

Beginning to Knit – The Purl Stitch

Purl Stitch (Combined Method)

Purling is actually a mirror image of knitting. Constructing a smooth fabric requires purling one row (when the wrong side faces) after knitting one row (with right or public side facing).



1. First bring the yarn to the front. Holding the yarn in **front of your work**, insert the right needle into the loop as shown.



2. Bring the yarn up letting the needle catch a new loop and pull it through the back of the loop on the left needle.

For further details, drawings and animation of purling, please go to Annie Modesit's web site.¹

*In front of the fence,
Catch the float,
Back we go,
Jump off the boat.*

Purl Stitch (Traditional Method)

It is useful to know about this method since just about everyone in America uses it. Traditionally the yarn is wrapped clockwise over the top of the needle before bringing the yarn back under and through to form a loop. This movement is awkward for the Continental knitter (holding yarn in left hand). It is comfortable for the American or English style who “throws” the yarn using the right hand.



Return now to the Combined Method of purling. (Skip if you hold yarn in your right hand.)

The combined method will cause the purl stitches from the previous row to be turned around **backwards** on the right needle. (Backwards as compared to the way they sat when you knit every row.)



After purling, the turned loops must be knit through the back loop. Knitting through the back loop is **faster and easier** than knitting from the front. This is because the yarn is already in the back so you only need to snag it and pull it through. When you to learn ribbing you will appreciate how easy it is to let the stitches tell you how they *want* to be knit and purl!

This is how it is done. To knit into a “twisted” stitch, insert the needle through the back “leg” of the loop as pictured. If you attempt to knit into the front of the loop, you will be twisting the stitch (as in the drawing). Let the needle go over top of the yarn and pull a loop through toward the front. This movement is known as “picking”.

How can we tell if a stitch has been knit or purl?



Think of the purl stitches as wearing turtlenecks. Notice the 3 purl stitches sitting on the right side of the picture “wearing” turtlenecks up close around the needle. The 2 knit stitches on the left side are sporting V-necks.

 **Tip:** *Until the Middle Ages,*

 *crossed stitches were the norm. Twisted stitches, also called crossed stitches, pro-*

duce a fabric that is thicker, tighter and warmer than regular stockinette fabric. See [Mary Thomas's Knitting Book](#) for further discussion. This book, originally published in 1938, has excellent drawings and instructions, as well as historical references. It remains in print today and is a treasure trove of knitting knowledge.

¹ <http://anniemodesitt.com/>

Pattern Stitches

Here are two essential stitches using knit and purl stitches. Thousands of pattern stitches have been developed by knitters who are always happy to share them. Stitch dictionaries abound in print and online. Here is a link to try: <www.knittingonthenet.com/stitches.htm> Do remember to check the knitting books in our library!

1. Stockinette Stitch (Stocking Stitch)

1. Knit across
2. Purl across

The Stockinette stitch is less bulky than Garter stitch. Most of our knit garments employ the stockinette stitch. This fabric is not reversible. Stockinette stitch fabric will curl top, bottom and sideways. You will find the “back” or purl side, is just as beautiful as the knit side. When the the purl side is chosen as the “front”, the pattern stitch is known as **Reverse Stockinette**.

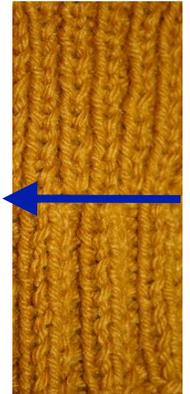
2. Ribbing

Ribbing produces a stretchy fabric which stretches vertically and does not curl horizontally. Notice the way ribbing is used on socks, t-shirts and sweaters.

K1-P1 Rib — CO any even number of stitches. K1, P1 across each row.

K2-P2 Rib — CO any multiple of 4 stitches (16, 20, 24, etc.) K2, P2 across each row.

Try different ribbing patterns such as K3-P1, or K1-P2. Each will have a different look and elasticity. You may soon come up with your own pattern stitch.



Projects

Ruffled Rose



CO 10 sts – leaving a tail to sew up.

1. Knit 1 row
 2. Increase in each stitch across (20sts)
- Repeat 1 & 2 again (40sts)
- Knit 1 row.
Bind off.

Using the starting tail, thread onto yarn needle, wind the ruffle into a circle and stitch in place. Tie onto stem.

This rose has an I-cord stem with a pipe cleaner inside. The leaf pattern can be found here: <http://knitty.com/ISSUEwinter04/PATTwinecozy.html>

Posies

Large (outer) Circle

Cast on 60 stitches, leaving a tail to sew the final seam.

Knit in Stockinette stitch for 2 inches. Do NOT bind off. Cut yarn leaving 10” tail.

Using a yarn needle, thread the yarn tail through all of the “live” stitches on your needle, removing them as you go. Pull tail to to form a circle. Using the beginning yarn tail, close the side seam.



Small (inner) Circle

Cast on 40 stitches, again leaving a tail. Knit around for 1 inch.

Finish as for large circle above.

Place the circles together and use the tails to tack them together. Add a button to cover the center hole. Sew a pin to the back for a removable embellishment.