

Knitting: An introduction.

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What is knitting?

Knitting is looping yarn around sticks, interlocking them to create a stretchy fabric.

Since you create it stitch by stitch, you have a **lot** of control over the finished product.

What do you need to knit?

Yarn, matching needles, time, and patience.

It's not hard, although it may feel awkward at first.

You need to match the needles to the yarn: typically larger diameter needles for larger diameter yarn. With any given yarn, smaller needles will produce a firmer fabric and larger needles will produce a looser fabric

Today, we are using worsted yarn (16-20 stitches per 4 inches of stockinette, and is best knitted with 4.5mm to 5.5mm needles (US size 7-9)¹).

Why do we knit?

- 1) Desire for a particular sweater or **something** that isn't available commercially
- 2) The motions themselves can be comforting; it's fidgeting with a purpose!
- 3) The challenge of trying new things and creating complicated, beautiful designs.
1 = product knitter
3 = process knitter

2 most common types of knitting:

- 1) Continental: Holding the yarn in your left hand
- 2) English: Holding the yarn in your right hand

Your teachers both favor Continental, so that's what we'll be teaching today.

Jill tried to learn knitting 3 times, the first two was with English: and it just didn't work. The third, with Continental, stuck.

If after sufficient practice, (2 weeks) Continental doesn't work for you, then by all means try English.

Tools

Knitting Needles: come in all different styles, sizes materials and lengths

- 1) circular - two needles connected by a flexible cable)
- 2) straight - one pointed end and one solid end, come in pairs
- 3) double pointed - pointy on both ends, come in sets of 4-5

¹ Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worsted#Weight>

Needles can be made of many materials with different properties. Metal needles tend to be more slippery while wooden needles are more “sticky”. This is a personal preference, but for learning we feel wooden needles may be more comfortable.

Yarn: all different fibers: wool, angora, acrylic, cashmere, alpaca: all with different qualities (and prices!)

Scissors: small is fine

Crochet hook: to fix mistakes

Measuring Tape: to be able to follow patterns or check gauge (knit 3 inches of stockinette....)

Techniques you will learn today

- 1) Slip Knot
- 2) Casting on (Knit Cast on)
- 3) Knit Stitch
- 4) Purl Stitch

Not included in today’s class, but when you have completed your work you need to cast off (make the stitches stay “closed” when off the needle). Instructions are included in this handout.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4tjzuRVoGA>

Remember: you will make mistakes and that’s okay. It’s just yarn. And most knitting mistakes can be fixed; plus most other people wouldn’t even notice them.

Plus, handmade \neq not perfect... It means unique and personal. Perfection is boring.

Slip Knot:

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1GSglLAdNc>

See diagram in other handout.

Cast on:

Knit cast on: so we can practice knitting from the very beginning

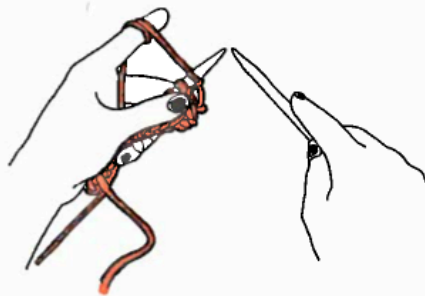
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hS1l_zAnDhY

The Knit Stitch

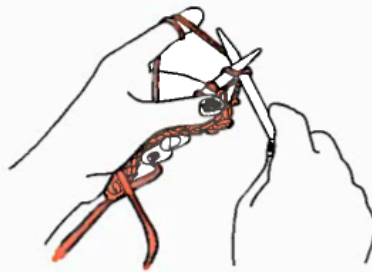
Knitting: from *Stitch and Bitch* by Debbie Stoller.

knit picking The Continental (Left-Hand) Method

1 With your left hand, wrap the yarn using one of the methods described in *Holding Your Own* (page 38), then pick up the needle with the stitches on it. Keep your pointer finger, with the yarn wrapped around it, pointing in the air, and place your thumb and middle finger just behind the first stitch on the needle. Use your bottom two fingers to hold the needle up. Pick up your second knitting needle with your right hand, and hold it the way you would a set of keys, getting ready to open a door: with your thumb and forefinger resting about an inch from the tip, your forefinger resting on top, and your other three fingers supporting the needle.



2 Slide the point of the right needle through the first loop on the left needle from front to back (and from right to left). Stick the point through about 1½ inches. Your needles should be making an X, with the left needle on the top of the X (closest to you), and the right needle on the bottom (away from you).



