

Free Floating Chains

By Judith A Helms

On the following pages I have illustrated how to make these chains. As the “free floating chain” moves between background stitches to form shapes, they do not disturb the original stitch count. These chains lie on top of the background stitches. The loops ride on the needle, ready for you to move them in any direction you choose. Once you learn the concept, you will be able to draw up your own designs using these little beauties.

They are also adjustable, as they are worked on a continuous separate strand of yarn.,this allows you to tighten up any loose loops you may find later. You might think of this as “crocheting” with a knitting needle.

The first illustration in this tutorial is how to make a free floating chain diamond pattern. Each diamond is begun with one strand of yarn, picked up in the middle, thus leaving 2 free ends to work in opposite directions.

The second illustration is how to handle these chains when using them to overlay a border for a pillow(as I did on the border surrounding two of my pillow designs, Ms Red Hat Silkie, and Sebright Hen and Chicks), or you might want to use this technique for the bottom edge of a tunic or for an ornamental touch on the bottom edge of sleeves.

I suggest that you read the entire tutorial through first, then try the pattern swatches on the last page. It take a bit of practice, but once you have the idea, you be able to make these chain with ease.



Tutorial Key

FC = floating chain

RN = right needle

LN = left needle

WY = **Working yarn** = background yarn of heavier weight.

CCR = cable chain right

CCL = cable chain left

CS = center stitch

Free Floating Chains Diamond

Fig. 1

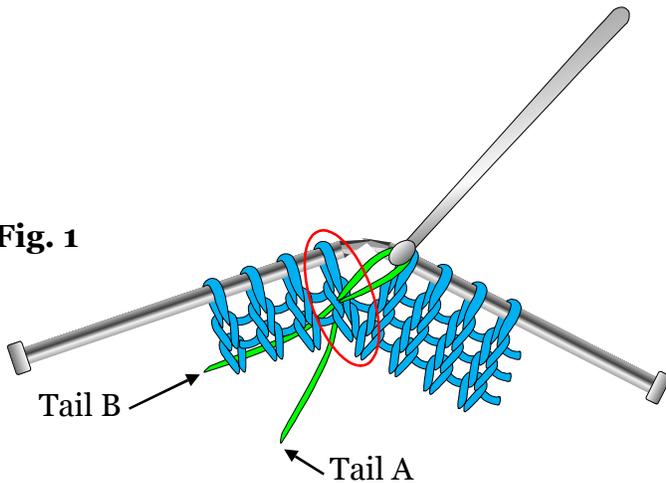


Fig. #2

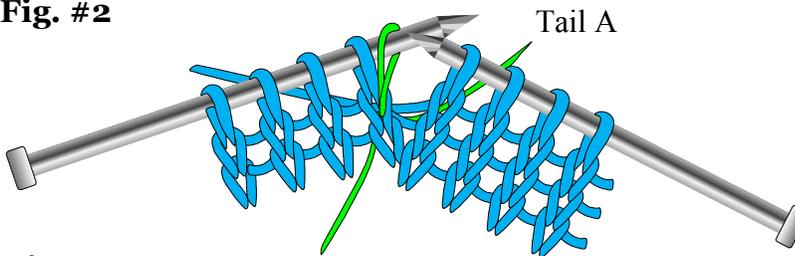


Fig. #3

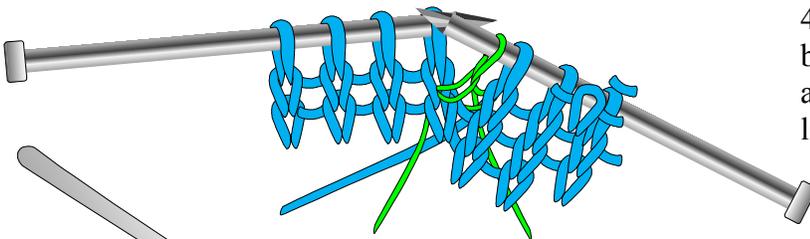


Fig. #4

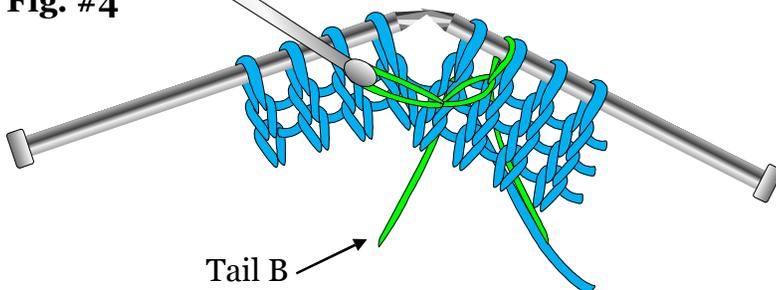
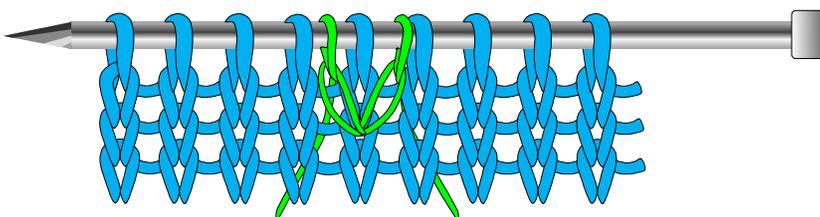


