

# CHOSEN FOR REDESIGN DIY

WRECKED CABLE KNIT - UNPICKING, ASSEMBLING, CABLE KNIT

**A!**

Aalto University  
School of Arts, Design  
and Architecture

 t-rex





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Photo: Aino Ahola



Hi!

I am Saimi Parikka, a textile designer graduating from Aalto University. During my studies, I specialised in knitwear. In the summer of 2024, we did a project in collaboration with T-REX and Emmy.fi, where we came up with ideas and made new products out of the unsold clothes from Emmy's second-hand store. In the summer project, I was working specifically with cotton knitwear, unpicking and reworking these. In these tutorials, I'll show you some ideas I've come up with over the summer to revamp old knitwear.

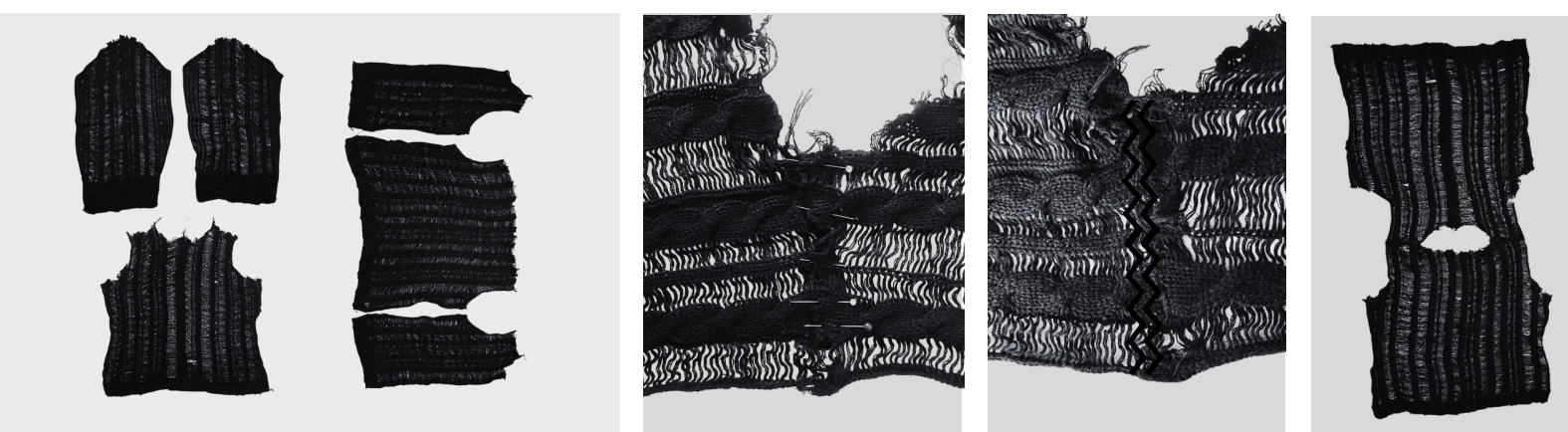
The majority of secondhand clothes that are not sold are in small sizes. When knitwear is modified by unpicking, it widens as the stitches are dropped and at the same time increases in length as the remaining stitches are loosened. This way, a knitwear in size XS can be modified into a knitwear in size M-L. The unpicked surface becomes slightly transparent, lacy and in my opinion interestingly untidy.

These tutorials are particularly suitable for people who are already knitting enthusiasts, as they have a basic understanding of how the stitches and the structure of knitwear work. Unpicking, like knitting, is a repetitive movement that can even feel meditative. The brain likes repetitive and predictable movement, which is a good counterbalance to mental work, screens and hectic everyday life. Unlike in knitting in general, I think the more irregular and sprawling the surface becomes, the better.

For reworking, it is worth choosing good quality knitwear. For these tutorials I have used 100% cotton knitwear. Smooth-stranded knitwear, such as mercerised cotton or viscose, is easier to unpick than rough, industrially tightly strung cotton knitwear. Thicker yarns are faster to unpick than thinner ones. Fingernails are helpful when unpicking, they can "pluck" the structure open conveniently. When unpicking a garment, you learn to visualise patterns and structures at the same time, when you see what kind of pieces the garment is made of. Unpicking knitwear can feel a little scary - will the whole garment unravel uncontrollably when you cut a hole in it? However, most industrial knitwear is so sturdily made that it does not easily unravel in undesirable spots.

