

PATTERN READING SKILLS - VARIOUS STYLES

Each tatting pattern can be written in a different style. Let's learn how to read them!



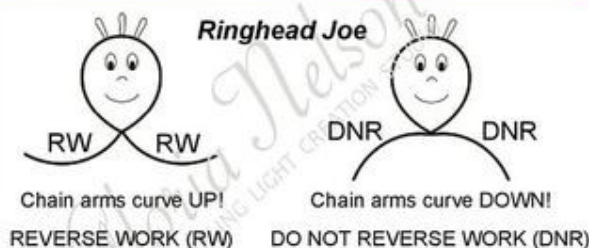
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This page shows you a variety of pattern writing styles that you might see in books and on websites. You may come across other styles and abbreviations as well because every designer has their preferred method of writing their pattern, and older patterns are written different compared to more modern patterns. It can be confusing! But with practice you can become a proficient pattern reader. **This is the same pattern written in 5 different styles.**

Put your shuttle or needle aside for now - just take your finger and trace the photo while you read each pattern.

Abbreviations Used:

R and ○ Ring	Ch and ∩ Chain
p and - and ∩ Picot	Rep Repeat
j and + and = Join	sep Separated
ds Double Stitch	prev Previous
cl Close Ring	* to * Repeat the pattern written between the asterisks the number
RW Reverse Work	of times indicated. (Sometimes patterns will say, for example, 3X or 4X, which indicates to repeat the pattern 3 or 4 more times. In the example on this page, there is not a set number of times.)
DNR Do Not Reverse Work	



PARAGRAPH OR LONG STYLE:

R 5 ds, p, 5 ds, p, 5 ds, p, 5 ds, cl, RW. Ch 4 ds, p, 4 ds, RW. * R 5 ds, j (to 3rd p of previous ring), 5 ds, p, 5 ds, p, 5 ds, cl, RW. Ch 4 ds, p, 4 ds, RW. * Repeat from * to * for the desired length, ending with a ring. Tie knot, cut thread and hide ends.

SHORT STYLE:

R 5 - 5 - 5 - 5, cl, RW.
Ch 4 - 4, RW.

* R 5 + (to 3rd p of prev R) 5 - 5 - 5, cl, RW.

Ch 4 - 4, RW. *

Rep from * to * for the desired length, ending with a R.
Tie, cut, hide.

Some patterns do not tell you where you need to join (+) to. You will need to figure that out by looking at the photo.

GROUP STYLE:

R 5 ds, 3 p sep by 5 ds, 5 ds, cl, RW.
Ch 4 ds, p, 4 ds, RW.

* R 5 ds, j (to 3rd p of prev R), 5 ds, 2 p sep by 5 ds, 5 ds, cl, RW.

Ch 4 ds, p, 4 ds, RW. *

Rep from * to * for the desired length, ending with a R.
Tie, cut, hide.



DIAGRAM: In this diagram, there are letters of the alphabet to tell you the order to tat the elements. Just start at letter 'A' and work your way through. If a diagram does not indicate a specific "Start" point, then start with a Ring. Many diagrams (and some written patterns) do not tell you when to Reverse Work (RW) or Do Not Reverse Work (DNR). You will need to figure that out by looking at the way the Chains curve beside each Ring (refer to Ringhead Joe above).

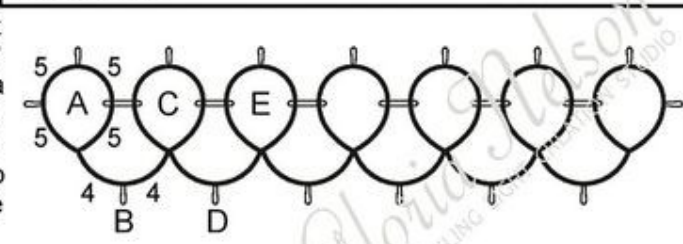


PHOTO: If a photo does not indicate a specific "Start" point, then start with a Ring. Sometimes only one set of numbers is shown for an element. For the Ring, the "5" tells us there are 5 ds between each p of the Ring. From the photo, you can count that there are 3 p around the Ring. For the Chain, the "4" tell us there are 4 ds on each side of the p of the Chain. Some photo patterns have more information shown, similar to the Diagram example above.



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Play with your picots!



EVERY RING HAS
24 DOUBLE STITCHES

Decorative picots, in any
pattern, can be adjusted
to suit what you prefer.
Play with your picots!



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REVERSE WORK (RW) & DO NOT REVERSE WORK (DNR)

When following a pattern that is written with only a diagram or photo to follow, it can be a challenge to figure out when you need to Reverse Work (RW) and when you Do Not Reverse Work (DNR). I would like you to meet Ringhead Joe with his long Chain arms! Are his Chain arms up or down? This will help you to determine when to reverse or not!