Fig. #5



1. To begin the bottom of the free floating chain diamond, knit across to the stitch where you want the diamond to start. In the illustration I have circled the stitch I have chosen in red. This will be the “center” stitch of your diamond.

Plan an uneven number of stitches in between, ie; 5, 7, etc.

2. Using a crochet hook, stick through the stitch below the center stitch that is on the left needle(Fig. #1), and pull up a loop of your contrasting yarn that has been pick up in the middle.

3. Place this loop on the left needle with the left leg of the stitch on the top. (Fig. #2)

4. Lay your working yarn to the left and bring tail A of your FC yarn from underneath and knit the chain (green) through the back loop. (Fig. #3)

5. Pick up working yarn(blue) and knit the center stitch. Bring tail B of your FC yarn over the top of the working yarn and hold it in your left hand. Using your crochet hook, stick into the same center stitch again and pull through a second loop. (Fig. #4) Place it on the left needle, making sure the front leg is on the top of the needle. Now grab tail B of the chain yarn and knit the loop through the back leg.

When you have completed the steps above it should look like Fig. #5

When you finish setting up all the diamonds you want, knit to the end and turn. You will always slip these FC-loops on the purl rows.

Fig. #6

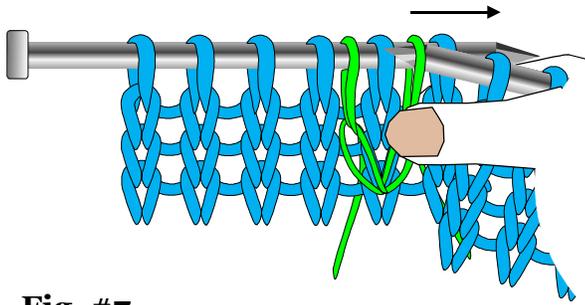


Fig. #7

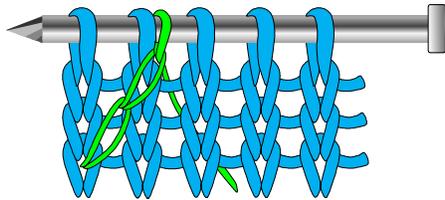


Fig. #8

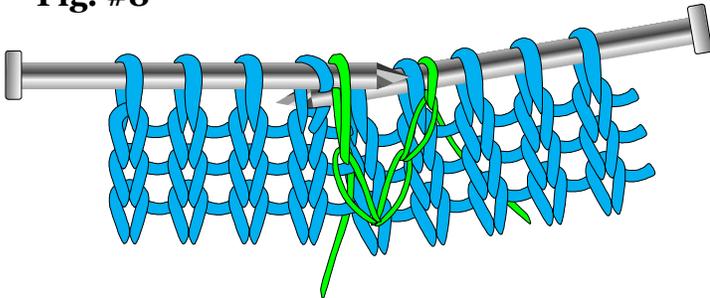


Fig. #9

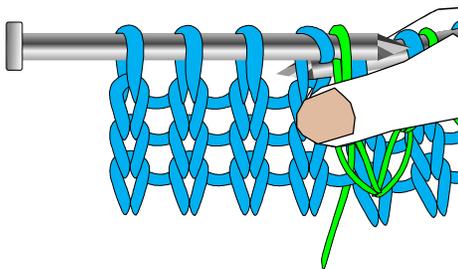
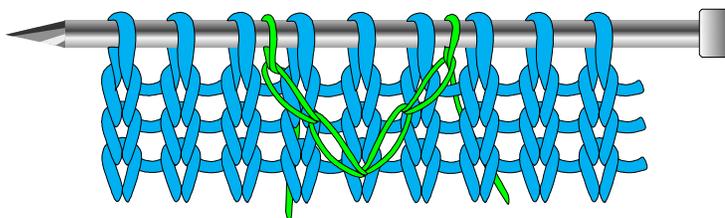


Fig. #10



6. After completing the purl row, you are ready to start enlarging your diamond.

Knit to 1 stitch before the first chain. Reach across in front of the stitch with your RN, and stick the point of the needle into the front leg of the FC loop, Fig. # 6. Pinch the chain and the stitch to its right together with you right thumb and index finger. Gently pull both stitches off the needle to the right.

