



# Knit It!

LEARN THE BASICS and  
KNIT 22 BEAUTIFUL PROJECTS

MELISSA LEAPMAN PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALEXANDRA GRABLEWSKI



*Knit It!*



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**LEARN THE BASICS *and*  
KNIT 22 BEAUTIFUL PROJECTS**

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Melissa Leapman

Photographs by Alexandra Grablewski



**CHRONICLE BOOKS**

SAN FRANCISCO



*for joan murphy, knitter extraordinaire*

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*Thank you, Joni Coniglio, for once again making me the luckiest author in the industry. Your beautiful work makes mine look better.*

*Just think: Together we'll be bringing lots of new knitters into the fold!*

*Knitting is a magical pastime.*

Some folks consider it an art form. Others find it a practical and fun craft. For all, it is a technique that enables us to transform soft balls of yarn into beautiful and useful objects for ourselves and others.

Knitting has become incredibly popular in the past several years. Trendy hand knits are showing up everywhere: on the pages of leading fashion magazines, on the shelves of your favorite boutique, on fashion runways all over the world, and—if you could sneak a peek—in the models' own shopping bags.

The biggest surprise about knitting is how easy it is to learn. In fact, I taught myself as a kid in high school. With very little investment in tools and materials, you can have yarn and needles perched in your hands and be happily stitching away in no time!

Drawing on my experience teaching workshops to countless crafters, this book lays the groundwork for a lifetime of knitting—no prior skills necessary! [Part 1](#) offers step-by-step instructions for the essential knitting know-how you'll need from the moment you walk into a yarn shop to the day you wear your first hand-knit sweater. And, since even expert knitters make mistakes, I've included a useful section called [Goofed! Now What?](#) ([page 65](#)) to help you fix inevitable errors.

[Part 2](#) includes twenty-two projects that are easy—and fun—to knit. You'll find patterns for a variety of clothing, accessories, and home dÈcor items, with plenty of options, whether you are knitting for yourself or the loved ones in your life. The projects are arranged in order to gradually add on to your skills as you work through the book. From the baby shower-friendly Color Me Mine throw ([page 79](#)) and the homey Pouf Positive ([page 87](#)) decorative floor pillow to the cozy Hat Trick ([page 91](#)) for men and the Get in Line sweater ([page 101](#)) for women, these projects will allow you to build your skills while knitting up unique items.

Each project includes a "Skill Set," which lists all the techniques necessary to complete the project. If something in the skill list looks unfamiliar, don't give up; just turn to the page referred to and learn something new. For absolute newbies, I'd suggest starting with Tie One On ([page 71](#)) or Taking a Ribbin' ([page 75](#)). These simple projects will give you the confidence to keep knitting.

"Yarn," "Needles," and "Notions" for each pattern list all the tools and supplies you'll need to make the project. If you'd like your version to duplicate the one photographed, choose the specific yarn called for. You can use the Resources: Materials in the back of the book for a list of yarn companies; they can suggest yarn shops local to your area. As convenient as the Internet is for most things, I bet you'll want to select your yarn and colors in person. Knitting is a tactile sport: Choose yarn that makes you happy!

You'll notice that each pattern also includes a "Knitting Know-How" tip or two, where you'll discover new pro tips and tricks to help you build your skills—and your confidence. Remember that mastering a new motor skill like knitting can feel awkward at first. Be patient with yourself as you learn. Everyone was

once a beginner.

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Best of all, each project also includes a “Change It Up!” suggestion to help you customize and put your personal spin on the item, letting you create something new and different. If a shawl doesn’t suit your lifestyle, you can easily adjust the Under Wraps shawl project ([page 179](#)) into a cozy afghan, for example. Knitting is always fun and stimulating. I hope it excites you as much as it does me.

Let’s begin! We have the whole world of knitting to explore together.

*Happy knitting!*





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# PART 1: THE BASICS

THIS PART OF THE BOOK PRESENTS EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO GET STARTED KNITTING, FROM THE TOOLS AND MATERIALS YOU WILL USE TO ESSENTIAL STITCHES AND HOW TO READ A KNITTING PATTERN.



# MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES

You only need a few fundamental materials to get started. Assemble the following items in your knitting bag:

## YARN

Lucky for us, companies offer a fantastic array of yarns from all over the world, many of which can be found online. Before you start any project, be sure to read the yarn label, which contains important information.

