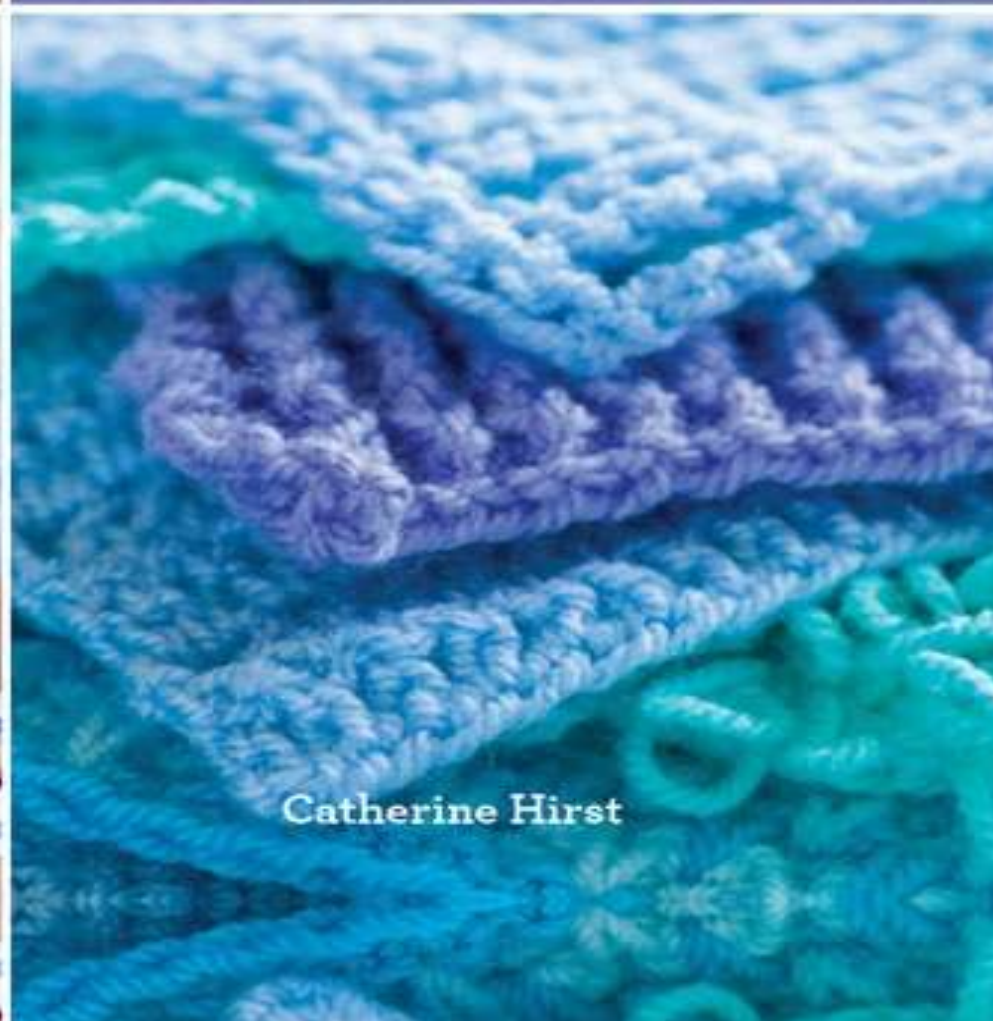




Calamity-Free CROCHET

Troubleshooting Tips and Advice
for the Savvy Needlecrafter



Catherine Hirst

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Contents



Choosing



Working with



Adapting



Troubleshooting

Introduction

Essential crochet terms

Pattern abbreviations

International terms

Yarn weights

Section 1: Materials

Chapter 1 - Hooks

Chapter 2 - Yarns

Chapter 3 - Notions, Trims, and Extras

Section 2: Techniques from Start to Finish

Chapter 4 - Beginning to Crochet

Chapter 5 - Basic Stitches

Chapter 6 - Gauge Swatches

Chapter 7 - Reading Patterns

Chapter 8 - Basic Stitch Patterns

Chapter 9 - Basic Shapes

Chapter 10 - Borders and Edges

Chapter 11 - Adding Trims and Embellishments

Chapter 12 - Finishing

Resources

Index

Acknowledgments

About the Author

Credits

Copyright

About the Publisher

Introduction

This book is designed to be your personal crochet tutor: it will teach you everything you need to know about the craft, whether you are new to it, returning after a break, or an advanced beginner who wants to improve.