While still holding the stitches tight, tip the needle toward you (so you can see) and pick up the stitch you released with the chain onto your LN, then pick up the chain loop through its back loop onto the LN. The stitches are now reversed and the chain has been “cabled” over to the **right**, one stitch. *You will see this move referred to in my patterns as CCR (or cable chain right).* You can now release the stitches you have been holding.

7. Knit the FC by bringing the FC yarn up from underneath the working yarn and knit the FC through the back leg. Be sure to check your FC to make sure that it is laying flat against the surface of the work. Drop the FC yarn strand.

Once knitted it should look like Fig # 7.

8. With working yarn only, knit the next two stitches. You now have the next chain immediately to your left. This time we will be moving this chain one stitch to the left (or CCL- cable chain left).

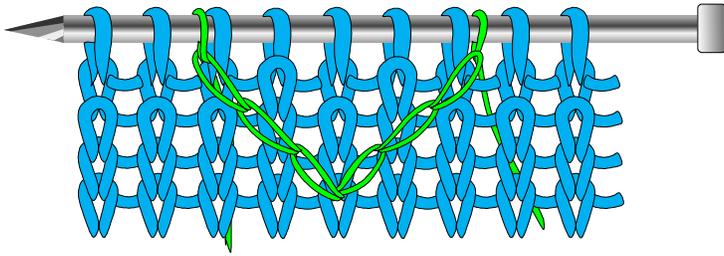
9. With your RN, reach around back of the LN to the stitch immediately to the left of the chain loop. Stick the tip of the needle into the stitch as if to knit (Fig. # 8). Pinch the FC and the stitch together as before and slid them off the needle to the right (Fig. 9). While still holding the stitches firmly between your thumb and index finger, pick up the chain loop with the LN. Immediately **knit** the stitch you just slipped unto the RN through the back loop.

10. Bring the FC yarn up from underneath the working yarn, knit the FC through the back leg, (checking first to see if it is lying open). Your diamond should now look like Fig. #10.

Drop the FC yarn, and with the working yarn proceed to the next diamond, repeating steps 6-10.

Now turn your work and purl across, slipping all chains.

Fig. 11



In Fig. #11, the chains have been worked until there are 5 stitches in between. Now it is time to change directions.

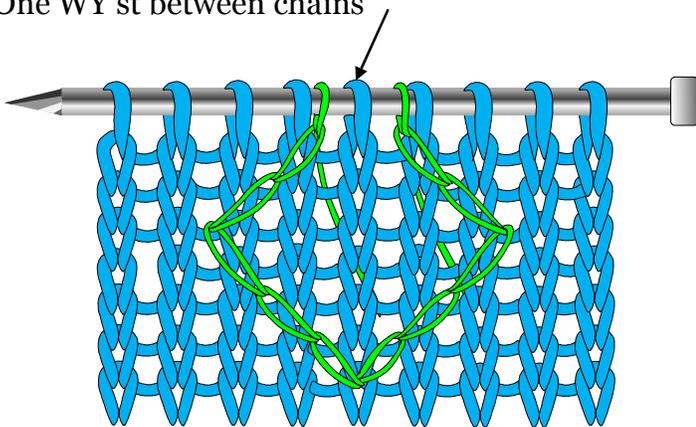
After purling the last row, and slipping the chains, we will begin the process of reversing the direction the chains move.

11. Knit to the FC. Now, CCL, Knit the background stitch with the WY, then knit the chain through the back loop, as before. (see steps 8-9). Knit 3 background stitches. CCR with the next FC loop. Knit chain, through back loop. Knit 3 background stitches. Repeat the process. Across. You now have 3 sts between the FC's. Turn.

Purl across as before, slipping all chains.

Fig. 12

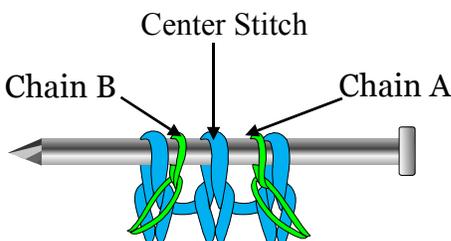
One WY st between chains



12. Next row, repeat the process in step 11. You will now have one background stitch (WY sts) between the chains. Fig. 12.

Work purl row as before, slipping all chain loops.

Fig. 13



** This next row is where we “Cross” the 3 stitches in the center, closing one diamond and starting another.

I have identified the stitches we will be working with in Fig. #13.

