

Learn to Knit

Knitting 101: Long Tail Cast-On, the Knit Stitch, Binding Off

Knitting 201: M1 Increase, Ssk and K2tog Decreases, the Purl Stitch

Itty Bitty Knitty Kitty: A Pattern for the Very Beginner

Casting On: The Long-Tail Cast On

The Long-Tail is one of the most common cast-ons and works for most projects. It can be a bit awkward at first, but once you get the rhythm of it, you'll be casting on in a flash.

1. Estimate the "Long Tail" length

As the name indicates, you'll need a long "tail" of yarn to work this cast-on. To estimate of the length of the "tail," make the tail three times the width of your finished cast-on, plus 10 percent. I.e. for a 10" wide project, make your tail approximately 33" long ($10" \times 3 = 30" \times 1.1 = 33"$). If you don't know the width of your cast-on edge, estimate 1-2" for each cast-on stitch (the bigger the needles, the longer the tail). Over time you'll get better at eyeballing the tail length. Better to have too long of a tail, than too short a one.

2. Form a Slip Knot



Fig. 2a

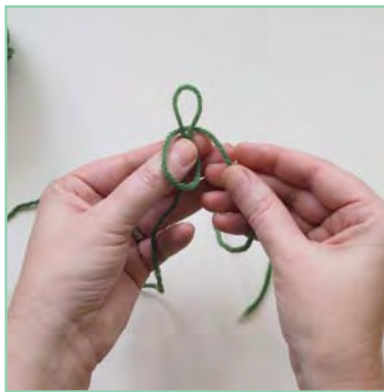


Fig. 2b



Fig. 2c

(a) Fold the yarn in half, forming the top of a loop, so the "tail" that is not attached to the ball/skein of yarn is the length you estimated in step one. (b) Wrap the tail around the folded yarn, and then (c) pull the tail through the loop you just made, forming a slip knot. (d) Pull on the tail, until the loop closes to a size slightly larger than your needle.

3. Insert your Needle into the Slip Knot

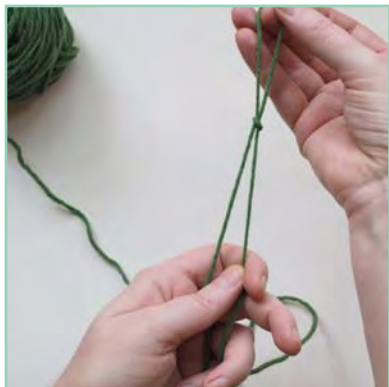


Fig. 2d

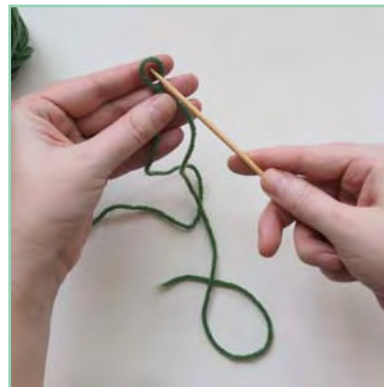


Fig. 3a

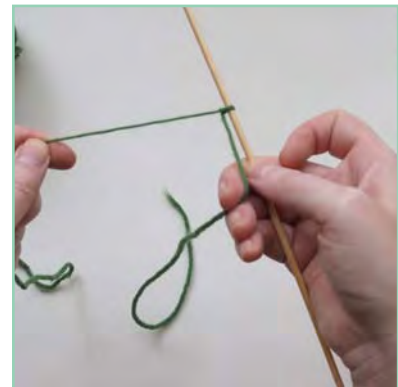


Fig. 3b

(a) Insert the tip of your needle into the slip knot and (b) pull until the loop is snug, but not tight.

