

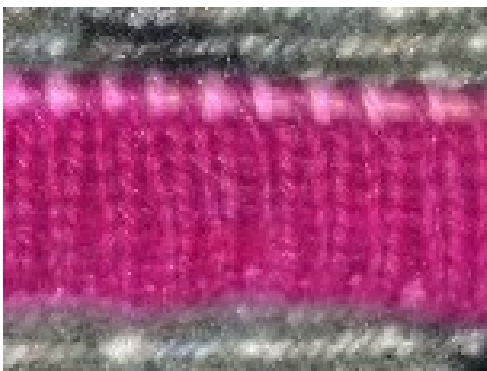
Reversible Two-Colour Double Knitting

Double knitting is a traditional technique that produces two layers in one piece of knitting. The technique can be used to form knitted tubes, self-lining hats and mittens, double-sided blankets and scarves, or to impress knitting friends by working two socks at the same time on one set of needles!

The Falling Leaves scarf is specifically 'reversible' double knitting, as the colours are reversed on each side of the scarf, one side being a 'negative' of the other. Reversible double knitting is particularly suitable for double-sided colourwork scarves as the two layers are interlocked by the design and there is no stranding inside the scarf to make it too thick or heavy for its purpose.

Any two-colour cast-on method works for double knitting – alternate two yarns so that each stitch is followed by a stitch in the other yarn. An excellent two-colour version of the popular long-tail cast-on technique is demonstrated by oftroy in this YouTube video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hq9uuuNx2Ps>. It is possible too create a seamless beginning for double knitting by adapting the Italian tubular cast on, demonstrated by oftroy here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQmkBeKCLSM>. This is a little fiddly, yet the results are worth it. To use it for double knitting, instead of slipping every other stitch on the first row, purl it double knitting style with the same yarn colour as the stitch. Take care to manage the two yarns as outlined below.

The working principle of double knitting is that in any row the stitches are alternated so that every stitch from one side (layer) of the knitting is followed by a stitch from the other. The pictures below show the stitches of a double knit on the needle – while the facing side is just one colour, the stitches from the other side can be seen on the needle between the stitches of the facing side.



To produce double knitting where both sides of the work have the appearance of the right side of stocking stitch (as pictured above) involves alternating knit and purl stitches in each row. The stitches from the facing side of the work are knitted, and the stitches from the back are purred. Thus in practice this form of double knitting is like working single (k1, p1) rib.

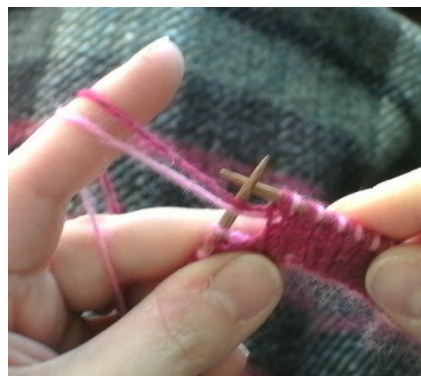
As with any knitting involving more than one yarn, holding the yarn is an important skill to master. There are a variety of methods to choose from. It is possible to hold both yarns in one hand for throwing ('English' style) or in the other hand for picking ('continental' style). Alternatively it is possible to hold the yarns in separate hands as is common for stranded knitting.

Despite ordinarily being a 'thrower', and preferring the two-handed method for stranded knitting, I have found that I produce best results in double knitting from holding the yarns in one hand for picking. One-handed yarn management makes it easier to keep the tension even, and picking the yarn makes it easier to keep the two yarns separate.

To hold two yarns in one hand for double knitting wrap them together once around the little finger, then take them both under the ring finger, then take one over and one under the middle finger, finally carrying both over the index finger. This way the yarns are both evenly tensioned by the little finger yet kept separate by the middle finger – see below.



For stocking stitch double knits (where both sides are the right side of stocking stitch), it is necessary to bring both yarns forward when purling, and take both yarns back when knitting, otherwise the yarn that is not worked for the stitch crosses the stitch on the public side of it. While this can be done deliberately to create interesting stitch patterns, it is usually only done accidentally creating an unwanted effect. The two following pictures show respectively both yarns held to the back of the work preparatory to knitting a stitch, and both yarns held to the front of the work preparatory to purling a stitch.