Crochet, rewarding as it is, can take a while to master, and I know the frustration that comes from getting half-way through a project only to realise it's gone completely wrong. Having to go back and start again can be disheartening and so, this book aims to preempt problems rather than address them retrospectively. Troubleshooting tips show you common pitfalls and help you ensure you have the right technique to get it right the first time.

In this book, you will first become familiar with the materials needed for crochet, including an in-depth discussion of yarn, hooks, and how to substitute these if needed. There is a huge variety of materials available for purchase, and you will be primed to make smart choices when selecting items for your projects. You will then learn the techniques and stitches that are used in patterns and projects. Remember that at these early stages, it's important to be patient; while it may be tempting to rush into making your first granny square, take a step back and practice basics such as learning to hold the hook and yarn correctly first. This is harder than you think but it gets easier with practice and will be worth the time spent on it.

When choosing your first project, it is a good idea to start with small items that can be finished quickly as this will help build your confidence. Blanket squares, for instance, are a great option because they can be made individually, one at a time, and then joined together to make a larger item. This can feel like a great accomplishment as it has the ease of a small project and the satisfaction of working on a big piece. Please see Chapter 9 for granny square and closed square patterns. Stuffed toys are also a good choice; the sphere, tube, and hourglass patterns in the same chapter are a good place to start, as they incorporate all the necessary skills to crochet in three dimensions.

It should be noted that all text is written in American stitch terms. New crocheters might be surprised to learn that there are different stitch terms used in Europe and other parts of the world. Please see *International terms* and *Yarn weights* for more information.



Essential crochet terms to get you started

ACRYLIC

A synthetic yarn in which man-made fibers are plied together to make yarn, often imitating animal fibers.

ALPACA

Yarn made from the alpaca's coat. Warm and highly insulative, often incorporates little hairs that make its appearance fuzzy.

ANGORA

Yarn made from the angora rabbit's coat. Very fuzzy/hairy, produces a distinctive, extremely soft fabric.

BALL

A length of yarn wound into a sphere or oblong shape. Can refer to machine-wound or hand-wound balls.

BALL BAND

The wrapper on a commercially purchased ball/skein of yarn. Will include information about dye lot, suggested needle/hook size, yardage/meterage, average tension, etc.

BALL WINDER

A device that will wind yarn from a skein into a ball/cake.

BLOCKING

Using water and sometimes steam to smooth your crochet, improving its appearance, straightening edges, and opening up openwork patterns.

BOUCLÉ

Yarn in which one of multiple plies is twisted more loosely than the others, forming distinctive loops.

BULKY/CHUNKY

A thick weight of yarn, ranging from just thicker than aran all the way up to super-bulky/rug yarn.

CASHMERE

Yarn made from the cashmere goat's coat. Very luxurious, generally the most expensive yarn on the market.

CROCHET HOOK PARTS

Bowl—The area under the lip of a crochet hook.

Head—The tip of the hook, used to insert into the stitch.

Lip—The hook part of a crochet hook.

Pad—On some crochet hooks, a depression to rest the thumb.

Shank—The long part of the hook between the lip and pad.

Throat—The part of the hook just below the lip, usually smaller in circumference than the shank.

DECREASING

To subtract stitches to a crocheted piece, usually one at a time. To decrease in a pattern usually means to subtract one stitch from the existing number of stitches.

DK

A medium-weight yarn, also referred to as “light worsted.” Most popular yarn weight in the Europe.