## FIBER CONTENT

Yarns can be made from all sorts of different fibers, from warm and cozy wools to silky cottons to workhorse machine-washable acrylics. Some yarns are blends of natural and man-made fibers and try to offer the best of both worlds. Since the way a knitted fabric feels is as important as how it looks, I suggest you experiment knitting with lots of different yarns to find the ones you love. If you haven't looked at yarns recently, you'll be amazed by the variety!

## YARDAGE

This information tells you how much yarn is in the skein (a.k.a. the ball). It will help you determine how much yarn to purchase to make a specific project.

## YARN WEIGHT

This describes the thickness of a single strand of the yarn. The Craft Yarn Council of America has set standard categories for yarn weights, from 1 (super fine) to 6 (super bulky). Bulky yarns knit up quickly with larger knitting needles and require less yarn yardage for the same size finished project.

## SUGGESTED KNITTING GAUGE

Here's where the yarn manufacturer recommends a particular knitting needle size and how many stitches would usually result over 4 in/10 cm. The finer the yarn, the more stitches and rows are needed to create fabric of a particular size. Note that the needle size printed on the label is only a suggestion. All knitters, even seasoned ones, vary in how they knit and the needles they use to achieve the recommended gauge. And remember, the same yarn can be knit at one gauge for socks and at another gauge for a lacy shawl.

# LAUNDERING INSTRUCTIONS

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Every yarn label will have information on how to best care for the finished knitted project.

## DYE-LOT NUMBER

Since yarn is dyed in batches, and batches can vary slightly in tone, it is important to use yarn of a single dye lot in a project to prevent color variations. So buy enough to complete your project.

## KNITTING KNOW-HOW

### YARN HANKS AND BALLS

Some yarns are sold in loose bundles (called hanks) that must be wound into balls before being knitted to prevent tangles. To do this, wrap the opened hank around the back of a chair, and slowly and gently unwind the yarn while rolling it into a soft, loosely wound ball. If you encounter a knot, cut it out and start a new ball. Those factory-made knots tend to come undone when you least expect it. Don't ask me how I know!



Knitting patterns will tell you how much yarn you will need to complete a project, but if you want to make any changes to the stitch pattern, gauge, or brand of yarn, you will need to adjust the number of balls or hanks that you purchase. To estimate the amount of yarn required to finish a project that you've started, you can measure the square area of what you've already knitted, then divide that measurement by the number of balls of yarn you've used so far. Calculate the finished square area of the total project, then divide this number by the number of balls used up to this point. If all else fails, buy more yarn than you think you'll need. As any knitter will tell you, there's no such thing as too much yarn.

### YARN CHOICE AND SUBSTITUTION

Each project in this book was designed for a specific yarn. Different yarns possess their own characteristics, which will affect the way they appear and behave when knitted. To duplicate the project as seen in the photographs, I suggest that you use the designated yarns.

If you would like to substitute a different yarn, be sure to choose one of similar weight to the one called for in the pattern, keeping in mind that a fluffy mohair will knit up differently than a smooth cotton. Yarn size and weight are usually printed on the label, but for the most accurate test, knit a gauge swatch as follows: Using the needle size suggested on the label, knit a piece of fabric at least 4 in/10 cm square. Bind off, then block the piece, following the instructions on [page 44](#). Once blocked, lay the piece on a flat surface and count the number of stitches horizontally and rows vertically over 4 in/10 cm. If your swatch has 20 stitches over 4 in/10 cm, for example, the yarn is Size 4 or medium weight (commonly known as worsted weight). You could then substitute another yarn of the same weight for that yarn. ([For more information on gauge, see page 13.](#))

# KNITTING NEEDLES

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## NEEDLE SHAPE

Needles are the essential tools for knitting and come in a few different shapes:

**straight knitting needles:** Standard straight knitting needles have a point on one end and a knob on the other end. They come in pairs and are generally used to knit flat pieces of fabric. They are available in several lengths; choose the shortest length that will fit all your stitches.

**circular knitting needles:** These needles consist of two short knitting needle points connected by a flexible cable that can form a circle. Most often, they are used to knit in the round to create projects without seams, like hats and leg warmers. But many knitters, myself included, prefer to use circular needles even when working back and forth in rows on flat pieces. I've found that while knitting, the cable allows me to distribute the stitches and the weight of the fabric so that stress on the body is prevented.

**double-pointed knitting needles:** These knitting needles are short and straight, with points on both ends. They usually come in sets of four or five needles, and are used for knitting small circular pieces such as mittens, hats, and socks that have too few stitches to be worked on a circular needle.