On the following page I will walk you step by step through the moves. It might seem a bit tricky at first, but with a little practice, you will soon be going through it like a breeze.

The Cross

Fig. #1

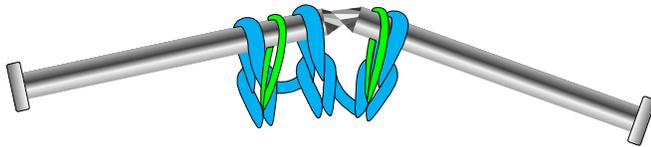


Fig. #2

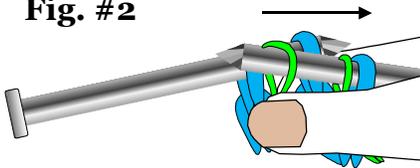


Fig. #3

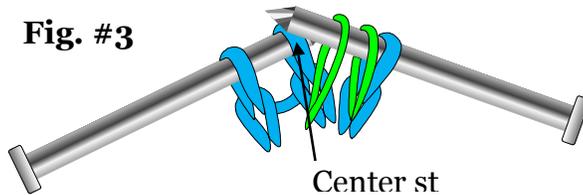


Fig. #4

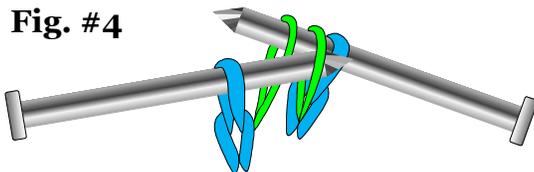


Fig. #5

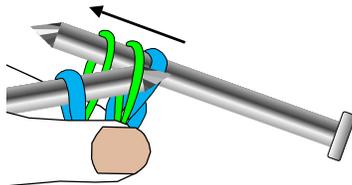


Fig. #6

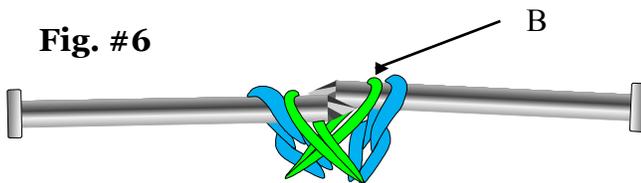


Fig. #7

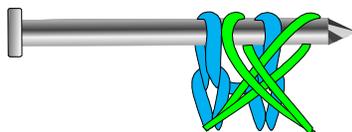
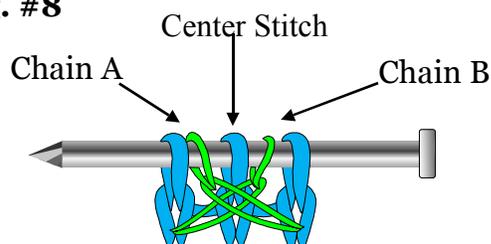


Fig. #8



1. Knit to the first chain of the 3 center stitches. Slip Chain A, onto the RN, knitwise. **Fig.#1**

2. CCL floating chain B. **Fig. #2**

3. Slip the center stitch onto the LN. Leave chain B on the RN. Both chains are now on the RN. **Fig. 3**

4. Stick the point of the LN, into the front leg of chain A. **Fig. #4**

5. Pinch the two chain stitches together and pull off the RN, to the left. **Fig. #5**

6. Slip chain B onto the RN. **Fig. #6**

7. CCL chain A, slipping the center stitch on the RN. Slip all three stitches back to the LN. See **Fig. #7**

8. Using floating chain B's tail,(which will be the one to the left of the center stitch), knit chain B through the back loop.

9. Knit center stitch with working yarn through back loop.

10. Using floating chain A's tail,(the one to the right of the center stitch, knit chain A through the back loop.

When finished your **Cross** should look like **Fig. # 8.**

Knitting Key

CCL - cable chain left (pg. #2, 8-9)

CCR - cable chain right (pg #2, 6-7)

LN = left needle

RN = Right needle

Floating Chain Practice

The chart previous page was drawn up to help you get a sense of how the chains move. It is a picture of the following written instructions.

Use two weight of yarn for this swatch.

1. With your heavier yarn cast on 15 stitches. This row is #1 on the chart.

Row 2- Purl across

Row 3 - Knit across

Row 4 - Purl across

Row 5 - Knit 7; (st 8 is your center st); set up your diamond as described on page 2 of this tutorial with a long strand of your lighter weight yarn. Don't forget to pick the strand up in the middle.

Row 6 - Purl across, slipping the chain loops.

Row 7 - Knit 6, CCR, knit 3, CCL, knit 6.