Plenty of great raw materials can be found second-hand. I hope these tutorials will inspire you to save old knitwear and enjoy making things by hand.





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## Wrecked Cable Knit

**Technique:** Unpicking, assembling and cable knit detailing

This tutorial will show you how to disassemble a knit into parts, work the surface using the unpicking technique and add cable knits for detailing.

When the garment is disassembled into pieces and the surface is shaped by unpicking, it increases in width and length in every direction. This is convenient because a large proportion of good quality unsold second-hand knits are small in size.

For the tutorial, you need to know

- how to sew straight stitches using a sewing machine and
- know what a stitch is in a knitted garment.

**Supplies:** Knitwear to be worked, same-coloured sewing thread, pins, sewing machine, iron, scissors, same-coloured cotton knitting yarn, knitting needles





## WORK ORDER

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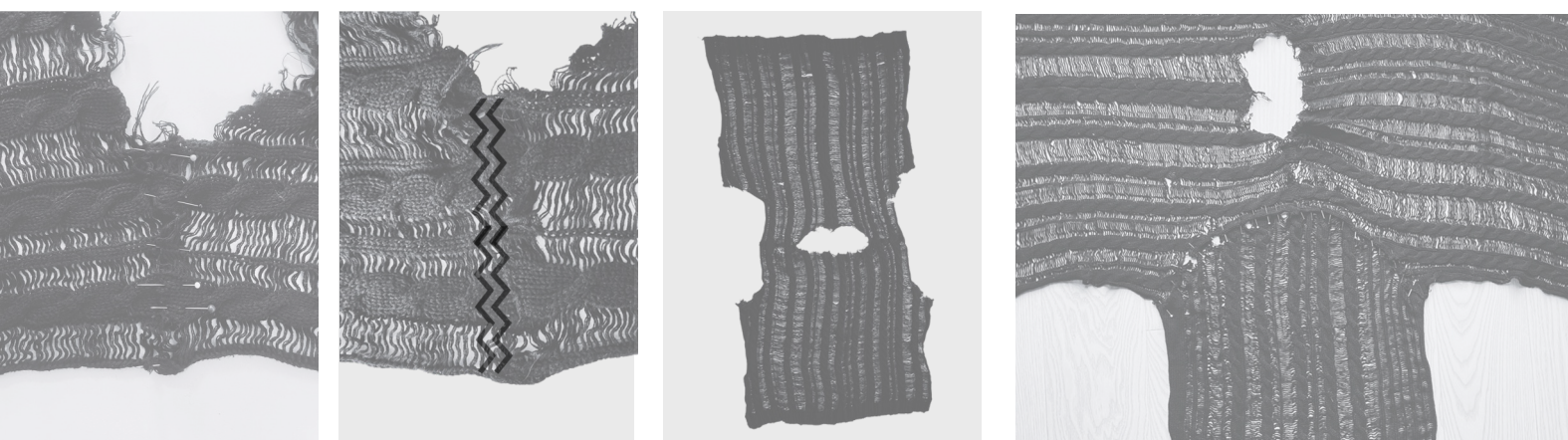
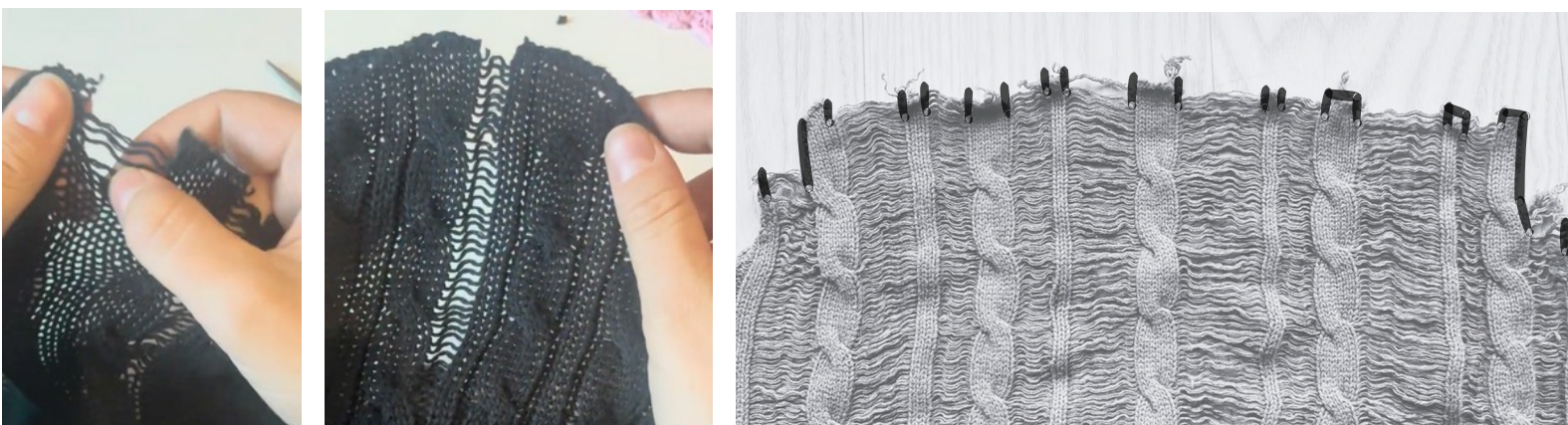
**Starting point:** Black S-size knitted jacket, 100% cotton. Loose knit, easy to unpick.

