

23: Keeping Edges Straight

The Problem?

The edges of your work seem to have a life of their own - sometimes creeping inwards, sometimes lurching outwards, even when you think you're sneakily adding or missing stitches to prevent this. The reason is that you don't really know or can't properly see, whether you have come to the end of a row or not before you turn. You're always wondering whether the turning chain is supposed to count as a stitch or not and, if so, whether that means you must work a stitch into the top of it at the end of the next row, and, if so, whether you have done that or not! So you learn to hate doing ends of rows and stick to projects where the rows are so long you don't have to do them very often and that way, you never learn what's going wrong. So come on! Let's sort this matter out for you once and for all in your own time. The satisfaction that flows from doing so is guaranteed to set you up for a lifetime of successful crochet.

The Secret

The fact is there are two ways of dealing with turning chains at the ends of rows. We call them Plan 'A' - Turning Chain Counts As Stitch and Plan 'B' - Turning Chain Does NOT Count As Stitch. It hardly ever matters which you do, so you can please yourself, but only if you understand the differences (see next page) and can be sure which you are applying. If you mix them up on the same row, you'll lose the plot - it's that simple.

The Answer

Part 1a: Following Plan 'A' make a series of strips starting with only 4 stitches in the row, keeping both edges absolutely straight (even) - see stitch diagram opposite and next page (Part 1a) for details. Make at least one strip with each of the basic stitches in the following order: double crochet (as shown in the stitch diagram opposite), triple, half double and, lastly, single crochet. Continue each strip until you are completely confident you are working correctly - count stitches and check work carefully at the end of every row! To be really sure you know what you're doing before you move onto increasing (Part 2 & 4) and decreasing (Part 3 & 5), stop off and make the **Tote Bag** (Worksheet #21)

Part 2: Continue to keep one edge (say, the one where the beginning of the yarn forms a tail) as straight as before and begin increasing one stitch every row at the other edge. It is important to be able to increase accurately at one edge only, whilst keeping the other straight as a 'control'. You can be much more sure that your results were intended, rather than 'fluked'. If you increase both edges symmetrically, it's easy to forget how to work straight. You must shape every row, so as to learn how to make an increase at both the beginning and the end of a row. You should keep doing this until you are completely confident you are working correctly.

Part 1b, 1c, etc: work a few rows straight (even) to remind yourself how to do this before moving on

Part 3: Keeping the same 'straight' edge straight, decrease one stitch every row at the other edge. You should keep doing this until your row has reduced to 4 stitches again - count stitches and check work carefully at the end of every row!

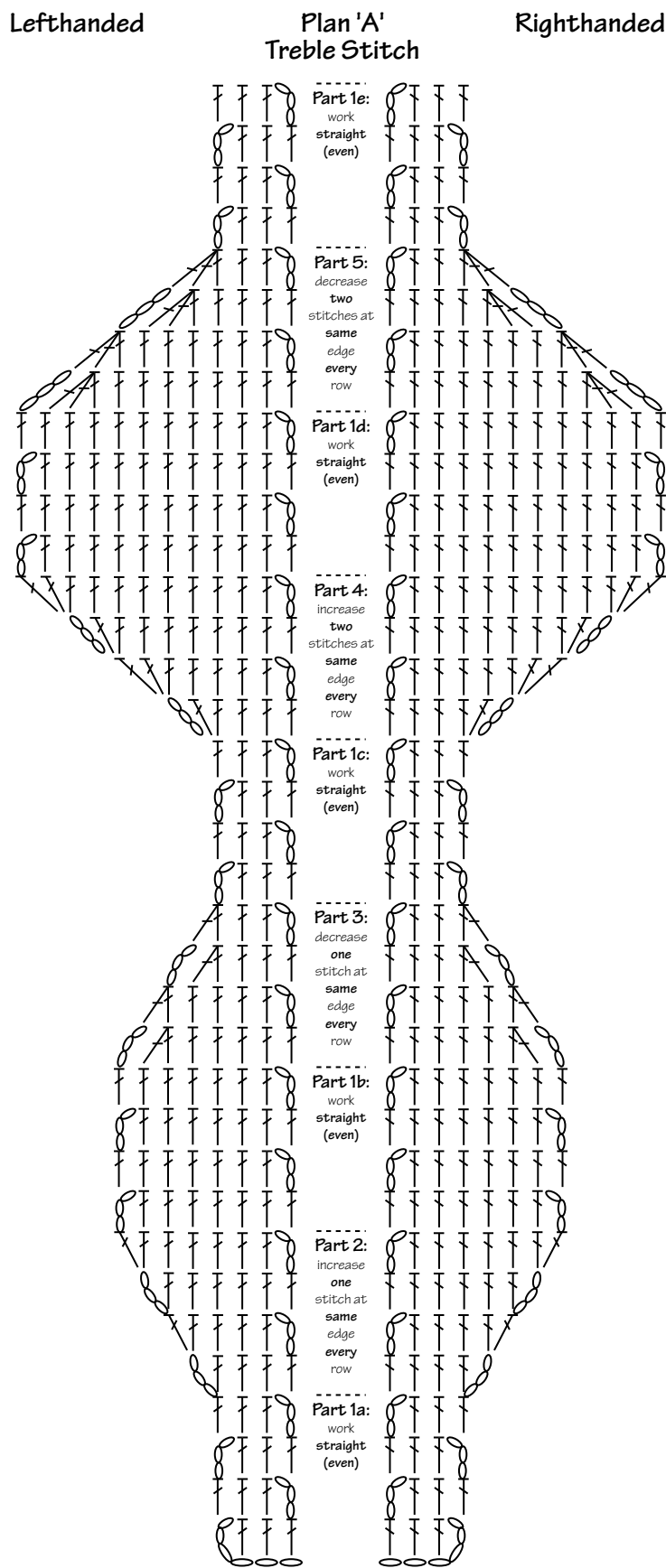
Part 4: increase 2 sts every row at the shaped edge