Row 8 - Repeat row 6.

Row 9 - knit 5; CCR, knit 5, CCL, knit 5.

Row 10 - Repeat row 6.

Row 11 - Knit 5; CCL, knit 1, knit CC, knit 3, CCR, knit 6.

Row 12 - Repeat row 6.

Row 13 - Knit 6, CCL, knit 1, knit CC, knit 1, CCR, knit 7.

Row 14 - Repeat row 6.

Row 15 - Knit to the first CC. Work "the Cross" as described on page #4. Knit across the rest of the row.

Row 16 - Repeat row 6.

Row 17 - 26 Repeat rows 7-16, twice.

Row 35 - To end the diamond, knit to the first FC. Slip it to the RN, knitwise. Knit the second FC and the center stitch together with the working yarn. Slip the first FC over the new stitch. Knit the rest of the row with the working yarn. Turn.

Row 36 - Purl across.

Row 37 - Knit across.

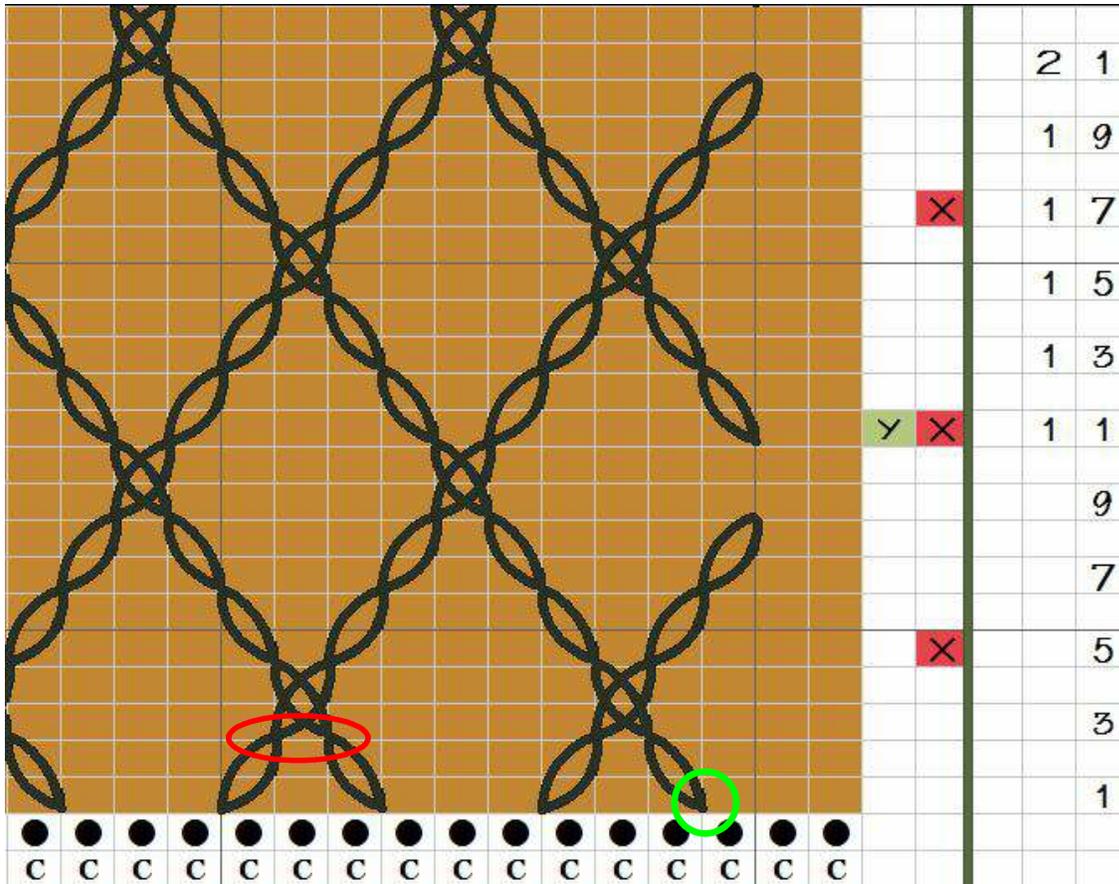
Row 38 - Purl across.

Row 39 - Cast off sts.

Free Floating Chains Diamond Border

In this section I will instruct you how to read my chart and give you added techniques for inserting the yarns. It is important to remember for this technique to look good it is again advisable to use two weights of yarn. You floating chains will show up better if they are constructed of the light weight. I used lace weight wool and silk over fingering yarn for all my pillow patterns. However, if you are thinking about using this technique for the bottom of a sweater or cuffs, you could use fingering weight over DK or regular 4 ply worsted.