4. Tension Yarn in Your Left Hand



Fig. 4a

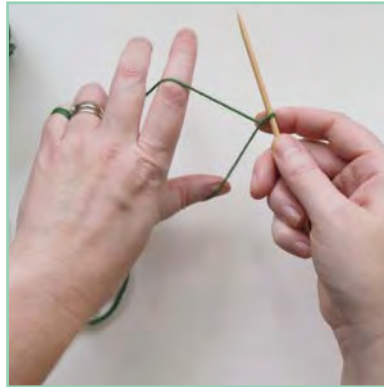


Fig. 4b

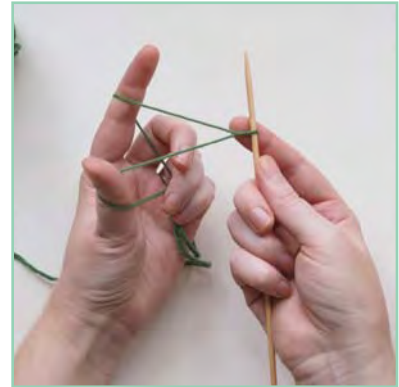


Fig. 4c

(a) With the needle above your left hand, pinch the tail and the yarn attached to the ball (the “working yarn”) with the pinkie/ring/middle fingers of your left hand so they are lying parallel to one another, with the tail closest to your thumb. (b) Slide your thumb and index finger in between the two strands (above your middle finger and below the needle), forming a diamond shape. The working yarn should be behind your index finger and the tail should be behind your thumb. (c) Pull the needle down toward your palm, forming a loop around your thumb.

