

CAST-ONS AND BIND-OFFS

Cast-Ons and Their Characteristics

All of the following cast-ons can be found either in a good finishing book like Nancie Wiseman's *The Knitter's Book of Finishing Techniques*, or online – many with videos for visual learners.

Single or Backward Loop

Very easy to learn, but really difficult to knit from evenly and easily, use in a pinch only!

Long-tail (sling-shot, double, continental)

Most common and most versatile, requires long-enough tail to make all sts (use wrap around needle method for estimating tail length), maintaining tension can take some time to get used to as correct placement of the yarn in your fingers is essential, the cast-on row should be used as the right-side row as it is very nice-looking, cast on edge will roll toward the knit side if followed by stockinette, can be used with any weight of yarn. Pair with the traditional bind-off.

Knitted

Can be used to start any project or to add sts with knitting in progress, done by actually knitting into a stitch so it's easy to remember, fairly elastic, so it needs to be worked firmly or the sts will stretch out of shape, knit into the back of the sts on the first row after the cast-on to tighten them up, casting on with a smaller needle is a good idea, works well with any yarn weight, both sides look exactly the same, cast-on edge tends to roll toward the knit side if followed by stockinette. Pair with traditional bind-off.

Cable

The edge will always look and remain firm and has a neat and uniform appearance – try not to cast on too tightly, can be used for casting on sts with work in progress, not very elastic but that may be good for some projects, knit into back of sts to tighten first row, followed by St st will not lie flat, works well with stitch patterns that don't have much stretch, works well with all weights of yarn. Pair with traditional bind-off.

Alternate Cable

Firm but stretchy, great for K1 P1 ribbing, both sides look the same, you knit into your slip knot to get started, then alternately purl and knit into the space between two sts and place the st on the left needle by slipping knit-wise.

Picot

Elastic, decorative, works well with ribbing or garter st, picots can vary in size, both sides look the same, works best with light to medium-weight yarns, don't place picots too close together (edge will ruffle), use needle 2 sizes smaller for cast-on and work evenly and firmly, takes more yarn and more time than other cast-ons, cast-on edge tends to roll toward the knit side if followed by stockinette. Pair with the Picot bind-off.

Chained (Bind-Off Cast-On)

Generally used to create a temporary cast-on, in this case removal of chain must be done carefully and live sts placed on a needle or scrap yarn*, if left in the edge will be firm and will not lie flat if followed by St st, more time-consuming than other cast-ons, knitter must know how to make a crochet chain, works well with any weight of yarn, worked with a slip knot on a crochet hook and a knitting needle – the chain is crocheted over the top of the needle.

Tubular

Beautiful, professional-looking cast-on edge, very elastic, great for ribbing at the hips, can be used to start any knitted piece using K1, P1 ribbing, can also be used with St st and other patterns, will always end with an odd number of sts so another st may need to be added on the first row for pattern, not good with bulky yarn (edge too thick), more time-consuming than other cast-ons but well worth it! Pair with Kitchener st bind-off.

Provisional

Excellent for adding a contrasting rib or border later, to work an I-cord border or to remove the cast-on and pick up the sts to work in the opposite direction, can also be used to make a firm edge if done in the main color and not removed, works well with all weights of yarn, leaves you one st short, takes more than usual amount of time.

Moebius

Creates the twist needed to create a never-ending circle, worked on a 60" circular needle –see Cat Bordhi's *Magical Knitting* books and her website for great illustrations. The needle is held so that the tips point in opposite directions, the cable forms two circles and the stitches are "scooped" onto the right-hand needle and over the cord of the left hand needle.

Twisted German

Very neat and elastic edge, perfect for socks, lovely double-twisted edge, starts with the traditional long-tail method, best to try this first with 2 colors of yarn slip-knotted together so that you can follow the path of the cast-on stitches.

Italian Tubular

Same as tubular but worked without waste yarn, you'll need an equal length of yarn on both sides to cast-on the sts so leave a tail as for the long-tail cast-on, then you alternate between using the left and right hand, moving the yarn with one hand and holding the last st in place with the other. There is no difference in appearance between the regular tubular cast-on and the Italian one.

Turkish

Invisible cast-on, forms a closed end - great for sock toes, mittens, glove fingers, pouches, etc., it is done on two same-sized circular needles. Practice this cast-on using 2 different types of needles so you can see what is happening.

Braided

Lovely braided effect, perfect for 2-color knitting, sets up sts perfectly for corrugated ribbing, you will cast on starting with a slip knot of two different colors of yarn held together.

