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Cast  
On

Bind  
Off



# Cast On Bind Off

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54 Step-by-Step Methods

LESLIE ANN BESTOR  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN POLAK



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*This book is for the most wonderful creation  
I have ever cast on, my daughter, Cady,  
and for my father, Charles,  
for being a shining example of dedication  
to the creative muse.*

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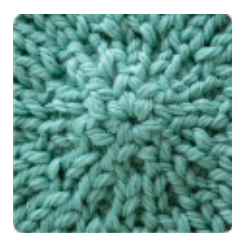
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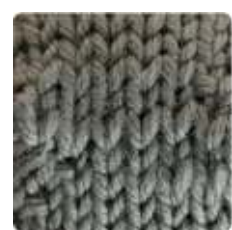
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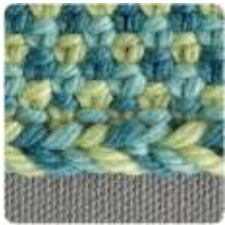
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## **Part Two Bind Offs**



**Basic**



**Stretchy**





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## Introduction

# Beginnings and Endings

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In knitting classes at the yarn store where I work, we start beginners with a needle full of stitches already cast on, so they can begin knitting and come back to casting on when they are more comfortable with manipulating the needles and yarn.

This roughly describes my own journey with cast ons and bind offs. I learned one way and stuck with it for every single project. The Long-Tail Cast On was my friend, and since it is so versatile, I had no issues with our relationship for many years. But as I grew as a knitter and began exploring different techniques, I realized that a whole range of varied options awaited me for both starting and finishing piece of knitting. I started to look at other ways to cast on and bind off and discovered that different situations call for different techniques, and that using the right one has a huge impact on the finished garment. The Old Norwegian Cast On became my next best friend. And I began to keep notes about which cast ons work in different situations. I carried little scraps of paper in my project bags and trawled for videos on the Internet, continually trying new ways to make my knitting match my imagination.

Most knitters progress in a similar fashion. They have a favorite cast on or bind off, and it is probably the one they learned from the person who taught them. A few workhorses, such as the Long Tail Cast On and the Traditional Bind Off, serve knitters well in many situations. But just as you learn the difference between right-and left-slanting decreases, learning new techniques for beginning and ending your projects allows you to take your knitting to a whole new level. You can choose a stretchy cast on for your top-down socks; a stable, firm beginning for the bottom of your cardigan; or a flexible bind off that allows you to block your lace shawl to its fullest. My hope is that this book opens a new world of possibilities and expands your horizons for beginning and ending a knitted project.



Use this book to learn new techniques. Keep it in your knitting bag as a reference and, with every project, try a new way to cast on and bind off. Some techniques, such as the provisional cast ons, app

to very specific situations, while others can be used for many purposes. Some of these new cast ons and bind offs you will like, some not so much. Some will be easy, some will be fiddly, but you may just find that the fiddly one is perfect for the particular piece you are working on. You will never regret investing time in the beginnings and endings of your projects: The edges set the stage for the piece as a whole. There's no point in knitting a beautifully intricate sock if its top won't stretch enough to go over your heel. With all the work we put into our knitted garments, we want all the parts to work together well.

This brings me to swatching. Of course, we all do this before beginning a project, right? Well, now you have another reason to swatch! Your swatch is the perfect place to experiment with cast ons and bind offs before you invest time in the project itself. After knitting your swatch, evaluate the edges. Are they either stretchy or firm enough for the project? Do they look good with your stitch pattern? Is the effort worth the result? Now you will be able to make choices based on many options rather than just the old standbys.

In this book you'll find 33 cast ons and 21 bind offs. Each technique features photographs illustrating every step. Check the Extras line for anything required in addition to your project needles and yarn. Having trouble? Consult the Getting It Right box, where I offer tips for refining the technique. Need suggestions for a cast on or bind off for your next project? Flip to inside the front or back cover for tips on which technique is best for which kind of project.

I hope this book becomes a trusted reference and guidebook for you. And I hope it provides some "aha" moments as you discover new methods. Maybe you, too, will find some new best friends in these techniques! Knitting is an adventure that allows us to keep learning, and my intent with this book is to encourage that ongoing exploration.

## Quick Start Guide

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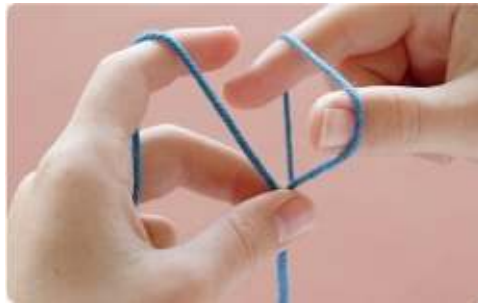
Here are some basic techniques that will come up again and again as you try different ways of casting on and binding off. Refer back to this section when you need a refresher on these essentials.