Part 5: decrease 2 sts every row at the shaped edge

Note: Parts 4 and 5 are a little too steep for double crochet - but try them anyway and see if you agree ... ?

Finally: when you've made all your sample strips in Plan 'A' mode (page 2), do another set in Plan 'B' (page 3).

You think I'm joking ... ?



What to do – Plan 'A': Turning Chain Counts As A Stitch

The regular 'rules':

- Missed chains of base chain and turning chains count as a stitch
- First stitch (last one worked in previous row) is missed (Except when increasing)
- You do work into tops of turning chains at ends of rows

Note: to 'fill in' the ??s below, look on the right under the stitch you are working

How many ??		Double	Triple
Single Crochet (sc)	Half Double (hdc)	Crochet (dc)	(tr)

Part 1a - begin ... and work 'straight':

Make **how many ??** chains (chs) for the base chain?

5	5	6	7
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Row 1 (RS): how many ?? ch to skip before inserting the hook for the first time [These skipped chains count as first stitch (st)]

2	2	3	4
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Work 1 st into each of remaining 3 ch, turn. Total in row counts as 4 sts.

Row 2, etc: Work **how many ??** ch [these count as first st], skip first st at base of turning chain (tch), i.e. last one worked at end of previous row, then, always inserting hook under the 2 loops which lie on top of each stitch, work 1 st into each of next 2 sts and again into top ch of previous tch, turn. Total in row counts as 4 sts

1 or 2	2	3	4
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Rep Row 2 as required, ending with a WS (even-numbered) row.

Part 2 - increase 1 st every row at one edge only:

Next Row (RS) - inc 1 st at beginning only: Work tch as before [counts as first st], work 1 st into first st at base of tch [inc made], work 1 st into next and each st to end incl previous tch, turn. Total in row counts as 5 sts

Next Row - inc 1 st at end only: Work tch as before [counts as first st], skip first st at base of tch, work 1 st into next and each st to end and 2 sts into previous tch, turn. Total in row counts as 6 sts.

Rep last 2 Rows as required, ending with a WS (even-numbered) row.

Part 1b, 1c, etc - work straight (even): just a few rows (even number) to remind yourself how

Part 3 - Decrease 1 st every row at same edge only:

Next Row (RS) - Dec 1 st at beginning only: Work tch as before [counts as first st], skip first st at base of tch, work **what decrease cluster ??** over next 2 sts, then work 1 st into each st to end incl previous tch, turn. [Decrease cluster counts as one stitch.]

sc2tog	hdc2tog	dc2tog	tr2tog
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Next Row - Dec 1 st at end only: Work tch as before [counts as first st], skip first st at base of tch, work 1 st into next and each st to last 2 sts incl tch, work **what decrease cluster ??** over those 2 sts, turn. [Decrease cluster counts as one stitch.]

sc2tog	hdc2tog	dc2tog	tr2tog
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Rep last 2 Rows until 4 sts remain, ending with a WS (even-numbered) row.

Part 4 - Increase 2 sts every row at one edge only:

Next Row (RS) - inc 2 sts at beginning only: Work tch as before [counts as first st], work 2 sts into first st at base of tch - inc made, then work 1 st into next and each st to end incl previous tch, turn. Total in row counts as 6 sts

Next Row - inc 2 sts at end only: Work tch as before [counts as first st], skip first st at base of tch, then work 1 st into next and each st to last st, i.e. tch, and 3 sts into that, turn. Total in row counts as 8 sts.