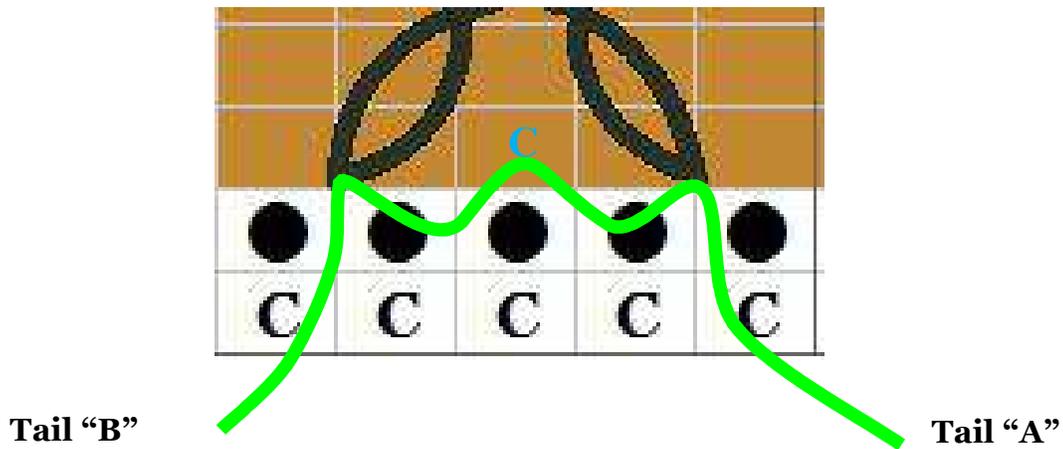
So.. Lets get started. First the chart.



1. The first two rows of the chart are your set up. As indicated "C" stands for cast on, while the return row is purled.
2. The first numbered row of the chart is where you begin to insert the FC strands.
3. The circled area above indicates where the first FC strand is entered. You will notice that it is between the 3rd and 4th stitch of the row of the chart.
4. The "cross" is indicated with the "X" in red.
5. The additional yarn insertions are indicated with the "Y" in green.
6. The base of the "cross" will always have a FC on each side of the center stitch. See red circle.
7. All movement of the floating chains occurs on the knit side of your work. All FC loops will be slipped on the purl rows.

FC Yarn Strand Insertion

1. Just as with the FC diamond practice, use the double ended strand where ever possible to eliminate unnecessary tails to weave in.



2. Using about a 30 inch strand of your light weight yarn, fold it in half, and place it over your left index finger. Holding it in place behind you work, put your crochet hook under the bar between the stitches and pull up a loop. Place it on the LN, so that the left leg of the loop is on top. Using the right side tail (A) bring the yarn underneath and up over the WY and knit the FC through the back loop. Drop the FC strand.

3. Knit 2 stitch with WY. Knit center stitch, trapping the “B” tail of the FC strand by going under the strand as you knit the center stitch.

4. Knit 1 with WY. Drop WY.

5. Insert hook between next stitch, pull up FC loop using tail “B”. Place loop on LN making sure that the left leg is in front. Bring FC tail up from underneath the WY, and knit the FC through back loop. Drop FC strand.