DYE LOT

The batch of dye in which a yarn is dyed. All yarn for one project should come from the same dye lot noted on the ball band.

FOUNDATION CHAIN

A chain made at the base or bottom of a piece of crochet, generally worked into in rows.

GAUGE/TENSION

Generally refers to the specific number of stitches per a certain measurement, usually 4 in/10 cm. Crocheters also refer to a crocheter's individual gauge (tightness) when crocheting, and also the size of hook.

GAUGE/TENSION SWATCH

A practice square made before starting a project to determine a crocheter's individual gauge. Generally measured by 4 in/10 cm.

HANK

A skein of yarn that has been looped into a figure-8 shape.

HOOK GAUGE

Also called a needle gauge, used to size crochet hooks and knitting needles.

INCREASING

To add stitches to a crocheted piece, usually one at a time. To increase in a pattern usually means to add one stitch to the existing number of stitches.

LACEWEIGHT

A very fine-weight yarn, used to make lacy items. Also referred to as thread or cobweb.

MERINO

Yarn made from the merino sheep's coat. Very soft, higher in price than other animal fibers, warm, and insulative.

MOHAIR

Yarn made from the angora goat's coat. Extremely fuzzy/hairy, it can be challenging to work with, but makes fabric that is remarkably lightweight while still very warm. Often sold in laceweight.

MOTIF/MEDALLION

An individual smaller shape that is often used in multiples to create a larger piece. Motifs can be square, hexagonal, or many other shapes. Usually worked in the round.

PICOT

A small point or loop used to accent in crochet.

ESSENTIAL CROCHET TERMS

PILLING

The excess gathering of fluff on fabric or yarn, caused by the separation of the short fibers from the long.

PLIED YARN

Yarn in which individual strands are twisted together to make one larger strand. The “ply” refers to the twist.

POST

The vertical section of a stitch.

RIGHT SIDE

The front or outside of a piece of crochet, as it will be used or worn.

ROW GAUGE

The vertical gauge—the number of rows per 4 in/10 cm.

SCHEMATIC

An illustration of a finished crochet piece, often a garment, that may be included with a pattern and will give measurements of individual sections of the piece.

SINGLE-PLY

A misnomer, as single-ply yarn is made up of one individual strand, and is not plied at all.

SKEIN

A length of yarn arranged into a long loop. Must be wound into a ball before use.

SLUB

The bump of fiber found in an uneven yarn spin.

STITCH GAUGE

The horizontal gauge—the number of stitches per 4 in/10 cm.

SWIFT

A tool with an adjustable diameter, used to hold yarn while it is being wound.

TURNING CHAIN

A chain made at the beginning of a row or round, to raise the crochet up to the height of the stitches about to be worked. The number of chains made for the turning chain is determined by which stitches will be worked in the row or round.

VARIEGATED YARN

Yarn that is dyed with more than one color. This may sometimes include gradients or shades of the same color.

WEIGHT

Refers to the thickness of the strand of a yarn.

WOOL

Can refer to yarn made from several animals, most notably the sheep. Can range from soft to coarse.

WORKING LOOP

The loop on the hook at any given time.

WORKING YARN

The yarn connected to the ball.

WORSTED/ARAN

A medium-weight yarn. Most popular yarn weight in North America.

WRONG SIDE

The back or inside of a piece of crochet, as it will be used or worn.

YARN NEEDLE

A large needle with a large eye, big enough to accommodate yarn, used to weave in ends and join pieces of crochet together.



