

Horizontal Cables

How to add machine-knit bands and cords to your palette of textures

by Susan Guagliumi

Once I'd figured out how to machine-knit diagonal cables, which I described in *Threads*, No. 14, pp. 58-59, I asked myself, "Could horizontal cables be so tough?" Horizontal cables would be perfect for cuffs, necklines, waistbands, and yokes. Well, I spent months experimenting, only to conclude that the far simpler technique of attaching vertically knit cable bands sideways is much more versatile. Combine that process with all the effects you can achieve with braided and twisted preknit cords attached to knit backgrounds, and the design possibilities are truly vast. Let's take a look at each method.

Cabled bands

Separately knit bands that you insert into a sweater can be as elaborate and wide as you want and can combine every kind of stitch, cable, and texture. I usually knit the band longer than I think I'll need and end with waste knitting; the excess length simply extends beyond the edge of the fabric. I can ravel it back and bind it off later or incorporate the binding-off with the side seaming to reduce bulk. The width of the band translates into length when it's inserted sideways. When I knit the band, I always add one seam stitch along each edge.

To start a garment with a cabled band for the bottom edge, hang the band (without stretching it) across the required number of needles, working 1 st from the edge with the wrong side facing you, and begin knitting the body of the garment. I bring the

needles out to holding position, hang the band, and allow the carriage to knit the needles back for the first row. With lightweight yarns, you can knit the band double-wide, with the lower half knit plain, and turn it up for a hem with a little more body, as I've done in the cardigan shown in the above photo. Some yarns will benefit from a row of crochet around the bottom edge to prevent stretching.

To insert a band between knit sections, knit to the point where you want to insert



Knit cords, like this 4-st cord, are easy to make on single-bed machines that can knit in one direction and slip in the other direction. A tight tension ensures that the cord will curl over the slip-stitch thread in back.



the band, and then remove the knitting from the machine. I find a garter bar very helpful for this, but if you don't have one, just knit some rows of waste knitting, and scrap the piece off instead. Either way, the effect is the same as hand-grafting or crochet, only faster. Hang the edge of the band with the right side facing you, and then rehang the knitting over the same needles with the wrong side facing you. Increase the stitch size by several numbers, knit one row, and then bind off loosely. Rehang the other edge of the band over the same needles, with the wrong side facing you, and continue knitting with your regular stitch size.

Machine-knit cords

Tubular cords can be knit like tubular fabric on a double-bed machine, but the simplest method requires only a single bed and a carriage that can be set to knit in one direction and slip in the other. If the knitting is at least 3 sts wide, but no more than 6 sts wide, the knit stitches will completely absorb the slip stitches to form a round. As always, check your manual for settings specific to your machine. A single claw weight, as shown in the photo at left, is usually enough to ensure that the knit stitches formed every other row will absorb the slack left by the alternate slip row. This enlarges the stitches somewhat, so I usually reduce the stitch size by one or two numbers from my garment gauge. Wide and narrow cords can be combined in the same application, and you can also cable

Susan Guagliumi's cardigan, facing page, sports horizontal cable bands at cuff and waist, each knit separately and joined on the machine to the garment; the waistband is doubled for a self-faced finish.

the stitches of the cord itself for an even more elaborate effect.

For horizontal placement, don't hand-stitch the cords in place; knit them. To attach a single, narrow cord, you'll need only one row; but to secure to a garment a twist or braid made up of several cords and to define the twist, you'll need to catch it by specific stitches along both edges. To be certain that twists and braids are evenly spaced, pin or baste the cords together before you get to the machine. Applying cords to the purl side is simple: just pick up stitches from the back of the cords and hang them on the appropriate needles as you knit the base fabric.

Attaching cords and braids to the knit side requires removing the work from the machine when you reach the point of insertion, hanging the edge of the cord(s) on the needles with the right side facing you, and then replacing the knitting on the same needles. You can do this with a garter bar or with a few stitches at a time with hand tools. For a single, wide cord, proceed as for a band, attaching a separate fabric edge to each side of the cord. For an open cable or twisted braid made up of several cords, attach the lower edge at a few stitches in the middle of each loop, knit a few rows (enough to equal the cable width), and then remove the work from the machine again to pick up stitches from the other edge of the cord, hanging them onto the corresponding teeth of the garter bar, if you're using one. Rehang the whole thing and continue knitting.

Cord cables will be raised if they're attached by stitches along the back (bottom photo); edge stitches will tend to visually bind the cable to the background fabric (center photo). In either case, they'll definitely appear more raised than knit-in cables or the cables on preknit bands because they sit on the surface, rather than within it. Of course, there's no reason to confine cord cables to horizontal designs. On chunky machines, they provide large-scale, very noticeable textures, but on standard-gauge fabrics this might be just the trick to keep cables in any direction from melting into a background of tiny stitches. □

Susan Guagliumi is a contributing editor of Threads and the Marketing Support Manager for Studio Knitting Machines. Her book, Hand-Manipulated Stitches for Machine Knitters, will be available June 15 from The Taunton Press, Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506.



Variations on the horizontal cable: An inset cable band (top); a 6-st twisted cord attached at its edges, on a knit background (center); and a 3-st cord twisted and partially attached, for illustration purposes, at a few stitches along the back to a plain knit background (bottom).