

Project One: Getting Started Knitting

Lesson 1: Choosing your knitting needles.

Many people say that a crafter is only as good as his tools. I don't know if that's true but I do know that choosing the right tool for the job makes the job a lot easier. When choosing your knitting needles there are a lot of things to take into consideration. We are going to talk about circulars, straights and dpns. We will also talk about the differences between metal, wood, and plastic. We'll talk about needle tips as well. And last but not least, we will talk about how to choose the right needles for the job.

Circular, Straight or DPNs

Let's first talk about needle shapes. Circulars, straights and dpns. Circular needles consist of 2 shorter needles connected by a cable. They are used for knitting in the round and for knitting back and forth as if they were straights. Circular needles come in a wide price range. The difference will be the cable in between them. The cheaper the price, the more likely you are to fight with a stiff cable that wants to curl up around your work while you knit. Straight needles are just as they sound, 2 straight sticks for knitting back and forth. Dpn stands for double pointed needles. They are usually shorter than straights. They have points on both ends and are used for knitting in the round or knitting that requires you to work from both ends without turning, such as icord.

Why can't I pick up my yarn without splitting it?

All of these needles will have one of two types of tips. They will either be blunt which is good for most knits that are dk weight or higher. Or they will be sharp which is intended for lace or knitting with finer weight yarns such as fingering or sock weight.

Will that be plastic, metal, or wood?

Not all needles are created equal. Nor do they cost equally. Plastic needles are usually the cheapest unless you find some incredible resource online. They usually have blunt points and they work best with yarns that are smooth and slippery. They don't work well with eyelash yarns or fine yarns. Metal needles work best with yarns that want to grip your knitting sticks. An example will be eyelash yarns, boucles, and fine yarns. Metal needles come with both blunt and sharp tip. Wood needles also come in a wide range of price brackets. They include woods such as bamboo, rosewood, ebony, and blondwood. They come with blunt and sharp tips. Wood has some benefits that the others do not. Many people with arthritis and other joint ailments can work easier and with less pain with wood needles. If your dog or cat happens to chew up the tip, you can repair it. It will be a little shorter than the other one but will still work. Wood needles work best with slippery yarns. They grip the yarn just enough to keep them from easily sliding off.

So many needles, so little time!

When choosing which needle to buy for your project you will first take into consideration the size mentioned on the pattern. Next you will take into consideration the recommended needle size found on the ball band. This is not written in stone. It is a suggestion only. But starting from there, you will consider the type of fabric you want to make. Looser, drapier fabrics will need a larger needle and denser thicker fabric will need a smaller needle. You will also take into consideration when choosing needle size whether you knit tight or loose. If you tend to knit tighter, you will use a larger needle and if you knit looser and need a denser fabric, you will choose a smaller needle.

You will decide the needle type and the tip style based on the project at hand. Are you knitting in the round or do you simply want to be able to wad your knitting up and stick it in your purse? Are you knitting lace scarf or are you knitting a hat? You will probably choose cables or dpns if you are knitting socks or mittens.

The last thing when choosing your needles, what kind of yarn are you using? Do you have a medical problem that requires a softer touch? This will help you to decide whether to buy plastic, metal or wood needles.

Lesson 2: So much yarn, so little time!

Money can't buy happiness but it can buy yarn and that's almost the same thing. This is such a broad topic that I could not possibly cover it all here so I'm just going to go over a few basics such as weight, fiber and care.

I found this chart on vogueknitting.com that covers not only the weights we are familiar with but also the new numbering chart.

Yarn Weight Symbol & Category Names	 0 Lace	 1 Super Fine	 2 Fine	 3 Light	 4 Medium	 5 Bulky	 6 Super Bulky
Type of Yarns in Category	Fingering 10 count crochet thread	Sock, Fingering, Baby	Sport, Baby	DK, Light Worsted	Worsted, Afghan, Aran	Chunky, Craft, Rug	Bulky, Roving
Knit Gauge Range* in Stockinette Stitch to 4 inches	33–40** sts	27–32 sts	23–26 sts	21–24 sts	16–20 sts	12–15 sts	6–11 sts
Recommended Needle in Metric Size Range	1.5–2.25 mm	2.25–3.25 mm	3.25–3.75 mm	3.75–4.5 mm	4.5–5.5 mm	5.5–8 mm	8 mm and larger
Recommended Needle U.S. Size Range	000 to 1	1 to 3	3 to 5	5 to 7	7 to 9	9 to 11	11 and larger
Crochet Gauge* Ranges in Single Crochet to 4 inch	32–42 double crochets**	21–32 sts	16–20 sts	12–17 sts	11–14 sts	8–11 sts	5–9 sts
Recommended Hook in Metric Size Range	Steel*** 1.6–1.4mm Regular hook 2.25 mm	2.25–3.5 mm	3.5–4.5 mm	4.5–5.5 mm	5.5–6.5 mm	6.5–9 mm	9 mm and larger
Recommended Hook U.S. Size Range	Steel*** 6, 7, 8 Regular hook B–1	B–1 to E–4	E–4 to 7	7 to I–9	I–9 to K–10½	K–10½ to M–13	M–13 and larger

* GUIDELINES ONLY: The above reflect the most commonly used gauges and needle or hook sizes for specific yarn categories.

