

What are all those numbers?

Understanding shaping notation in Japanese charted patterns

Shaping in Japanese patterns is shown with a series of numbers:

$$\#-\#-\# = \text{rows-stitches-times}$$

For example, 2-1-3 means every 2 rows, increase/decrease 1 stitch, 3 times. 2-1-3 indicates shaping worked over 6 rows total.

This notation is the same for increasing, decreasing, or short rows. How do you know which one? Simple: the shape of the schematic. If the schematic gets wider, increase; if the schematic gets narrower, decrease. Short rows are most often seen for shoulder shaping in Japanese patterns. You can recognize short rows because they are typically marked "# stitches even" (#目平) rather than "# rows even" (#段平).

Be sure to read the numbers in the direction you're working - that is, if you're knitting from the bottom up, read the numbers from the bottom up. In the example below, which is a garment worked from the bottom up, the numbers are read in rows from bottom to top.

Finally, remember to work shaping on both sides! (Unless, of course, the schematic indicates shaping on one side only.)

