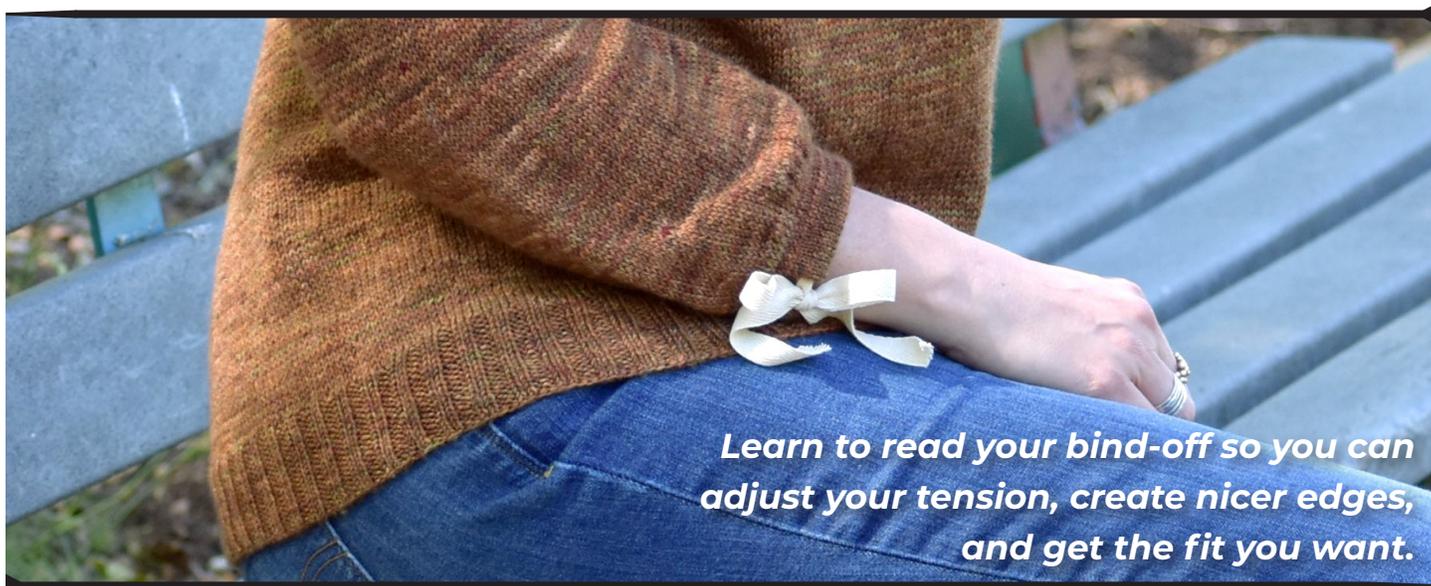




Tips

TROUBLESHOOTING YOUR BIND-OFF



Adjusting Your Bind-Off Tension

Binding off is more than simply a way to close the live stitches on the last row of your knitting. It can make or break your project in surprising ways. This week we're talking about how to read your bind-off so you can adjust your tension, create nicer edges, and get the fit you want.

There are two main things that impact your results when binding off:

1. The number of stitches you're binding off
2. The tension of your bind off row

Binding Off on a Button Band

It's a problem every knitter has faced more than once – the dreaded button band. How can you tell if you have the right number? It's quite common to pick up too many or too few stitches when you're starting your sweater button band, but the good news is that it's easy to tell (and fix).

- ❖ If you picked up too many stitches on your button band and bind off with loose (or even normal) tension, then you'll likely have a button band that flares out at the top and bottom. **The solution:** Pick up slightly fewer stitches or try binding off more tightly to counteract it.
- ❖ If you pick up too few stitches on your button band, then you will notice that the band pulls inward and slightly shortens the length of the sweater in the front. **The solution:** Pick up slightly more stitches or try binding off loosely to counteract the lack of stitches.
- ❖ If you pick up an uneven number (i.e. one side of the button band has 120 stitches and the other side has 106 stitches), you run the risk of having a mix of both issues. You wouldn't think it would be possible to have such a difference in numbers, but you'd be surprised. When it comes to button bands, be sure to pick up the same number of stitches on each side.

Binding off on Necklines

You would be surprised at the power you wield when you're working on a neckline. The bind-off is only half the story. Here's how to troubleshoot your neckline results.

❖ **If your neckline feels too tight or doesn't slip easily over your head**, don't despair. It's easy to fix! Troubleshoot the following. First, did you pick up enough stitches in the first place? Try again and pick up a few more stitches next time. Even 8-10 additional stitches can make a big difference. Second, did you bind off too tightly? Try binding off again with more relaxed tension – it doesn't need to be a stretchy bind-off. (In fact, I rarely recommend a stretchy bind-off because it tends to look quite messy.) Sometimes it's a combination of both too few stitches AND a tight bind-off. Either way, once you learn that you can manipulate the fit by adjusting your stitches and bind-off, you can dramatically change the way your sweater fits at the neckline.

❖ **If your neckline is too wide or loose**, again – don't panic. It's an easy fix, as long as you don't mind re-working it a bit. Troubleshoot the following: First, did you pick up too many stitches in the first place? Chances are, if you were to try it again and pick up slightly fewer stitches, that will likely solve the problem (even 8-10 fewer stitches can make a big difference). Second, did you bind off too loosely? If you want to find out, keep the stitch count as/ is and just take out the bind-off row. Bind it off again with tighter tension and see if that solves it. If not, you'll want to start the neckline over again and pick up fewer stitches. Third, how tightly you work the neckline ribbing can also impact the way the neck of your sweater fits. If it looks/feels too loose, you will want to take a three-part approach to fix it: **1)** Pick up fewer stitches, **2)** Be sure you're knitting the ribbing with

tighter tension, and **3)** Adjust your bind-off, as needed. Don't be afraid to bind-off tightly if you are trying to bring the neckline in closer.

Binding Off Hems & Sleeve Cuffs

If you're binding off at the bottom hem of a sweater or the cuff of a sleeve, then the number of stitches isn't variable; it's whatever the pattern says it is. You might think there's not much you can do to change the results if you can't change the number of stitches – au contraire!

❖ **If your sweater hem or cuff feels like a tight rope clinging to your body**, chances are you need to bind off again – more loosely. As I mentioned before, that doesn't mean you need a stretchy bind-off; I've found that you can almost always adjust the fit and create a lovely, elastic bind-off by simply adjusting your tension while you're doing it.

❖ **If your sweater hem looks wavy and uneven**, chances are you've bound it off too loosely. I know it's worrisome to have a sweater that clings at the wrong spots, but it's no better to have a hem that looks like we simply gave up at the end. A good ribbing bind-off should look crisp and smooth and have some "give" when it's stretched (sort of like elastic, but less aggressive). If you've ever seen a piece of elastic that's given up the ghost (i.e. retired from duty and let itself go), then you know what a bind-off edge shouldn't be. Your hem or cuff don't need to cling like elastic, but they shouldn't look like they've given up; there's a happy space in between where the ribbing creates a lovely, even edge, lays flat and doesn't draw attention to anything you don't want it to.