3 Okay, here's the tricky part in Continental knitting: With the tip of the right needle, grab that strand of yarn that's coming from your forefinger so that it wraps counterclockwise around the right needle.





4 Pull this new loop back out the loop you came in from. (It sometimes helps to twist your hands so that your palms face you.) With Continental knitting, you're doing all the work with your right needle rather than your fingers, and you are "picking" stitches from the strand. And guess what? You've just created a new loop. Wunderbar!



5 Once you're back out, slide the right needle up again so that the new loop is about 1½ inches from the tip. Your needles should be back in an X shape.



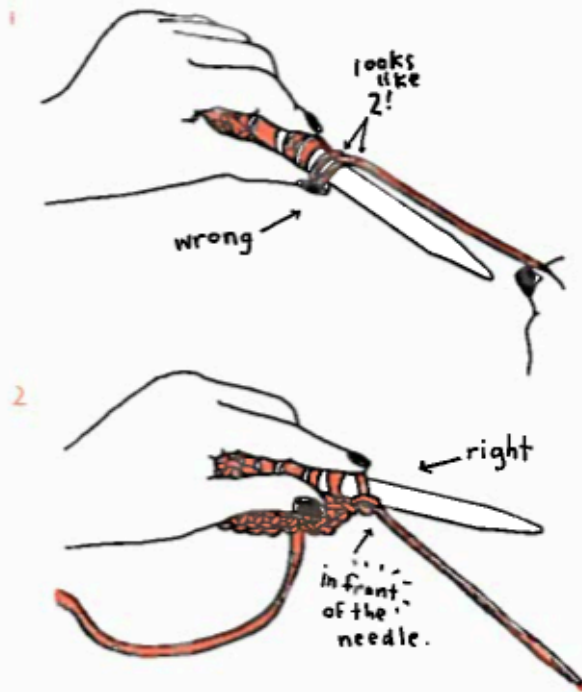
6 Push the old loop off the left needle.

Hey, you did it! You made a knit stitch, Continental-wise. Now go get yourself a Continental breakfast and celebrate!

Keep It Comin', Love

Just keep knitting each stitch from the left needle onto the right needle until there are no stitches left. Then, switch hands: Place the needle with stitches in your left hand, and take the empty, naked needle in your right. Make sure your yarn is hanging straight down and in front of the needle (see Caution, page 38), and go back the other way. Then, just like a little human typewriter (you've seen one of those ancient machines, right?), work each row, switch hands, and knit back again until your piece of knitting is as long as you want it to be.

CAUTION: A super-easy and common mistake to make at this point is to have the yarn hanging down but to the *back* of your needle, making it look like you have two stitches at the end of your left needle instead of one (figure 1). Lots of beginners then actually knit both of these stitches, adding a stitch to each end of their knitting and creating a weirdly shaped shawl-like object instead of a scarf or other straight piece of knitting. So make sure your yarn is hanging down correctly (in front of the needle) before you head back (figure 2).



from stitch-n-bitch:

KNITTY DITTIES: RHYMES TO KNIT TO

Rhymes were used to teach little children to knit, but they are really helpful to grown-ups, too, because they can remind you that there are basically four moves to every knit stitch. Here's a modified version by Debbie Stoller:

GO IN YOUR FRONT DOOR

(insert right needle up into the center of the loop on your left needle)

AND GRAB YOUR SCARF

(wrap the yarn counterclockwise around the tip of the right needle)

THEN TAKE IT OUTSIDE

(draw the right needle back out through the loop on the left needle, taking the new loop with it)

BEFORE THE CAT BARFS

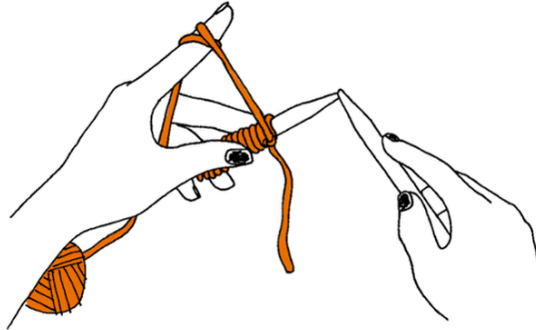
(push the old loop off the tip of the left needle)