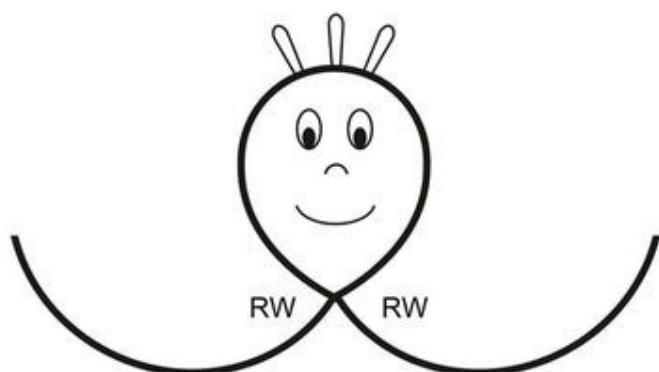
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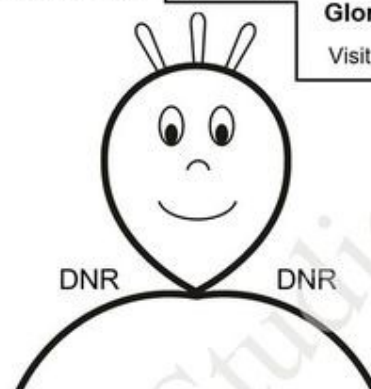
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ARM UP! = REVERSE WORK (RW)

Left Chain is Arm Up = RW when the Chain is done,
Tat the Ring,
Right Chain is Arm Up = RW when the Ring is done.



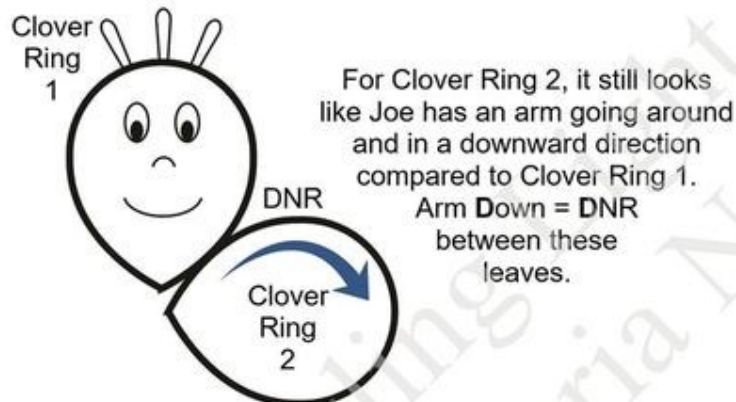
ARM DOWN! = DO NOT REVERSE WORK (DNR)

Left Chain is Arm Down = DNR when the Chain is done,
Tat the Ring,
Right Chain is Arm Down = DNR when the Ring is done.

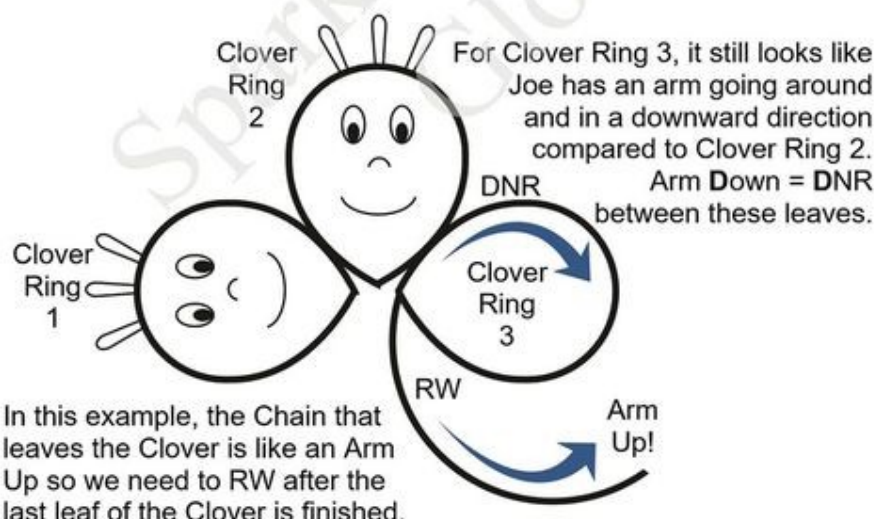
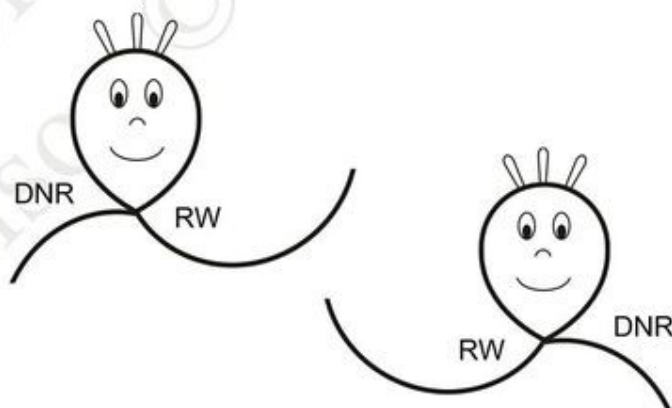
CLOVER LEAVES

We Do Not Reverse Work (DNR)
between the leaves of a Clover.

