

*Tips & Tricks: The lavender
cotton shirt and the no-sewing*



*Spring is Springing -
And so is a new pattern!*

seams!

Someone asked me not long ago where I get my ideas for designs. I should have said something that would make me sound authoritative and serious. After all, I do follow the fashion collections and the retailer websites, to see if there is anything out there that would be adaptable for me. Mostly not.

But I told the truth: “I generally make what I need, or someone else might need or like,” I answered, thinking of my friend in New York, who recently told me that, bundled up in his cozy new sweater on a cold day, he’d really enjoyed it.



What I needed for myself was something new in the way of a long-sleeved summer top for sunburn days and cool evenings, that would also do in winter as a first layer under a sweater, down vest, and jacket or coat.

14																				15
12																				13
10																				11
8																				9
6																				7
4																				5
2																				3
																				1

I wondered if there is such a thing as *pretty* long underwear. My belief that there could be was reinforced by wildly expensive ski-resort shop that sells cashmere undershirts, at stunning prices, seemingly for women whose gentlemen friends may well be able to afford such things, and who don’t worry about inadvertently reducing it to child-size by getting it in the wrong load of laundry.



Since I do worry about that, I thought a cotton blend would be best, with a close, smooth fit to avoid that Michelin Tire Man® look when it’s used as a first layer. I measured myself carefully, and set out to make the shirt pictured, in a waffle-weave pattern that would be cool in summer but hold lots of warmth under an outer layer, beginning with garter stitch, and changing to a

repeat of four rows: two rows garter stitch, two rows k1, p1 rib, with a selvedge stitch on each side, next to which all increases and increases would be worked into the first row of garter to conceal them and make them flow smoothly, by aligning the next rows of ribbing with the previous row.

This took a small needle arrived at after some swatching—a #2 for Cascade's Pima Tencel yarn (<http://www.cascadeyarns.com/cascade-pimaTencel.asp>) in a swatch to arrive at a firm but not stiff fabric; that gave me a gauge of 18 stitches by 32 rows for 4 inches/10 cm. If 32 rows seems like a misprint, it's not; the garter stitch makes this a short pattern, and show to work up. This took 9 50 gm balls.

No, this is not mindless knitting, and demands careful attention and marking of each increase or decreases with safety pins. And lots of ripping at if you get tired or you attention lapses. And lots of measuring yourself beforehand, and doing some arithmetic, and reviewing the instructions on fitting at <http://www.highcountryknitwear.com/makeitfit.shtml>

This is about seaming, right?

I'm not crazy about sewing, so I'm careful with it, and usually ladder stitch body seams and sleeve seams, taking pains to do it right, which is easy enough if you're careful about your selvedge stitches and the seamline is fairly straight.

On this, however, the body seams are curved, and even the most painstaking matching up didn't look as if it would allow me to produce a perfect seam. I'd read about a pickup method that might, so I tried it. Let me say, before you try it, that it is easiest if your two pieces are exactly the same length not only by measurement, but also by number of rows, and the thing is almost bristling with safety pins that mark each increase and decrease.

Here's how:

Take your two body pieces, and, from the right sides, pick up exactly the same number of stitches—a pickup, for most patterns, in three of every four stitches--from the length of the sides you'll be seaming together. Make sure that your pickup is **not inside the edge thread**, but **inside the entire edge stitch**, which is your selvedge stitch.

You will be working up one side and down the other, in most instances, and will have to transfer the pickup on one needle to another so that the tips of your two needles align with one another. Be sure to count your stitches on each side, and adjust them, if needed, so they are identical.

Then flip your work so that the two right sides are together, and use a three-needle bind off for the joining. As you do this, the selvedge stitches are pushed to the inside of the work. When you have completed the seams, steam from the wrong side, and then from the right side. You'll be amazed at how smooth and professional it looks. If the three needle bindoff seems impossible, k 2 tog for the entire length, then bind off on the return row.

