Change Yarn Color at a Clean Row Edge

Original 16-stitch, 12-row A/B/A garter colour lesson

No knots, no carried floats; three bands of four rows



FREE / 14 original steps / 2 diagrams / 2 records

Why and what you will make

A clear A/B/A stripe change with no carried floats

A small sample makes the colour change visible

This lesson builds a flat 16-stitch garter-stitch rectangle in three bands: Color A for Rows 1-4, Color B for Rows 5-8, and a new working strand of Color A for Rows 9-12. Knit every stitch on every row. The objective is to practise introducing a new yarn at the first stitch of a row, keeping all sixteen live stitches, leaving useful tails, and finishing the edge without relying on a permanent knot. This is a sample, not a tested dishcloth, garment or child item.

Decide which face is the right side

Garter stitch looks textured on both faces, but a colour change can create contrasting horizontal bumps on one face. Choose and mark the side you work on Row 1 as the right side (RS), using a removable marker well away from live loops. Every odd row in this flat sample, including the two colour-change rows 5 and 9, is then a RS row. The transition may look cleaner on that chosen face; the wrong side (WS) can show a mixed-colour ridge. Do not promise both faces will look identical.

Change at the row boundary, not in the middle

For this project, complete the old-colour row before reaching for the next colour. After Row 4, turn; the marked RS faces you and the first stitch of Row 5 is ready. Lay the old yarn aside, then work that first old loop with the new yarn B as the working strand. Do not add a loop to the needle, join two strands as one stitch, or accidentally wrap the old yarn across the first few stitches. Perform the same row-edge change from B to a fresh A strand after Row 8.

Choose the two colours and keep their ends

Keep the unknotted change controlled at the first loop

The beginner version uses separate tails, not carried floats

Cut the old working strand at each of the two transitions, leaving at least approximately 15 cm / 6 in of tail, and begin the new strand with its own 15 cm / 6 in tail. A fresh length of A from its ball is used for Row 9, so neither A nor B is carried vertically along the edge in this exercise. There are six loose ends in all: A cast-on, A at the first change, B joining, B at the second change, A joining again, and A after bind-off. More advanced carrying/twisting methods exist but are outside this original exercise.

Keep the first stitches unforced while the tails are loose

A yarn tail that has not yet been woven in is not permanently secured merely because a few stitches have been worked. Support the new tail lightly with your fingers for the first stitch or two; do not pull it so hard that the edge puckers. Count each new loop as the replacement of exactly one old stitch. Minor looseness at a new-colour edge is possible and should be handled during the appropriate final weaving-in, not disguised by an unsupported claim of perfect tension.

Materials and limits

Choose smooth practice yarns A and B of similar labelled weight and compatible needle suggestions, two knitting needles, a removable RS marker, a blunt tapestry needle, a ruler, and closed scissors. Using two very different fibres or yarn diameters can alter width and tension. Keep loose yarn and tools away from children and pets; stop if your hands hurt. No actual sample was knitted, no physical colour result or secure-tension result was tested, and no laundering, dye-transfer, colourfastness or child-safety guarantees are made.

Plan the twelve-row sample

Four rows A, four rows B, four rows A

The complete original twelve-row practice pattern

CO 16 sts in Color A. Work FLAT. Row 1 (RS): K16 A. Row 2 (WS): K16 A. Row 3 (RS): K16 A. Row 4 (WS): K16 A. Cut A, leaving at least 15 cm / 6 in. Row 5 (RS): K16 B using a new strand with a tail. Rows 6-8: K16 B on every row. Cut B, leaving a tail. Row 9 (RS): K16 with a newly introduced strand of Color A and a tail. Rows 10-12: K16 A on every row. Turn; BO all 16 stitches knitwise with A as a SEPARATE finishing action. Leave a tail and weave all six ends on the WS.

