

To my friends on "Men Who Knit"

To say "I'm beyond flattered" is the very least of how I could express myself. The public comments and the multiple personal messages in my inbox have moved me to share this with you.

As you know, I'm working on a second book to publish in early Spring. I've chosen to do this book on sweaters, vests, cardigans/jackets with different styles and designs.

The Vertical Sweater is, for certain, scheduled to take its place in the new book.

I'm glad that so many of you liked the photograph of the original and have asked me to share the pattern with you.

So, I shall and here it is.

The Vertical Sweater

As a lover of the Garter Stitch and it's IxI gauge, I was in the mood to really "design" something. I had so many basic tools to work with -- so many techniques to use, mostly either learned by being taught by Grama and doing it since I was 5 all the while, sharing the methods employed by the great Elizabeth Zimmermann. I knew there was a way to make a nice drop-sleeve style, but, instead of doing the conventional "horizontal" direction of knitting, I thought to myself "Why not try doing it sideways?"

After all, since one can knit sideways gloves, sideways socks, and sideways hats using Garter Stitch, why not try doing a whole sweater?

The name, as you would guess, illustrates the direction of the ridges.

To figure the casting on and how many rows to knit, etc. we must figure our "regular" gauge turned on its side. For the purposes of the upcoming book, I've been using a gauge of 160 stitches around and 120 rows/rounds/ridges tall and counting 40 stitches from the centre to make room for the arms. Depending on the size of yarn and needles, you'll come up with the size you wish. For the original design, I used a 29 inch and 16 inch Size 7 circular and worsted weight orlon acrylic in those hard to come by (nowadays) 1970s browns and oranges. I usually buy my acrylics in either half-pound or pound skeins and put the rest with my odds and ends to be lovingly used later on, but this sweater was born from the stash that I acquired by a person on "Freecycle" (any knitter who refuses free yarn should be severely chastised) and so, I used what was there -- the equivalent of three "pounder" skeins, with some to spare. This makes a nice medium/large(ish) sweater.

So, you be the judge.

I'll first give you the basic instructions as if you were to knit with just one colour and then I'll go over the colours that I used for the original. I don't know if they can even be found anymore -- these skeins were OLD -- as in late 60s, early 70s old -- but, I'm sure that the closest modern substitutions can be made.

I would suggest, if you don't know them, to study and learn well three things: the invisible casting on method, the "Thumb Trick," and garter stitch weaving (the Kitchner stitch) all used by Elizabeth Zimmermann in her books.

For this project, you will be casting on 120 stitches (which will become the centre of the front or the back) and doing 160 ridges total: 40 ridges out, armhole, 80 ridges further, armhole, and 39 ridges to complete the body (the last ridge would be created by weaving the Kitchner Stitch to join the cast on edge.)

So, without hesitation, go ahead and invisibly cast on 120 stitches and knit 40 ridges -- remembering to **SLIP KNITWISE** the first stitch of every row to create the selvedge you need for seaming and picking up later on.

To make the space for the armhole, we'll use the "Thumb Trick." Knit 80 stitches and then, with a spare length of different colour-ed yarn, knit the remaining 40 stitches, transfer those stitches back to the left-hand needle, and knit up those stitches with your main colour and complete the ridge by knitting all the way back.

Knit 80 ridges.

Make another armhole using the Thumb Trick as for the first one.

Knit 39 ridges and then weave, using the Kitchner Stitch, the invisibly cast-on row with the 39th ridge, you'll be creating the 40th and final ridge.

So now, you should have a seamless tube with two "stitched-up" slits. If you're looking at the alternate colour of yarn, you should see a short row of stocking stitch -- this is right-side-out.

From this point, you'll want to seam the shoulders to allow for a bit of a sturdier piece in which to knit down the arms. So, turn the garment-in-the-works inside-out and match the ends of the ridges at the top and seam inward 20 stitches on both sides.

For the sleeves, you'll want to keep the garment inside out to where you see the "purl" side of the alternate colour. **VERY GENTLY** (so as to not drop every stitch as you go along) pull the alternate colour from the armhole stitches and pick them up with the knitting needle(s). You'll notice that you're exposing stitches across from each other, creating a hole, rather than exposing all of the stitches in a row. For best results, you can use two straight needles, one for either side and pick up each stitch on each side of the gaping hole as you go along removing the yarn; and then transfer them all to a 16-inch circular, ready to begin knitting garter stitch back and forth from the underarm.

From this point on...knit a regular garter stitch arm: For this sweater, it's best to knit 20 ridges even and then decrease two stitches every fifth ridge until you reach 40 stitches and using the sewn casting off method (also employed by Zimmermann) for stretch in the cuff. Finally, seam all the way back UP the arm to the underarm.

Do this the same way for the other arm and then turn the garment right-side-out.

To balance out the no-edging all 'round the rest of the sweater, a nice low-and-wide-turtleneck can be made by picking up the remaining selvedge stitches at the neck (which should be 80, total) and simply knit up about 20 or 30 ridges and a sewn casting off for stretch.

Okay.

Here's how I made the original model.

I dreamt up my colour scheme with the inspiration from a skein of brown and orange variegated; lovely Autumn-y colours with the very dark (almost black) brown, medium brown, and light brown mixed with a couple of shades of orange, dark and light. This was, I would imagine, probably a 7oz or 8oz skein -- none of the labels were on the skeins, and so, of course I'm making a well-educated guess.

From that, I chose a skein of very dark (almost black) solid, the same for a nice medium-darkish brown, and two of a nice orange-ish colour (perhaps in modern day it would be "Brick" or "Terra Cotta")

So, I cast on with the darkest brown and knit 30 ridges and then switched to the variegated and knit 10 and, just as I suggest in the directions, made the armhole using the Thumb Trick and knit 10 more ridges with the variegated. Then, I switched to the medium-darkish brown and knit 35 ridges. I then switched to the orange-ish and knit 5 ridges and then did the entire colour scheme in reverse: 5 ridges of orange-ish, 35 ridges of the medium-darkish brown, 10 ridges of the variegated, made the armhole, and 10 more of the variegated, and finally 25 of the darkest brown, creating the last ridge by weaving together the last ridge and the invisibly cast on edge.

I did the arms completely in the orange-ish with one ridge and the very end of the medium-darkish brown, casting off in that colour.

I picked up for and knit the neck with the same medium-darkish brown.

. . . and sewed in all of the ends to finish.

Another suggested version would be to make a cardigan by completely fully casting on and knitting the last ridge and casting off, doing the arms, and then styling the neck however you wish, and edging it for buttons.

Perhaps you may think of making a jacket by adding a hood to the cardigan and doing the arms straight out (rather than tapered down, decreasing to the cuff) and making a snug cuff by decreasing the final few inches of the sleeve by half (another Zimmermann technique).

I would love to see your creativity.

Good luck.

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Robert

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Robert Buchanan

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