



"Too long has the word knitting suggested pot-handlers, Girl Scout squares, booties, and rather lumpy, if loving, sweaters."

— Elizabeth Zimmermann, in [Knitter's Almanac](#)



a newsletter from
Meg Swansen

Dear Knitters,

Now that all the seasonal hub-bub has subsided, we can settle properly into our winter knitting. Did you see that old lady* on the cover of Wisconsin Magazine of History? The Winter 2011-2012 issue features a 16-page article, "[Stitch by Stitch, The Life and Legacy of Elizabeth Zimmermann](#)," by Kathryn Parks and Colleen McFarland. (*When Walter Sheffer took this photo, my ma was younger than I am now!).



Though EZ has sometimes been referred to as the "grandmother of knitting," EZ's philosophy reflects an understanding of the craft as more than grandmotherly and more than a hobby. EZs quote from *Knitter's Almanac* "Too long has the word knitting suggested pot-handlers, Girl Scout squares, booties, and rather lumpy, if loving, sweaters." and her KA commentary about well-knit garments is a subtle reminder to continue to hold your knitting (whether you are a young woman, man, grandmother, or grandfather) to a high standard. EZ promoted this idea through her Knitting Camps (by the way, you can [apply to 2012 Knitting Camp](#) through February 8th), and we follow her example to this day. Two topics that invariably come up during Camp are How To Re-size or Alter a pattern and How to Design Your Own Sweater. Pictured in the heading is Ann Swanson's Snow Sky design, our latest Schoolhouse Press pattern--see right column--, an example of a sweater designed using Elizabeth and Meg's techniques and sizing instructions featured in the book [Knitting with Two Colors](#).

The possibilities for designing your own sweater are wide-ranging, but you can

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New Books



[Two Color Knitting](#)



[Norwegian Mittens and Gloves](#)

begin simply by altering an already existing pattern to fit. Doing so will allow you to better understand the construction of the garment you are making and give you an opportunity to use the math skills you'll need to design your own sweater. When you know the general construction of the sweater you wish to alter, you can rely on EPS (Elizabeth's Percentage System) to recalculate the numbers. As with all fitted garments, knowledge of your personal Gauge is the key to success; swatching is essential. Following are instructions for swatching from the book *Knitting with Two Colors*.



Swatching: Knit a good sized swatch in the color-or-texture pattern of the project; flat for flat construction, circular for seamless construction. Make a flat swatch at least 6-8" wide; it helps to keep the selvages in Garter stitch so they will not curl. For a circular swatch, knit a Swatch Cap in the round on about 110-120 sts. Then measure (flat) for gauge.

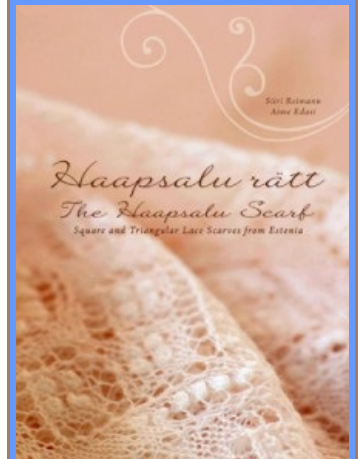
Speed Swatching: Or, if you are in a Tearing Rush, you can knit a 6-8" wide Speed Swatch back and forth on a circular needle. I.e. knit across (in color or texture pattern), pull out a long length of wool (s), slide the stitches back to the other end of the needle and knit the next row. Continue and you will have a series of long ladders across the back of your work, but you are only knitting on the outside of the fabric, thus achieving a circular (but flat) swatch from which to take a gauge reading. Here is a tip from Joyce Williams: If working the Speed Swatch in two colors, knit the first and last stitches of each row with both strands of wool together to keep the selvedge as tidy as possible. And, after steam blocking, stay a few stitches in from the selvages when you measure.

