

Lana Grossa Knitting Tip—Pretty Edges Revisited

by Binka Schwan

For many years, Lana Grossa Yarn Company published a section of knitting tips on their website. These tips were excellent, and knitters often referenced them throughout the years. One of the most helpful tips from the website concerned edge gutters in stockinette stitch and how to eliminate them in your knitting. But the Lana Grossa website has been recently updated and changed and is now focused on their product line. The website no longer supports a knitting tip section.

The [original knitting tip](#) on pretty edges has been web-archived. Because it can be difficult to find the web-archived posting, this article will revisit the original Lana Grossa knitting tip and serve as an easier-to-find reference for this important technique.

Stockinette stitch may be one of the easiest stitch patterns to work, but it is one of the hardest to maintain even overall- and edge-stitch tension when working flat. Often, knitters tension the knit rows differently than the purl rows, and this results in uneven fabric. We are all aware of overall tension problems, such as ridges on the public side of the fabric and gutters on the non-public side. However, edge gutters are something that many knitters are unaware of but, when pointed out to them, are very interested in eliminating!

Edge gutters are alternating large and small stitches that are found in the column(s) of stitches directly next to the right and/or left selvedge edges in stockinette stitch. In one row, the stitch in these columns (or rows) may be too tight, and in the next row, they may be too loose. Sometimes the alternating stitch columns can extend 2–3 columns after the right selvedge stitch or before the final selvedge stitch, but most often the edge gutters are seen in the columns directly next to the selvedge-stitch columns. These edge gutters can be seen on both the right and left edges, or on just one edge of the stockinette fabric.

Figure 1 shows an example of evenly tensioned stockinette stitch. The swatch is squared, with cast-on and bind-off edges matching in width and sides matching in length. All stitches are the same size. The blue lines on the swatch outline the edge-stitch columns that lie directly after and directly before the right and left selvedge-stitch columns. Note that the stitches in these columns are even and match the rest of the stitches in the swatch. There are no alternating large and small stitches within the edge-stitch columns. This is the type of stockinette fabric that you want to achieve in your knitting.



Figure 1: Evenly tensioned stockinette stitch

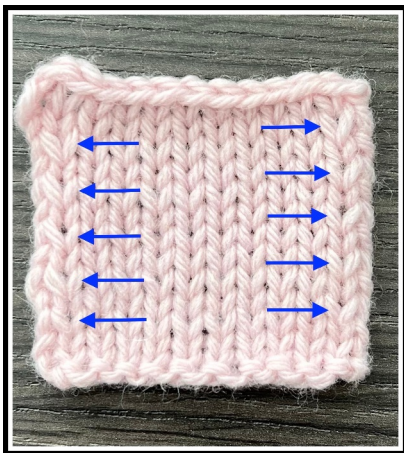


Figure 2: Right and left edge gutters

Figure 2 shows an example of both right and left edge-stitch gutters in addition to some other tension problems which will not be discussed in this article. What is important to note is that the stitches in the body of this swatch are all similar in size except for those in both the right and the left edge-stitch columns. The arrows point to the enlarged (looser) stitches in each of the edge-stitch columns, followed by smaller (tighter) stitches. The edge gutters in this swatch are more noticeable on the left side than they are on the right side. They are present on the right edge but are not as severe. This is a common occurrence, and if edge gutters occur on one side, it is most often the left side.

Why do the edge gutters occur? As stated in the Lana Grossa post, the reason for this “lies in the row before.” The alternating stitches in the edge-stitch columns are due to uneven tension on the knit rows and the purl rows. This uneven tension has a direct relationship to the stitches that have already been made—the stitches in the row below—and the amount of yarn that was used to form those stitches.

When a new row of stitches is being made, the right needle is inserted into the stitch on the left needle, which is the previous row (or the row below). As you knit or purl across a row, the yarn in the previous row can become slightly stretched because of the needle being inserted into the stitch. This small change in the amount of yarn goes into the next stitch, then the next one, and so on, until the end of the row is reached. The extra yarn is unnoticeable as you work across the row, but at the end of the row that extra amount of yarn must go somewhere and is divided over the final 3–4 stitches.

If the column of alternating large and small stitches is on the right edge of the stockinette fabric, it is due to how the last 3–4 stitches of the *@@IT purl IT@@* row were worked. If this column occurs on the left edge of the fabric, it is because of how the final 3–4 stitches of the *@@IT knit IT@@* row were worked.

According to the original Lana Grossa post, to deal with this extra amount of yarn in the row below—and to achieve even edge-stitch columns—the following process should be worked for every row: the first 3–4 stitches of every row should be knit tighter, and the final 3–4 stitches of every row should be knit looser than you would work the middle of the swatch or garment. By doing this, the “chain reaction” of adding the extra yarn will be addressed. The too-loose stitches (the last ones from the previous row) will be reduced and become normal size if you make the stitches tighter as you start the next row. The too-tight last stitches of that row (the first from the previous row) are then made larger by the extra yarn obtained by working the final stitches looser.

Why is it important to have even edge-stitch columns? The most important reason to have even edge stitches has to do with seaming. The selvedge-stitch columns of each piece being seamed will be the

one-stitch seam allowance and not be seen on the public side. However, the two edge-stitch columns will be directly next to each other, forming the seam line on the public side of the garment. If there are significant edge gutters in these pieces, the seam will be visible. If there are no edge gutters, the seam will match the rest of the fabric and become invisible. Figure 3 shows an example of a stockinette seam where edge gutters appear on both the right and left edges of the two swatches. The blue line marks the seam line showing the edge-gutter columns on either side of the seam line. Note that the seam is very visible.

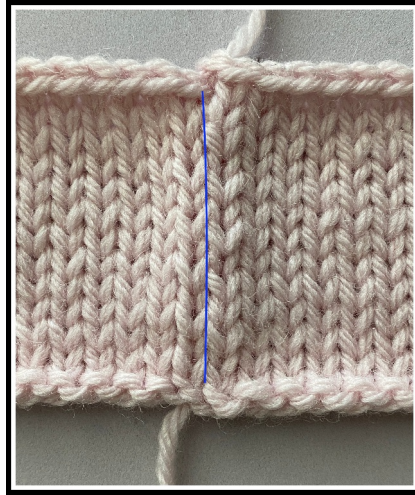


Figure 3: Right and left edge-gutter columns at seam line

Figure 4 shows an example of an even seam. All stitches in both swatches are even with no edge gutters. In this example, the blue line again is at the seam line. Because there are no edge gutters, this seam is invisible.

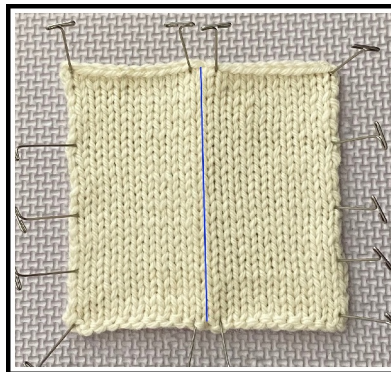


Figure 4: Evenly tensioned edge-stitch columns at seam line

In summary, the Lana Grossa method suggests working the first few stitches of every row tighter than normal and the final few stitches of every row looser than normal. Only these stitches are modified, and the middle of the garment or swatch is worked as you would normally knit. The reason this method is so effective is because it takes into consideration the stitches in the row below. It deals with the extra amount of yarn that happens as we knit. If a knitter understands what is happening and why it is happening, it is much easier to correct the problem edge gutters.