#### 1. Ripping the seams

Separate the knit into pieces from the seams. Often knitwear is sewn together with a chain stitch, which unravels by pulling when you find the right spot. Sometimes the knit is sewn together with an overlock, so the knit strand breaks at the seams. You can also use knits like this, but you have to cut the seams open with scissors and first sew over the cut edges twice with a zigzag stitch.

It's not an issue if you accidentally cut the surface of the knit when undoing the seams. This can be finished off by running a zigzag stitch over the cut part. With the unpicking technique, the surface will be uneven anyway, so holes and "blemishes" can be fun details.





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### 2. Unpicking the surface

Unpicking always starts at the top of the piece.

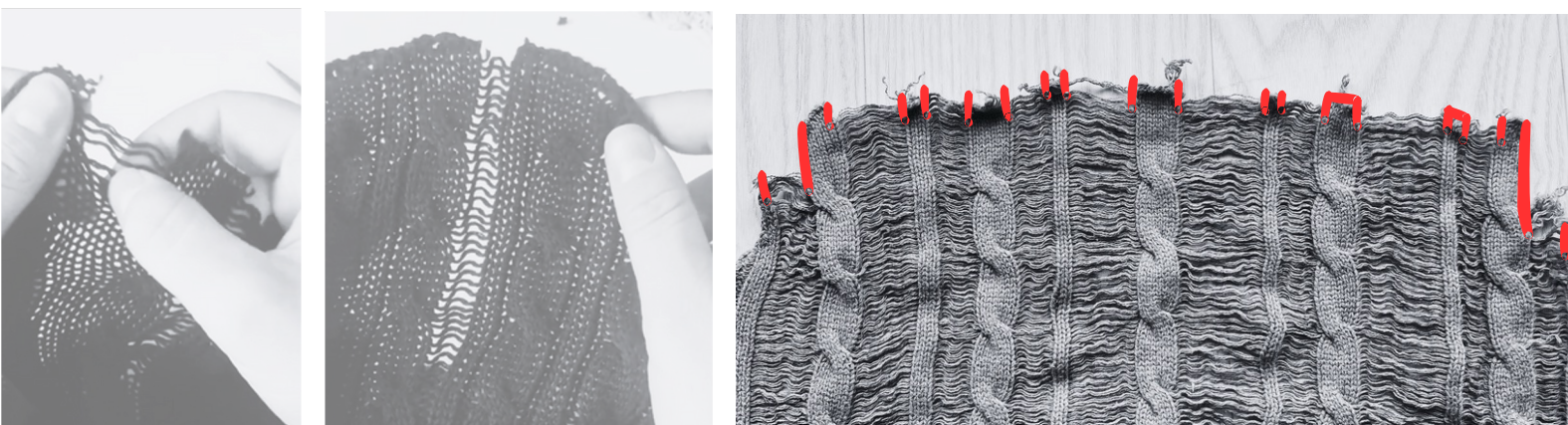
Cut open the desired number of stitches (1-4 stitches) from the top edge of the piece. Start unpicking, being careful not to unpick the stitches horizontally. Cut yarn easily unravels horizontally and must not be allowed to escape. We want to drop stitches downwards. The stitches drop easily when the knit is stretched horizontally. You can also help the stitches to open by "plucking" them with your fingernails. Drop the stitches up to the hem.

