Kurrajong Handcrafts
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Steeking Made Easy
Part Three – The Chop!

Trust me – it's really not that hard. Take a deep breath and remember that it's only a swatch and not a full-sized Fair-Isle cardigan that you've laboured over for months!

We're going to use two different methods of reinforcement. The crochet method is a good idea if your yarn is very smooth, or you're a bit too timid to cut without some sort of pre-stitching. The blanket-stitch edging is less bulky and obvious than the crochet, and leaves you with a neat, flat edge.

A note on machine stitching: I know it's in vogue, but it's not my favoured choice of reinforcement. It's not very elastic, even in zig-zag, and there's also the risk of putting the stitching in the wrong spot – which entails hours of frustrated bad-language-inducing picking out of teeny buried stitches. The solid fabric created by colourwork knitting, and the types of yarns traditionally used, generally do not need any more reinforcement than is outlined here.

The Crocheted Steek

Worked before the steek is cut, a line of double crochet (US single crochet) is worked one stitch away from the centre of the extra stitches.

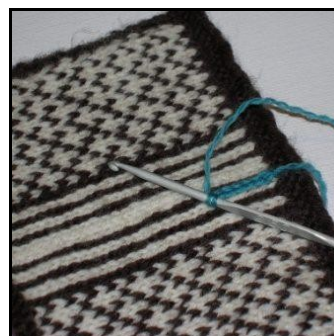Use a hook the same size as the needle you used for the swatch, and a finer yarn

(To keep it simple, I will refer to 'brown' and 'white' stitches rather than 'foreground' and 'background')

The reinforcement is worked one stitch away from the centre of the extra stitches and joins the side of one stitch (white) to the adjacent stitch (brown).

Make a slip knot and place over hook. Insert the hook underneath the right-hand bar of the white stitch and then the left-hand bar of the brown stitch.

Catch the yarn and draw it underneath the two bars, then catch it again and draw it through both loops on the hook.

Insert the hook underneath the next white/brown pair of bars and repeat.

You may find it easier to fold the swatch in half along the line of stitches which are being crocheted together.

Repeat for the length of the swatch. Use the yarn tails at each end to secure the few garter stitches – normally a steek will not have a garter edge of course.

If you wished to work the crochet reinforcement for the entire steek, you would at this point turn and work back down the right-hand side of the extra stitches in exactly the same manner. If you worked you swatch in one colour only, or the yarn is rather smooth, this would be a good idea.

We're only doing one side, and using a blanket stitch reinforcement on the other side.

Cutting the Steek

The steek is cut before the blanket stitch is worked. Use one of the colours used in the swatch, but split the plies in two to create a finer yarn. Have your needle and yarn threaded and at hand, there's no need to tempt fate!

Use very sharp scissors and cut directly between the two white centre stitches.

Unless the yarn is very slippery, or you tug at it, the stitches will stay pretty much where they are, perhaps curling under a little.

Work blanket stitch over the white edge stitch and the brown stitch adjacent to it. 1-2 sts per row is sufficient.

Some knitters traditionally use a whip stitch to over-cast the edge but I prefer the neater finish the blanket stitch gives.

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Your steek is done!

The only thing remaining is to pick up stitches and begin work on an imaginary sleeve or neckband. After all, that is why we steek!

As you can now see, we were very generous with the number of steek stitches. The brown stitch below the needle is the last pattern stitch and we will be picking up stitches between it and the adjacent white stitch (the first of the extra stitches)

We could easily have used two less extra stitches on each side.

Pick up and knit the new stitches just as you would for a knitted neckband. You will notice the extra stitches naturally fold under and lie flat underneath the seam.

Pick up 3 sts for every four rows.

Once the stitches have been picked up, work begins again on the sleeve, neckband or edging – whatever the steek was for.

Congratulations! You've successfully steeked.

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