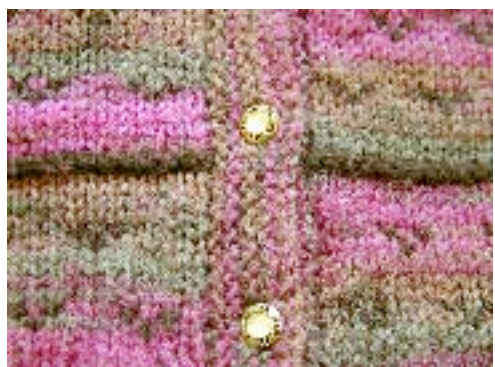# *Make Your Own Garter Bar*
Colleen Smitherman

A garter bar is a bar with prongs that allows you to take all the stitches off your needlebed at one time and put them back on the needles later even turning the work from the purl side to the knit side if you wish.

You can do many cool things with a garter bar. <u>You can use a garter bar to turn what you are knitting from one side to the other to make alternating knit and purl sections</u> -- a favorite technique when knitting baby blankets or scarves.

<u>My favorite use of a garter bar is to knit what I call "purl ridges"</u>. By turning the work around from one side to the other, knitting one or two rows, and then turning it back, you get a row of raised purl stitches on the otherwise flat stockinette stitch side which adds texture to the surface of what you are knitting. Illustration 1 shows purl ridges between crossed stitches. Illustration 2 shows a purl ridge in a contrasting color for more punch.

Illustration 1   Purl Ridges

Illustration 2   Purl Ridge in Contrasting Color and Garter Stitch Ribbing

<u>Garter bars can be used to make increases or decreases spaced across an entire row</u>. For example when knitting a winter hat, you might like to make decreases evenly around the crown every few rows to reduce bulk at the top.

Stitches taken off on the bar are put back on doubling up some for decreases or leaving empty needles to be filled in with purl bumps for increases.

As an alternative to the usual knit and purl ribbing, you can knit garter stitch ribbing by turning the work every row as shown in Illustration 2. Still another use for a garter bar is as a stitch holder. Instead of taking off shoulder stitches with scrap yarn, you can slip then onto a garter bar to be hung back onto the needles when you are ready to join the shoulder. It also works well for holding the tops of pocket linings or neckline trims until you are ready to knit them in. In fact, almost anything that needs to be taken off on waste yarn and later rehung can likely be put on and off a garter bar more quickly.
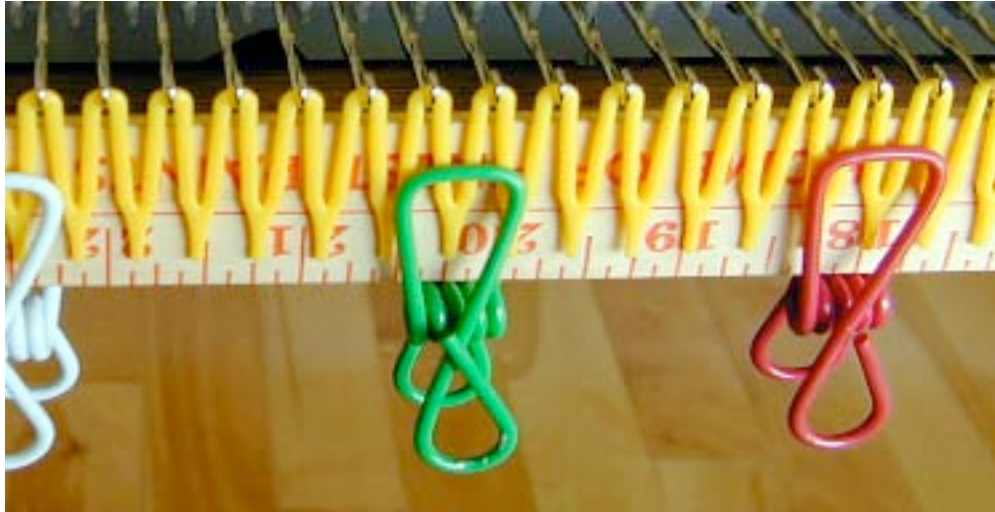
If there is no garter bar available for your machine or if it is expensive to buy, making your own with inexpensive supplies is, as Martha would say, "A good thing". The best part is that you can make the garter bar to exactly fit your bulky or midgauge needlebed regardless of the needlebed gauge. You will need your machine and the following items: stretchable plastic hair combs as shown in Illustration 3, an unpainted yardstick, some spring clips, a glue gun or wood glue, and some newspaper to protect the floor under your machine. The hair combs are very inexpensive and can be found at most drug or grocery stores or you might find more economically ones at a craft store. The yardstick can be found at hardware stores or you might even be able to find one at home.

Illustration 3   Stretchable plastic hair combs

Begin making your garter bar by first cutting off the clasp ends as they won't be functional. You should get about 40 to 45 loops per comb. Next begin stretching the comb across your needle bed placing the loops of the comb into each needle in sequence and at the same time clamp the comb to the yardstick as shown in Illustration 4. You need to leave about 1/4 inch of each loop

protruding beyond the edge of the yardstick as shown. <u>When everything is aligned and spaced evenly, rotate the yardstick up to horizontal and glue the comb to the yardstick</u> between the clamps, let harden, remove the clamps, and fill in the glueless spaces. You want to keep the glue away from the loops and the first 1/4 inch or so of the yardstick edge as shown in Illustration 5.

Illustration 4   Hang comb in needle hooks and clamp to bar

Illustration 5   Apply glue to comb teeth

You can make a whole family of garter bars for different uses for all your machines and you can add as many combs across the yardstick as you wish. Don't worry too much about an uneven loop where the combs come together. Label your garter bars with which machine they are for and how many loops they have for easy reference.

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