

1. Do not use crocheted steeks on anything other than traditional 100% wool. All smooth and/or superwash wools, plant-based or synthetic yarns *require* machine-sewn steeks. Even traditional wools can benefit from machine-sewn steeks which can be faster, stronger and far less bulky than crocheted steeks.



Superwash merino blend



Shetland wool



Norwegian wool

2. Take a practice run on your sewing machine with your gauge swatch. Better to find out how your machine behaves – *or misbehaves* – on something you don’t care about!
3. Use a *very* short stitch length on your sewing machine. Crocheted steeks fail with smooth yarns because they merely loop *around* each strand of yarn. With a slight tug, most any smooth yarn can slip right through that crocheted loop. (But, *if it’s sticky, like Shetland wool, well, you might not even need that bulky crocheted loop to begin with. But, that’s another post, for another day.*) If you bisect, or even trisect, each knit stitch with short machine stitches, cut strands cannot slip through – they’re locked in place for good.
4. Sew two lines, right next to each other, on each side of your cutting line. I always have at least one stitch column for cutting in the middle of my steeks, sometimes two. I have seen patterns without any extra cutting columns at all. I think an extra column in the middle is great insurance – well worth the tiny effort!



5. You'll be covering your sewing lines with hems, facings or maybe even a "covered steek" so feel free to use a contrast color of thread to make the process easier on your eyes.



Orange band at left = covered steek on [Rosalia](#).



Gold band at left = covered steek on [Tiger Lily](#).

6. Keep loose yarn ends away from your sewing lines by temporarily tucking them aside under plain, old scotch tape – it takes seconds and it works wonders!



7. A layer of tissue paper between your knitting and the machine keeps fluid, textured or extra fine fabrics from getting snagged by the machine's feed dogs. Once you're done reinforcing, the tissue peels away in a snap.



8. Norwegian armhole steeks are typically sewn and cut right into patterned body fabric, without any striped steek guidelines. If you're afraid your sewing might stray out of bounds on those spots, run a quick basting line with contrasting yarn down the center of the sideline, to the base of the armhole. You can pull it out as you sew along, knowing your stitches are staying right on track. When you have several stitch columns set aside for steek stitches, as for cardigan and neckline steeks, knit those steek stitches in alternating stripes to create clear sewing and cutting lines.



9. Work that backstitch! The high-risk areas tend to be the outer edges at the very tops and bottoms of openings and the internal endpoints, such as the bases of necklines or armholes. Those are the areas where you'll want to use your machine's backstitch function liberally. And it does not have to be a thing of beauty – you're shooting for a thing of *strength!* Remember, those areas will eventually be covered, so don't hesitate to backstitch a couple of times to be sure you've caught the edge stitches securely. Same thing on those v-necks and armholes – it's okay to go around the bottom point a couple of times to be certain you're leaving a secure line that will hold up to constant movement.



10. Once it's time to cut, use sharp, pointed scissors, sit in a well-lit spot and take your time. A sheet of cardboard inside your sweater, underneath your steek, can keep you from cutting through anything *other* than your cutting line – *priceless* for peace of mind!

Yay, now you're a pro with machine-sewn steeks! To see more of my designs using machine-sewn steeks, visit my website at [MaryAnnStephens.com](http://MaryAnnStephens.com).

HAPPY STEEKING!!