Naturally, don't even bother to measure if the blocked swatch doesn't please your eye; continue to change needle sizes and knit additional swatches until you are satisfied. When you know your gauge and have the measurements you want for your sweater, plug that information into the garment construction you wish to emulate and continue to rely on EPS for other calculations.

Aside from swatching, consider working out your design specifications in miniature. Elizabeth Zimmermann designed well-loved garments such as The Tomten Jacket by knitting them first for a 16.5" Sasha doll. Her collection of garments for Sasha dolls have been published in a Schoolhouse Press pattern. See our newest selection of patterns (two beautiful shawls, color pullover and color cardigan, and doll clothes) in the right column.

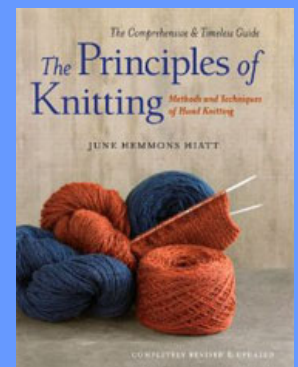


[Working with Wool](#)



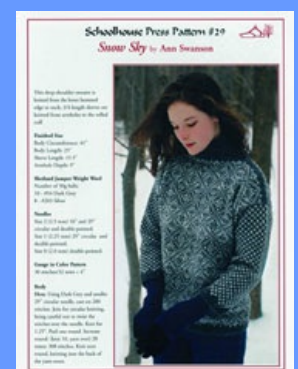
[The Haapsalu Scarf](#)

Coming Soon/Preorder



New Designs

[Snow Sky](#)





Below are some queries written to me on the subject of using EPS calculations to modify garments.

The steady stream of queries I receive feed this electronic Newsletter beautifully; thank you—and keep 'em coming.

Q&A

Q: I am not sure that I understand how to make the ribwarmer pattern bigger. I need to go to about 48". In one place it seems to say that EZ suggested using 12 as a basic number instead of a 10. Does this mean that when the original pattern says 10 stitches, I should do 12, and when it says 40 ridges, I should do 48? In a second place, it recommends increasing the side stitches, or if that will not be enough, increasing the shoulder stitches. Having never made a ribwarmer before, I'm not exactly sure how to increase the shoulder stitches.

A: For larger sizes, I still Cast On 10 sts; that is just the height of the back collar. After the little collar strip, you can cast on more shoulder stitches than the pattern calls for, or - if you don't want the vest to jut out past the shoulders, cast on the number needed to reach the recipient's shoulder point. The body width can be increased gradually on the armhole edge as you work down to the underarm. The final number of stitches on the needle (just before you begin to turn the first corner) is 1/4 of the total circumference (less possible side panels). So calculate total girth; divide by 4 - and that is the approximate number of stitches you need by time you reach the underarm.

However, two more points - 1. The original garment was not designed to necessarily meet in the middle, so decide upon the style you want. 2. You have another opportunity to enlarge the body measurement below the armholes: After turning the first corner, you are at the side "seam." Here you can work back and forth for several inches before you begin the second corner. This will make a side panel to extend the circumference as much as you wish. Remember to work the same amount at the other side seam for symmetry, and take this into account when deciding how much extra material to work.

Q: I am planning to make your Fair Isle vest for my husband. He prefers button down vests with pockets. Is there any reason I couldn't add some steek stitches to the vest and make it a cardigan? Perhaps referring to the instructions in MS Knitting... Second, the pockets. I think I could do this and then he and I would both be satisfied. Any thoughts, cautions, advice? If I do make a cardigan vest, seems that I would need more background color. Does that seem right?