The Purl Stitch

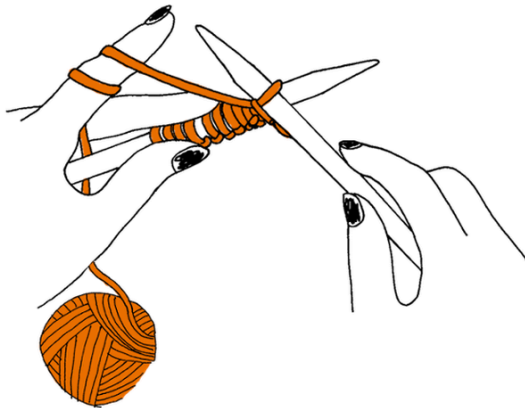
Purling with Yarn in the Left Hand (Continental)

[View Slideshow »](#)

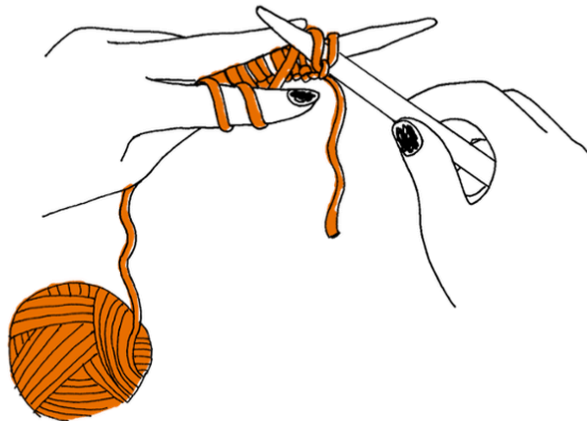
1. Hold your yarn and needles the same way you would to make a knit stitch, holding the yarn in your left hand, but before you begin, bring the yarn between the tips of your needles so that it is *in front* of your left needle.



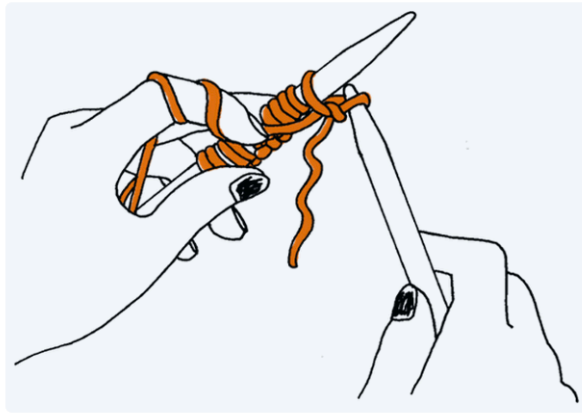
2. Insert your right needle from back to front (and from right to left), through the loop on the first stitch on the left needle, passing the right needle *underneath* the front leg of that stitch. The ends of your needles are now in an X shape.



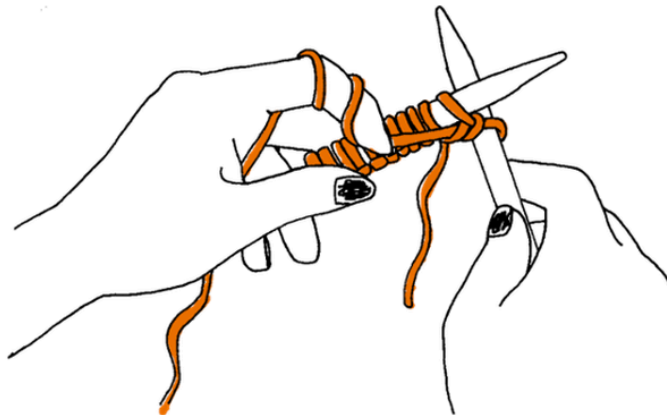
3. Bring the yarn in your left hand around the point of your right needle counterclockwise, then bring your left pointer finger (the one with the yarn around it), down below the center of the X.



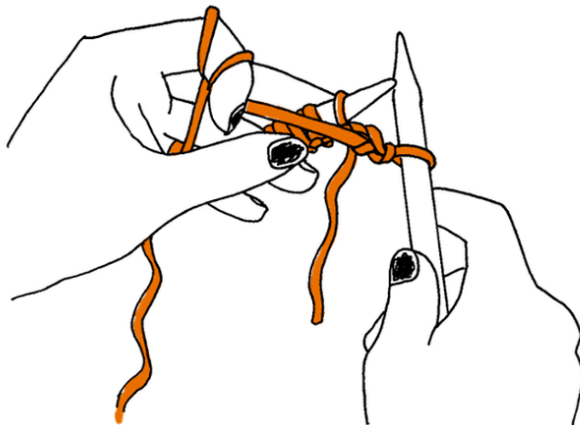
4. Continue to hold the yarn in this position while you carefully slide your right needle down along the base of the left needle, pushing the point of the right needle out through the back of the stitch you came in through. Be careful not to let the new loop you created fall off!