## NEEDLE SIZE

The circumference of knitting needles determines the size of the needles. Larger needles produce larger stitches and will create fabric with fewer stitches per 1 in/2.5 cm than smaller needles, and smaller needles produce smaller, tighter stitches.



Knitting patterns will suggest the appropriate needle size to make the specific project with the recommended yarn. Knitting needles are marked in either U.S. or metric sizes (and sometimes both). A handy conversion table for knitting needle sizes can be found at the Craft Yarn Council website, [www.yarnstandards.com](http://www.yarnstandards.com). Note that conversions are rounded, so they may not always exactly match the size specified on the needle package. (For example, a 24-in/60.5-cm measurement will use 24-in/61-cm length needles.) Since everyone knits a little differently, you might need a different needle size than called for in the pattern to produce the same fabric. Always test your knitting gauge ([see page 13](#)) before beginning a project.

## GENERAL KNITTING TOOLS

The following tools are useful as you knit:

### TAPE MEASURE

This dressmaker's tool is used to take your body measurements and to measure your knitted pieces

accurately.

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## SCISSORS

You'll use small, sharp scissors to cut yarn—snipping ends or creating pom-poms or fringe.

## STITCH MARKERS

You will find countless uses for these colorful little circular markers. They just slip on the needle, and knitters use them to separate certain stitches from others or to mark the beginning of a round when working circularly. In a pinch, you can make your own stitch marker by tying a piece of contrasting yarn into a loop.

## YARN NEEDLE

You use this type of needle, which has a blunt tip and a large eye, to sew up seams without piercing the individual strands of the yarn.

## CABLE NEEDLES

Cable needles are used to hold one set of stitches out of the way while you work another set of stitches. They are available in various shapes and sizes. I prefer to use a straight double-pointed needle to hold my cable stitches. Find the one that works for you.

## STITCH HOLDERS

Knitters slip groups of live stitches onto stitch holders to keep them safe and ready to be worked later. For a small number of stitches, a safety pin can serve as a stitch holder; for more stitches, a spare needle or length of scrap yarn can be used.

## ROW COUNTER

This tool is handy for keeping track of how many rows you have knitted. Or, you can just jot down a running tally on a sheet of paper. Tech-savvy knitters can also find smartphone apps to help them keep on track.

## CROCHET HOOK

Even expert knitters occasionally drop stitches. A crochet hook is very handy for picking up dropped stitches.

## SAFETY PINS

These standard household items come in handy as stitch holders, stitch markers, a safe haven for dropped stitches, and more. The coilless kind are especially useful since they don't get caught on knitted fabric.

## YARN SWIFT OR BALL WINDER

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These devices make it easy to wind yarn hanks into usable balls. In a pinch, you can even use a friend's willing outstretched arms.

## KNITTING BAG

You'll want your supplies available as you knit, so find a roomy knitting bag. Choose one that won't be easily pierced by knitting needles, and avoid Velcro closures since they can snag your yarn.

# GETTING STARTED

This section discusses all the basic concepts you need to know to begin knitting, from how to hold the needles and yarn to how to make the basic stitches.

## SLIPKNOT

Nearly every knitted piece begins with a simple slipknot, which is an adjustable loop that fits a knitting needle of any size. Here's how to do it:

step 1: Starting at least 6 in/15 cm from the end of the yarn, wrap the yarn into a loop, and then place the working yarn (the yarn coming from the ball) beneath the loop. *See fig. 1.*

