

Colors That Climb

Information

Colors that Climb, or Vertically-Stranded Color Work, is a technique I have been teaching since 2009. It's been my playground since learning [Rovaniemi knitting](#) in 2008, then departing from it to make it more knitter-friendly and interesting by working it into different fabrics and patterns.

In order to incorporate the contrasting colored stitches into the knitted fabric without overdoing it, and without having a yarn management problem on your hands, please follow these instructions. If you were to guess how to do it, you are likely to make it more difficult.

There is no twining of the colors in the back as in intarsia, and there is no carrying of the contrasting colors across the row as in traditional stranded color work. Instead, by following the execution instructions on these pages, the contrasting colors will essentially end up woven into the fabric as they are worked. Trust it.

This technique allows multiple colors to be added to the fabric without changing the gauge and without inhibiting the elasticity (horizontal stretch) of the garment. Think socks!

For much more you can do with the technique, take a live class from me at a knitting event, or learn online in one of three places:

- My <https://www.craftsy.com/> class entitled "Knit Faster with Continental Knitting: Color and Texture", Lesson 5. You do not need to knit in the continental style in order to do this. See page 8. <https://www.mybluprint.com/search-results?q=lorilee%20beltman&search=content>
- Interweave has my DVD entitled "Vertically Stranded Color Work". A digital download is

also offered. <https://www.interweave.com/store/vertically-stranded-colorwork>

- Colors That Climb was my topic for the 2018 online knitting conference Knit Stars 3.0. Knit Stars includes lessons from several instructors and makes this the most expensive (but fun!) of these three options. [Knit Stars Season 3 Link](#)

All of my patterns on my Ravelry Store <https://www.ravelry.com/designers/lorilee-beltman> that use this technique now also include this tutorial as part of the pattern. Please read the written instructions that follow.

- Lorilee Beltman

Contact me: use my contact page at LorileeBeltman.com

Instagram: @lorilee.beltman

Show me your FOs! #colorsthatclimb, tag @lorilee.beltman

Facebook, my verified professional page is <https://www.facebook.com/LorileeBeltmanKnittingEnabler/>

Designers: if your designs use this technique, you have permission to share a link to a PDF of these instructions found on my website: <https://lorileebeltman.com/?p=1845>

Look to Instagram and Facebook for announcements of upcoming teaching events, knitting trips, and new pattern releases.

Colors That Climb Tutorial

Learn five things:

1. Cut the contrasting strands.
2. How to introduce the contrasting strands to the fabric in both Continental and English knitting styles.
3. How to manage the yarns so they do not become cumbersome.
4. How to execute the colorful stitches when you come to them, again, in both Continental and English knitting styles.
5. Basic troubleshooting.

STEP ONE :

Cut the contrasting strands.

Depending on the pattern, you need roughly a foot of length of contrast yarn for each inch of rounds or rows. A little more is needed if you make bobbles or cables. Alternately, it's fine to just guess and cut a few yards. Add more if needed and darn the ends in later. These long strands will be contained during step three.

STEP TWO:

How to introduce the contrasting strands to the fabric in both English and Continental knitting styles.

Continental knitters (aka pickers), or knitters who are comfortable working two colors by holding one strand in each hand:

- Keep the main color in your left hand at all times. Never drop it; stay tensioned up. You will work all main color stitches with your left hand.
- Use your right hand to throw, or English-style knit only the contrasting stitch. Do not drop the left hand yarn to pick up the contrasting strand. The reasons are two-fold: speed, and results.

More specifically, it works like this: It is helpful when you are first introducing the contrasting colored strands to lay them out on a table in front of you, so you can just grab the strand when you need it. Work a main color stitch with the left hand yarn. When it's time to add a contrasting color, use your right hand index finger and thumb to grab the strand and bring it in from the right. Work the stitch with your right hand and immediately drop the long part of the strand where it lies. Don't tension or wind that strand in your right hand, just work the stitch and wave goodbye. Tuck the short tail downward. Leave the long part on the table for now. Work the following MC stitch by returning to your left hand picking action.

The main color is carried under the just-introduced contrasting stitch.

Introduce any following contrasting yarns in the pattern in the same way, until that round/row is completed. Then go to step three.

English-style knitters (aka throwers) and those knitters comfortable handing the yarn in their right hand:

- You will work all main color stitches and contrasting stitches with your right hand.

More specifically, it works like this: It is helpful when you are first introducing the contrasting colored strands to lay them out on a table in front of you, so you can just grab the strand when you need it. Work a main color stitch with the right hand yarn. When it's time to introduce a contrasting color, drop the main color and let it hang off to the right. Reach ahead to get the contrasting strand and knit it, bringing the yarn in to the left of the main color. Then drop contrasting yarn straight down- no twining. Tuck the short tail downward. Leave the long part on the table for now. When you return to the main color, it crosses over top of that just-dropped contrasting yarn. Work the following MC stitch by also throwing.

The main color is carried over the just-introduced contrasting stitch.

STEP THREE:

How to manage the yarns so they do not become cumbersome.

Once all the yarns are introduced, take the short tails (that you will darn in later) and, making sure they have a clear path downward without encircling any of the long strands, collect them together and tie a simple overhand knot. This prevents one from knitting with the tails and also secures the strands.

Collect the strands into a butterfly: with your fingers, gently comb all the contrasting strands so they are roughly parallel. Starting about a forearm's length from the knitting, wind the yarns together around a pinky and thumb in a figure-8 path until the yarns are all wound, then secure the center of the butterfly with a couple of knots, a rubber band, a barrette, or an IKEA chip clip— whatever works for you.

Do not make individual butterflies for each strand!

STEP FOUR:

How to execute the colorful stitches when you come to them in both Continental and English knitting styles.

Work the stitches following the same executions instructions as for introducing the yarns.

Continental knitters, work a main color stitch with the left hand yarn. Don't drop the main color. When it's time to work a contrasting color stitch, use your right hand index finger and thumb to grab the strand and bring it in from the right. Work the stitch with your right hand and immediately drop the long part of the strand where it lies.

The main color is carried under the just-completed contrasting stitch.

English knitters, work a main color stitch with the right hand yarn. When it's time to work a contrasting color stitch, drop the main color and let it hang off to the right. Reach ahead to get the contrasting strand and knit it. Then drop contrasting yarn straight down to the left of the main color- no twining. Work the following main color stitch by also throwing.

The main color is carried over the just-completed contrasting stitch.

STEP FIVE:

Basic troubleshooting.

If your tidy collection of contrasting strands becomes entangled with your main color, then you are not carefully observing the instructions. The execution will become cumbersome and the resulting fabric will be look wonky. Review the instructions.

A newly-created contrast stitch appears twisted on the needle. Do not make corrections. Just accept that it appears different.

A newly-made contrasting stitch will be loose. That's normal. Realize that when you have the strand in hand, ready to make a new loose stitch, you have a moment to correct the tension of the stitch below. Don't pull too tight or the stitches will sink into the fabric. Also, don't pull the main color too tight across the back, or the contrast stitches will pop up on top of the fabric.

Keep the butterfly emerging from the top of your knitting. If knitting in the round, do not tuck it inside.