



How to Center a Stitch Pattern

If you plan to incorporate a stitch (or colorwork) pattern into the body of a sweater, you'll want to make sure to center the pattern vertically. You'll also want to make sure that there is a whole number of pattern repeats horizontally from side to side.

STEP 1: DETERMINE NUMBER OF STITCHES IN ONE PATTERN REPEAT

Make note of the number of stitches in a full pattern repeat.

If necessary, add balancing stitches.

For example: Let us use a 2-row slip-stitch pattern that repeats over 4 stitches and 2 rows.

Row 1: (RS) *K3, sl 1; rep from *.

Row 2: (WS) Purl.

Repeat Rows 1 and 2 for pattern.

This pattern requires 1 balancing stitch to make the two ends of the repeat match. However, balancing the stitch pattern is not necessary if you want the pattern to flow continuously from front to back.

STEP 2: DETERMINE HOW MANY REPEATS ARE NEEDED

Divide the total number of stitches by the number of stitches in a single pattern repeat.

For example: Let's say we want a total of 98 stitches for the back or front of a sweater.

$98 \text{ sts total} \div 4 \text{ sts/repeat} = 24.5 \text{ repeats}$, which results in a partial repeat of 2 stitches at one edge of the piece.

To ensure a full number of repeats, adjust the number of total stitches.

For example: We can reduce the total number of stitches to 24 repeats (96 stitches) or increase to 25 repeats (100 stitches).

For our example, let's choose 96 stitches for a total of 24 pattern repeats.

STEP 3: DETERMINE CENTER STITCH OF REPEAT

Determine which stitch of the repeat you want to be aligned at the center of the total number of stitches.

For example: We have two choices for centering this stitch pattern.

1. Center on the slip stitch (...sl 1, k3, **sl 1**, k3, sl 1...)
2. Center on the three knit stitches (...k3, sl 1, **k3**, sl 1, k3...)

STEP 4: PLOT GARMENT PIECE ON GRAPH PAPER AND FILL IN PATTERN REPEATS

Plot the outline of the garment piece on graph paper, allowing one box for each stitch. Draw in the symbols for the stitch pattern, aligning the center stitch of the pattern repeat with the center stitch of the total number of stitches. Then extrapolate the adjacent repeats both widthwise and lengthwise.

If you don't want to bother with charting the entire garment piece, you can calculate how to center the stitch pattern by using some simple math.

EXAMPLE 1: Center the stitch pattern on the slip stitch

Step 1: Subtract the centering stitch or group of stitches from the total number of stitches.

96 stitches total – 1 center stitch = 95 stitches, excluding center stitch.

Step 2: Divide the remaining stitches by 2 to determine the number of stitches each side of the center stitch.

95 stitches ÷ 2 = 47.5 stitches each side of center stitch

In this case, there will be 47 stitches on one side and 48 stitches on the other side of the center stitch.

47 stitches + sl 1 center stitch + 48 sts = 96 stitches

Step 3: Divide the number of stitches on each side by the number of stitches in the pattern repeat to determine the number of pattern repeats on each side of the center stitch.

47 stitches ÷ 4 stitches/repeat = 11.75 repeats on one side

48 stitches ÷ 4 stitches/repeat = 12 repeats on the other side

This means there will be 11 full 4-stitch repeats, plus an additional 3 stitches on one side and 12 full 4-stitch repeats on the other side.

To maintain the stitch pattern, you'll want the repeat before the center stitch to be [sl 1, k3] and you'll want the repeat after the center stitch to be [k3, sl 1].

3 stitches + [sl 1, k3] 11 times + sl 1 + [k3, sl 1] 11 times = 96 stitches

Step 4: Maintaining the established pattern, designate the stitches outside of the repeats.

K3, [sl 1, k3] 11 times, sl 1, [k3, sl 1] 11 times = 96 stitches

Notice that the overall stitch pattern begins with k3 and ends with sl 1. This means that both the front and back will begin with k3 and end with sl 1. When joined together, the pattern will appear continuous at each side seam.

However, you'll need to add selvedge stitches to prevent the seams from interrupting the continuity of the stitch pattern.

In our example, we'll have to add these 2 selvedge stitches to the overall stitch count.

1 selvedge stitch + 96 body stitches + 1 selvedge stitch = 98 stitches total

The stitch pattern will read:

K1 (selvedge stitch), k3, [sl 1, k3] 11 times, sl 1, [k3, sl 1] 11 times, k1 (selvedge stitch)

EXAMPLE 2: Center the stitch pattern on the group of 3 knit stitches

Step 1: Subtract the centering stitch or group of stitches from the total number of stitches.

96 stitches total – 3 center stitches = 93 stitches, excluding center group of 3 stitches.

Step 2: Divide the remaining stitches by 2 to determine the number of stitches each side of the center stitch.

93 stitches ÷ 2 = 46.5 stitches each side of center group of 3 stitches

In this case, there will be 46 stitches on one side and 47 stitches on the other side of the center group of stitches.

46 stitches + k3 center sts + 47 sts = 96 stitches

Step 3: Divide the number of stitches on each side by the number of stitches in the pattern repeat to determine the number of pattern repeats on each side of the center stitch.

46 stitches ÷ 4 stitches/repeat = 11.5 repeats on one side

47 stitches ÷ 4 stitches/repeat = 11.75 repeats on the other side

This means there will be 11 full 4-stitch repeats, plus an additional 2 stitches on one side and 11 full 4-stitch repeats, plus an additional 3 stitches on the other side.

To maintain the stitch pattern, you'll want the repeat before the center stitch to be [k3, sl 1] and you'll want the repeat after the center stitch to be [sl 1, k3].

2 stitches + [k3, sl 1] 11 times + k3 + [sl 1, k3] 11 times + 3 stitches = 96 stitches

Step 4: Maintaining the established pattern, designate the stitches outside of the repeats.

K1, sl 1, [k3, sl 1] 11 times, k3, [sl 1, k3] 11 times, sl 1, k2 = 96 stitches

Notice that the overall stitch pattern begins with k1 and ends with k2. This means that both the front and back will begin with k1 and both will end with k2. When joined together, the pattern will appear continuous at each side seam.

However, you'll need to add selvedge stitches to prevent the seams from interrupting the continuity of the stitch pattern.

In our example, we'll have to add these 2 selvedge stitches to the overall stitch count.

1 selvedge stitch + 96 body stitches + 1 selvedge stitch = 98 stitches total

The stitch pattern will read:

K1 (selvedge stitch), k1, sl 1, [k3, sl 1] 11 times, k3, [sl 1, k3] 11 times, k2, k1 (selvedge stitch)