This join, if finicky, is amazingly smooth and even, and—being knit itself—remarkably suitable to knitting; pattern rows line up perfectly with one another. I'm a fan, and will use this when appropriate from now on. You can find a brief, absolutely clear tutorial, well illustrated, at:

http://wolfandturtle.net/Yarnpath/index.php/Yarnpath/comments/the_three_needle_bind_off/

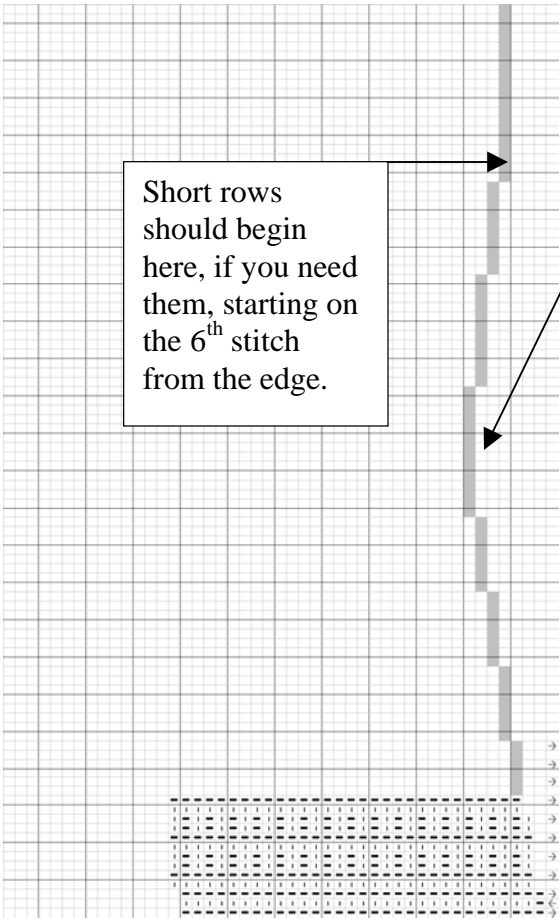
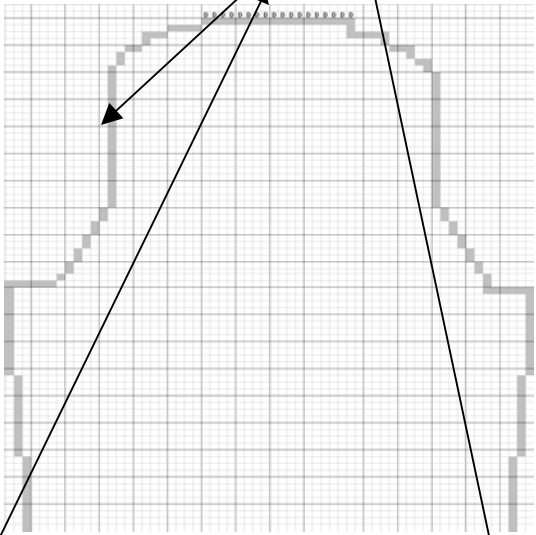
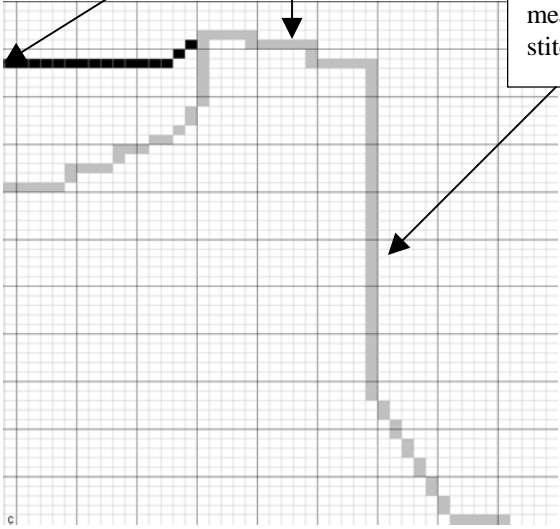
Yes, you still have to backstitch the shoulders to keep them from stretching, but that was the only sewing I did on this shirt. And the basic tank top, without the sleeves—as shown at right--and with the armholes finished in K1, P1 ribbing, would be a suitable summer top by itself. The swatch, finished with garter stitch, made the handy pocket; it's 23 stitches wide, and finished with garter stitch, with a long enough end to sew it into place when the sweater is complete, and otherwise fully assembled.

Measure yourself carefully; working with notes on the following chart, allow about 2 inches of ease in the bust (band measurement + 2 inches) and allow for short-row work if you have a cup size larger than B. Allow 2 inches of ease in the bust, 3 at the waist, and three at the hemline, which falls on the upper hip.



For smaller sizes, narrow the neckline by a stitch or two, and the shoulders by a stitch or two, on the lines indicate; for larger ones, add in the same way. Adjust the shoulder Bindoff in thirds.

Remember to adjust the sequence of increases and decreases after you've adjust the pattern pieces to your own measurements by adding or subtracting stitches for width, and rows for length.



Short rows should begin here, if you need them, starting on the 6th stitch from the edge.