Keep the row count, stitch count, and face together

Each knitted row consumes sixteen existing stitches and leaves sixteen new live stitches. The row groups are 1-4 in A, 5-8 in B, and 9-12 in A: 4+4+4=12 worked rows, with no increases or decreases. Odd rows are worked with the selected RS facing; even rows with WS facing. After an even row finishes, turning places RS toward you. The bind-off follows Row 12 and is not counted as Row 13. Record the actual count at each transition before making another stitch.

A clean boundary is not the same as a hidden tail

The new yarn creates Row 5 or Row 9; it is not dragged through the last stitch of the previous row. The tail stays free at the side until it can be woven into the WS. It is normal for the first new-colour stitch to need gentle adjustment before finishing. Do not tie a permanent bulky joining knot or rely on a slip knot left inside the finished swatch. Some tutorials discuss temporary knots that are untied later, but this specific pattern avoids them completely.

Count and record both colour changes

Exactly 16 stitches across all twelve rows

How to guide the new yarn through the first old loop

When Row 5 or 9 begins, hold the new working yarn behind the needles for knitting. Enter the first existing loop on the left needle as for an ordinary knit stitch, wrap the new yarn around the right needle, draw a new loop through, and slide the old loop off. The new strand's short tail is held nearby, not worked as an extra loop. Work each of the remaining fifteen stitches with only the new working strand. Check that sixteen live loops—not fifteen, seventeen or doubled yarn loops—remain.

Three original visuals and records of what you actually made

PATTERN 1 maps Rows 1-12 into A/B/A bands and marks Rows 5 and 9 as RS colour changes. PATTERN 2 traces the old strand, new strand, first existing loop, and free tails at a single row edge; it is symbolic, not a tested yarn-tension diagram. RECORD 1 is a twelve-row colour-and-count tracker. RECORD 2 records both change locations, tail lengths, whether knots or floats were avoided, visible edge shape and the final treatment of tails. Each original diagram page contains two digital 50 mm print-reference bars; measure them on paper if printing at 100%. They are not a tested gauge or size guarantee.

Steps 01-05

Prepare A and complete the first four rows

1. Gather two similar practice yarns and mark the RS

Put smooth Color A and Color B yarns, two needles of a size suitable for your yarn, scissors, blunt tapestry needle, ruler and the records on a flat workspace. Select the fabric face you will call RS and plan to mark it after the first row. These instructions are for simple flat garter stitch, not circular knitting or a multi-colour garment.

2. Cast on sixteen stitches using Color A

Create exactly sixteen separate live loops with your familiar cast-on or the method in F077. If your chosen cast-on counts a starting slip knot as a stitch, count it once, following that cast-on method. Leave an A cast-on tail about 15 cm / 6 in or longer for later weaving. Do not start knitting until you see sixteen loops.

3. Knit Row 1 with the designated RS facing

Knit all sixteen stitches using A. You have finished Row 1 (RS). Note that face as the RS using a removable marker outside the working stitches or a small paper tag. Count sixteen live loops on the right needle. Turn the work; the WS is now toward you. The marker is a face reference, not an additional stitch.

4. Finish Rows 2, 3 and 4 in Color A

Knit every one of the sixteen loops in Row 2 (WS), Row 3 (RS), and Row 4 (WS). Turn after each row. Four A rows are now worked, with sixteen live loops after each. Row 4 ends on WS; after turning, the marked RS faces you for Row 5. Check RECORD 1 before changing yarn.

5. Stop A at the end of Row 4 and leave its tail

At the row boundary, cut A's working strand with closed-scissor control, leaving approximately 15 cm / 6 in or more from the fabric. Do not remove a needle loop and do not knot A to B. You now have an A cast-on tail and an A transition tail; both remain loose until the end-finishing step. Lay the A ball aside rather than carrying it up the side.

Steps 06-10

Introduce B and return to A on the RS

6. Start Color B in the first stitch of Row 5

Turn to the marked RS, position B behind the needle tips and leave B's own short tail at least 15 cm / 6 in long. With B's WORKING strand, knit the first existing loop of Row 5 as an ordinary knit stitch. Hold the loose B tail gently so it does not slip out. One old loop is replaced with one new B loop; the B tail must not create a seventeenth loop or be knitted together as a second yarn strand.