It is also important to pay attention to the position of the yarns relative to each other as they are worked. If they are twisted around each other between stitches the stitches of the other side will subsequently show between the stitch columns, rendering the work more like ribbing than double-layered knitting. Fortunately with one-handed yarn management, and especially if picking rather than throwing the yarn, it is more difficult to twist the yarns together between stitches than to knit the stitch as desired. Thus this problem is relatively easy to avoid.

Another issue with flat double knitting is how to work the edges. Again there are a multitude of options dependent upon the desired effect. For an open edge simply knit and purl to the end of the row, then turn and work the next row without twisting the yarns together at the edge. For a closed edge the yarns must be joined at the edges, either by twisting them together, or by knitting a stitch with both strands. I prefer the latter option, and especially like to work a chained selvedge, purling the last stitch of each row with both strands of yarn held together, and then slipping that double-stranded stitch knitwise at the beginning of the next row. This produces a braided effect on the edge as seen here:



Working two-colour designs in double knitting is much easier than it may at first seem to be. Because two layers of knitting are being worked at the same time the colours are simply swapped to stitch the design. The colour that was purling is instead used for the knit stitches, and the colour that was knitting now purls. Hence neither colour is stranded/floated. The picture below shows this in practice – on the needle where the colours are swapped it can be seen that a purl stitch is followed by a knit stitch worked with the same yarn.



Although the design may regularly require a purl stitch to be followed by a knit stitch in the same yarn (as seen above), the golden rule for stocking stitch reversible double knits is to ***always follow a knit stitch with one yarn by a purl stitch with the other yarn.*** Remembering this rule makes it easier to follow charts for reversible double knitting than may at first seem possible.

Usually charts for reversible double knitting just show one side of the work. Therefore each stitch box on the chart actually represents two stitches, the stitch from the facing side (the knit stitch), and the stitch from the rear side (the purl stitch). Because in a reversible double knit one side is a 'negative' of the other every alternate row in the chart must be worked reversing the colours. On the 'positive' side of a double knit (the side which looks like the chart) work all the knit stitches in the colour shown on the relevant boxes of the chart, following each knit stitch with a purl stitch in the other colour. On the 'negative' side of the knitting work all the knit stitches in the colour opposite to that shown in the relevant box on the chart, following each knit stitch with a purl stitch in the colour shown on the chart. As in all flat knitting the chart is followed right to left on the 'right' (positive) side, and left to right on the 'wrong' (negative) side.

To stitch the example chart below in reversible double knitting the first row would be worked as **knit white, purl black, knit black, purl white, knit white, purl black, knit white, purl black**. The second row, knitted on the 'negative' side, would be worked as **knit black, purl white, knit black, purl white, knit white, purl black, knit black, purl white**.

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Reading charts for double knitting is actually much easier to do in practice than it seems to be from description. Looking at a double knit in progress it is very obvious which side is being worked on relative to the chart. As with most knitting techniques, the key thing to do to keep on track is to 'read the knitting'.

For further help getting going with this form of knitting there is a free video tutorial of reversible double knitting viewable online in the 'advanced techniques' section of www.knittinghelp.com. Those hungry for more may wish to acquire the recently published 'Double Knitting: Reversible Two-Color Designs' by M'Lou Baber which provides a variety of garment patterns to double knit. There is also a very inspiring and helpful double knitting group in Ravelry (www.ravelry.com/groups/double-knitting). All the issues discussed in this article are much more extensively covered in posts there, and individually tailored support is available for folk undertaking a double-knitting project.

Designs by Ann in double knitting: (All links are to pages in Ravelry)

Hogwarts Double Knitted Bookscarves:

<http://www.ravelry.com/patterns/library/hogwarts-double-knitted-bookscarves>

Falling Flowers:

<http://www.ravelry.com/patterns/library/falling-flowers-2>

Sky at Night:

<http://www.ravelry.com/patterns/library/sky-at-night>