### Slip Knot

The foundation stitch for many a cast on, the slip knot is aptly named: If you pull too hard to tighten the knot (and it isn't looped around an object, such as a knitting needle), the knot *slips* apart.



- 1 Make a loop with the tail end underneath the long end where the yarns overlap.



- 2 Reach through the loop and grab the long yarn and pull a new loop through the first loop.



- 3 Holding the new loop, pull on the tail to tighten just a bit. This is the loop — the slip knot — to place on your needle.



- 4 Pulling on the long end tightens the loop on your needle (or, if the loop is not on the needle, pulls the knot out entirely).

### Overhand Knot

Another commonly used knot, the overhand joins two strands together.



- 1 Hold two strands of yarn with tails lined up together.



- 2 Make a loop and pull the ends through the loop. Tighten the knot.

### Cast-On Tail

Some cast ons require you to create a long tail before you begin. This tail will be used, along with the strand of yarn going to the ball, to create the edge. There are a few different ways of measuring out the length you need:

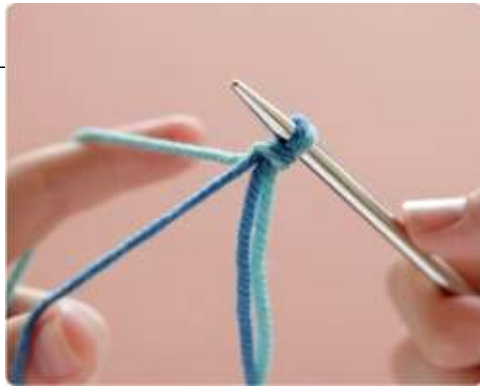
- Measure out a length three to four times the width of your project.
- Use approximately 1" for each stitch.



- Wrap yarn around needle 10 times and use that length to approximate 10 stitches, then measure out length needed for total number of stitches.



- Alternatively, for projects with a large number of stitches to cast on, use two balls of yarn. One ball provides the tail yarn; the other is the knitting yarn. Connect them with a slip knot. (Do not count knot as a cast-on stitch. Just drop it off needle at end of first row.) After casting on, drop the tail yarn and continue knitting with the other yarn.



## Slingshot Position

The slingshot position is used in many cast ons, so learning it is a crucial step in any knitter's education.



① Make a slip knot and place it on the needle. Hold the needle in your right hand.



② Let the tail yarn and ball yarn hang down. Unless otherwise instructed, the tail yarn is closest to you. Insert forefinger and thumb between the two strands of yarn hanging from the needle.



③ Use your remaining fingers to grasp the ends of the yarn in the palm of your hand and pull the yarn with your thumb and forefinger pointing up and back: The yarn looks like a slingshot.

## Knitwise, Purlwise

Sometimes knitting requires you to slip a stitch from a needle without working it. Or, in the case of some of these cast ons, such as Knitted ([page 31](#)) or Cable ([page 36](#)), a newly made stitch is slipped back to the left needle. I always specify whether you should slip it knitwise or purlwise: as if to knit

as if to purl.

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**Knitwise:** Twist the right-hand needle so the two needles are side by side and insert the tip into the new stitch from below.



**Purlwise:** Holding both needles so that they form a continuous line, with the tips touching, pass the stitch from one needle to the other.



# Part One

## Cast Ons

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**The beginning of a project** is an exciting time, and often we are eager to jump right in and get going. You already know how important it is to knit a swatch when starting a project. And if you care about the edges of your project (and why wouldn't you?), it's also important to first consider the dozens of ways to get stitches on the needles.

Take advantage of your gauge swatch to test out some possibilities. It pays to take the time at this stage to get it right. Anything to avoid the heartache of ripping back three inches (at 100 stitches per row) because the cast on doesn't look right!

But even before swatching, start with an understanding of your project. Will the edge be ribbed or have some other stitch pattern? Does it need to stretch? A little or a lot? Will you be starting in the center and working out? Will you be coming back to add an edging later, or perhaps turning it up to make a hem?

Once you have examined your project to see what characteristics you need, look at the various cast ons to see which might fit. Look inside the front cover for a list of which ones work best in various situations. As you get to know more cast ons, you will get a good sense of your choices. Swatch, and you will discover for yourself how you like to use them.



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## Basic Cast Ons

This first group of cast ons covers the ones most knitters learn first. In searching for a way to describe this group, I decided that “simple” was not accurate, nor did “all purpose” fit those included here. These are the basics in a knitter’s wardrobe. They are some of the easiest to learn and teach, but more than that, these methods are the staples we come back to again and again for their versatility.