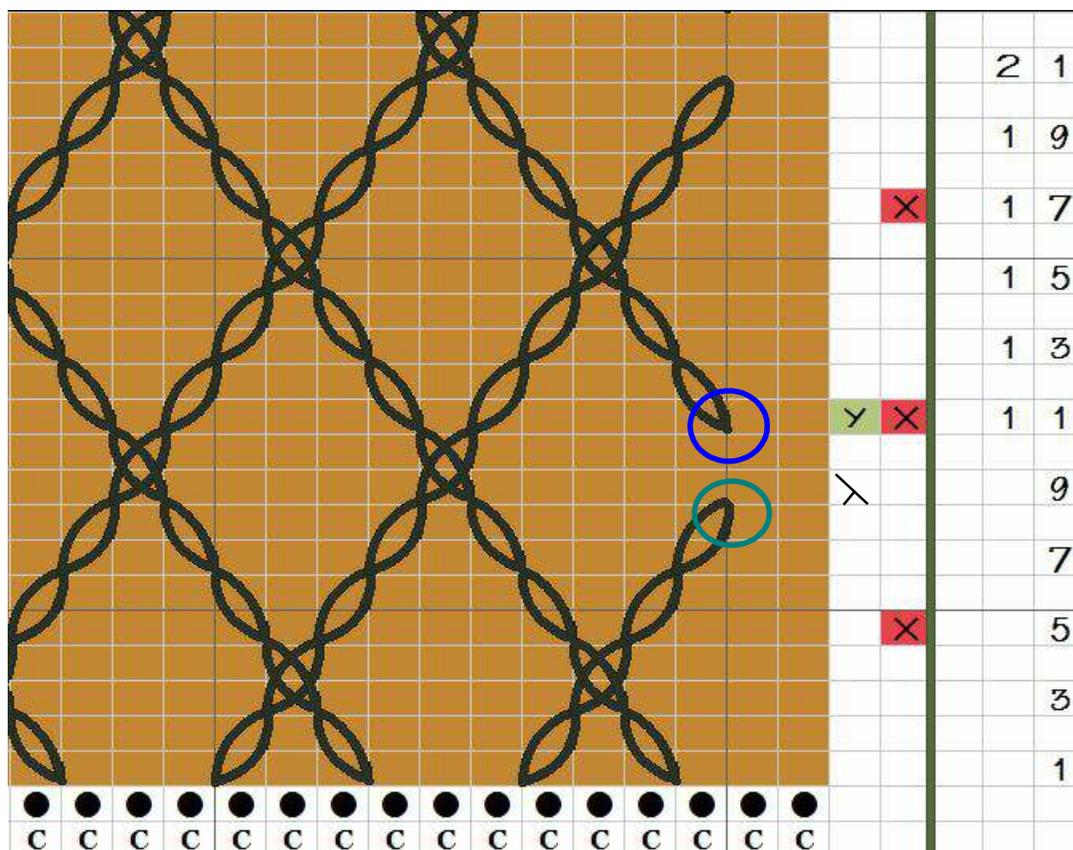
6. With WY, knit across to next FC strand insertion. Repeat process with new strand.

Make as many as needed. Turn. Purl across slipping all FC loops. Turn.

Move FC as indicated on chart, being careful to pick up the corresponding tail to each FC loop.

See pages 3-6 for instructions on moving chains.

Beginning and Ending FC Strands on Sides



In row # 9 you will see the symbol of an upside down “Y”. This means that you will end the surface appearance of this FC strand (blue circle). To do this, knit the loop as before, then pull the free end of the FC strand through the loop. Bring it to the back of your work and drop it. Continue across the row, completing your chart. Repeat the process with the last FC loop in the row. Turn.

Row 10. Purl across slipping all FC loops on the needle. Turn.

Row 11. This time you have a “Y” in the green box. You are going to pick up the discarded FC strand from row #9 and use it to make the new FC loop indicated on your chart. Just be careful to make sure it lies smoothly on the back surface of your work. Do **NOT** pull it up too tight.

**Remember you can adjust the tension of these loops after they are completed.*

Continue across, completing chart. Insert new loop at end of row as indicated on the chart.

Row 12. Purl across, slipping all FC loops on needle. Turn.

Now you are on your way. You have all the basic moves. Working the border practice chart will help you become familiar with the process in no time.

