

Random thoughts on Joining Squares (or Other Shapes) with Crochet Stitches

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I have made many blankets by connecting squares. I rather enjoy watching the pile of squares turn into something amazing. Crocheting rather than sewing them together speeds things up considerably. When I tried one of the Crochet Dude's afghan patterns in his pamphlet Hug It Out, I fell in love with the way he joined his squares with a wonderful interlocking stitch that took joining to a new level for me. I used a version of that join for the squares Ms Sara Ford's first graders knitted last year, and was delighted at the way the join framed each square. This year I tried a different variation for the first graders blanket and it went together in a flash.

So I've been playing a bit with ways to join squares, knitted or crochet. I invite you to get out a crochet hook, some yarn, and a bag of squares (or strips) and start playing, too. The nice thing about seaming with crochet stitches is... it's really easy to pull it out if you are not happy with it. That's also a reminder - be sure to really thoroughly secure your yarn ends when you're doing it "for real". Yep - I learned that one the hard way after dozens of repairs on a couch afghan I did for my mother.

So - have fun!

Stitches to join squares

Slip Stitch or single crochet

I have joined squares with slip stitch for years, and it's a good, solid way to connect a lot of squares in fairly quick time, without the nuisance of re-threading a needle as you would in sewing. I even sometimes seam knitted garments that way. To do it, place the two pieces to be joined right sides facing (for the seam to be inside - you can do it the other way around if you want the seam to show on the right side), catch the loops on both pieces with your hook, draw a loop through, then slip stitch. (Or single crochet - which makes more of a ridge than slip stitch.) Keep slip stitching to the end of the seam. For crochet granny squares, going through the back loops makes a really tidy seam, but it also works well through both loops or front loop only.

Positives

- * quick
- * fairly invisible

Negatives

- * a bit stiff - doesn't stretch
- * uses a lot of yarn compared to whip or mattress stitch
- * does make a slight ridge, more so if you're using single crochet. Though it can make a nice design feature.

From the book Beyond the Square Crochet Motifs by Edie Eckman, I've tried these:

Chain and single crochet : this looks rather nice on the right or wrong side

Match the pieces as before, single crochet through both pieces, chain 3 (or more), single crochet through both pieces. Repeat to the end of the seam. This one is fun in a contrasting color, and might be fun in different colors on the horizontal and vertical seams. I haven't used this for a large number of blocks yet.

Chain stitch zig-zag: I used this to join a set of knitted squares from a chemo blanket kit at the shop. I had so many "ooh, I want to try that" 's I decided to write this essay. This one is fun, though I'm not sure I was completely happy with the intersecting spaces. To work, single crochet in one of the pieces to join, chain 3, single crochet 2 stitches (or knit rows) from the edge of the second piece, chain 3, single crochet 2 stitches from the sc on the first piece. Repeat, zig-zagging between the two pieces. When I use this again, I will try joining the squares in a column, rather than trying to jump from the first pair to the second continuously, then join the rows. (More on that later)

Then, from the Annie's Attic book When Granny Meets Filet, there's this join:

Lacyjoin: join yarn in one corner of one square, single crochet, chain 3, sc in the same space (this makes an "ear") chain 3, single crochet, chain 3 - continue all the way to the next corner, make an "ear" until you've gone all the way around. Join and finish off. Repeat for the second square until you finish the third side, then grab your first square - you're going to "join as you go". At the corner, sc, chain 1, slip to the center stitch of the ch 3 "ear" of the first piece - now you're joined! - chain 1, single crochet on your current piece, chain 1, slip stitch into the center chain of the chain 3 on the first square, chain 1, sc in current square. Repeat until you're connected at the center of each chain 3 on both squares.

It's done much the same way to add the 3rd square in a column. When you want to connect it on 2 sides, work 2 sides as before, then sc into the corresponding center sc on the previous square. I used this on Ms Ford's class blanket and to join a set of crochet squares for a church group. Looked really nice - ask Joan Beck!

- * Negatives - you have to go all the way around every square, which uses more yarn.
- * Positives - it makes a nice connecting frame for each square, and you're crocheting!

Now for the Crochet Dude's join, from Hug it Out:

It's actually the same as for Annie's Attic lacy join, with this variation: when joining the second square, instead of slip stitch to connect the chains, chain 2, drop the loop from your hook, reach the hook through the chain-3 space on first square, pick up the loop again. Slip stitch, then sc in current square (having skipped 2 stitches). You've interlocked the chains on the two squares. For his "ears" - well, I'm still struggling with them. He has you connecting them by overlapping them when you work the border on the edge, and overlapping 3 and coming through them with the chain on the 3rd. You'll have to sort that out for yourself, or check out his pattern. There's a copy at the shop, or they have it at A.C. Moore.

Negatives:

- * It's a bit fussy to work, and the place where 4 corners meet is a little lumpy (or maybe I just have to work at it more)
- * Like the Annie's Attic lacy join, you're working completely around every square

Positives:

- * It looks really nice
- * Flexible, not stiff at all
- * Good for easing two slightly different sized squares together

For other shapes - hexagons or triangles - you'll just have to experiment with corners. I've done the lacy join with hexagons, and it looked pretty cool.

Here are some photographs of the joins



zig zag join on knit squares



chain and single crochet - front



chain and single crochet - back



lacy join



interlaced join

Joining a lot of squares efficiently

The books usually have you joining squares this way - one by one into a column, then joining the columns. For some of the methods - the zig-zag join, the lacy join and the interlocking join, that's probably the best strategy. BUT . . .