Backward Loop [page 20](#)



Double-Twist Loop [page 22](#)



Long-Tail [page 25](#)



**Long-Tail, Thumb Version** [page 28](#)



**Knitted** [page 31](#)



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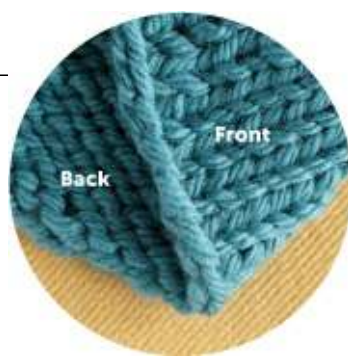


**Old Norwegian** [page 41](#)

## **Backward Loop Cast On**

*a.k.a. Single, Simple, Wrap*

**The Backward Loop Cast On** is one of the simplest. Very easy to learn, it is often taught to new knitters. The sad truth, though, is that it does not produce a particularly attractive edge and does not hold up well. It also makes knitting the first row tricky. But don't discount this method altogether: the Backward Loop is one of the few cast ons that can be used to add stitches at the end of the row or in the middle of a section of stitches.



## CHARACTERISTICS

- Elastic edge
- Loops between stitches can look sloppy

## GOOD FOR

- Adding stitches at the ends and middles of rows, such as the underarm of a top-down sweater or base of a mitten's thumb

## Working the Cast On

- 1 Make a slip knot, leaving a short tail (approximately 4"), and place it on a needle.



- 2 Position the working yarn (the yarn going from the needle to the ball) so that it comes from the needle in between your fingers and thumb, and then outside and around your thumb.



- 3 Insert the needle tip under the loop of yarn on the outside of your thumb.





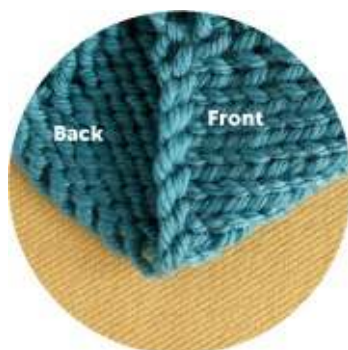
- 4 Let the loop slide off your thumb and gently tighten.



- 5 Repeat steps 2 and 3 for the desired number of stitches.

## Double-Twist Loop Cast On

**This cast on** takes the Backward Loop Cast On ([page 20](#)) and adds an extra twist to it. And in doing so, it makes a firmer, more attractive edge. It is excellent for buttonholes and any place where you need to add stitches at the end of a row. My friend Nina was delighted to show me this way of casting on. I have since found it mentioned in a few books, but it is usually made with a loop that is double twisted before putting it on the needle, which I find awkward to do. Nina's method, shown to her by a friend's grandmother, is easy and very quick once you get the movements down.



## CHARACTERISTICS

- Elastic, firm, attractive edge

## GOOD FOR

- Buttonholes and adding stitches at the end of the row

## Working the Cast On

- 1 Make a slip knot with a short tail and place it on the needle. Hold the needle in your right hand. If

adding stitches at the end of a row, skip this and go directly to step 2.

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② Wrap the working yarn so that it goes from the needle around the outside of the thumb and then around the index finger; use your other fingers to grasp the working yarn in the palm of your hand.



③ Insert the tip of your needle under the strand that runs from your index finger to the palm of your hand.



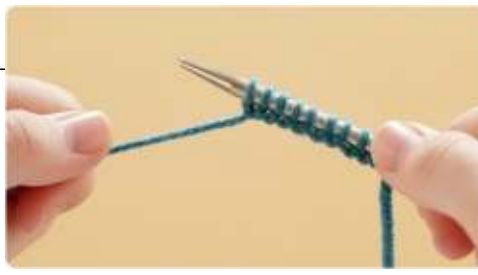
④ Take the needle tip over the top of the strand running between the thumb and the index finger and pull it back underneath the first strand.



⑤ Rotate the needle tip to the left so that it comes up into the gap between the two strands wrapped around the thumb.



⑥ Drop the yarn off the thumb and index finger and gently tighten the stitch on the needle.



⑦ Repeat steps 2–6 for the desired number of stitches.

## Long-Tail Cast On

*a.k.a. Continental, Double, Two-Strand, Slingshot*

**This cast on is the workhorse** of the many methods available. As the name suggests, you use a long tail of yarn along with the working yarn to create the cast-on edge. Fairly easy to learn, it lends itself to many different types of knitting situations. The edge it creates is firm and elastic, making it suitable for edges that will be followed by garter, stockinette, or rib stitch. It is attractive and looks good on both the front and back sides. Note that the Long-Tail Cast On, because of its structure, also creates the first row of knitting.



## CHARACTERISTICS

- Edge is elastic and attractive
- First row begins with wrong (private) side of work

## GOOD FOR

- Any stitch pattern and any project

## Working the Cast On

① Measure out a tail of yarn using whatever method you prefer ([page 13](#)). Make a slip knot and place it on the needle.



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sample content of Cast On, Bind Off: 54 Step-by-Step Methods; Find the perfect start and finish for every knitting project

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