



## 5 (SURPRISING!) SWEATER KNITTING MISTAKES



Knitting a sweater is so much more than finding the right yarn and sitting down to knit. Today we're talking about 5 surprising mistakes sweater knitters make (and how to avoid them).

**1. Panicking.** I can't tell you how often I hear from knitters who are panicked before the party even starts.

Common moments of panic include: "Are these colors going to work? Did I pick the right size? Should I get more yarn? What if my yarn bleeds? What if I didn't knit my swatch right? What if my gauge changes partway through the project? I read through the pattern and I don't understand the instructions on page 4! HELP!"

Dear Knitter, here's the thing: Every creative project brings a bit of the unexpected. Do your best to make good choices from the beginning, follow the advice in the pattern, and be flexible and willing to adapt if you run into a problem along the way. If something goes awry, you'll learn from it.

But most of the time the things we panic about turn out fine in the end. Panic keeps one foot on the gas and one foot on the brake; it stunts your progress and takes the fun out of the experience.

Instructions that seem a bit hazy on the first read-through often make a lot more sense once you get to them; resist the urge to ask for help until you've actually reached that point in the pattern and given it a try (at least once, but preferably twice). Knitting is 50% stitching and 50% problem-solving. The less confident you feel about the project, the more likely it is that panic will try to creep in and make you worry (usually for nothing). Make informed decisions (i.e. choose yarn that fits the pattern, knit a gauge swatch, etc...), trust the pattern and give it a go. If parts of the process don't work out quite as well as expected, you'll have more information – and therefore more confidence – in your skill toolbox for next time.

**2. Ignoring your gut.** You've jumped in and started your project, but you have a nagging feeling that something isn't right. It's something you might have worried about in the beginning (i.e. you knew your yarn was a bit too lightweight for the project, but you really wanted to make it work so you cast on anyway). You don't want to turn back, but you're struggling to move forward because you just know something is wrong.

This is a different feeling than panicking because you're unsure of yourself. This is a feeling that has lingered from the beginning, and you don't want to acknowledge it because it means you might have to start over. When you know in your gut that you should have chosen the next size, or that you should have gone with the heavier yarn, or that you shouldn't have started without knitting a gauge swatch – these nagging concerns will slow your knitting down and take the fun out of the experience. There's a difference between pushing through a lack of confidence, and



stubbornly forging ahead knowing you didn't start out on the right foot to begin with. If your gut is telling you to start over, consider where that feeling is coming from. If you need to start over, that's okay (we call it "frogging" because you rip-it, rip-it). There's absolutely nothing wrong with starting again so you can get it right.

**3. The wrong advice.** It happens to the best of us – we fall victim to the wrong advice now and then. You've likely heard me say that there are many "right" ways to reach the same result, but there are times when one method might work better than another. If the pattern or the pattern designer suggests a particular method, it's wise to give more weight to that suggestion than to the advice you may get from crowdsourcing other options. Someone who hasn't knit the pattern or isn't familiar with that designer's particular methods may point you toward advice that isn't ideal for the project – and the end result might be affected. So often I see knitters giving advice that might work well for certain kinds of patterns but doesn't work as well for the pattern in question. For best results, always look to the suggestions in the pattern or advice from the pattern designer first.

**4. Fiddling with an unfamiliar pattern.** There's an air of mystery about a new pattern. How will it fit me? Will I be happy with the length? Maybe I should add darts? Short rows? If you're a highly skilled knitter with a lot of sweater-knitting and modification experience, then fiddling with (i.e. modifying) an unfamiliar pattern might be easy breezy. But for most knitters, modifying a pattern comes with a Pandora's Box of unforeseen outcomes.

Making an adjustment in one spot can affect a different aspect of the sweater, and in many cases can lead to less-than-ideal results. Here are a few examples:

- A)** Not using the recommended cast-on and then having a wonky/loose/untidy neckline later-on when it comes time to pick up the stitches.
- B)** Using a stretchy bind-off instead of the recommended bind-off, and then being disappointed that the bottom edge of the ribbing rolls up and won't lay flat.
- C)** Casting on more stitches under the arms because you want more room in the arms, only to realize that it makes the bust bigger, too.
- D)** Adding length because you don't want it too short, only to realize that your finished sweater is now much too long.

Having the confidence and skill to modify your sweaters is an exciting aspect of knitting, but if you're new to sweater knitting or new to a particular design, I recommend knitting it as written the first time through. Once you're familiar with the pattern, you'll find it's much easier to make successful modifications. Worth noting: Once you modify a pattern, you're on your own for pattern support – so don't dive into modifications until you're sure you can troubleshoot the process on your own.

**5. Not blocking.** Finishing a sweater is super exciting but remember this: a sweater isn't finished until it's blocked. Blocking your sweater is the finishing touch, and it makes a world of difference to the finished fit, feel and look of your sweater. I know I sound like a broken record about blocking, but I promise: once you start blocking your sweaters, you'll be addicted to the results. After all of the time and love you've put into your sweater, don't skip this very important final step. ([Click here](#) to learn about how I block my sweaters)



### Images –

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Page 2: Meridian Striped Pullover from [Seamless Knit Sweaters in 2 Weeks](#)

Page 3: Stowaway Chevron Pullover from [Seamless Knit Sweaters in 2 Weeks](#)