7. Finish Row 5 in B and count all sixteen loops

Continue knitting the other fifteen old loops with B alone. Count sixteen live stitches, mark Row 5 (RS) complete, then turn. The old A edge tail and new B tail may look a little loose at this stage; that does not justify yanking both strands tight or making a permanent knot. Adjust only enough to avoid an obvious gap; proper end weaving comes later.

8. Knit Rows 6, 7 and 8 using only Color B

Knit every stitch across each row, turning at its end. Row 6 is WS, Row 7 is RS and Row 8 is WS. There are now exactly four B rows, Rows 5-8. Check sixteen live loops after Row 8, then turn so the marked RS faces you. Stop before adding Row 9 with the wrong colour.

9. Leave B's ending tail and avoid a carried edge float

Cut B after Row 8, leaving another 15 cm / 6 in or longer tail. There is no need to lift an inactive strand up four rows because the lesson uses separately cut yarn lengths. Let both B tails lie free at their respective joining edges. Avoid making an improvised loop or hitch around the end stitch; the edge will be inspected and secured on the WS during finishing.

10. Reintroduce Color A in Row 9 on the marked RS

Use a fresh A working strand from the A ball, leaving a new A tail 15 cm / 6 in long. With the RS facing you, knit the first existing needle stitch with A, then knit the other fifteen. Count exactly sixteen, mark Row 9 complete, and turn. Do not mistake the old cut A tail near Row 4 for a live strand to be drawn four rows up the edge; that is a different technique.

Steps 11-14

Bind off, weave ends and record the result

11. Complete Rows 10 through 12 with Color A

Knit all sixteen stitches on Row 10 (WS), Row 11 (RS) and Row 12 (WS), turning after each row. Your twelve completed rows are four in A, four in B, four in A. Each has sixteen live stitches. The two colour-change rows 5 and 9 were worked with RS facing, so the transition bumps should be on the designated WS rather than guaranteed invisible on both faces.

12. Bind off the sixteen live loops with Color A

After the WS Row 12, turn to face the RS. Work a standard knitwise bind-off with A: knit two loops to the right needle, lift the older first-knitted loop over the newer and off, then knit one fresh stitch and pass the older loop over each time until one remains. Pull a cut A tail through the final loop. This is finishing, not a thirteenth knitted pattern row. Refer to F082 for an illustrated practice of bind-off mechanics.

13. Weave each loose tail on the WS without pulling the stripe edge

Turn to WS and identify all six ends: A initial, A at Row 4, B at Row 5, B at Row 8, A at Row 9, and final A. With a blunt tapestry needle, weave each tail independently through the backs of compatible-colour stitches near its row edge, redirecting through neighbouring stitch backs where yarn type allows. Avoid drawing a contrasting tail through the visible RS of an unlike-coloured stripe. Do not assume the same weaving method suits every slippery fibre; seek yarn-specific advice if it slides free. Trim only after ends are secured to your satisfaction.

14. Check the edge and fill the two original maker records

Lay the swatch flat without stretching. Look at the marked RS: are both transitions at the beginning of Rows 5 and 9, and are their visible bumps mainly on WS? Count the twelve ticked rows and record the actual line, tail treatment, edge puckering or gaps, and any unexpectedly loose stitch. Mark the final status honestly; this guide has no physical test data, colourfastness claim, wash guarantee or prescribed dimensions. Put needles, scissors and yarn away safely.

Troubleshooting and limits

Fix the edge without inventing loops or hidden rows

Fix, care and preserve

A contrasting bump line appears on the intended RS

Check the face marker and whether the colour switch truly began at Row 5 or 9 with your chosen RS facing you. A visible contrast can also reflect the cast-on orientation or yarn texture. Undo a few recent rows if necessary and remake the colour boundary from the intended side. The lesson does not promise an identical transition on both faces; the WS can show a mixed-colour ridge.