Pattern abbreviations

alt—alternate
approx—approximately
beg—begin, or beginning
bet—between
BL—back loop
BP—back post
CC—contrasting color
ch—chain
cm—centimeter
cont—continue
dc—double crochet
dc2tog—double crochet two together (decrease)
dec—decrease
dtr—double triple
FL—front loop
fol—following
FP—front post
ft—foot
g—gram
hdc—half double crochet
in—inch
inc—increase
lb—pound
lp—loop
m—meter
mm—millimeter
oz—ounce
patt—pattern
pm—place marker
prev—previous
rem—remaining
rep—repeat
rnd—round
RS—right side
sc—single crochet

sc2tog—single crochet two together (decrease)

sk—skip

sl st—slip stitch

sp—space

ss—slip stitch

st—stitch

tog—together

tr—triple

trtr—triple triple

WS—wrong side

yd—yard

yo—yarn over



International terms

CROCHET TERMS

NORTH AMERICA	UK/EUROPE/AUSTRALIA
YO (yarn over)	YRH (yarn round hook)
Worsted	Aran
SK (skip)	Miss
Gauge	Tension

STITCH CONVERSIONS

NORTH AMERICA	UK/EUROPE/AUSTRALIA
chain (ch)	chain (ch)
single crochet (sc)	double crochet (dc)
half double crochet (hdc)	half treble (htr)
double crochet (9dc)	treble (tr)
triple crochet (trc)	double treble (dtr)

MEASUREMENT CONVERSIONS

IMPERIAL	METRIC
1/8 in	3 mm
3/8 in	1 cm
1 in	2.54 cm
12 in (1ft)	30 cm
1 yd	91.44 cm
1 yd 3 in	1 m

WEIGHT CONVERSIONS

IMPERIAL	METRIC
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1 oz

28 g

1 lb (16 oz)

450 g

2 lb 3 oz

1 kg (1,000 g)

Yarn weights

There is no standardized measurement system of yarn weights, and there is much variety between yarn manufacturers' references to weights. There is a general guide and reference system, however, which this yarn weight conversion chart can assist with.

STANDARDIZED YARN WEIGHT	NORTH AMERICA	UK / EUROPE	AUSTRALIA / NZ
 0 LACE	Thread Cobweb Lace Light Fingering	1 ply 2 ply 3 ply	1 ply 2 ply 3 ply
 1 SUPER FINE	Fingering Baby	Sock 4 ply	4 ply
 2 FINE	Sport	Light DK 5 ply	5 ply
 3 LIGHT	DK Light Worsted	DK 8 ply	8 ply
 4 MEDIUM	Worsted Fisherman Aran	Aran 10 ply	10 ply
 5 BULKY	Bulky Rug Craft	Chunky	12 ply
 6 SUPER BULKY	Super Bulky Roving Polar	Super Chunky Polar	14 ply

SECTION 1

MATERIALS



CHAPTER 1

Hooks



The word “crochet” means “hook” in French, and the crochet hook is the first piece of equipment you will need when starting to crochet. There is a wide variety of crochet hooks on the market, and in this chapter you will make sense of the various options, so you can choose the best hook for you.

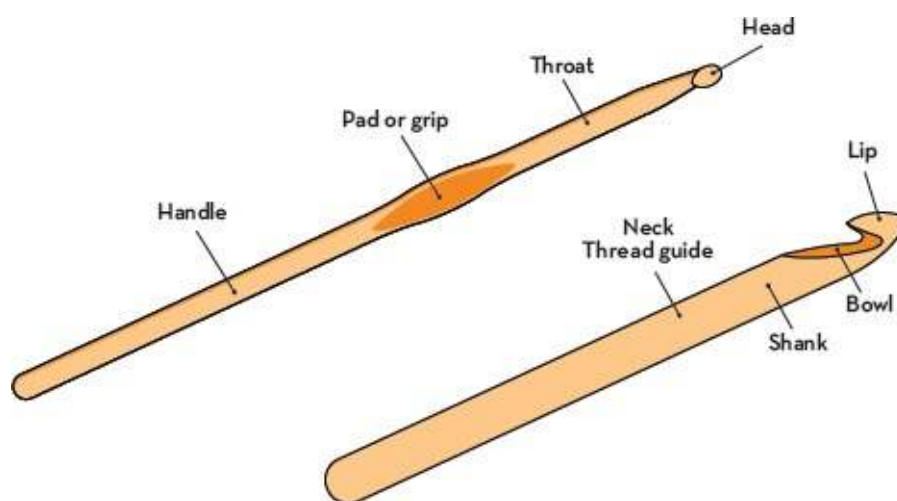
MATERIALS: HOOKS

Hook types

There are many types of crochet hook. Here is some information about the most common types available.