5. Push the right needle back up again (it should now be behind the left needle). You have an X once more.



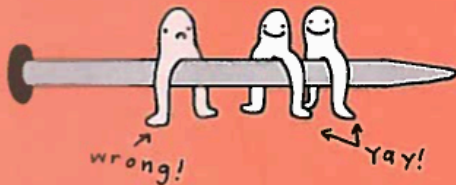
6. Push the old loop up and off the left needle.
Take a bow, Purlana Purlstein! Keep on keepin' on until you've purl'd each stitch on the needle.



THE ANATOMY OF A STITCH

You already know that a knit stitch is a loop that hangs off your needle, but it's also important to know exactly how it hangs off the needle—since there's a right way and a wrong way. I like to think of the loop as a little gymnast straddling a balance beam, with one leg in front and the other in back. Your knitting needle is the beam, and the leg in front is the side of the loop that's hanging closer to you, the leg in back is the one that's farther away.

The thing to know is that the leg that's in front should be the leg that's on the right side of the loop, and the leg in back should be the one on the left side of the loop. If you're knitting and a stitch falls off the needle, it's super-important that you put that gymnast back on the balance beam that way: with the leg on the right side in front, and the leg on the left side in back. Another way to think of it is that the leg in front should be the one closer to the tip of the needle.

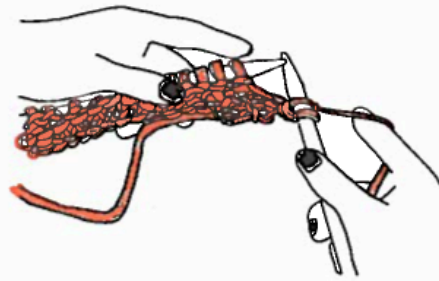


bound for glory

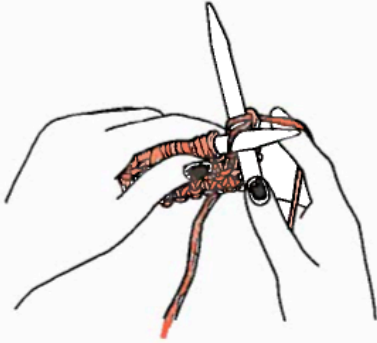
How to Bind Off Your Work

There's one last thing you need to know, and that's how to get the darn thing off the needles when you're done. Otherwise, you'd be walking around with a scarf that had a big pointed stick at one end. Okay, maybe you'd like to rock a stick-in-the-mud look this season, but it's still a good idea to know how to get those stitches off the needle and how to secure them so they don't unravel. It's called **binding off**, and it's easy. Really. Here's how:

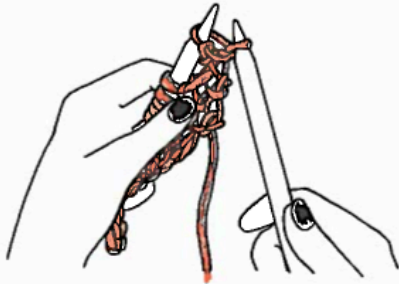
Starting at the beginning of a row, knit a stitch. Let's call it Sally. Knit another stitch and call it Harry.



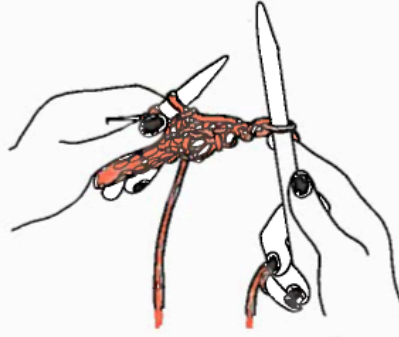
2 Slide the tip of the left needle under Sally's front leg (the first stitch you knit).



3 Then let Sally play leapfrog with Harry (the second stitch), by lifting Sally up and over Harry and then letting her drop off the tip of the right needle.