The first new-colour loop is loose or the edge has a hole

Support the new tail lightly as you work the first few stitches; a loose end can be tightened gently while weaving later. If the edge has a large gap, carefully undo only the affected row and remake it without adding or skipping a stitch. Do not invent a permanent tight knot as the solution, and do not claim all yarns will behave identically.

The strip has only ten rows or has a wrong stripe count

Do not confuse the three colour blocks with three rows. The exact count is A Rows 1-4, B Rows 5-8, A Rows 9-12: 4+4+4=12. This lesson has no repeated instruction that silently adds rows. Check the written tracker and count the worked rows before bind-off; if you omitted a row or changed mid-row, unravel to the first affected row rather than disguising the count.

The edge is tight or a yarn tail shows on the RS

Do not yank a tail to make the row edge look clean. A heavy pull can pucker the first stitch, while a very loose tail may not hold in a slippery yarn. Unweave and redirect the end through nearby WS stitch backs in the same colour region, checking the fabric at rest. Trim only after the new end path is satisfactory; no durability guarantee is implied by a digital pattern.

I want one-row stripes or to carry A up the side

That is a different knitting problem. A stripe on every flat row may place the desired working yarn at the opposite needle end, and carrying an inactive yarn along a selvedge needs its own tension management. This particular sample uses four-row blocks, fresh strands and no carried floats. Do not transplant this sequence to one-row stripes, intarsia, circular striping, colourwork or garments without an appropriate dedicated pattern.

Two original teaching diagrams

Row colours and the two open-tail transitions

PATTERN 1 / A-B-A three-band row map

Rows 5 and 9 are right-side colour changes; K16 each row.

01 RS K16 / A	**02 WS** K16 / A	**03 RS** K16 / A	**04 WS** K16 / A	**05 RS** K16 / B NEW YARN	**06 WS** K16 / B
07 RS K16 / B	**08 WS** K16 / B	**09 RS** K16 / A NEW YARN	**10 WS** K16 / A	**11 RS** K16 / A	**12 WS** K16 / A

No hidden Row 13: turn after Row 12 and bind off separately.

PATTERN 2 / A new working strand at a row edge

OLD ROW ENDS

A ends after Row 4



Cut; 15 cm tail

ROW 5 BEGINS

B knits the first loop



New B tail free

CHECK & FINISH

16 loops, tails free



No knot / extra loop

Repeat the operation at Row 9, using a fresh A strand. Weave all six tails later.

Record 1 / The twelve-row stripe tracker

Mark each working row; every row finishes with sixteen live stitches

- [ ] Date / initials
- [ ] Color A and fiber / lot
- [ ] Color B and fiber / lot
- [ ] Needle diameter (mm)
- [ ] RS marker placed?
- [ ] Row 01 / RS / A / K16
- [ ] Row 02 / WS / A / K16
- [ ] Row 03 / RS / A / K16
- [ ] Row 04 / WS / A / K16
- [ ] Row 05 / RS / B / K16
- [ ] Row 06 / WS / B / K16
- [ ] Row 07 / RS / B / K16
- [ ] Row 08 / WS / B / K16
- [ ] Row 09 / RS / A / K16
- [ ] Row 10 / WS / A / K16
- [ ] Row 11 / RS / A / K16
- [ ] Row 12 / WS / A / K16

Record 2 / Edge and six-end review

Write observed results only; do not invent stretch or durability evidence

A cast-on tail retained	☐
A tail after Row 4 retained	☐
B start Row 5 tail retained	☐
B tail after Row 8 retained	☐
Fresh A start Row 9 tail retained	☐
Final A after bind-off retained	☐
Row 5 changed on marked RS?	☐
Row 9 changed on marked RS?	☐
16 live stitches counted per row?	☐
Separate bind-off after Row 12?	☐
No permanent knots used?	☐
No A/B strand carried up side?	☐
WS shows mixed-colour ridge?	☐
RS transition appearance	☐
Tails woven into compatible WS colour?	☐
Gap, puckering or loose edge?	☐
Final decision / care notes	☐

Original technical sources (links, not reproduced):

Craft Yarn Council - Knit 911

Purl Soho - Simple Stripe Washcloth