5. Cast on a Stitch

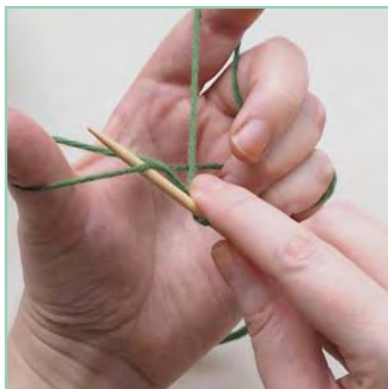


Fig. 5a

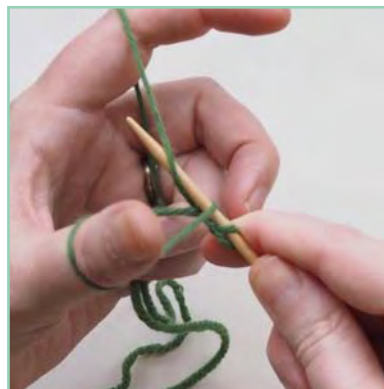


Fig. 5b

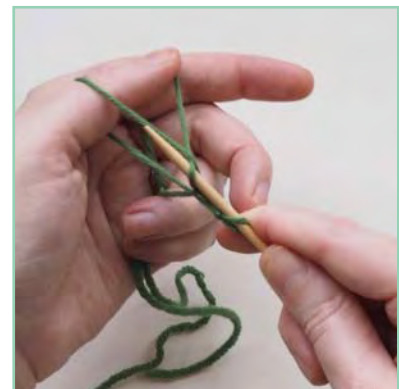


Fig. 5c

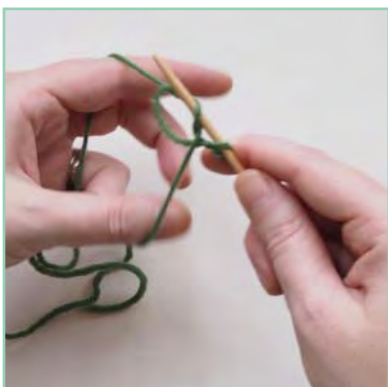


Fig. 5d

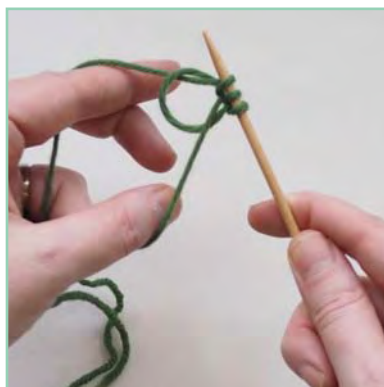


Fig. 5e



Fig. 5f

5. Cast on a Stitch (continued)

Keeping your thumb and pointer finger in a firm “L” shape, (a) insert the tip of the needle into the bottom of the loop on your thumb, going from palm to fingers. (b) Coming from fingers to palm, scoop up the strand on your index finger and (c) pull it through the loop on your thumb. (d) Drop the thumb loop over the edge of the needle and (e) pull to secure – again, going for snug, not tight. You have now cast on one new stitch.

Repeat Step 5 until you have the desired number of stitches cast on. When counting stitches, include the initial loop you made with the slip knot. There are 10 stitches in Fig. 5f

The Knit Stitch: Continental Style

The stitch from which knitting gets its name, the knit stitch (combined with the “purl” stitch) is the basis of all knitting. For now, we will focus on the knit stitch only. Something that is worked with all rows knitted (where the back and front look the same) is called Garter Stitch.

There are two main styles of knitting Continental Style / “Picking” or English Style / “Throwing.” Both work equally well. I’ll be showing Continental Style because that’s how I knit (I also think knitting Continental makes it easier to keep an even gauge, and is more efficient and ergonomic, but that’s just my opinion).

1. Tension the Yarn

Make sure you have about 1 yard of yarn pulled out between the cast-on needle and the ball. (a) At about a hand’s width away from the needle, drape the end of the working yarn (the strand closest to the ball) over the pinky finger of your left hand with your palm up. (b) Flip your palm down so the yarn forms a loop around your pinkie and (c) scoop up the strand near the needle with your index finger so it rests on the back on the finger.

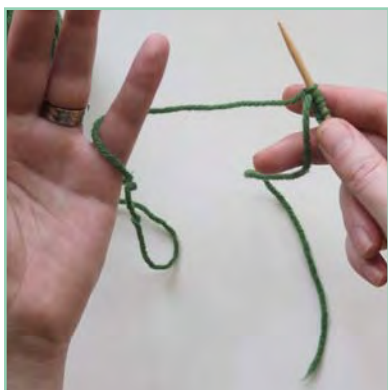


Fig. 1a

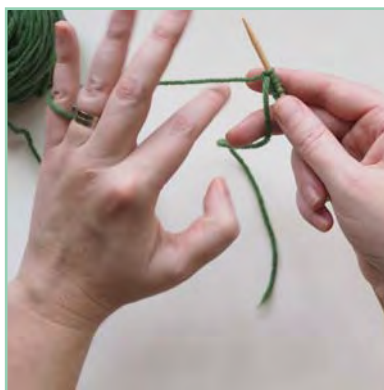


Fig. 1b

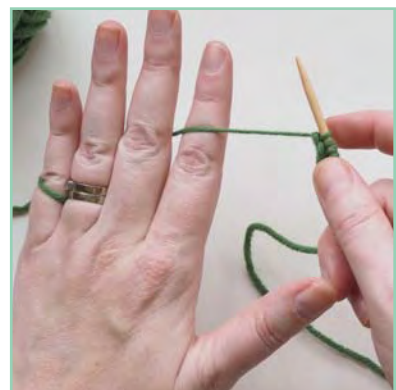


Fig. 1c



Fig. 1d

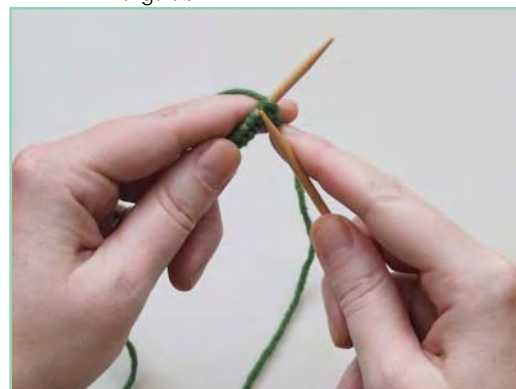


Fig. 1e

1. Tension the Yarn (continued)

(d) Pick up your cast-on needle with the thumb, middle, and ring finger of your left hand and adjust yarn around your fingers as needed so it is slightly taut as it runs from needle to index finger to pinkie. The yarn should be BEHIND the left hand needle. (e) Pick up the empty needle in your right hand.

