

Introduction

A provisional or temporary cast-on is one which is unravelled at some stage during the project. Its main advantage is that it allows the knitter to access a row of live stitches to knit from rather than working from picked up stitches along a cast-on edge. Typically, projects which require the addition of a decorative edging or band may use a temporary cast-on as the use of live stitches gives a much smoother transition between the edging and the main body of the item. For example, the main section of a lacy shawl can be knitted then the provisional cast-on is unravelled and the edging is worked using the live stitches. As there is, in effect, no cast-on edge, this gives an almost invisible, seamless join between the body of the shawl and the decorative edge.

Provisional cast-on is also used where two pieces of knitting are later to be joined and the join needs to be as invisible as possible. A cowl, for example, may be cast on in this way so that the beginning and end of the knitting can be joined together, usually by grafting.

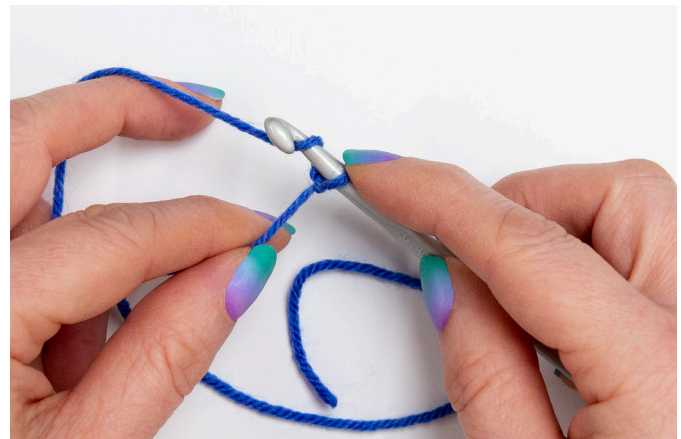
Using a provisional cast-on also has a thrifty side. Children's sweaters, for example, may be cast on using a provisional cast on at the start of the main knitting (ie, after the rib). When the body of the garment has been knitted the provisional cast-on is unravelled and the rib knitted. As the child grows taller (or if cuffs fray or get dirty), the rib can be quickly unpicked, the sleeve/body lengthened and the rib re-knitted.

For an easy provisional cast-on you will need a crochet hook in approximately the same size as your main needles and some waste yarn in a contrasting colour but similar thickness to the main yarn.

Crochet chain

You will need to begin by making a crochet chain. If you haven't crocheted before, don't worry, it's easy!

Make your crochet chain:



1. Using a piece of contrasting waste yarn in a similar weight to your main yarn, put a slipknot in the yarn and place it on your crochet hook. Steady the slipknot on top of the hook with your right index finger and grasp the tail end of the yarn between your LH thumb and index finger. Tension the working yarn over your LH middle or finger.
2. With the hook in your RH and the hook pointing down, take the hook under the working yarn from front to back. The slipknot may want to slide around the hook so keep hold of that tail with your LH!



3. Keeping the tail yarn pinched and making sure that the working yarn stays around the hook, use your LH to draw the slipknot over the hook. If it's a little tight you can wiggle the slipknot loose a touch with your LH. Once you have taken the slipknot over the hook you should have one stitch on the hook. You have made your first chain.



4. Repeat steps 2-3 until you have made a crochet chain several stitches longer than the number of stitches you will need to cast on.



5. Fasten off the chain (not too tightly as you will need to unravel this later) by cutting off the working yarn leaving a 15cm (6" tail) and passing it through the loop on the hook.



6. Using a knitting needle in the size specified in your pattern, hold the crochet chain in your left hand and insert the needle into the bump on the back of the crocheted chain. Wrap the project yarn around the needle.



7. Complete the knit stitch using the project yarn.



8. Knit once into each bump until you have the right number of stitches for your pattern. You should have a couple of crochet chain unused at the ends of the cast on.



9. Continue working following your pattern.



10. When you are ready to unravel your provisional cast-on, return to the crocheted chain. With the work below and the chain on top (so the work is effectively upside down with the RS facing you), undo the temporary knot in the chain and gently pull back until you get to the first stitch of your knitting. With a knitting needle in your RH, carefully insert the needle from R to L into the first 'live' stitch. At this point you may need to unpick the crochet thread from the stitch. It depends which end of the chain you are working from.



11. Hold the live stitch on your knitting needle.



12. Insert the needle into the next stitch.



13. Gently pull the waste yarn free, leaving the stitch on the needle (2 stitches on the RH needle).



15. You can now turn the work, rejoin the yarn (or join in a different yarn) and make your edging.



14. Continue until you have placed all the live stitches on the RH needle and removed all the waste yarn.

TOP TIPS

- When you return the work to the knitting needle, you may find it easier to use a smaller needle. Just remember to change back after you complete the first row of your edging.
- Count your stitches once you finish removing the waste yarn. Occasionally you will find you have one stitch short. Check carefully at the edges to see if there is a dropped stitch. If there is, you can put the dropped stitch onto a safety pin or padlock-type stitch marker and either lift it onto the needle or, if it is at the start of the row, pick it up when you complete the first row of knitting.

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