Emily Ocker's Circular

Used to start a piece of circular knitting in the middle, also excellent for starting toe-up socks, you make a loop around your finger, insert a crochet hook through the loop, grab the yarn and pull the yarn through the loop on your finger, then hook the yarn a second time w/o going through the loop on your finger and draw the yarn through the loop on the hook ---- wish I had known about this one when I started the Hemlock Ring Throw!

Judy's Magic

Totally awesome!, I didn't find it really fast to learn, but once I figured out the path of the yarn, I found it easy to work, completely invisible from both sides, can be used with almost any toe-up sock pattern, can also be used as a "seamless" side seam on a side-to-side sweater - see Lucy Neatby's Venus Rising Cardigan on her website. This cast-on is done on two circular needles.

Long-tail Loop

Exceptionally elastic, used to cast-on for garments knit with the Knit One Below technique. Hold needle in left hand and long tail of yarn in right hand, bring right index finger under yarn, pointing toward you, turn index finger to point away from you, insert tip of needle under yarn on index finger – this forms the stitch. Repeat.

Aloha

For toe-up socks, variation of long-tail c/o but casting yarn onto 2 circular needles simultaneously.

References

Google

Reader's Digest Knitter's Handbook, pp. 64 - 82

The Knitter's Book of Finishing Techniques by Nancie Wiseman, pp. 10 - 25

Knit One Below by Elise Duvecot, p. 138

A Second Treasury of Magical Knitting, pp. 10 – 13

Bind-offs, part I

Traditional

The most commonly used, easy to learn, also known as the “pullover bind-off” because you pull one st over the other, can be bound off in pattern, works well with all yarn weights, easy to work too tightly – use a needle one or 2 sizes larger in the right hand only, the last st can be sloppy – see “to clean up last st in Wiseman’s book, p. 51.

Traditional, but with a crochet hook

You’ll be surprised at how fast this goes – use a crochet hook in your right hand, insert in the st as if to knit, wrap yarn around hook and pull one loop through the other, repeat across, be sure to use a hook the same size as your knitting needle or one size larger.

Grafting or Kitchener Stitch

Very stretchy, invisible – edge looks like a tube instead of a straight line, can be worked flat or in the round, works well with all weights of yarn, tension is difficult to maintain, requires a lot of concentration – very easy to lose your place, stitches are placed on 2 needles and a tapestry needle is used to work the grafting. Pair with tubular cast-on.

Applied I-Cord

Leaves a nice rolled edge on the finished piece, can be worked with either 2 or 3 sts, easy to work too tightly, I-Cord seams require grafting, do not use on shoulder seams, care must be taken to pull the yarn tightly across the back of the I-Cord so it will be uniform in size, takes more time and more yarn than usual. (Check out Brooklyn Tweed’s hat Quincy on the cover of his pattern book from Classic Elite – You work the I-Cord on each side of the rectangle that forms the bottom of the hat while knitting the rest of the rectangle. Very clever!)

Picot

Can be used on any edge that will not be seamed, decorative, very elastic (good for neck edges), works well with ribbing, take care not to work the picots too close together or edge will ripple, takes more time and yarn than usual. Pair with picot cast-on.

Single Crochet

A row of sc is worked directly onto the free loops, strong and elastic, quite decorative on the wrong side if worked with contrast yarn, good base for crochet edgings except the crab st, knit first st with hook, insert hook into st, catch yarn and draw through st, knit next st with hook and drop from needle, catch yarn with hook and draw through the 2 sts on hook, repeat.

3-Needle

For seaming (especially shoulders), decorative if used on the outside of the garment, works well with all yarn weights, must have the same number of stitches on each of 2 needles, with a third needle, knit the first stitch from the front needle with the first st from the back needle, repeat – you now have 2 sts on the right needle – pull the first st over the second, repeat until all sts are bound off, can be awkward and must be done loosely.

Yarn Over

Knit one st as usual, yarn over, with left needle pass first st on right needle over the yarn over and off the needle, knit one more stitch, pass yarn over over this knit st and off the needle – you have bound off one st, very elastic, makes a nice edge.

Purl-Two Together

Cast an extra st onto the left needle, p2tog, slip st back to left needle, repeat from p2tog, take care to work loosely, very decorative if done with a contrast color.

Purl Loop –

Thread a length of yarn at least 3 times the width of the knitted piece onto a tapestry needle, work carefully to keep the tension even, insert tapestry needle into second st as if to purl and pull through to the front, leaving st on needle, insert tapestry needle into first st as if to knit, pull through and drop off the knitting needle, repeat until on st remains and insert needle into this st as if to purl, makes a very neat edge.

References:

Google

Reader's Digest Knitter's Handbook, pp. 82 - 91

The Knitter's Book of Finishing Techniques by Nancie Wiseman, pp. 49 – 58 and 75

Knit One Below by Elise Duvecot, p. 139