For sewing, slip stitching, and chain and single-crochet methods, I find it more efficient to do it this way:

Layout your squares in the formation of your finished blanket. Start at the end of a column, sew (or slip stitch) the first two together, and without cutting your yarn, join the next 2 and work your way up the column. You'll have the pairs of seamed squares joined at the intersections. (see diagram) You can then connect the next column of squares, one at a time, to the first pairs. When you have all the columns joined, then you can do the row seams. Fewer ends to work in!

Now, for the lacy and interlocking join I have been using with a variation of a column join:

*Work around 2 sides of the square, chain 3 then join the next square, this time working 3 sides, and continue joining squares going round only 3 sides until you finish the column - then working the entire length of the unworked 4th sides of all the squares. (You'll come back to the first side of square number one when you do the final round.) Then on the second column, you can join the whole side to the first column "as you go". When you come to the chain 3 between 2 squares, chain 1, slip or sc into center chain to join, chain 1, sc into corner of next square.

*Then join the new row, one square at a time, join first square of new row to first square of new column on side (leave same side unworked as for row 1), chain 1, slip or sc into center chain of chain 3 from first column's space between first and second square, work second side of first square, chain 3. Join in new square, connecting to side of first square in new column, then chain 1, slip or sc into corner chain 3, chain 1, connect to second square in first column.

* When you've joined all the squares, work around until you come back to where you began. TA-DA! All the squares are joined with a single yarn - only beginning and end to work under.

* Positives - only one yarn

* Negatives - you really have to pay close attention as the rows progress - it's really easy to find you've inserted a square between the two squares that form the columns. Also, you'll have the whole blanket in your lap for a longer time than if you do one column, then a second column and join the columns.

Diagrams appear on the following page.

There you have it . . . not the last word in crochet joinings, but at least I hope you have a place to start exploring on your own! Have fun!

Diagram 1 - joining squares with sewing, slip stitch, single crochet

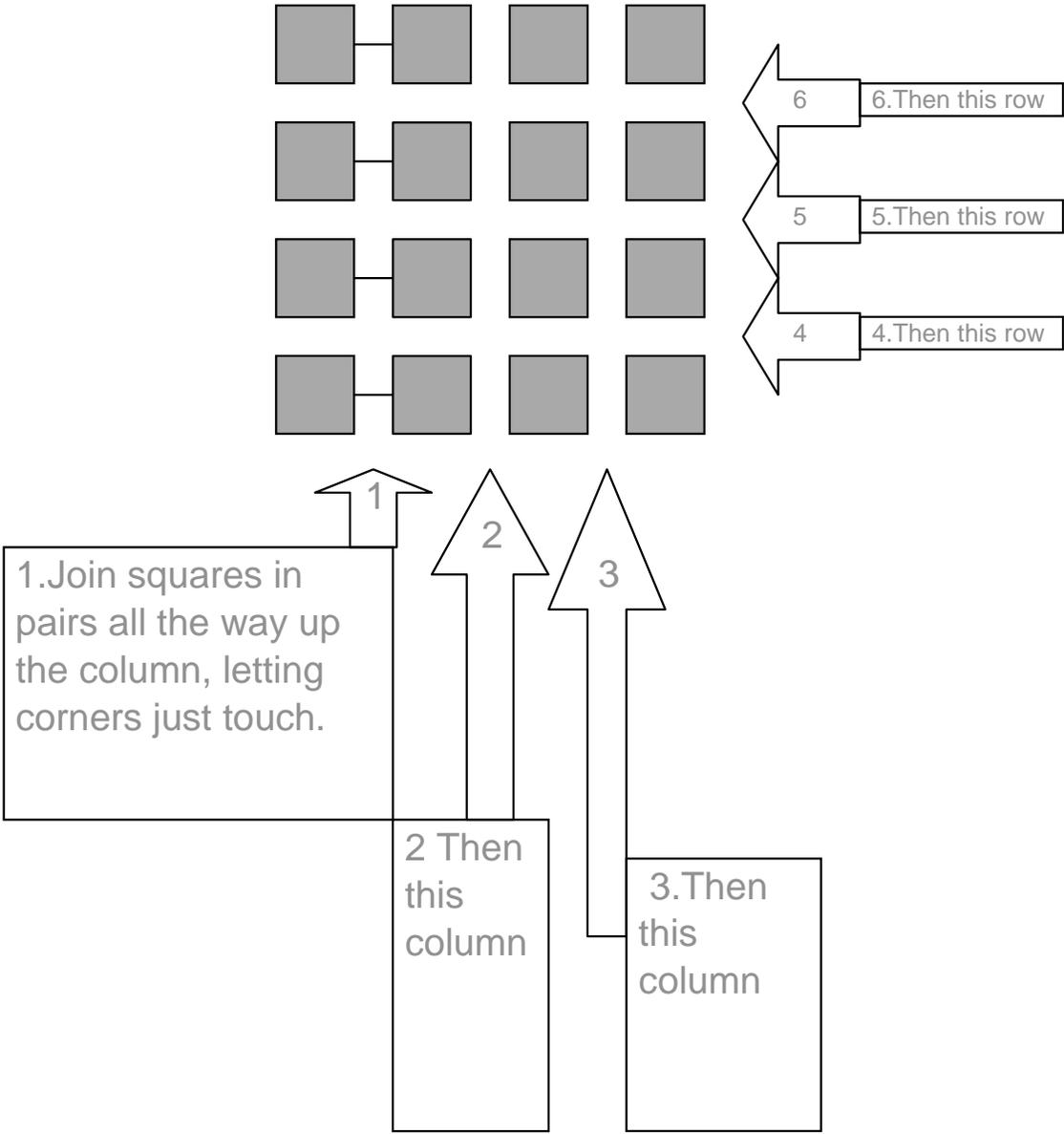


Diagram for column join, version 2