FC Practice Key

K = knit

st = stitch

RN = right needle

P = purl

FC = floating chain

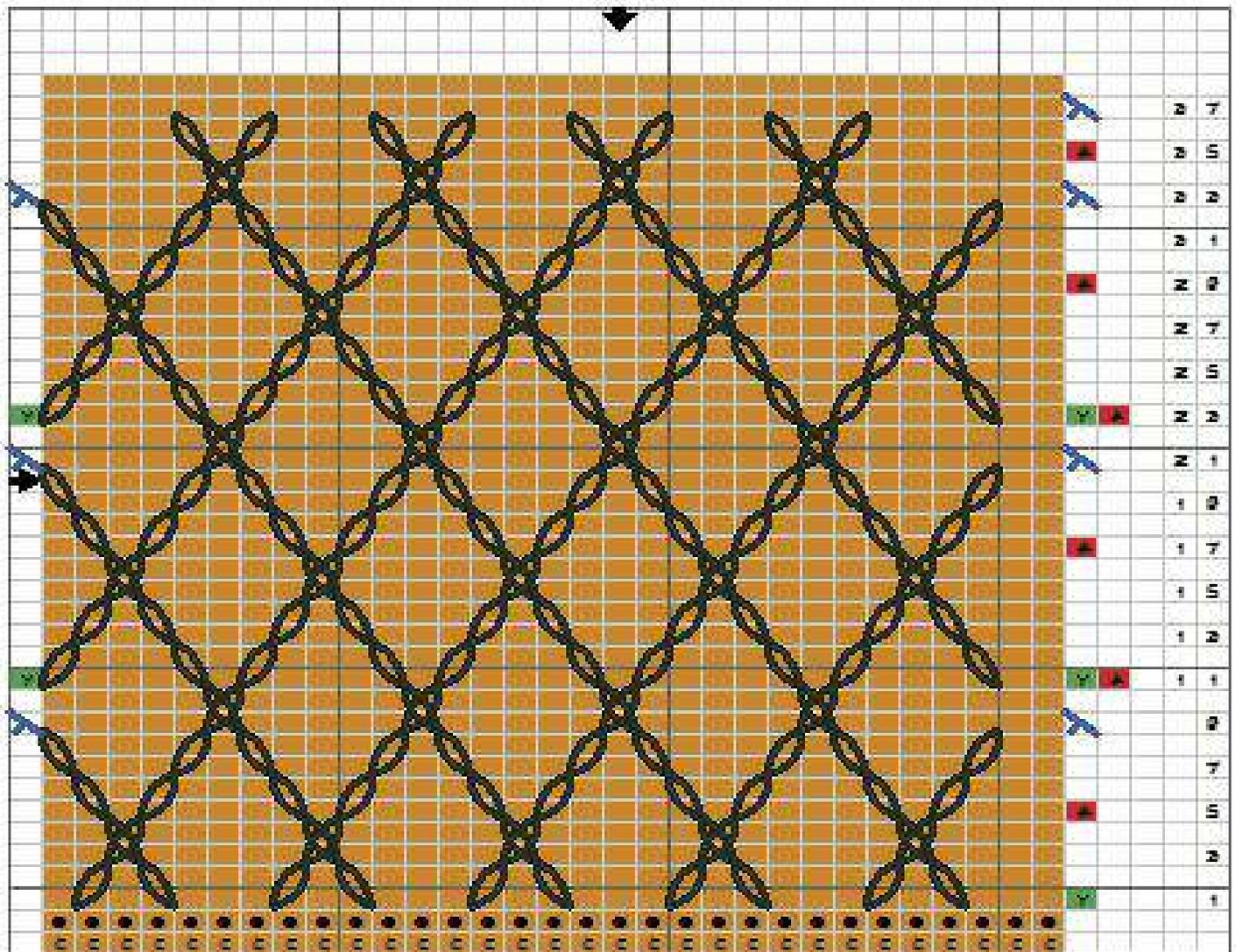
LN = left needle

CS = center stitch

WY = working yarn, or background yarn

Floating Chains Border Practice

Chart and Instructions



As on most charts, the odd row are knitted and the even rows are purled. Begin by casting on 31 sts.

Purl across. (●)

Row #1 K 3 sts with WY. Insert hook underneath bar between st 3 and 4. Pull up loop from tail “A” of FC strand and place it on the RN. This is your first FC loop. K 3 with WY, trapping FC tail “B” in center stitch. Insert FC loop between sts 6 &7. Place st on RN. Knit 3 with WY. Repeat across until all FC loops have been added to you work.

Row # 2. P across, slipping all FC loops on needle. Turn .

Row #3. With WY, k 3; [: CCL, with WY k 1; k FC through back loop. Knit CS. CCR, moving FC one stitch to right. Knit FC through back loop. With WY, knit 4 :]. Repeat [: :]. Work across moving FC loops as indicated on the chart (CCL, CS, CCR). *You will have 1 FC loop each side of the CS, and 5 sts of WY in between.*

Row #4. P across, slipping all FC loops.

Row #5. K 5 with WY. Work “Cross” over next 3 sts (FC, CS, FC), with WY, k 5. Repeat across as

Rows #6-8. Work chart, moving FC loops as indicated.

*Always make sure that your loops are laying open on the surface of your work. Adjust the tension as you go. You can pull up any slack by turning to the back of your work and finding the corresponding single strand that connects the loops. Pull up gently, then work up from there follow the line toward the loops presently riding on your needle.

Row #9. with WY, k 2; CCL, k FC through back loop. Stop! Pull the new loop just made completely through the FC, then drop the FC tail to the back. This ends the loop in this section.

Continue across, working the chart as indicated. When you get to the last FC, repeat the process and drop it off to the back of your work. Finish the row knitting with the WY only, Turn.

Row #10. Purl across, slipping all the FC loops on the needles. Turn.

Row #11. Knit 2, insert hook under bar between the stitch to your left, pick up the FC yarn you just discarded on row #9 and pull it through placing it on the LN. DO NOT KNIT THIS LOOP. Let this loop just ride your needle. You will be moving it into position in row #13. Work across row as indicated in chart., working the “Cross” with 5 WY sts in between. Add the FC loop at the end of the row, as you did the one at the beginning.

Row# 12 Purl across, slipping all FC loops.

Rows # 13 - 38 Work the chart.

Row # 39 bind off #31 sts.

Finishing - Adjust all FC loops as desire, then weave in the ends along the lines of the chains on the backside.