Find and Fix a Dropped Knit Stitch

Catch one live loop. Rebuild the ladder from bottom to top.

Original stockinette-only recovery practice



FREE / 14 original steps / 2 diagrams / 2 records

No physical knitting, recovered-stitch, fit or printing trial performed.

Understand the dropped stitch

Keep one live loop safe; rebuild in knit-V stockinette only

One dropped loop is not the same as a missing stitch instruction

A live knit stitch can slip off its needle and unravel down its own column, leaving a vertical opening crossed by horizontal strands of yarn. Those horizontal strands are often called ladders or bars. In a simple stockinette column, a small crochet hook can draw each bar through the caught loop, rebuilding one stitch at a time. This lesson shows that restricted repair; it does not claim to fix a broken strand, a hole in finished fabric, a yarn-over, or a deliberately decreased stitch.

Work only where the knit V faces you

The original practice is a flat 16-stitch stockinette swatch: knit across the designated right-side (RS) rows and purl across the wrong-side (WS) rows. Face the smooth knit-V side toward you while reconstructing a dropped knit column. The purl side uses a different hook orientation. Do not transfer these instructions unchanged to garter stitch, ribbing, brioche, cables, lace, edge stitches or patterned colour work.

Protect the lost loop before rebuilding anything

First stop working. Catch the lowest surviving loop promptly with a removable stitch marker, a blunt needle or the hook itself. Never tug the horizontal bars and never cut a loose strand; an unsecured live loop can run farther down the work. If more than a few bars have opened, if the yarn is split, or if you cannot identify the original loop, it is safer to pause and seek pattern-specific help rather than improvise.

Count stitches in two places, not just on the needle

The practice starts with 16 live stitches. If one middle stitch drops, there may be 15 on the knitting needle plus one safely caught below. If two bars have opened, both must be reconstructed, starting with the lower bar, to restore the loop to the current row height. Those still represent sixteen intended stitches, not fifteen finished stitches. Once the recovered loop is back on the needle correctly, there should again be 16 live stitches in the worked row. Do not add a compensating cast-on stitch to hide a dropped one.

A small observed repair is the only claim

This guide teaches a visual and hand-guided technique, not a tested guaranteed recovery. Actual yarn fibre, tension, friction, fabric curl and the number of open bars may change what happens. The publisher has not made a physical sample, tested hook sizes, measured a repaired hole, assessed strength, washed the swatch or certified any result. Use a spare practice piece rather than trying this as the first repair on valuable clothing.

Prepare the practice swatch

16 live stitches, 12 worked rows, one caught loop

Make a small stockinette-only practice field

With smooth yarn and two needles appropriate to the yarn label, cast on 16 stitches by a familiar method. Work flat, back and forth. Work Row 1 (RS): K16 and Row 2 (WS): P16 first. Then work this same two-row pair five additional times, making six pairs in total: Rows 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8, 9–10, and 11–12. That is 12 completed rows, six RS knit rows and six WS purl rows. Keep 16 live loops after each row. Do not bind off before the repair. Curl at the edges is common with stockinette and does not by itself mean a dropped stitch.

An optional controlled two-bar practice drop

On a sacrificial swatch only, after completing Row 12 (a WS purl row), turn the work so RS faces you and hold all sixteen loops on the needle. With the work resting flat, isolate ONE interior live loop (for example a middle-column loop, not the first or last) and carefully slide just that loop off the needle. Catch it immediately with a removable marker or the hook. If you choose to practise laddering, allow no more than TWO horizontal bars to open before stabilising the lower loop. Never pull other loops off, and do not force unravelling if the yarn catches. You can instead use a naturally dropped single centre knit stitch; no intentional drop is required.

See the loop below and two bars above

PATTERN 1 is an original symbolic diagram: A is the caught lower live loop; B1 is the lowest bar immediately above A; B2 is the next bar toward the needle. The arrows show rebuilding in order B1 and then B2. Each drawn line is a yarn-path teaching symbol, not a realistic or physically tested stitch length. The picture does not instruct you to create a gap wider than one column.

Hook direction for the knit-facing side

With RS facing, insert the crochet hook through caught loop A from the front of the fabric toward the back. The tip now sits on the back side of the fabric. Catch B1, the lowest loose horizontal bar above loop A, and draw that bar forward toward you through loop A to form the new loop on the hook. Release the old loop A only after the new loop is secure. Then repeat with B2, moving upward one bar at a time. Do not twist the loop or skip a bar. Stop if the reconstructed stitch looks unlike the neighboring knit-V column.

Two records distinguish actions from observations

RECORD 1 tracks the 16-stitch/12-row starting pattern and the caught-loop count. RECORD 2 tracks the number of bars caught and rebuilt, whether the resulting V column looks aligned, and whether 16 live loops were restored. PATTERN 2 shows a before/during/after count map. Both original pattern sheets have two digital 50 mm reference bars; printing at 100% requires the maker to check both bars with a physical ruler. No printing was performed by the publisher.