Rep last 2 Rows as required, ending with a WS (even-numbered) row.

Part 5 - Decrease 2 sts every row at same edge only:

Next Row (RS) - Dec 2 sts at beginning only: Work tch as before [counts as first st], skip first st at base of tch, work **what decrease cluster ??** over next 3 sts, then work 1 st into next and each st to end incl previous tch, turn. [Decrease cluster counts as 1 st.]

sc3tog	hdc3tog	dc3tog	tr3tog
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Next Row - Dec 2 sts at end only: Work tch as before [counts as first st], skip first st at base of tch, work 1 st into next and each st to last 3 sts incl tch, work **what decrease cluster ??** over these 3 sts, turn. [Decrease cluster counts as 1 st.]

sc3tog	hdc3tog	dc3tog	tr3tog
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Rep last 2 Rows until 4 sts remain, ending with a WS (even-numbered) row. Fasten off as required

Sc2tog – worked over 2 sts thus:

*insert hook into next st, yrh, draw loop through fabric; rep from * once more - 3 loops on hook, ending yrh, draw through all loops

Hdc2tog – worked over 2 sts thus:

*Yrh, insert hook into next st, yrh, draw loop through fabric; rep from * once more - 5 loops on hook, ending yrh, draw through all loops

Dc2tog – worked over 2 sts thus:

*Yrh, insert hook into next st, yrh, draw loop through fabric, yrh, draw through 2 loops; rep from * once more - 3 loops on hook, ending yrh, draw through all loops

Tr2tog – worked over 2 sts thus:

*(Yrh) twice, insert hook into next st, yrh, draw loop through fabric, (yrh, draw through 2 loops) twice; rep from * once more - 3 loops on hook, ending yrh, draw through all loops

Sc3tog – worked over 3 sts thus:

*insert hook into next st, yrh, draw loop through fabric; rep from * twice more - 4 loops on hook, ending yrh, draw through all loops

Hdc3tog – worked over 3 sts thus:

*Yrh, insert hook into next st, yrh, draw loop through fabric; rep from * twice more - 7 loops on hook, ending yrh, draw through all loops

Dc3tog – worked over 3 sts thus:

*Yrh, insert hook into next st, yrh, draw loop through fabric, yrh, draw through 2 loops; rep from * twice more - 4 loops on hook, ending yrh, draw through all loops

Tr3tog – worked over 3 sts thus:

*(Yrh) twice, insert hook into next st, yrh, draw loop through fabric, (yrh, draw through 2 loops) twice; rep from * twice more - 4 loops on hook, ending yrh, draw through all loops

Tip! - This is not the only 'correct' way to increase/decrease plain, flat, stitch patterns. Some people like to move their increase/decrease clusters to keep at least one single edge stitch at beginnings and ends of rows to provide a consistent matching selvedge. When you know what you're doing (you do, now, don't you!), you can do this kind of stuff, too, if you want.

What to do – Plan 'B': Turning Chain Does NOT Count As A Stitch

The regular 'rules':

- Missed chains of base chain and turning chains do NOT count as a stitch
- First stitch (last one worked in previous row) is NOT missed
- You do NOT work into tops of turning chains at ends of rows

Note: to 'fill in' the ??s below, look on the right under the stitch you are working

How many ??

Single Crochet (sc)	Half Double (hdc)	Double Crochet (dc)	Triple (tr)
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Please Note: the shortened stitch diagram for Plan 'B' (below right) shows only two rows in each Part and no straight sections between, but you should work the full exercise as for Plan 'A'!

Part 1a - begin ... and work 'straight':

Make **how many ??** chains (chs) for the base chain?

Row 1 (RS): **how many ??** ch to skip before inserting the hook for the first time [These skipped chains do NOT count as first stitch (st)]

Work 1 st into each of remaining 3 ch, turn. Total in row counts as 4 sts.

Row 2, etc: Work **how many ??** ch [these do NOT count as first st], do NOT skip first st, but, always inserting hook under the 2 loops which lie on top of each stitch, work 1 st into each of 4 sts but NOT into top ch of previous tch, turn. Total in row counts as 4 sts

Rep Row 2 as required, ending with a WS (even-numbered) row.