** Lace weight yarns are usually knitted or crocheted on larger needles and hooks to create lacy, openwork patterns. Accordingly, a gauge range is difficult to determine. Always follow the gauge stated in your pattern.

*** Steel crochet hooks are sized differently from regular hooks—the higher the number, the smaller the hook, which is the reverse of regular hook sizing.

This Standards & Guidelines booklet and downloadable symbol artwork are available at: YarnStandards.com



This chart will come in handy time and time again until you become familiar with all of the weights available. I still refer back to it as well. It helps me to know where I can substitute yarns.

Baa Baa Black Sheep, Have You Any Wool?

When you're shopping for yarn, you'll find that you have a huge variety of fibers to choose from. There are man made fibers such as acrylic and polyvicose and then the natural fibers like wool, cotton, silk, alpaca, etc. The list goes on and on. One of the first differences you'll find is the price of these different fibers. Man made fibers tend to be less expensive than natural fibers. There are some key benefits to using natural fibers over man made fibers. They vary from one type of fiber to the other. Most animal fibers have "memory". This means that you can block them and they will hold their shape until they've been wetted again. Animal fibers are great for cold weather areas because not only do they repel moisture but they trap body heat close to the body for extra warmth. Cottons, linens and silks, have no stretch to them at all. What ever shape you knit them into, that is what you get. The plant fibers and silk are cooler to wear and work well for hot climates.

This is the way we wash our clothes, wash our clothes, wash our clothes...

Man made fibers also tend to be easier to care for than natural fibers. It is important before you start your project that you are aware of the care instructions for your fiber and whether the person receiving your project will be able to care properly for it. Always check your ball band for care instructions. If you happen to be lucky enough to be knitting a handspun yarn, know what fiber it is and what you have to do to take care of it.

Which Way Did He Go?

Choosing a yarn is only hard if you have an unlimited budget. The pattern you are working with will usually recommend a type of yarn and tell you which yarn the demo was made from. When you are first learning to knit, it is important that you choose a yarn that is smooth and preferably worsted or aran weight. It is critical to learn what your stitches are supposed to look like so you can recognize if you've made a mistake. Fluffy yarns like eyelash, mohair, Lion Brand homespun and boucles will hide the structure of the stitch and you will not know when you've made a mistake until it's too late. Also, those yarns are hard to frog (rip it! rip it!)

Next lesson: Supplies needed

Lesson 3: What do I need to start knitting?

Obviously the first thing you need in your knitting tool kit are needles and yarn. Our first project is going to be fairly simple. We are going to learn to cast on, knit and cast off. For our first project you will need size 9 (5.5mm) knitting needles. You can purchase short circulars or straights. For this project I recommend metal but wood or plastic will also work well.

You will also need one ball of Sugar and Cream cotton yarn. Have you guessed it? We're going to make a dish cloth.

What else?

There are some things you need in your knitting tool box that should be there all the time. Some are specialty items and some are not. You won't use everything, every time.

- **Scissors...** you will always need scissors
- **Tape measure...** another one of those things you always need
- **Stitch markers...** don't always need them but when you do, they make your life incredibly easier. Don't get plastic if you can help it, they break easy. Two kinds, circular for sliding across the needles and clip on used for working with dpns or crochet. These clip onto the yarn itself.
- **small ruler with needle gauge holes...** there's a fancy name for this, I don't know what it is.
- **Row counter...** this is especially needed when making complicated patterns
- **Yarn needle...** always needed for finishing up.
- **Post it notes...** I stick these to the pattern and make notes so I know where I'm at or what I need to pay attention to.

For our first project, you'll need needles, yarn, scissors, yarn needle, and tape measure. We'll start on Monday after every one has had time to collect supplies.

Lesson 4: Casting On

An old saying goes, there is always more than one way to skin a cat! I'm firmly against skinning cats and they don't like it much either however, the saying is true in many things in life and casting on is one of them. I don't profess to know all the ways of casting on but I know a few things about it.

When a project is planned, the cast on is very important. Do you want a decorative edge? Do you want a stretchy or firm edge? Do you want a temporary edge where you can come along later and pick up those stitches and knit into a different direction? It's easy to see that the type of cast on that you use is very important. In this lesson I'm going to cover a few of these different cast on methods and let you know which one to practice for your first project tomorrow.

When you first read your pattern. It will often say "CO" followed by a number. "CO" means cast on. This is your first knitting abbreviation. You don't have to worry about memorizing every knitting abbreviation. Anything outside the standard ones will include detailed instructions on how to create that stitch.

Long tailed cat!