A: Indeed, dear Stephanie -- there is no reason why you cannot add steek stitches at the front. Be sure to center the motifs exactly each side of the cardigan; you will most likely have to add one more stitch to achieve that perfect balance (and center them again at the underarms if you want them to match at the shoulder-tops). Make a second steek when you begin the neck shaping. Cully recently came up with a sure-fire formula for centering motifs --whether odd or even multiples -- and we have published it in the new book, *Knitting with Two Colors*. If you knit the OXO and Peerie motifs I charted for my vest, you have

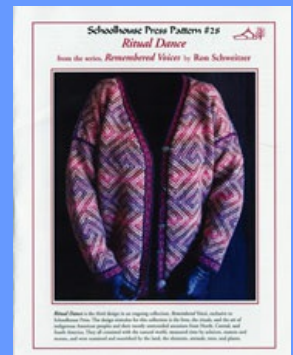
Sasha Doll Designs



Pansy Shawl



Ritual Dance



If I Could Fly



plain rounds between them, which are perfect for inserting EZ's After-Thought Pockets. Yes, you will need more wool for the cardigan trim and the pockets. Onward...

Q: Well, I'm about to jump in and try to design my own simple cardigan vest using EPS. I want to do a Gansey vest, and I want to design a simple stranded color pattern vest as well. So my questions are about the percentages of K. Square armholes - should I put about 15% of K on a holder? Shaped armholes - What % on a holder and how quickly do I increase and to what %? Obviously that might depend on how wide I want my shoulders and neck openings, sooooo.....what % of K for those? If I want a U neck, what % goes on a holder, and how quickly do I decrease? Does anyone do back of the neck shaping? Any help will be much appreciated!!

A: Dear Sandra,

- A very general guideline is to put 15% of [K] sts on a thread at each underarm, then knit straight to shoulders for a square armhole.
- Shaped armhole: put 10% of [K] sts on a thread and decrease away an additional 5%. For a handsome curve to the armhole, dec every round for 3 to 4 rounds; then every-other-round for the rest.
- The width of the neck opening for an adult size is roughly 8" -- allowing for whatever filling you will add with the border.
- For a U-Neck shape, the % of sts-on-a-thread depends on how wide you want the base of the neck. Draw the shape you want; choose a width for the bottom of the U and determine (roughly) the angle of the sides. Multiply the base width (in inches) times your gauge and put those sts on hold. Cast on a steak. Now choose the rate of decrease along the sides of the U to give the shape you want as you reach approx 8" width. Then work straight to shoulder height.
- Instead of traditional back-of-neck shaping, which sometimes involves a steak, I now use Joyce Williams' invention (from the book [Armenian Knitting](#)) of working short-rows across the front stitches only. That slopes the shoulders nicely and lowers the neck-back at the same time.

Q: Dear Schoolhouse Press, I was wondering if anybody there had tried adding a steak to Meg's Spiral Yoke pullover in order to make it into a cardigan. Thanks for your time, I know this is an unusual question.

A: Actually, dear Rodger, I have been threatening to do just that for years. I got the idea in 1992 as I drew a schematic (p 26 of [Handknitting with Meg Swansen](#)) to show that you could Spiral to the Left or to the Right. For a cardigan, I would mirror-image the direction of the spirals at center-front and -back and add a steak between the reversing lines on the front. I don't like the idea of slicing the sweater open through single-direction spirals, but Knitter's Choice, for sure. Please let me know how you fare.

Q: Hello, I have been watching this wonderful DVD [[Knitting Workshop](#)] and think it is the very best one I have seen yet...the chit chat back and forth is so wonderful, I feel like I am sitting in the same room with Elizabeth and Meg and must say that both my husband and I think Meg sounds a lot like Doris Day! I hope that is not insulting, it isn't meant to be, just that she is so nice to listen to!

A: Dear Dorothy, Thank you for your very kind letter; I am so pleased that the DVD is useful for you. I love Doris Day; thank you. My sister, Lloie, was once a stand-in for Doris during a skiing scene in the movie, [Caprice](#): Doris (Lloie in a blonde wig) skied down the mountain with a Bad Guy skiing behind and shooting at her with a rifle. Then - just as Doris/Lloie was headed over the Big Cliff to Certain Doom, along came a helicopter with a rope ladder which Doris/Lloie grabbed to be flown to safety. Whew.

If you have questions you wish to see answered in a future newsletter, please write to us at info@schoolhousepress.com.

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Outward,
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