Steps 01-05

Identify the single drop and keep the loop from running

1. Identify the kind of problem before touching it

Look for a single vertical opening in a knit-facing stockinette column with one live loop below and horizontal ladder bars above. If you see a severed yarn, split strand, deliberate eyelet, cable, rib, or an edge loop, do not treat it as this example. Mark the row and column in RECORD 2 if you can see them.

2. Stop and secure the lowest surviving loop

Lay the work on a stable surface, needles pointing away from anyone nearby. Catch the dropped lower live loop with a removable marker, blunt needle or small crochet hook, without stretching it. Do not pull on adjacent stitches or let the loop travel downward while you search for tools. Keep yarn and needles away from children and pets.

3. Prepare the original sixteen-stitch practice swatch

If practising on new material, cast on 16 live stitches. Work Row 1 (RS) K16 and Row 2 (WS) P16, then repeat this same two-row pair five ADDITIONAL times for six pairs total (Rows 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8, 9–10, 11–12), exactly 12 worked rows. Check the count at every turn. This is a stockinette sample, not the garter-border decoder from F083 and not a finished garment.

4. Face the smooth RS knit column toward you

After Row 12 (WS), turn so the knit-V face is visible. Find a central column well away from the curling edges. If the sample already has one naturally dropped stitch, catch its loop and do not deliberately loosen another one. Only on a spare sample may you release one interior live loop (never the first or last selvedge stitch) from the needle and permit up to two bars to open while immediately catching and holding that loop safely. The repair itself does NOT add a row; the sample remains at twelve worked rows.

5. Separate the bars without pulling their neighbours

Identify the caught lower loop A and the loose cross-strands directly above it. Read them from the caught loop upward: B1 is lowest, then B2 if present. Keep adjacent full stitch columns on their needles. A bar is not a new ball-yarn working end and should not be cut or tied to the loop.

Steps 06-10

Use the hook from the knit-facing side and rebuild both bars

6. Put the hook through the loop from front to back

IMPORTANT: This hook direction applies ONLY to a stockinette knit-V column with its smooth RS facing you. Do not apply it unchanged to purl-facing fabric, garter, ribbing, edges or other patterns. Remove the holding marker only when the hook securely holds A. Insert the hook through A from the fabric front toward the back. The tip is now behind the fabric, ready to catch the lowest bar. Stop if A is split or twisted.

7. Draw the lowest bar forward through A

Use the hook on the back side of the fabric to catch B1, the lowest horizontal bar above A. Pull B1 toward you from back to front through A, so that B1 becomes the new loop held by the hook. Allow old loop A to release only after the new loop is secure. This rebuilds one knit-facing stitch and uses one ladder bar.

8. Repeat upward for the next bar, if present

Keep the new loop on the hook. Reach to B2 above it, catch that bar and pull it through the new loop in the same knit-facing direction. Repeat bottom-to-top for each actually visible bar. For the controlled TWO-bar example, you must pull B1 and B2 through in that order before returning the live loop to the needle. Repairing one of two bars leaves the recovered loop one row too low. If there is just one bar, use that one rather than inventing a second. If more than two bars opened, pause if you cannot confidently identify their order.

9. Check the recreated V direction and any unused bars

Look at the front of the repaired column. The newly formed loop should sit in the same knit-V orientation as its immediate neighbours; there should be no loose skipped ladder strand and no obvious loop twist. If a bar was skipped or the V faces oddly, hold the active loop safely on a marker or the hook (temporarily park it), carefully reverse only the uncertain hook action without releasing the lower loop, and recheck the lowest-to-highest bar order. Do not put the loop back onto the needle while any loose bar remains.

10. Return the final live loop to the needle

Lift the one recovered loop from the hook onto the same knitting needle that holds the rest of that row, without twisting the loop. Check the leading leg/mount against adjacent stitches before working it. The intended total is 16 live needle loops again; never knit the restored loop together with a neighbour simply to make the count appear right.

Steps 11-14

Count, inspect and document the recovered loop

11. Confirm the count without disguising an error

Count all needle stitches once more. Before the repair, 15 might have been on the needle while one was caught below; after successful recovery, sixteen should be on the needle and the loose ladder bars consumed. If the total is fifteen or seventeen, stop and diagnose the source before making another row. Record actual counts rather than a desired answer.

12. Inspect the fabric without promising invisibility

Lay the swatch flat gently. A rescued stitch may look looser or tighter than nearby stitches until the yarn settles; a stockinette practice square may also curl. Do not pull hard to erase the difference and do not claim the repair is invisible, tested durable or physically identical to the original fabric. Note the actual appearance in RECORD 2.

13. Resume only if the live stitch is secure

Recovering a dropped loop is a repair, not an additional worked row. After restoring the stitch on the twelve-row practice sample, the row count is still 12. If every live stitch is back on the needle and there are no stray bars, you may choose to knit a new Row 13 (RS K16) to continue the sample, but that would go beyond the twelve-row exercise. If a large run or complex yarn remains unstable, stop and seek help rather than keep knitting.

