

READING AND WRITING PATTERNS

There are many forms of pattern writing out there and it can be very confusing for beginners (or even experienced tatters) to understand what everything means; This is a page to help you understand different types of pattern writing:

Things to do when making a pattern the first time:

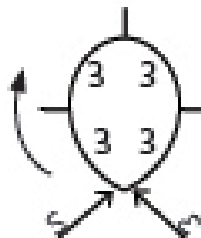
1. Read through the pattern at least twice to see if you are able to understand it. You don't need to understand every twist and turn this second but are there any terms you do NOT know that you want to get help with first before going further?
2. Are there any skills in the pattern that you need to learn or review?
3. Ask yourself: What will I do with my thread ends; how my project will be used? Can I knot my ends and cut the threads close on the back because it will be mounted in a frame and not seen? Can I use the ends of the threads as part of the hanger on a Christmas ornament or bookmark? Do I need to hide them inside my DS?
4. When reading a pattern for the first time, try drawing it before you try tatting it. If you can draw it, you can tat it. If you have the old-fashioned instructions where every single word and every single movement is written out for you, you may want to try reducing it to the tatters' shorthand formula.

Vintage tatting patterns were lengthy and confusing. Today's tatting notation makes it easier to read, write and diagram patterns. Let's examine the manner in which tatting patterns are written and how to interpret the directions.

Which of these instructions is correct?

1. Make a ring of 12 double stitches evenly divided by three picots.
2. Make a ring of 3 double stitches, picot, 3 double stitches, picot, 3 double stitches, picot, 3 double stitches.
3. Make ring: [3 double stitches, picot (3x)], 3 double stitches.
4. Make ring 3 DS p 3 DS p 3 DS p 3 DS.
5. R 3 - 3 - 3 - 3.

6. A Diagram



All of the above instructions are correct and all ask you to tat the same ring.

Frustrating, isn't it? Unfortunately, over the decades tatting has not been standardized with one set of abbreviations, nor one style of writing instructions. As time passes, however, more and more of the patterns are relying on a diagram with numbers or on the simplified style of directions shown in example 5 above (also known as tatters' shorthand formula).

Here are some commonly accepted abbreviations:

R = Ring

CH = Chain

P, or p, or - = picot

J, or + = to join

+ with a v below it = shuttle join

RW = reverse work; meaning to turn the work over from top to bottom in the vertical plane

TW = turn work; meaning to turn the work from right to left in the horizontal plane as if turning the pages of a book

DS = double stitch

HS = half stitch

1HS = first half stitch

2HS = second half stitch

Numbers before DS, i.e., 3 DS = indicates the number of repetitions to be worked

CTM = continuous thread method; meaning to wind two shuttles without a knot between them; i.e. wind first shuttle then roll enough thread off the ball to wind second shuttle from opposite direction

SH1 = shuttle one; **SH2** = shuttle two etc.

ss = switch shuttles

Split ring = 5 / 5 with the "/" mark indicating the two parts of a split ring, i.e., tat 5DS
switch shuttles wrap 5 ds

set stitch = 4 . 4 with the "." indicating the number of repetitions of each half stitch

Every tatter who creates original designs will develop their own abbreviations to use peculiar to their work as well. For a partial list of tatting terms in French, German, Italian and Spanish, see Rebecca Jones' "The Complete Book of Tatting".