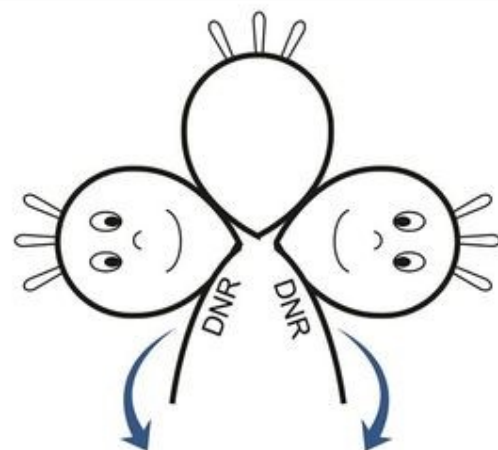
Does Ringhead Joe show us this? Yes!



Following the guidelines above, we can now figure out how to tat Ringhead Joe's waving Chain arms!



In this example, the Chain that leaves the Clover is like an Arm Up so we need to RW after the last leaf of the Clover is finished.



In this example, the Chains that enter and leave the Clover are both Arms Down, so we DNR before and after the Clover is made.



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RECOMMENDED TATTING NEEDLE SIZES

		Tatting Needle Size *					
		(the higher the number, the smaller the diameter of needle)					
		9	8	7	6	5	4
Thread Size and Brand ** (the higher the number, the thinner the thread)	100	DMC Cordonnet Special	●				
	80	DMC Tatting Thread (Spécial dentelles)		●			
		Lizbeth		●			
	60	DMC Cordonnet Special		●			
	40	Lizbeth		●			
	30	Aunt Lydia's		●			
		DMC Cébélia		●			
	20	Aunt Lydia's		●			
		DMC Cébélia		●			
		DMC Cordonnet Special		●			
		Lizbeth			●		
	10	Aunt Lydia's			●		
		DMC Baroque			●		
		DMC Cébélia			●		
		Lizbeth				●	
	5	DMC Petra				●	
	3	Aunt Lydia's				●	
		Lizbeth					●

CHOOSING A NEEDLE SIZE:

The size of tatting needle you choose depends on the thickness of the thread you are using for your project. This is because you make your stitches on the needle and then push them onto the thread that is through the eye of the needle (this is the Core Thread). **To achieve the best quality of needle tatting, your stitches need to be snug and firm around that Core Thread.**

"GENERAL RULE" - ALWAYS CHOOSE THE SMALLEST DIAMETER OF TATTING NEEDLE WHERE YOU CAN STILL FIT THE THREAD THROUGH THE EYE.

Also consider the following:

a) When you are making your stitches on the needle, ensure that they are firm around the needle and snug against each other. After you push them over the eye to make a Ring or Chain, *check your stitches*. They should NOT bunch up, overlap, or be so loose that they twist around the Core Thread. If your stitches are doing that, then your needle is too large. Use a smaller needle. **Remember the "General Rule" mentioned above.**

b) If you are splitting, fraying, or stretching the thread when trying to fit it through the eye, or find it very difficult to use a needle threading tool, then your needle is too small. Use a larger needle.

c) It is normal for stitches to be quite snug and firm around the needle, and it is normal to sometimes require the help of a rubber "needle grip" (because sometimes our fingers are slippery when trying to grasp the needle). But if you are going to be hurting your fingers or bending your needle when trying to push the stitches over the eye and onto the Core Thread, then your needle is too small. Use a larger needle.

* The brands of tatting needles I used for this chart are "Handy Hands" (sizes 5, 7, and 8), "Havel's" (sizes 4 and 6), and "Lacis" (size 9). Different brands have similar sizes. If you own a different brand, just remember the "General Rule", and consider the notes above, when choosing your needle size.

** These are the brands of thread that I use regularly and had in stock. It is impossible for me to test every brand and size of thread or yarn on the market. Just remember the "General Rule", and consider the notes above, for whatever thread or yarn you plan to use for your project.

Note: There are larger tatting needle sizes available in metal (0, 1, 2, and 3) and in wood (various diameters) for tatting with larger thread or yarn. Just remember the "General Rule", and consider the notes above, when choosing your needle size for tatting with the larger thread or yarn.

Tatting Together

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