In this knit, I have chosen to save the cables and unpick between them. It is a good idea not to drop more than 5 adjacent stitches at a time, so that the yarn floats do not become too long and the garment does not become impractical. It is good to leave at least 2 intact stitches between the dropped stitches.

The stitches can be unpicked in any rhythm. I think the surface becomes more interesting the more irregular the rhythm in which it is unpicked. In the picture, you can see how the knit widens as unpicking progresses.

If the material is slippery and the stitches try to escape, it is a good idea to use a sewing machine to finish the broken strands as you unpick them, following the instructions on the next page. Otherwise, you can disassemble all the pieces before moving to finishing.





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### 3. Finishing

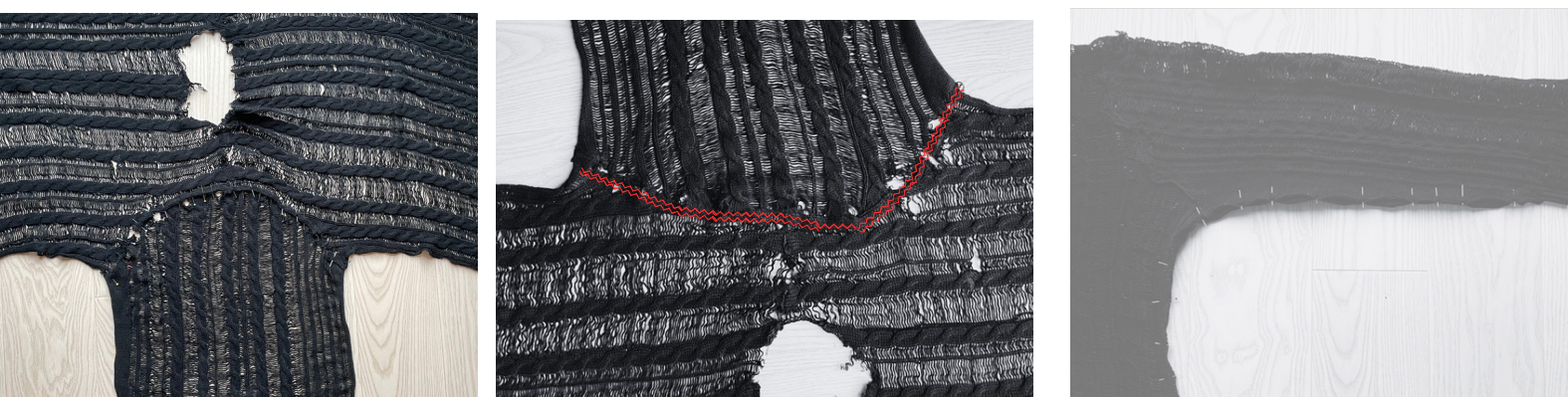
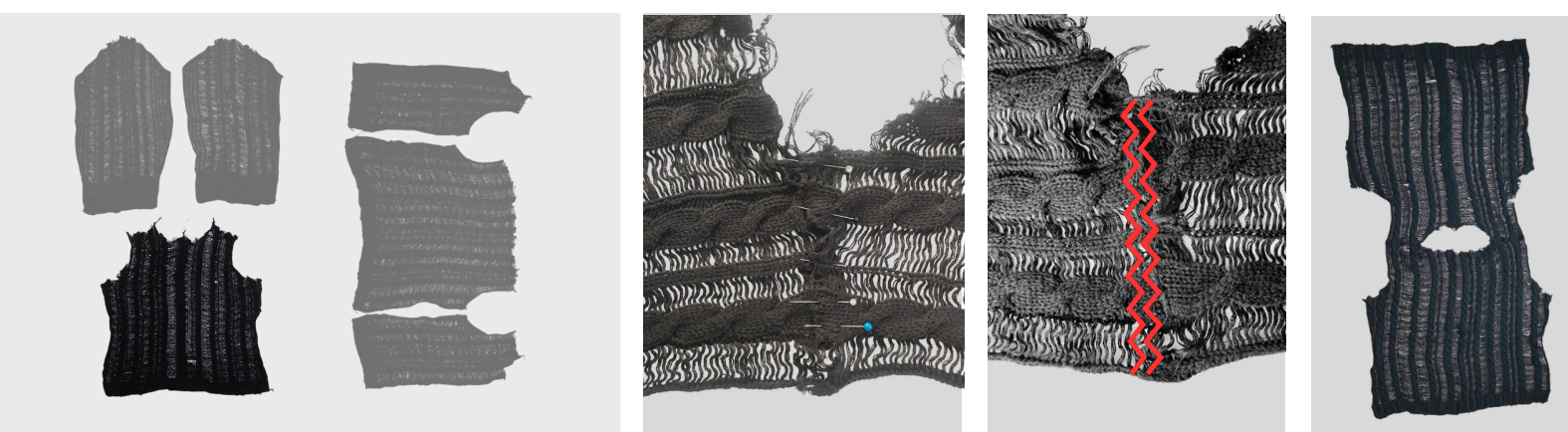
Each cut strand and open stitch should be finished by running the sewing machine back and forth over it with a straight stitch. The red lines drawn in the picture indicate where to sew. In the vertical direction, the stitching finishes the cut strands and in the horizontal direction it finishes the open loops.

