

7 POINTS TO A PERFECT STITCH DEFINITION

Like any other manual or artistic activity, knitting requires rigor and perseverance. From the scarf to the cable knit sweater, a few steps are necessary. But some tips can help beginners to improve their technique and reach the goal of a perfect stitch definition.

The wool

Depending on the expected result, the type of wool used is essential. There are two basic spinning methods to enhance the natural characteristics of a particular fiber or to achieve a yarn well-suited for specific kinds of knitted fabric.

-**Woolen Spun yarn** : The fleece is carded, causing the fibers to go in different directions rather than lying parallel, and also adding air to the mixture. The result is a fiber package that is lofty with warmth-trapping characteristics but with an uneven surface. It provides a rustic knitting result that delights lovers of authenticity and naturalness. Shelter by Brooklyn Tweed or Lore by The Fiber Co are perfect yarns for outdoor knitwear, warm sweaters and cardigans. It will suit beginner knitters and colorwork enthusiasts.

Tip : Once knit, Woolen Spun yarns achieve their full beauty after a wet blocking, as thanks to elasticity property, each stitch relaxes and bonds with its neighbors to produce a plush fabric with a halo.

-**Worsted-Spun yarn**: The machine combing removes short fibers and inconsistencies and leaves the fibers parallel. The combing process also removes the air between, making the top dense and smooth. The thread is round, shiny and straight and when used in knitting, the yarn has an amazing stitch definition. Arbor from Brooklyn Tweed or Krea Deluxe yarns are the ideal yarns for all textured stitches and twists. A thread of choice for fans of perfect stitch definition!

Tip: A project made with a single yarn will be less even than a wool with multiple plies. (4 ply, 8 ply...)

The fiber

-Keep in mind that "hairy" fibers like **mohair or alpaca** provide by nature an uneven result due to the varying thicknesses and densities of the yarn.

-**Linen and silk** are slippery, fine and shiny fibers. And controlling the tension of the thread is more difficult. When knitting linen and silk, remember also that these fibers are not very elastic ! On the other hands, the uneven effect is part of the style and the expected result of summer sweaters !

-Fine wools as **merino** are short-stapled and crimpy, they spin into elastic yarns. The thread is smooth, round and even. The individual fibers are fine and can be spun with high or low twist. Merino is a favorite choice and the best option for an even result.

The needles

• Material:

- **Metal** : Generally, I prefer using metal needles to get an even fabric. Some have a coating on them so they're not as slippery if you knit slippery yarn. They work pretty well with wool and provide an excellent stitch definition as the stitches do not stick on the needle and slip easily.

- **Bamboo** needles have a warm and earthy feel. They are quite comfortable to use and are good for beginners because they are not as slick as metal. However, some yarns may stick a bit more to bamboo.

Tip : Smooth or "grippy", the needles material affects your tension as you knit. I recommend trying a needle of the same size but in a different material while swatching.

• Straight or circular?

-Circular needles are lighter than straight ones and can be used when knitting flat pieces as well. The weight of the knit is distributed over the cable of the needles and rests on the knees. The straight needles make it necessary to support the weight of the knitting with the cuffs and after a few minutes or hours of knitting, it may affect the tension of the yarn.

• The diameter :

-Knitting a swatch is crucial. Lots of knitters hate doing it because they'd rather get down to knitting but it's really important to do it if you want to knit things that are the proper size but also to be sure of the appearance of your knitting. By telling you how many stitches and rows are in an inch of knitting, you may be able to gather from a gauge measurement whether the knitted fabric is loose or dense. Of course, it depends on individual preference but generally, loose fabric is less even. This explains why I adjust the needle size to get a firmly fabric and then a nicer stitch definition. Knowing that the blocking will magically soften the surface and fix the project at the final measurements.

Note: The sample is generally more regular than the project, due to the reduced number of stitches.

The pattern

• **Garter stitch** : The Garter Stitch is the most basic Knit Stitch Patterns in which you simply knit every row. It is easy to knit, reversible, lies flat, and is stretchy. When knitted back and forth, the result is generally neat and even.

Tip : Knitting garter stitch in the round alternates knit and purl rounds.

• **The stockinette stitch** : when knitted flat, knitting one row and purling the next, repeating this process consecutively

-The fabric is flat and smooth; the slightest uneven stitch is immediately obvious.

- The knit row is generally tighter than the purl one resulting in an appearance of waves or zebra.

Tip : This can be avoided by using a thicker needle for knit stitches (1/2 mm less than the diameter used for purl stitches)

Tip: When knitting in the round, stockinette stitch is formed by knitting every stitch of every round. The direction of the knitting remains the same and the result is neat and even.

• **1/1 rib pattern** : Cables without a cable needle is trendy ! However, with or without, take care not to stretch and pull the loop. Generally, the less the loop is stretched, the more even the knitting.

Knitting style

When you knit Continental-style (as opposed to English-style), you hold both the working yarn and the needle with the stitches in your left hand. With English knitting you hold the yarn in your right hand and "throw" it over the needle.

There are several different ways to hold the yarn when working a stitch. Some people wrap the yarn completely around their index finger while others wrap the yarn around the pinkie and then over the index finger. Experiment with different methods to find what's most comfortable for you. By simply changing how you hold your yarn, you'll dramatically improve your knitting!

Tip : Winding the yarn around your fingers and holding the yarn on the index creates the tension that is necessary for producing even knitting.

Knitting faster

Unless many years of practice, knitting too fast does not bring an even fabric. Levels of relaxedness are unavoidable and will affect your tension,

Learn quietly how to manage the tension of the thread, and the knitting style that suits you the best. Then you will be ready to learn how to knit faster with a perfect tension.

Tip: always make sure to put a project in progress on hold at the end of the row.

The blocking

Blocking is a simple but vital step which will greatly improve the look of even the most beginner knitters. If you have made the effort to hand-knit a stunning project, it deserves to be blocked.

• **Wet blocking** : Soak your knitted item in gentle water for at least 2 or 3 hours, with or without the addition of a special wool soap without rinsing. Drain the water, then gently squeeze (don't wring) your knitting and roll it in a towel to extract as much moisture as possible. Lay your damp knitting right-side up on your blocking surface and gently nudge the piece to your finished measurements.

• **Steaming** : Set the temperature of your iron to the lowest setting that allows steam. Gently use the iron to steam the entire piece in an up and down motion (never side to side) without any pressure. Be careful to insert a fine cotton cloth between the iron and the knitting.

Special note for beginners

To sum up perfect stitch definition means:

- *A 4ply merino Worsted Spun yarn*
- *Circular metal needles with a slightly smaller diameter (1/2 mm) than the pattern recommendation*
- *Garter stitch and control of the tension by holding the working yarn on the index.*
- *Relaxation, and patience and practice*
- *Wet blocking*

THANK YOU !

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