14. Complete the audit and store the sample safely

Mark whether a natural or controlled practice drop was used, where the lowest loop was caught, how many bars were rebuilt, the before/after needle count, and the observed appearance. Leave the yarn uncut until the piece is intentionally finished with an appropriate bind-off. Store the knitting, hook and any removable markers away from small children and pets; no physical recovery trial was performed by this publisher.

Troubleshooting and limits

When the single-knit-column method is not appropriate

Fix, care and preserve

The ladder bars are not visible or the yarn has snapped

Do not drag the hook through intact fabric or tie a broken end and call it a dropped-stitch repair. This original method requires a surviving live loop plus recognisable bars directly above. For broken yarn or a hole after bind-off, use a separately appropriate mending technique.

The repaired loop looks twisted or one bar remains

Hold the live loop securely, and reconsider the lowest bar first order. On the knit-facing RS, the hook goes through the loop front to back and draws the next bar forward. Undo only the latest uncertain hook transfer if feasible; never force a tight loop or claim a perfect visual result.

The mistake is in garter, ribbing, an edge, or another pattern

A ladder in garter may alternate knit-looking and purl-looking rows, while ribs and edges create different yarn paths. Stop. The diagram here is a single stockinette knit-V column, not a general chart for all stitch patterns. Use instructions specifically written for the actual fabric or carefully undo the work to the problem.

There are still only fifteen loops on the needle

One loop may remain on the hook or marker, or you may have lost more than one stitch. The correct count is sixteen only after all intended loops are restored to the needle. Do not silently cast on another stitch; track the caught loop and any open bars before proceeding.

Technical and rights provenance

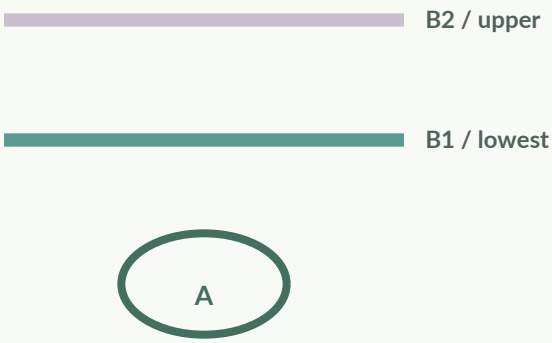
The sixteen-stitch practice sequence, full manuscript, two teaching drawings and two printable observation records were authored for Steadleaf Press. External knitting sources support the general stockinette stitch-catching approach only; their instructional images and wording were not reproduced. All diagrams here are original symbolic designs, not measured photographs or physical samples. No actual dropped-stitch practice, physical printing, loop-tension measurement, endurance testing, garment fitting, laundering, medical assessment, or child/pet safety testing was performed.

Original teaching diagrams

Symbolic loop-and-ladder illustration, count transition

PATTERN 1 / Recover a single knit-V column

Smooth RS toward you; a symbolic loop + two ladder bars



Hook front-to-back through A; pull lowest bar B1 forward through loop.
Then use B2. The real fabric may not resemble this simplified drawing.

Each scale bar is 50 mm in the PDF at 100%: measure the print yourself.

PATTERN 2 / Before, caught, restored

BEFORE	CAUGHT	RESTORED
16 on needle	15 + caught A	16 on needle
16	**15 + 1**	**16**

Two bars opened? Rebuild B1 and B2; do not skip a strand.

Dropped stitch repair is NOT a new worked row: 12 stays 12.

Each scale bar is 50 mm in the PDF at 100%: measure the print yourself.

Record 1 / Prepare and count

Twelve-row swatch tracker and original stitch identity

Date / initials		☐
Yarn and fibre		☐
Needle size		☐
Crochet hook size (if used)		☐
Row 1 / RS / K16		☐
Row 2 / WS / P16		☐
Row 3 / RS / K16		☐
Row 4 / WS / P16		☐
Row 5 / RS / K16		☐
Row 6 / WS / P16		☐
Row 7 / RS / K16		☐
Row 8 / WS / P16		☐
Row 9 / RS / K16		☐
Row 10 / WS / P16		☐
Row 11 / RS / K16		☐
Row 12 / WS / P16		☐
Intended live stitch count	*16*	☐
Actually counted at Row 12		☐

Record 2 / Document the repair

Record observed ladder bars, loop counts and what actually happened

Location / column of dropped loop		☐
Natural mistake or controlled practice?		☐
Stitch A caught on hook or marker?		☐
Live loops still on needle		☐
Caught lower loop count		☐
Bars visible above A		☐
B1 (lowest) rebuilt?		☐
B2 rebuilt? (if present)		☐
Any bars still loose?		☐
Loop mount matches neighbours?		☐
Final live loops back on needle	*16 expected*	☐
Rows physically worked	*12 before any new row*	☐
Appearance / twist / curl		☐
Decision: continue / pause / redo		☐
Yarn / tools safely stored?		☐

Technical references (linked, not reproduced)

Craft Yarn Council - Knit 911 dropped stitch

CYC - Certified Knitting Instructors Program Handbook

Purl Soho - The Knit Stitch / dropped-stitch Q&A

Recording is personal observation, not a product safety, strength or gauge certificate.