

Garter Bar Tutorial

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In *Make Your Own Garter Bar*, I discussed how to make your own garter bar for any midgauge or bulky machine using easily available materials. Now we will consider how to use one. I must confess that I found it very difficult at first to use a garter bar and I would become very tense, but practice is the key. The following step by step guide explains how to take off stitches on the needles onto a garter bar, turn them from one side to the other, and rehang them.

Cast on about 30 stitches in a large gauge using light colored yarn with a firm twist, knit about 10 rows, and select a short garter bar. Trying to turn 120 dark and tight stitches knit with a yarn that splits easily with a bar one yard long is not a good first experience. To be honest, it is never a good experience actually.

Move stitches from the needles to the bar Remove all weights possible from the knitting to reduce the chance that a runaway stitch will unravel very far. Pull the needles forward pushing the stitches behind the latches back towards the bed, and lay the garter bar into the needle hooks with the comb side up. Beginning at either end, pull the stitches off the needles onto the loops of the comb as shown in Illustration 1. Keep a latch tool handy because there may be some stitches which insist on falling into the needle hooks and not going onto the comb prongs. If things don't go well, you can always push all the stitches back onto the needles behind the latches and start over. I find it helpful to hold the bar at about a 20 degree angle to the needles when pulling the stitches over and to keep my hand and forearm behind the stitches holding them towards to reduce the likelihood that they will slip back into the hooks.

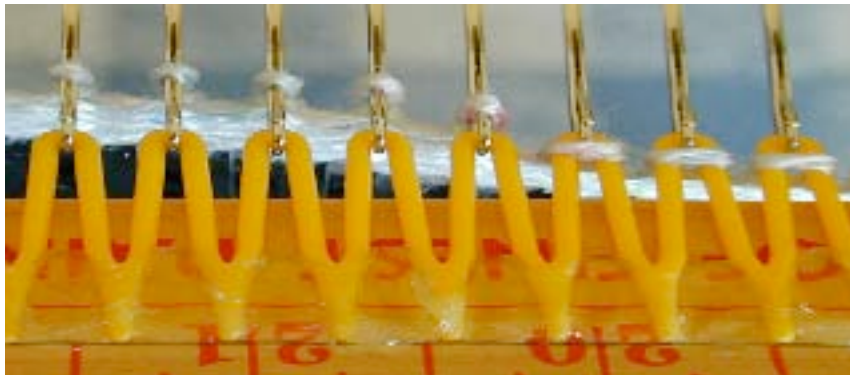


Illustration 1 Slide the stitches over the covered latches onto the prongs

Relax When you have all the stitches onto the bar as shown in Illustration 2, you

have done the hardest part. The bar can actually hang on the needles while you compose yourself if necessary. A piece of chocolate might be in order.



Illustration 2 The difficult part is over

Turn the bar First, move the carriage to the opposite side of the bed and pull out some extra yarn. Now lift the bar out of the needle looks. It may take some jiggling to get it free. Rotate the bar 180 degrees horizontally so the comb side is facing the needlebed, the knit side is facing you, and keep that latch tool handy.

Rehang the stitches In this next maneuver, you want to get the turned stitches off the garter bar and into the needle hooks. Make sure the needles are fully forward and the latches are open. Lower the bar over the needles extending it away from you so the stitches on the bar are centered and just a little behind the needle hooks. Continue to lower the bar until you feel it touch the needles and then slowly bring the bar towards you scraping the stitches off into the hooks as shown in Illustration 3. Don't panic if a few stitches don't cooperate. You can guide them where they belong later. Note that the bar shouldn't end up in the needle hooks, just the stitches. Easy for me to say!



Illustration 3 Stitches, but not prongs, are in the needle hooks

Remove the bar You are now ready to remove the bar. There is a trick to this part. You have to get the bar free from the needle hooks while leaving the stitches in the needle hooks. Start by rotating the bottom of the bar away from you so it is clear of the hooks as shown in Illustration 4 and pull downward and back until it slides out of the stitches.



Illustration 4 Note that the bar is rotated at an acute angle so the bar can be removed

You did it! Inspect all the stitches to see if some need attention and fix any problems. Another piece of chocolate might be in order.

Now you are ready for lots of practice and I have a garter stitch dishcloth project which is guaranteed to give you just that. You might want to be sure you have some chocolate nearby.

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