

Stitch Smarts

by Bethany Dailey

Bind Off Basics

(Originally published in the Spring 2012 issue of the Loom Knitter's Circle Magazine)

In our last session, we talked about the importance of choosing just the right cast on to begin that special project. Let's say you've now used that knowledge to cast onto your knitting loom and have worked your project all the way to the last row and it's looking truly amazing! Now, where would you be without that perfect method to cap off your work in the most complimenting way? This is where your choice of bind off comes in. Just as important as choosing the best method of casting onto your knitting looms, the way you finally bind off your project is an essential component of how the finished piece will look, work, and feel as a whole.

It is important to consider the role that bound off edge will play in its final intended purpose. Is this bind off to be used as an edge to a flat piece, such as a shawl or scarf, which will look best when the bind off stitches match the ones used in the cast on edge? Or, will your bind off edge be used in a place where a bit of stretch is needed for built-in comfort and fit, such as with the top edge of a sock, the brim of a hat, or a neckline? Or, are your bind off stitches going to be sewn or grafted into another section of your knitting?

I'd love to share with you a comparison of the main bind offs (or sometimes referred to as cast offs) that are commonly available today. Some of them are better for certain knitted items than others. Some of them might just have that particular look you'd like to display on your project at hand. I hope this comparison will help you make a better informed decision as to which bind off is the best for your particular project. Let's dive in and take a closer look at them, shall we?

There are some terrific bind off tutorials found here and there throughout the web and we will be featuring those here that are the most useful and easily understood. Please see the links listed in each bind off description for step-by-step tutorials and videos detailing how to work each one.



As mentioned in the previous article, the most desirable attribute for a loom knitting cast on is a non-loopy edge. In contrast, the most sought after trait in a bind off is stitches that have a little stretch to them and that are even with the main body of the project. Because most of the methods of binding off on the loom are worked off of the pegs, rather than on, the stitches can easily become too tight, causing that edge to not fit the style of the project. One way to combat this as you create your bind off is to concentrate on not pulling your working yarn tighter than you would if your stitches were still on the pegs. Remember that your main project stitches are worked on the pegs in their most stretched out position, so we need to build that knitting "ease" into our bind off as well.



Basic Bind Off



The Basic Bind Off is the bread and butter of bind offs in the loom knitting world. It is the one that I myself use most frequently to finish off a project. The resulting chained edge is quite lovely and is a wonderful compliment to most knitted projects where the edge will be seen. Because it is worked by creating an additional knitted row, it has just a bit of stretch built in; though, I have heard that occasionally loomers find it difficult to keep this bind off from becoming too tight. The secret to making this bind off a success is to make sure to not pull too much slack out of your working yarn as the bind off stitches are created. (*see side note for more information on this technique) The cast on that best compliments this bind off is the Chain Cast On, as referred to in our last session (or as I've always called it, the Crochet Cast On ;)).

Helpful links: [PDF Picture tutorial](#) by Jenny Stark. [Video](#) by Isela Phelps



Basic Purl Bind Off



The Purl Bind Off is the exact opposite as the Basic Bind Off. It is worked in almost the same method, but the stitches that comprise the bind off as a whole are purls rather than knits. This is perfect to use when your last

row needs to have purl stitches featured, such as with garter stitch, or an all purled project. The chain that is normally seen along the front of the Basic Bind Off runs along the back side of the Basic Purl Bind Off.



Helpful links: Pictorial [PDF](#) by Jenny Stark.



Single Crochet Bind Off



Don't let the idea of using a crochet hook deter you from trying out this particular technique! The method is really quite simple and actually might be just a little easier to control the stitch tension than that of the Basic Bind Off. The resulting edge looks almost identical to that of the Basic Bind Off, but with just a bit more elasticity.

Helpful Links: Pictorial [PDF](#) by Jenny Stark. [Video](#) by Isela Phelps.



Double Crochet Bind Off



Helpful Link: [Tutorial](#) by Rebecca Novelli.

This bind off stands out from the rest with its slightly decorative, yet very stretchy edging. This would be a terrific finish for a blanket or shawl, or a ribbed piece that needed extra elastic capabilities. Because this bind off has so much ease built in, I would recommend it only for these types of specialized projects, rather than for everyday uses, as the edge does tend to flare out a bit beyond the main knitting. Due to its crochet-like technique, it adds a subtle eyelet effect running just above its chained edge, which could be used to weave in a thin I-cord or a line of ribbon to create a drawstring or simply an extra touch of style.