4 Only Harry is left on the right needle.



5 Repeat steps 2 and 3 over and over again, knitting a stitch, then leapfrogging the previous stitch over it, until all of your stitches have been bound off, and you're left with only one stitch. Cut the yarn about 6 inches from the end and pull it through that last stitch, tightening gently.



Resources

Internet: Ravelry.com: facebook for knitters. Amazing site.

minors 12 and older may hold accounts with Parental supervision. This is an excellent resource, please be responsible when using it. Red Heart, Lion Brand, Patons, Bernat - these are large companies that also have extensive libraries of free patterns on their websites. May require an account to access patterns but all accounts are free. As with Ravelry, age restrictions may apply.

Books

Introductory Book: Stitch 'N Bitch: The Knitter's Handbook by Debbie Stoller
<http://stitchnationyarn.com/knithappens.com/content/view/13/1/>

Starts off at the beginning. Explains cast-ons, bind-offs, and finishing techniques (ie: attaching multiple pieces together). Patterns range from simple to complex.

Videos

Youtube is a wonderful resource. There are videos out there for zillions of techniques (every one I've needed has been there), and you can pause it, rewind it, and watch it as many times as you need: an infinitely patient teacher. If the first video you find isn't helping you, there are probably 100 more like it; so keep trying them!

tip: put "Continental" or "English" in the search terms (along with whatever technique you are looking for); because the way you hold the yarn makes a big difference in understanding new techniques; stick with the way of knitting that is most comfortable for you.

Tutorial Sources

Knitpicks: <http://www.knitpicks.com>
Lion Brand: <http://www.lionbrand.com/>
Red Heart: <http://www.redheart.com/>
Stitch 'N Bitch: <http://blip.tv/stitchnbitch>

Yarn & needles

All different fiber types are available: wool, cotton, modal or bamboo (rayon synthetics), acrylic (synthetic), cashmere, and more.

All different weights: (from large->small): bulky, aran, worsted, double-knitting (DK), sport, fingering, lace, cobweb. Worsted is a great weight to start with for beginners. (not too thin, not too thick)

LYS == your Local Yarn Store.

They can be a great resource. The one near here has gatherings every week that are free. There are master knitters in the one I go to, and they give me the best advice. Plus they have classes, too.

Look up on Google! Some local options include:

Most affordable:

Michael's, Jo-Ann's, AC Moore, Walmart

Most of the offerings at these stores are acrylic, with a small selection of wool, wool blends and other fibers. These stores have the best hours, the most locations, and are excellent for when you are learning.

Mid-priced and Luxury:

Gather Here: 370 Broadway, Cambridge, MA

<http://www.gatherhereonline.com/>

Mid-priced to luxury yarns. Also has fabric and sewing supplies. They have lots of drop-in knitting, classes, and are open later than most shops.

Mind's Eye : 22 White St, Cambridge, MA

<http://www.mindseyeyarns.com/>

High-end yarn, plus spinning supplies.

Knittin Kitten: 93 Blanchard Rd, Cambridge, MA

Mostly mid-priced and some luxury yarn. Very friendly, but have limited hours (google for hours).

Stitch House: 846 Dorchester Ave, Dorchester, MA

<http://stitchhousedorchester.com/>

We are not familiar with this store ourselves, but keep hearing good things about it.

Hub Mills: 16 Esquire Rd #2, North Billerica, MA

<http://www.hubmillsstore.com/>

Mostly luxury yarn, very friendly and welcoming staff.

Wool pack: 340 Great Rd, Acton, MA

<http://woolpackyarn.com/>

Everything from mid-priced to luxury yarns, and they have a variety of classes. Friendly staff.

WEBS: 75 Service Center Rd Northampton, MA

yarn.com - full online catalog

WEBS: "America's largest yarn store". Your needles were purchased from here. Their brick and mortar store is huge and well worth a visit out there for an immense selection of moderate to more expensive luxury yarns. Everything is available online, too. If you have the opportunity to explore; it's a lot of fun.

Knitpicks: <http://www.knitpicks.com/>

Source of lots of yarn of all different price points. The "Wool of the Andes" we used in class today came from here. They have needles, books, and a variety of accessories. Also have needles; their dpns are fine but quality on their circulars is inconsistent, some other sources are recommended.

Needles - we have used all of these brands and been happy with them

Knitter's Pride : <http://www.knitterspride.com/>

Addi <http://addineedleshop.com/>

Hiya Hiya <http://hiyahyanorthamerica.com/>

Clover <https://cloverusa.wordpress.com/>