2. Form a Knit Stitch



Fig. 2a

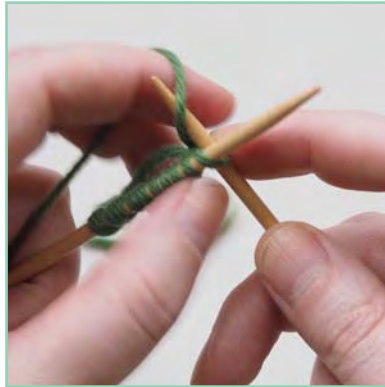


Fig. 2b



Fig. 2c



Fig. 2e

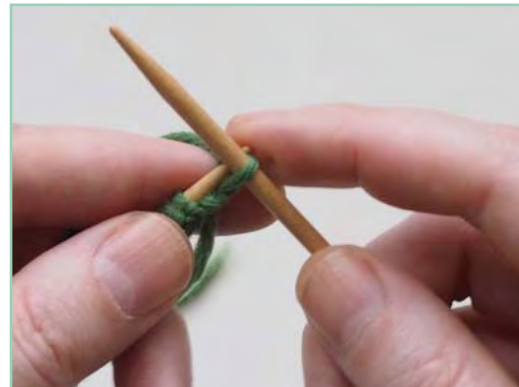


Fig. 2f

(a) Insert the tip of your right-hand (RH) needle into the front (from palm to fingertip) of the loop closest to the end of the left-hand (LH) needle. (b) Scoop of the tip of the RH needle up and over the yarn strand running over your left index finger to “pick” up the yarn and (c) pull it through that first loop. (d) You should now have a new loop on the RH needle. (e) Using your right index finger to push the LH needle down, slide the old loop off the LH needle and let it drop. You’ve just knit your first stitch!!

Repeat Step 2 until you’ve worked all the stitches on your LH needle. Move the empty needle to your right hand and the full needle to your left and keep going!



Fig. 2g



Fig. 2h

NB: To count the number of rows you have worked in Garter Stitch, look at the front of your work (the tail from the cast on will be on the RH bottom edge). Each row of “bumps” or Garter ridges (above the cast on edge) equals two rows knitted. In Figures 2g and 2h, there are 6 rows knitted.

Binding-Off

Binding-off secures the end of your knitting so it won't unravel. Just as there are many cast-ons, there are many bind-offs, some more stretchy than others. Here, I'll show you a basic bind-off that provides a firm edge.

1. Bind Off the First Stitch



Fig. 1a



Fig. 1b

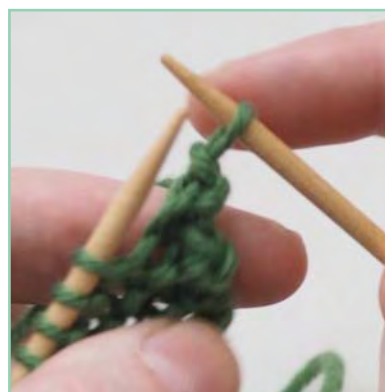


Fig. 1c

At the start of a row, (a) knit two stitches as normal. On the RH needle, (b) pull the rightmost stitch up and over the other stitch, (b) dropping it off the needle. You should now have one stitch on the RH needle.

2. Continue to Bind Off

Continue as in step 1: knit one stitch, pull the rightmost stitch on the RH needle up and over the new stitch. Repeat until there is one stitch on the RH needle and no more stitches to bind off on the left.