Regardless of the material with which your hook is made, special attention should be paid to the shape of the hook, as hooks can be very different and the shape will affect the crochet experience. The lip, hook part of the hook, can be a soft curve or a sharp wedge shape. The shank may have a flat area to rest the thumb, or it may be a uniform tube from tip to base. The neck may be tapered or the same width as the rest of the hook, and the head, or tip, of the hook may be pointy or rounded. None of the options are right or wrong; individual crocheters should experiment with different hooks and see which one works best.

ANATOMY OF A CROCHET HOOK



▶ SEE ALSO

How to hold the hook



METAL

The most common material for a standard sized (between B/1 or 2.25mm and N/15 or 10.0mm)

crochet hook is metal. Metal hooks have the advantage of being “fast,” meaning they do not cling to the yarn like wood or bamboo hooks. Rather, they are slippery and pass through the yarn easily, making faster crochet possible. Metal hooks are easy to find and usually less expensive than wood, comparable to plastic in price. They are virtually indestructible, although crocheters with a strong grip may get some bending.



BAMBOO

Bamboo is environmentally friendly as it is a renewable resource. Bamboo hooks are less expensive than wood and are readily available. They are lighter in weight than metal and smooth in the hand. While they are flexible, they are also strong and will hold up well during years of use. Bamboo hooks will “cling” to yarn more than metal hooks, providing more control, especially when dealing with silky or novelty yarns. Some bamboo hooks have a very sharp “lip” or hook edge that can catch yarn. Crocheters can use a fine-grained sandpaper to smooth that area.



STEEL

Steel is used for smaller sized crochet hooks. Generally, these tiny hooks are used to crochet thread and cotton. As the slim, hard handles can be uncomfortable during prolonged use, a comfort grip hook with an added handle can be helpful.

Hook sizes

Crochet hooks come in different sizes to match up with the different thicknesses of yarns and other materials used for crochet. The size, or gauge, refers to the thickness of the shaft of the crochet hook. Since you are wrapping the yarn around the hook, the thickness of the hook will affect the size of the stitch made. There are several ways these sizes are categorized—the US generally uses a lettering

system, Europe, and Canada use a numbering system, and most of the rest of the world uses a gauge millimeters.

CONVERSION CHART

LETTERING	NUMBERING	METRIC
-	14	2.00 mm
B / 1	13	2.25 mm
-	12	2.50 mm
C/2	-	2.75 mm
-	11	3.00 mm
D/3	10	3.25 mm
E/4	9	3.50 mm
F/5	-	3.75 mm
G/6	8	4.00 mm
-	-	4.25 mm
7	7	4.50 mm
H/8	6	5.00 mm
I/9	5	5.50 mm
J/10	4	6.00 mm
K/ 10 ¹ / ₂	3	6.50 mm
-	2	7.00 mm
L/11	0	8.00 mm
M/13	00	9.00 mm
N/15	000	10.00 mm
P/16	-	16 mm



SEE ALSO

Hook types

Yarn weights

TROUBLESHOOTING

“The lip of the hook is too sharp—I am splitting my yarn with it when trying to draw through the loop.”

Sometimes bamboo hooks in particular have a sharp lip. Try using an aluminum or plastic hook instead.

“I get pain in my hand after a long time crocheting.”

Try using a comfort grip hook. Some hooks are sold with comfort grips already attached, or you can purchase grips to add to your existing hooks.

“I find my hook too slippery to manage.”

If you are using an aluminum hook and you are having problems, try a bamboo hook—the wood will help “grip” the yarn, giving you more control. Also, be sure your hook has a depression for the thumb rest—that will help to prevent the hook from rolling more than you want it to.

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