Super Stretchy Bind Off (or Sewn Bind Off)



Helpful links: [Tutorial](#) by Rebecca Novelli. [Video](#) by Kelly Jones.

In contrast to the Double Crochet Bind Off, the Super Stretchy Bind Off provides a highly elastic edge that can also be employed for more everyday projects. It results in an edge that although very stretchy, also has some firmness to it, allowing it to lie flatter than other stretchy bind off methods. It requires only a yarn needle to execute, which makes it extremely user friendly, especially to those who may not be comfortable with using a crochet hook. The clean looking edge would be a nice pairing to the Double E-wrap or the Half Hitch Cast Ons, both discussed in our previous session.



Three Dimensional Bind Offs

Gathered Bind Off (or Provisional)



Helpful link: Pictorial [PDF](#) by Jenny Stark.

This is most likely the first bind off that you ever learned on your knitting looms. It is the best way to remove your project from the loom if you intend on picking up those stitches again, or if you are planning on grafting them onto another piece of your project. In these cases, the sewn through yarn, or Provisional Bind Off, is used as a way to hold your live stitches rather than to actually bind them off. If you want to gather your bind off edge, such as for the top of a hat, or for the basic toe of a slipper sock, then this is the most basic bind off you can use and definitely does the job at hand. It does require a bit of touch up work at the end to invisibly stitch the resulting circle closed and to counter some of the bulk which results from cinching in so many stitches into a completely enclosed edge.



Flat Drawstring Bind Off



Helpful link: [Video](#) by Jeannie Phillips.

If you've been looking for a way to gather your bind off edge that is less bulky and much neater looking than the original Gathered Bind Off, then this new bind off method by Jeannie Phillips is definitely the way to go! I don't think I'll ever go back to the regular way again after seeing how neat the resulting gathers end up looking! Because the last three rows of any project to be gathered are worked in a double rib stitch (*K2, P2, repeat from *) and then only the purls are threaded through and cinched all the way around the loom, followed by the knits, it naturally pulls the purls to the inside of the knitted piece, with the knits staying to the outside. This evens out those gathers and lessens the bulk significantly. You also only need a knot or two at the end, rather than the several stitches required to close the circle with the Gathered Bind Off. The inside of the bind off ends up looking just as pretty as the outside!

*Note: Another gathering method to try out is the Basic Graft Bind Off, which is an alternate method of the Gathered Bind Off, where the live stitches are sewn through in an alternating, zig-zag method across the loom, rather than in a straight line. This is a nice way to finish a project that is intended for the tip of a sock or a mitten. (Pictorial [PDF](#) by Jenny Stark)



Decrease Bind Off



Helpful link: [Video](#) by Bethany Dailey.

The Decrease Bind Off is a simple way to work a softly curved shape into your bind off edge. It works great for creating simple rosettes, or for adding dimension to projects that require a curve, such as the top of a baby bootie, or the added brim of a sun hat. It is worked in much the same way as the Basic Bind Off, but two stitches are bound off at once, rather than singly.



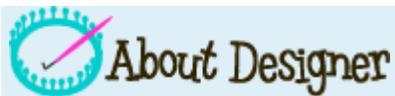
I've created this short video to physically illustrate the differences in each of the bind offs discussed above and how much elasticity is achieved for each:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9yCDCFSxJ4&list=PL413D5BC440AB43AC&index=3&feature=plpp_video

There you have it, a run-down of nine different bind off methods that all have their own uses in the wonderful art of loom knitting. Hopefully this information will be of help to you the next time you reach that last row of your loomy project. Remember, all of them will work, so never fear that you're going to be making a huge blunder by choosing the "wrong" bind off. It's just that some of them might be more what you're looking for than others. Our goal is to help you achieve a satisfying conclusion to a wonderful creation, worked skillfully stitch by stitch, from peg to peg.

Happy Looming to you!

Bethany~



Bethany A. Dailey has loved the art of loom knitting since 2005. She discovered that even with hand and wrist limitations, she was still able to successfully create lots of fibery goodies on her knitting looms. She soon began teaching locally, as well as online through her website, GettinItPegged.com. Bethany has participated in several loom knitting publications over the years and has recently released her debut book, Loom Knitting for Little People. Contact [Bethany](#)