3. Secure the Bind Off



Fig. 3a



Fig. 3b

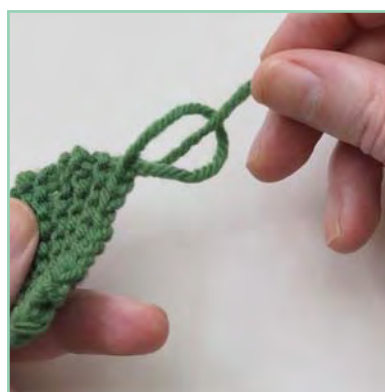


Fig. 3c

(a) Enlarge the final loop slightly and remove from the needle. Cut or break the yarn leaving at least a 6" tail (more if you intend to seam with it). (b) Pull the tail through the final stitch and (c) pull tight to secure. If not using the tail to seam, use a darning needle to hide the tail on the back side of your knitted fabric. (For a helpful tutorial on various methods for “weaving in ends” visit <https://www.purlsoho.com/create/weaving-in-your-ends/>)

Shaping Knitting: Increases and Decreases

With your knowledge of casting on, the knit stitch, and binding off you could make an endless number of square or rectangular objects from coasters and cowls, to scarves and ponchos. But one of the magic things about knitting is that you can shape your fabric as you go - meaning the resulting shapes are pretty much limitless. In Knitting 201, we'll learn how to increase, decrease, and purl!

The "Make One" (M1) Increase

The m1 increase is my favorite to use, it's easy to do, and doesn't have a strong "lean" in one direction or the other like some increases.

1. *Work to the Increase Point and Pick up the "Bar"*



Fig. 1a



Fig. 1b



Fig. 1c

Knit the appropriate number of stitches up to your increase spot. If, for example, the pattern reads k2, m1, knit two stitches. (a) Pull your RH and LH needles slightly apart, between the stitch you just worked and the first stitch on the LH needle, you should see a horizontal strand of yarn or "bar". (b) Pick up this bar and (c) place it on your LH needle, placing it so it's not twisted.

2. *Knit Through the Back of the Loop*



Fig. 2a



Fig. 2b



Fig. 2c

2. Knit Through the Back of the Loop (continued)

(a) Insert the RH needle through the BACK of the loop (from finger toward palm on the backside of the needle). To get your RH needle in position, I find it easiest to insert the RH needle from finger to palm on the front of the stitch and then slide it over the LH needle to the back. (b) Using the RH needle, pick up the working yarn and (c) form a knit stitch as usual.



Fig. 2e

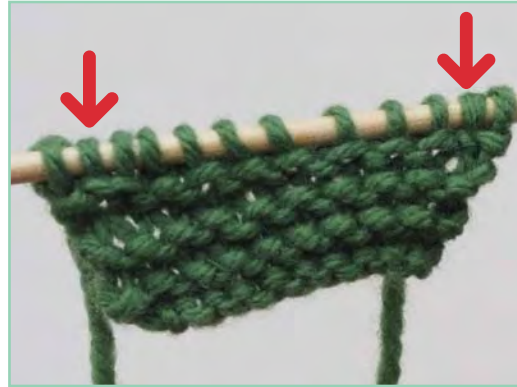


Fig. 2f

NB: This is known as knitting through the back loop, often abbreviated as ktbl.) This will twist the base of the loop you just picked up (Fig. 2e) so it doesn't form a hole. Continue knitting as normal until your next increase. After each m1 increase you should have one more stitch in total on your needles (e.g. from 10 to 11). See arrows in Figure 2f for two increased stitches.

Ssk: The Left-Leaning Decrease

With the exception of centered decreases (which decrease an even number of sts at a time), most decreases have a clear "lean" toward the left or right, so it helps to know both a right and left leaning decrease. Typically, you want the decrease to lean in toward the main body of the fabric, so a left-leaning increase will generally be found at the right-hand side of the fabric. The slip, slip, knit or ssk decrease is one of the easiest.