Part 2 - increase 1 st every row at one edge only:

Next Row (RS) - inc 1 st at beginning only: Work tch as before [does NOT count], work 2 sts into first st at base of tch [inc made], work 1 st into next and each st to end, but NOT into previous tch, turn. Total in row counts as 5 sts

Next Row - inc 1 st at end only: Work tch as before [does NOT count], do NOT skip first st, work 1 st into each st except 2 sts into last; do NOT work into tch, turn. Total in row counts as 6 sts.

Rep last 2 Rows as required, ending with a WS (even-numbered) row.

Part 1b, 1c, etc - work straight (even): just a few rows (even number) to remind yourself how

Part 3 - Decrease 1 st every row at same edge only:

Next Row (RS) - Dec 1 st at beginning only: Work tch as before [does NOT count], do NOT skip first st, work **what decrease cluster ??** over first 2 sts, then work 1 st into each st to end (NOT into tch), turn. [Decrease cluster counts as one stitch.]

Next Row - Dec 1 st at end only: Work tch as before [does NOT count], do NOT skip first st, work 1 st into each st to last 2 sts (NOT incl tch), work **what decrease cluster ??** over those 2 sts, turn. [Decrease cluster counts as one stitch.]

Rep last 2 Rows until 4 sts remain, ending with a WS (even-numbered) row.

Part 4 - Increase 2 sts every row at one edge only:

Next Row (RS) - inc 2 sts at beginning only: Work tch as before [does NOT count], work 2 sts into first st - inc made, then 1 st into next and each st to end (NOT into tch), turn. Total in row counts as 6 sts

Next Row - inc 2 sts at end only: Work tch as before [does NOT count], do NOT skip first st, work 1 st into each st to last st (NOT incl tch), and 3 sts into that, turn. Total in row counts as 8 sts.

Rep last 2 Rows as required, ending with a WS (even-numbered) row.

Part 5 - Decrease 2 sts every row at same edge only:

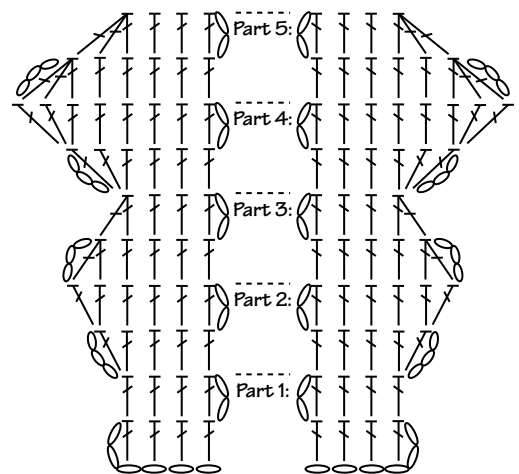
Next Row (RS) - Dec 2 sts at beginning only: Work tch as before [does NOT count], do NOT skip first st, work **what decrease cluster ??** over first 3 sts, then work 1 st into next and each st to end (NOT incl tch), turn. [Decrease cluster counts as one stitch.]

Next Row - Dec 2 sts at end only: Work tch as before [does NOT count], do NOT skip first st, work 1 st into each st to last 3 sts (NOT incl tch), work **what decrease cluster ??** over these 3 sts, turn. [Decrease cluster counts as one stitch.]

Rep last 2 Rows until 4 sts remain, ending with a WS (even-numbered) row. Fasten off as required

5	5	6	7
1	2	2	3
1	2	2	3
sc2tog	hdc2tog	dc2tog	tr2tog
sc2tog	hdc2tog	dc2tog	tr2tog
sc3tog	hdc3tog	dc3tog	tr3tog
sc3tog	hdc3tog	dc3tog	tr3tog

Lefthanded Plan 'B' Righthanded
Double Crochet



✿ Let's be clear about one thing: you can do a whole lifetime's worth of crochet without ever needing to know exactly how to keep edges straight 'properly'. Working just by feel is fine. So this worksheet is just for if you feel you want to be able to understand how to do it anyway. This whole approach is not essential except for those who want to be able to make precise shapes, which fit and interlock with others

✿ It is usual to work all the longer stitches in Plan 'A' and double crochet in Plan 'B' mode. That's why the trickiest plain stitch pattern for beginners is often one with rows of double and treble crochet alternating, especially when the instructions are not clear as to whether the turning chains are supposed to count as stitches or not.

✿ In these exercises the strips are deliberately narrow, so you are working edges every few seconds. Having only four stitches, you know for sure when there is one (and only one) more stitch to work. That makes it much easier to see where to work it. It doesn't really matter where exactly you insert the hook, so long as you are consistent and keep the right numbers, your edges will be straight and your work will look OK. By the time you come to work double crochet, you'll be able to do it with your eyes shut – this is 'Good News', because you won't be able to see what you're doing anyway