

Hints and Tips

#6 – Cast Off Edges for Shawls

At our latest show, I was asked by a couple of people what the “picot” cast off was, and this prompted a discussion about the best cast off to use for a shawl. Lace needs blocking to show it off to its best advantage, and so requires an elastic edge - otherwise the yarn can break when the work is stretched.

I normally use one of two cast offs - the Elastic or Lace cast off, and the Picot cast off.

The Elastic cast off is quick and easy and gives a nice stretchy edge, ideal for blocking out the points on an edge, as shown on my Donna Cowl design. It's worked as follows:

*K1, *k1, insert left needle through 2 sts on right needle from left to right, and k2tog through back of both sts; repeat from * to end, break yarn, then slip yarn end through final stitch and pull tight to finish.*

*Elastic cast off used on the Donna cowl (top)
and the Picot cast off used on Giselle*

A Picot cast off gives an edge with a series of “bumps” along it, rather than a smooth line as is more usual with most methods. It is much more decorative and gives a beautiful finish to a shawl or scarf. It does, however, use much more yarn than other methods and takes a good deal longer (some of my larger fine lace shawls took a whole evening to cast off with this method!).

To work a picot cast off, you will cast on additional stitches and cast them straight off again, along with the existing stitches, which forms the “bumps”. In the example below you can see the edging on my Giselle Cowl design, which was achieved as follows:

*Using the cable cast on, *cast on 2 sts onto the left needle, cast off 5 sts, return stitch on right needle to left needle,* repeat from * to * to end, break yarn, then slip yarn end through final stitch and pull tight to finish.*



There are of course lots of other cast off methods around, some of which suit particular requirements better than others. You can find whole books describing ways to start and finish your knitting and it can be fun to try a few, rather than stick to your favourite one.