

There are many ways to block or “dress” a lace shawl to bring it to its full glory. Different lace-knitting cultures have worked out their own methods, some of which seem much more complicated than others! The end goal is the same, however, which is to open up the knitting to a beautiful, airy confection, and show the true beauty of the lace. This pdf describes how I like to block a shawl using only pins (blocking with wires is described in a different pdf). I’m using my Paisley Swirl as an example.

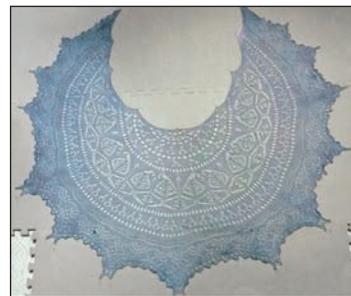
1. Immerse the shawl in tepid water until it is thoroughly wet. You can use a mild soap suitable for delicates or woolens if the shawl needs cleaning or freshening up. Drain the water and supporting the shawl, squeeze out the excess moisture, being careful not to wring the fabric. If you wish, roll the shawl in a towel to further absorb moisture. I usually skip this step as I find the shawl dries out quite quickly anyway. If the shawl begins to dry out as you are pinning it, spritz it with water to keep it moist.
2. Blocking surface: Choose a clean, flat surface to block your shawl. This could be a carpet or rug in an area that can be closed off from children and pets (note that if you are blocking a dark-coloured shawl, colour could transfer, so covering the blocking area with an old sheet is advisable). Some people use their bed (a good reason to roll the shawl in a towel first to absorb extra moisture). I like to use foam jig-saw floor mats. The ones I have are about two feet square and can be interlocked into any number of configurations to fit the particular shawl I’m blocking.
3. Blocking pins: I use stainless steel, glass-headed dressmaker’s pins. I find T-pins too large when I’m pinning a complex design that requires a lot of pins. The glass-headed pins are easier on your fingers when pinning, and also easier to later spot and pull out. Don’t skimp on pins—it is always better to overpin rather than underpin to achieve the nicest edges and shape.



Here is the wet shawl on the jig-saw blocking mats.



Open out the shawl, gently shaping it to the general dimensions of the finished piece.



Pull out and pin a selection of edging points to start refining the shape, working evenly around the shawl including the inside curved edge.



Working around the shawl, pull out and pin more edging points between the previously pinned points. You may have to repin certain areas as the fabric will relax, allowing you to pin the shawl tighter and larger. Step back to check your work and also

measure the “wings” to make sure they are even.



And here is the shawl completely pinned and drying. I pinned the inside curved edge every inch or so to avoid a “scalloped” appearance. Every point on the shawl is tightly pinned. Wait a few hours or overnight, then carefully unpin. The

lace will be “set” and should remain beautiful until the shawl is washed, when it will need to be reblocked.