

Russian Shawl Corner Technique

By
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A couple of years ago I took a workshop on the Russian Shawl techniques and was inspired to take many of their ways of working and adapt them to my shawl making. I have used the Russian corner technique in much of my work since then. It allows the knitter to work the edges at the same time as the body of the shawl or scarf. The corners do not stretch out to a point, but form a diagonal corner—a look I prefer. The Russian knitters worked the bottom edge and then picked up the stitches along the top, worked the corners and worked the body and side edges at the same time to the top of the project. Then they worked the one top corner, worked the top edge, joining to the body of the work and finished by working the last corner.

I use an open loop cast-on as long as needed for the body stitches and the beginning of the bottom edge. As I work that edge, I join to the cast-on. When that is done I put the waiting stitches on the needle. This is a better match to the top join.

TO ADAPT A PATTERN TO USE THE RUSSIAN CORNERS

Use an open loop, provisional cast on to put on the stitches needed for the body of your project plus the opening number of stitches needed for your chosen edging. I think an inc-dec type of scalloped edging is best. See that the number of body sts is such that you will run out of sts as you finish a repeat of the edging. Work your edge, joining to the cast on sts every other row. When you have worked all the sts, end at the scalloped side and drop the yarn. Pick up, but do not knit, the number of stitches needed for row 2 of your edging. (It may be one more than you started with if there are set up rows). Place marker, pick up the body sts. Place marker and put the waiting edge sts on the needle. *Tie a ribbon on the front side.* Now you will work short rows over these edge sts using the number of rows necessary to reach the widest point of the scallop. A good plan over 8 rows would be to work 2 rows of the edging then work until 1 before the marker, turn and wrap, then 2 before the marker, than 1. Fudge to fit your pattern. Knit across, turn and work the corner on this side—the back side is facing you. Work back and when you get to the first corner you worked, work the edge row that is an even row following the odd row you stopped on when you did the first corner—if you finished with a row 9, this would be row 10. Turn and work the next odd row edge. (Now you are working the down side of the scallop), the body of the project, and the even edge row previous to the one you started this row with. *It is important that you understand the concept of the righthand edge (as you look at the front side) is always one row ahead of the lefthand edge and that when you are working towards the body of the shawl you are working an odd row of the edge—away from the body, an even row.*

Finish your shawl or scarf at the widest point. Work short rows for the upper righthand corner as you work the down side of the scallop. After that, remove the marker and work the top edge joining to the body sts. End at the last row of your edge with the smallest number of sts. Move the marker and knit across the maximum number of sts waiting there. Turn and work the last corner on these sts, working short rows as you work the scallop down. You should now have an equal number of sts on each side of the marker. Graph these together.

TO MAKE THE SAMPLER SCARF WITH THE RUSSIAN CORNERS

Use an open loop cast on to put on 76 sts. I like the Beverly Royce cast on. Use a 20" piece of waste yarn. Tie the two yarns together on the needle—this is not a st. Make a V with the two yarns, waste in front, and hold them in your left hand with the waste over your thumb and the good yarn over your forefinger. In every case, you will pick up from outside this V. Pick up the back yarn—don't make a loop, just pick it up with the needle—come around to the front and pick up the front yarn (remember, outside the V), now go around to the back of the V and pick up the back loop again. You now have three loops of yarn on the needle—good, waste, good. Lift up your left thumb which is holding the waste yarn, and lift that middle strand off the needle. No need to let go of anything with your left hand—just move the thumb up and let the strand off the needle. You are left with two sts of the good yarn. Repeat this action enough times to have 76 sts, two at a time. If you have waste yarn sts on the needle, let it all off and try again.

Knit back. Drop the knot off (just let it hang). *When this double knot is on your right, you are working the pattern (odd number) rows.*

Special Techniques

The Russian Slip St starts every row. For American "throwers", you will leave the yarn hanging while you slip the first st purlwise. Then you will pick up the yarn in front and put it to the back through the needlepoints. For Continental knitters it is faster to tuck the right needle under the yarn (that is held in the left hand) and slip the st purlwise onto the needle and under the yarn. The path of the yarn is the same regardless and it forces the edge to curl slightly. You will notice that with the Russian method of forming a scalloped edge, the decreases for the down side of the scallop come on the *return* row so that the "first st slipped" is not interrupted.

For markers, use 4" of thin cotton. Tie an overhand knot leaving a small loop. Let the ends hang down the back side of the knitting and be woven in as you knit. You always know which is the patterned row side (front) because the ends will be on the return (back) side.

The O+ is a way to make a larger yarnover. This is because a yarnover before a decrease tends to be larger than one that stands alone. Put the yarn over the needle and between the points. This yarnover will have to be knit in the back on the return row. For continental knitters just pick up the yarnover the over way—front-away-instead of towards you. Of course, maybe you have no problem matching yarnovers—if so ignore the above.

The joining st and the turning st used on the corners will be detailed when you come to them.

Work from Chart A. Work the two set-up rows starting with the first 11 sts. Work set-up row A right to left. Turn the work at the end of Row A and put the yarn to the back. **Slip, P-wise, the first st on your left needle. Pass the second st now on your right needle over and off.**

The st that was slipped and then passed over is the first st of the even rows and of set-up row B. Finish row B reading left to right.