1. Work to the Decrease Point (if necessary)

Knit up to your decrease spot. If, for example, the pattern reads k3, ssk, then knit three stitches.

2. Slip Two Stitches

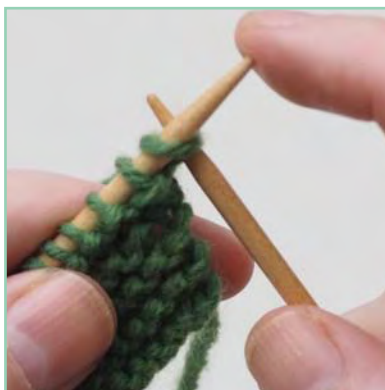


Fig. 2a



Fig. 2b



Fig. 2c

(a) Insert your RH needle into the next stitch as if to knit, but instead (b) "slip" it to RH needle without grabbing the working yarn. (c) Repeat for a second stitch so there are two slipped sts on the RH needle.

3. Knit the Slipped Stitches



Fig. 3a



Fig. 3b



Fig. 3c

(a) Insert the LH needle into the back of the two stitches you just slipped and (b) knit them together through the back loop as if one, (c) dropping both stitches off the LH needle once the new stitch is formed. You have decreased one stitch in total (e.g. from 11 to 10). See Figure 2c below for finished decreases.

K2tog: The Right Leaning Decrease

Knit two stitches together, or k2tog is the companion stitch to ssk and is even easier to do.

1. Work to the Decrease Point (if necessary)

Knit the appropriate number of stitches up to your decrease spot. If, for example, the pattern reads k3, k2tog, knit three stitches. You will need at least 2 stitches left on the LH needle. (Fig. 1a below)

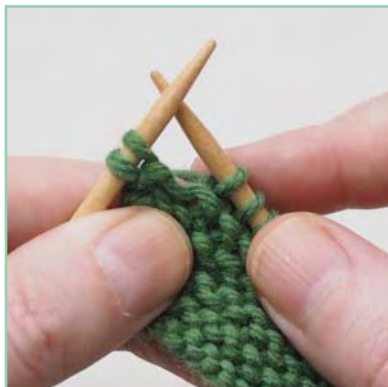


Fig. 1a

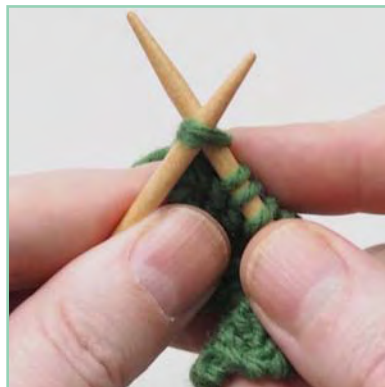


Fig. 2a



Fig. 2b

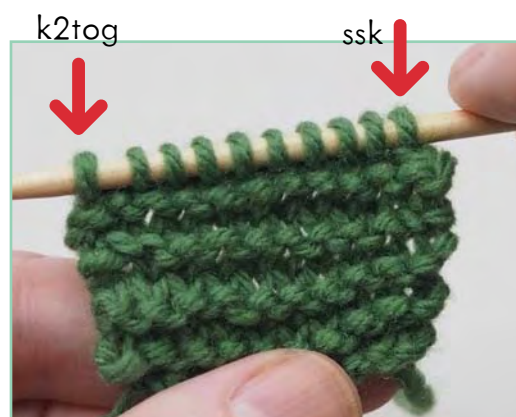


Fig. 2c

2. Knit Two Stitches Together

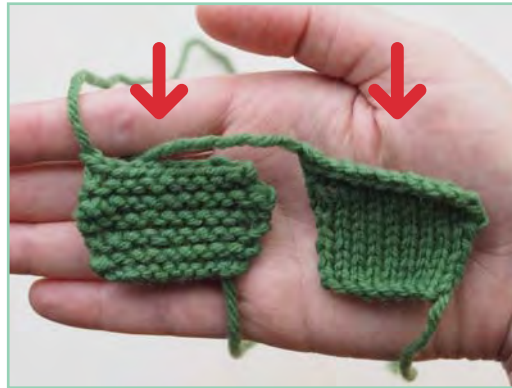
(a) Insert your RH into the next two stitches as if to knit, and (b) knit them as if one, dropping both stitches off the needle once the new stitch is formed. You have decreased one stitch in total (e.g. from 11 to 10).

