

The Language of Knitting

I've knit for a long time. I have old issues of Family Circle with knitting patterns, I remember when Red Heart was just about the only yarn out there for the average knitter. I remember when slp 1, k1, pss0 was the authoritative way to do a left-leaning decrease. There were no ssk, spk, or all the infinite variations one can find on the internet today.

Knitting these days is a whole new re-birth of the craft. There are wonderful free patterns on the internet, blogs that share FO's and UFO's, boards to share and commiserate, store sites to boggle the mind and pocketbook, and Ravelry to get us distracted from the actual knitting.

But at heart, knitting, if it involves a written pattern, still involves the knitter sitting with yarn, needles and a pattern to be interpreted. We cannot escape the need to speak the language of knitting. The thing is, which dialect are we speaking? Are we in "Knitty" land, or one of the older variations. How does this particular pattern envision the simple or not-so-simple yarnover?

So, I got this lovely Ladder Lace Shrug pattern by Ivy Mok as part of a purchase at [CommuKnity](#) on the [Peninsula to Pier LYShop Hop](#) last month. I took it with me on a short retreat to this beautiful place





and by the looks of the pattern (two rows long for the main lace pattern) I thought this would be a mindless knit. I needed a mindless knit. Then I read the pattern, and tried it, and all of a sudden my years of ignoring those pesky little details of yarnover variations became clear.

I've always been confused by the variations in how knitters describe putting the yarn over the needle to make a whole, except for the most simple yarnover between knit stitches. That one I've got down. These two rows bit my you-know-what. I literally put the whole thing down, because I was second-guessing myself - was this variation of a yarnover big enough? Is the hole the way the designer intended? How lacey should this lace pattern be?

(I'll note that far more experienced lace knitters have run up against this language issue -- [Alison Hyde](#) told me that she and her editor of "[Wrapped in Comfort](#)" do their yarnovers differently and had different notions of what she was intending. It makes me feel better to hear this.)

These are indeed the existential questions of knitting. Am I doing it "right" or right enough for me? What language is this pattern-maker writing?

Well, this is how my ladder lace shrug looks before sewing it together. I hope Ivy approves.

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In another burst of lace knitting, I finished the Tuscany Shawl from [No Sheep for You](#), this in Alfabeto from Artfibers. Those yarnovers are always between knit stitches, so my main problem was counting up to 10 over, and over, and over again.



I like it. Amy and I speak the same dialect of knitting!