Work eight 16 row repeats of the edging pattern (don't repeat A & B), eliminating a cast-on st at the beginning of every even row as detailed in bold above. You should come to the end of the cast-on sts and end at the scallop side after row 16 of the eighth repeat. Adjust if you come out + or - a st. See that all your scallops (the Russians call them "teeth") are on one side! Do not cut

yarn, but drop it.

Starting at the beginning, pick up, but do not knit 12 sts from the waste thread. Place marker (M). Pick up 63 more, place M, slip the 12 on your needle to this needle. You now should have 12 sts, M, 63 sts, M 12 sts on one needle with the yarn coming from the working end of the needle. If all is well, you may remove the waste cotton. At this point it is a good idea to take a piece of the cotton and tie it in a bow on the front side of your scarf. It will become very important to know which side is the front as you get into the body of the scarf.

Work the first corner following the chart B. You will be working back and forth on the 12 sts before the first marker. This forms the righthand lower corner. Pay careful attention to the instructions for X--it is just close enough to the "join" you did before to be confusing. Think of the — sts as "stones" that are too heavy for you to do anything with and so will just sit there.

At the end of row 9, move M and knit the center 63 sts. (some of them may be presented backwards--if so knit them in the back loop), move M, K the remaining 12 sts. Turn.

Work the lower left corner following the same chart. This time the odd rows are worked on the back side of the scarf. You will work back and forth on the 12 sts before the M. On row 9 this time, work row 9, M, K63, M, K14, K2tog. This is the return row, (back) and the edge is row 10. The next row will be a front row. Check that your scarf is marked with the front side and that your M's have their tails on the back.

Now you are finally ready to work from the scarf pattern. You will work from this chart on edging row 11, then work row 1 of the beginning pattern over the 63, adding 1 st somewhere in the middle, then work row 10 of the Russian edging pattern after the marker. Turn and work the return row—edging row 11, row 2 of the sampler scarf, and edging row 12 on what is the righthand edge on the front side. Notice that the lefthand edge (when looking at the front side) is always one row behind the right hand edge. *This is an important concept to understand.* Another way of saying it is that when you are working towards the body of the scarf, you will be working an odd row of the edging. When you are working away from the body of the scarf, you will be working an even row.

Keep your Russian edge chart handy in case you have not yet memorized it and work from the directions in the scarf kit.

Chart A

Chart for edging pattern for Russian Shawl construction--16 rows, 2 set-up rows

16.												/					(12)
							/	0									15.
14.												/				(13)	
		/	0					/	0							13.	
12.												/			(14)		
							/	0							11.		
10.												/		(15)			
	/	0			/	0		/	0					9.			
8.																	
(16)				/	0	/	0					0+			7.		
6.																	
(15)	/	0		/	0					0+					5.		
4.																	
(14)										0+						3.	
2.																	
(13)	/	0							0+								1.

>B																	
(12)									0+								A <

Cast on 76 open loop style and **K back**, dropping off the knot. Tail is on your right.
 The first stitch of the even rows is joined to the cast-on sts. Work rows A & B first,
 and do not repeat **Empty square is K** O = yarnover O+ = enlarged
 yarnover (knit in back on return) = slip / = K2tog.
Gray is no stitch. (#) is the st count

Corner charts--Work from Chart B for both lower corners and chart C for both upper corners

Chart B for lower corners

	M		/	O				/	O			/	O				9.
8.	M	—															
	M	—	X				/	O	/	O				O+			7.
6.	M	—	—														
	M	—	—	X			/	O						O+			5.
4.	M	—															
	M	—	X										O+				3.
2.	M																
	M	X	/	O									O+				1.

The even rows are K--(the first st is already worked.) — = left unworked M = marker

X =slip as to P, turn, put yarn back, knit this st, it is the first of the return row.

You will want to end your scarf when you are about to start a row 9 of the edging on the front side. You will now work the upper righthand corner on the 16 sts before the M. Use chart C for the upper corners. When you come to row 1 of that chart, work the 12 sts as given and then remove the marker. **Turn the work, moving the yarn to the other side, slip the first st on your left to the righthand needle P-wise and pass the second st on that needle over and off.** This is the first st of edging row 2. You will work the top edge using only the edge sts and joining to the body sts. You will end, *with NO join on row 15, but you will K the last two sts of this edge together (adjust if you are a st off)* so that you have 12 sts, M, and continue without turning across the 16 sts of the waiting edge. This is row 8 of the last corner--the upper left.

Turn your work--the last corner is worked on these 16 sts, following chart C, but only through row 16. You will end at the scalloped edge with 12 sts in this section. Put 12 sts on each needle, break thread leaving about 10" and thread it through a tapestry needle. Fold the knitting so the ridges are together and the yarn comes from the back needle and work a garter st graft ending towards the center of the scarf.

To graft the last few sts together, hold the needles together points to the right. Thread a tapestry needle (TN) with your yarn. Notice which needle the yarn is coming from and start with the other needle. Take the first st off onto the TN as if to K--don't pull through

