit wrong side: purl
	right side: purl wrong side: knit
	right side: k2tog wrong side: p2tog
	right side: k3tog wrong side: p3tog
	right side: ssk wrong side: ssp
	right side: sl 2 sts individually, k1, p2sso; wrong side: p2tog and place st on left needle, pass next st over this st, return st to right needle
	Make 1
	yarn over
	work through back loop of stitch
	no stitch
	<b>Right cross:</b> place specified number of sts onto cable needle and hold in back, knit specified number of sts, knit specified number of sts from cable needle
	<b>Left cross:</b> place specified number of sts onto cable needle and hold in front, knit specified number of sts, knit specified number of sts from cable needle





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