The most commonly used cast on is the long tailed cast on. Back to skinning the cat, there is more than one way to do this. The long tailed cast on gives a firm edge and is used for edges that do not need to be stretched when you put them on or for edges of blankets, dishcloths, towels, pillows, etc. This is the cast on that you will want to

practice for tomorrow's project. The next video is the way that I first learned to do the long tailed cast on.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HW4MK_s4Go

This method is called the thumb cast on.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Teo8JETmi4>

Practice whichever method you find that you are most comfortable with.

Loosey Goosey

Sometimes you need a cast on that is going to be stretchy. This happens when you're making socks from the top down, the wrist edges of sleeves, cowls, and hats from the bottom up. Naturally there is more than one method. We won't be using these methods yet so I'm going to briefly touch on them. The cable cast on is the easiest of the two we're going to talk about. It is also known as the knitted cast on. It provides a nice stretchy cast on that won't be tight when you put it on. Here is a video on how to do the cable cast on. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7aWoPqfo-XY>

Another method for a stretchy edge is the Norwegian Long Tailed Cast on. It is very similar to the regular long tailed cast on but has an extra twist. I have also provided a link to that video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvcoG8NniAA>

Neither of these methods are necessary immediately but it won't take us long to get to the point where you will need to know them.

What Else?

Other types of cast on methods are provisional and decorative. The provisional cast on provides a temporary base for your knitting which will later be removed. At that time you will pick up live stitches at the bottom of your work and knit in the opposite direction or do a 3 needle bind off.

Last but not least is the decorative cast on. For some items, you want your cast on to be as pretty as the rest of it. It can be decorated with picots or other fancy type edges. We will cover both of these methods when and if the need arises. Generally your pattern will have specific instructions for them.

Don't forget, practice your long tailed cast on or thumb method cast on for the dishcloth.

Lesson 5: Kn-kn-kn-knit Stitch

The humble knit stitch. Not so humble really when the whole craft is named after this one stitch. You can make entire garments using only the knit stitch. You can make entire other things too which is what we're starting today.

The basic knit stitch looks like a v when you are looking at the front of it. This is important to recognize.



Once you recognize the stitch, it will be easy for you to count rows. To count rows, simply count up the line of completed v's. Do not count the stitches on the needle as a row because it hasn't been knitted yet.

The main stitch pattern that you need to know first is called garter stitch. It is all knitting with no rows of purls in between. Actually no purls at all! Garter stitch looks like this.



See where I highlighted in pink? Each ridge of hill and valley like this represents 2 rows. You will not have a vee except at the end where you aren't following with another knit row.

A quick blurb about knitting styles. Continental knitting has the knitter holding the yarn in the left hand similar to crochet. For those who are already crocheters, this may be the easiest way to learn. English knitting which is common in the US has the knitter holding the working yarn in the right hand and "throwing" it over the needle. Most people find that continental is faster and easier on the hands. Others prefer English because it is conducive to right handed people. It doesn't really matter. Both ways are correct and both ways get the job done with the same result at the end. I have included video for both ways. You get to choose which way you prefer. If you're wondering what I do. I do them both. If I get tired of one way, I switch to the other. My hands are fickle so I like to give them equal time so they hurt equally at the end of the day. ;)

Continental - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9XImtoQmZ8

English - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4kSztvq-vI>

Lesson 6: Purl a Stockinette

So far you have been working in garter stitch. Now it's time to learn the stockinette stitch. That means learning how to purl. If you're not knitting in a circle, you have to learn how to knit backwards, which is a purl stitch.



This is what stockinette stitch looks like. On the back, are the bumps of the purls. A stockinette pattern is made by knitting one row and then purling the next.

The Perils of Purline

The purl is what makes ribs and cables possible. It is also key in so many other stitches. There are so many ways to use the purl stitch. You will find that once you learn this stitch, the rest of it comes easy.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkb0YyrzPWA>

The Project: Easiest Dishcloth Ever!

For this dishcloth, you will cast on 45 stitches using the long-tailed method of your preference (long tailed cast on or thumb cast on). It will require that you pull out approximately 30 inches of yarn before you make your slip knot.

You will then proceed to knit every row until you have knitted a square. This is known as garter stitch. The easy way to measure if you have a square is to take a corner of the dishcloth and fold it up until it lies under the knitting needle smoothly. If all of your sides line up evenly, you have knitted a square. Alternatively, you can use a measuring tape and measure both sides.

When you have your square knitted, you will bind off. I will show you this method in a consequent lesson. The pattern looks like this.

Size 9 (5.5mm) straight or circular needles
1 ball Sugar and Cream cotton yarn

CO 45

Row 1: k all stitches.

Repeat row 1 until you have a square.

BO. (Bind off)

Good luck and I am here for questions!

P.S. The end loop is always a bit baggy. When you turn your work, snug it up a little, knit the stitch and snug it up again. Not too tight! This will easily take care of that baggy stitch. A lot of people say slip the first stitch and yes that works but it creates a different edge than we want today. So please don't slip the first stitch even if others tell you to.