See Figure 2c for decreased stitches.

The Purl Stitch: Continental Style

Look at a knit stitch. There is a clear front and back to the stitch, with the front forming a smooth V shape and the back forming a bump. The Purl stitch is simply a stitch worked so that the bump is on the front (a purl stitch looks like a little pearl). It doesn't flow as easily as a knit stitch does, so don't worry if it feels more awkward and slow – you're basically knitting backwards!

Garter Stitch Stockinette Stitch



Something that is worked with all right side (RS) rows knitted and all wrong side (WS) rows purled so that the front looks like all knit stitches is called Stockinette Stitch. Pair a knit stitch and purl stitch side-by-side (as in k1, p1) and you get ribbing.

1. Tension the Yarn

Tension the yarn as you did before, but this time, make sure the yarn is in FRONT of the needle (Fig. 1a).

2. Make a Purl Stitch



Fig. 1a



Fig. 2a



Fig. 2b



Fig. 2c



Fig. 2d

2. *Make a Purl Stitch (continued)*

(a) Insert the tip of your right-hand (RH) needle into the front (from fingertip to palm) of the loop closest to the end of the left-hand (LH) needle. (b) Pull your left index finger down toward the RH needle forming a loop and (c) pull it through that first loop on the LH needle. You should now have a new loop on the RH needle. Slide the old loop off the LH needle and let it drop. You've just purl!

NB: To count rows in Stockinette St, look for the little Vs on the knit side or the bumps on the purl side. Each V or bump in a column is equal to one row. There are 4 rows in Figure 2d.

Congratulations!

You've learnt the basics of knitting. Now put your skills to use by trying a simple pattern. I've included one on the next pages for you to try.

Next Steps

For next steps, I would recommend learning how to knit in the round, which will open up a whole world of patterns. (A good overview of the various methods for knitting in the round can be found here: <https://tutorials.knitpicks.com/knitting-in-the-round/>)

Beyond that, follow your interests! There are 100,000s of patterns available (www.Ravelry.com is an excellent resource, as is your Local Yarn Shop). Like projects with lace? Learn yarn overs and dropped stitches! Enamored with cables? Grab a cable needle and cross those stitches! Experiment with color and charts! The knitting world is your oyster!

To pick up new skills, look for classes at your local yarn shop, or there are loads of photo and videos tutorials online. I have a library of photo tutorials available at <http://www.msclaver.com/tutorials/>. Other resources for beginners that I like include Tin Can Knits (<http://tincanknits.com/support.html>), Purl Soho (<https://www.purlsoho.com/create/knit/tutorials/>), and Lion Brand Yarns (<https://www.lionbrand.com/learn/how-to-knit>).

ITTY BITTY KNITTY KITTY

Leah B. Thibault

Designed for the very beginning knitter, the Itty Bitty Knitty Kitty will teach you how to cast on, knit, increase, decrease and bind off.

Size

Approximately 12" tall.

Yarn + color(s)

Quince & Co. Owl Tweet in Otus (50% Wool, 50% Alpaca; 120 yard [110 m]/50 g) or approximately 100 yards of any Worsted weight wool yarn.

Gauge

24 sts and 40 rows = 4"/10 cm in Garter Stitch.
Adjust needles as needed to match gauge.

Needles & Notions

US 5 [3.75mm] straight needles
Embroidery Floss for face
Polyfil Stuffing
12 inches ribbon (optional)
Tapestry needle

Pattern Notes

The pattern is knit in pieces and seamed together. The kitty is worked in Garter Stitch, where every row is worked in knit stitch.