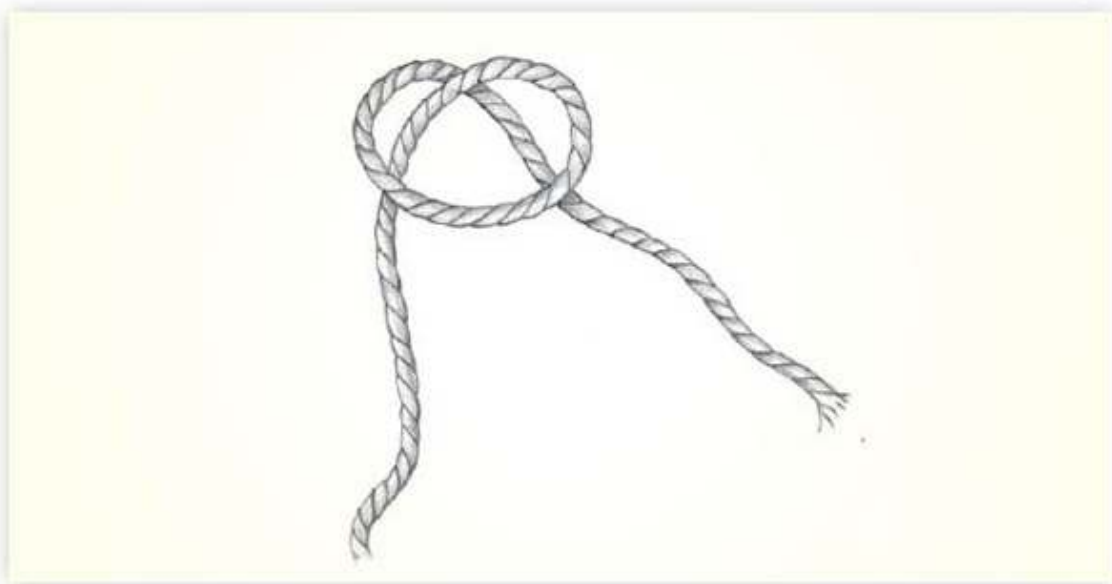


fig. 1

step 2: Use your knitting needle tip to scoop up the strand of yarn coming from the ball, and pull it through the center of the loop. *See fig. 2.*



fig.2

step 3: Tighten the slipknot by tugging on both ends of yarn at the same time, adjusting its size to fit the needle while still allowing it to slide easily. [See fig. 3.](#)

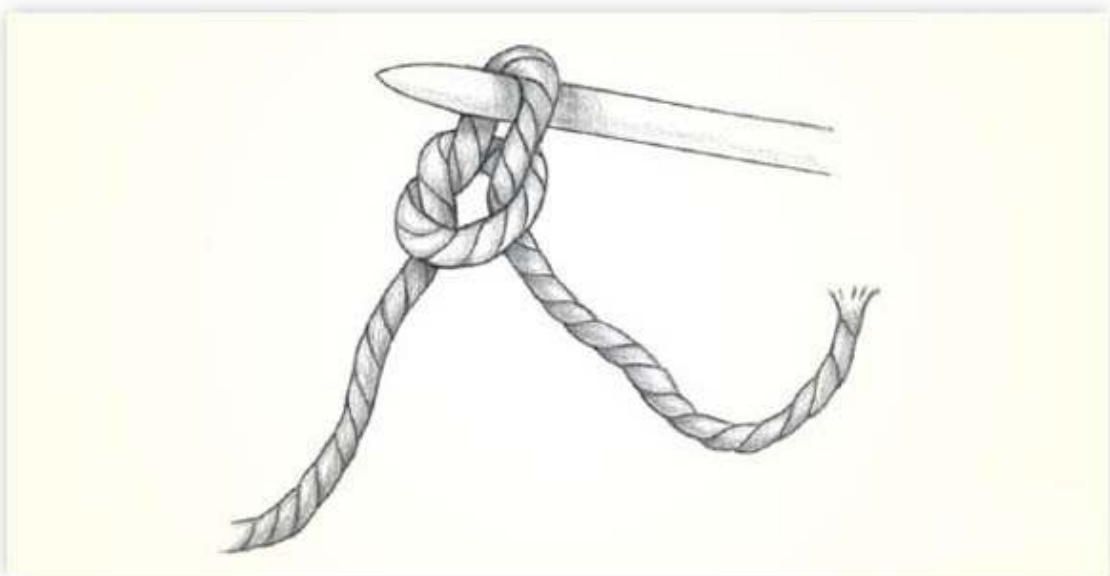


fig.3

## HOLDING THE NEEDLES AND THE YARN

It's been said that there are as many methods of holding knitting needles and yarn as there are people who knit. You may have picked up your style from your grandmother or a friend without even knowing it. Here are the two most common ways. Try both to see which works better for you—it's all about personal preference.

### ENGLISH STYLE

With this method, the yarn is wrapped or "thrown" around the needle using the right hand. The working ball

of yarn is positioned to the knitter's right. [See fig. 4.](#)

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fig.4

## CONTINENTAL STYLE

With this method, the working yarn is held in the left hand, and the right-hand needle is used to “pick” the yarn to create stitches. Many knitters find that the Continental method is faster. And, since there's less movement in this style, some believe it minimizes repetitive stress discomfort. [See fig. 5.](#)



fig.5



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