When you choose a sewing thread of as similar a colour as possible, the stitch will sink into the knit almost imperceptibly.

Often the lower edge does not need to be finished separately with a sewing machine. In some knitwear structures, however, new stitches may begin to unravel from the bottom. Run the sewing machine straight stitch back and forth a couple of times.

Finally, cut off the strand ends.





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### 4. Assembling: Sewing shoulder and sleeve seams

The next step is to assemble the knitted pieces back into a garment. I started by sewing the front pieces together, making it a shirt instead of a jacket.

Next, sew the shoulder seams. Place the pieces overlapping each other by about 1 cm, instead of laying them against each other as you usually do when sewing clothes. Fasten the pieces in place with pins and stitch the seams with a narrow zigzag stitch. The red zigzag line in the picture shows the sewing point. Cut off the leftover thread ends and finish the seams by steaming them with the iron. Repeat this for both shoulder seams.

Fasten the sleeves in the same way: place the pieces with a 1 cm overlap and fasten them with pins. Sew the sleeves in place as guided by the red zigzag line. Once both sleeves are sewn, cut the leftover thread ends and finish the seams by steaming.





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#### 5. Assembling: Side seams and neckline

Place the side seams against each other with the wrong side facing up. Sew the seams with a straight stitch, leaving a seam allowance of about 0.5 cm. Once the seams are sewn, finish them by steaming them with the iron.

Finish the fringy ends of the neckline by zigzagging over the edge a few times. The stitch has the effect of "melting" the threads neatly into itself. Cut off the rest of the fringy strands carefully.

The shirt is now assembled and ready for use as it is. If you wish, you can add some cable detailing to give it more expression.





## personalisation CHOSEN FOR REDESIGN DIY



### How can you vary the appearance of your product?

You can add cable knits to your shirt to bring shape and vitality. Knit the cables from a yarn as similar as possible to that of the original knitwear. An appropriate quantity is 3-4 pieces, each about a meter long. The cable knits shown in the picture are made with double cotton yarn.

The cables are made up of a simple structure: there is always one angled stitch at the edges, and four plain stitches in the middle, which when swapped, form a cable. When the cables are ready, insert them into the holes you have cut out, folding them slightly, and sew them on by hand. This finishes the knit and gives it a shape.

### Share the picture on social media!

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