Abbreviations

CO: Cast on
dec'd: Decreased
inc'd: Increased
k: Knit
k2tog: Knit two together (1 st dec'd)
m1: Make one. Insert left hand needle from front to back under horizontal strand between stitch just worked and next stitch, knit lifted strand through the back loop (1 st inc'd).
rem: remain/remaining
rep: Repeat
St(s): Stitch(es)
Slip: Slide a st without knitting it from the left needle to right needle, without twisting it.
Ssk: Slip, Slip, knit. Slip 2 sts one at a time knitwise to the right hand needle; return sts to left hand needle in turned position and knit them together through the back loops. (1 st dec'd)



Additional Techniques

FRENCH KNOT

1. Secure thread at back of fabric.
2. Bring up needle through fabric at desired position.
3. With needle pointing away from fabric, wrap thread around shank of needle 2-3 times. (The more wraps, the bigger the finished knot).
4. Holding onto the yarn tail until it becomes too short, push the needle down through the fabric just next to the spot it came up in. Pull snugly against fabric.
Repeat steps 2-4

For additional tips, techniques, and tutorials, visit <http://www.msccleaver.com/tutorials/>

Arms

Using a long-tail cast on, CO 10 sts. Knit 32 rows. Bind off, leaving a long tail for seaming. Repeat for second arm.

Legs

Using a long-tail cast on, CO 12 sts. Knit 50 rows. Bind off, leaving a long tail for seaming. Repeat for second leg.

Body

Using a long-tail cast on, CO 16 sts. Knit 50 rows.

On the next row, decrease for the neck as follows:

Ssk, knit to 2 sts before end of row, k2tog. (2 sts dec'd, 14 sts rem).

Repeat the decrease row 2 more times, until you have 10 sts remaining.

Knit 1 row.

On the next row, increase for the head as follows:

Knit 1 st, m1, knit to 1 st before end of row, m1, k1. (2 sts inc'd, 12 sts total)

Repeat the increase row 2 more times, until you have 16 sts total.

Knit 13 rows.

On the next row, decrease as follows:

Ssk, knit to 2 sts before end of row, k2tog. (2 sts dec'd, 14 sts rem).

Repeat the decrease row 2 more times, until you have 10 sts remaining.

Knit 1 row.

Bind off, leaving a very long tail for seaming. Repeat for back body.

Ears

Using a long-tail cast on, CO 7 sts.

Knit 2 rows.

On the next row, decrease as follows:

Ssk, knit to 2 sts before end of row, k2tog. (2 sts dec'd, 5sts rem).

Knit 1 row.

Repeat decrease row once more. (3 sts rem.)

On next row, decrease as follows:

Slip 1 st, k2tog, then pull the slipped stitch over the knitted st. (1 st rem.)

Break yarn, leaving a long tail for seaming and pull it through the remaining st.

Finishing

Using a whip stitch or running stitch, seam the arm up along the long edge and one short edge, leaving the other end open for stuffing. Stuff lightly and seam up remaining opening. Hide the yarn tails inside the arm. Repeat for other arm and both legs.

Using a length of embroidery floss, stitch the face on the cat. In the sample, the mouth is a cross stitch, the eyes are French knots., and whiskers are a single long stitch each. Secure the ends of the floss on the inside of the body piece.

Using a whip stitch or running stitch, seam the two body pieces together with wrong sides together, leaving a hole for stuffing. Stuff the body to desired fullness, and seam hole shut.

Using a whip stitch or running stitch, attach the arms to the body at the bottom of the neck bend. Hide the yarn tails inside the body. Repeat for the legs.

Weave in the top yarn tail so it is hidden in the ear. Attach the ears to the side of the head, where you worked the decreases and hide the yarn tails inside the body.

Congratulations, you knit a stuffed kitty!!



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