HOW I TEACH BEGINNING KNITTING CLASSES

By Cori Eichelberger

I teach beginning knitting at our local library with my limit being 8 students. (8 is a lot if you're teaching for the first time, I would recommend fewer.) Classes are all free through a legacy fund, so the library pays me, but we also provide the needles and yarn. My classes always have a waiting list since you can't get free instruction and materials anywhere else in the area. Some students show up and already have knowledge of knitting from the past. They maybe just can't remember how to cast on or how to read a pattern. This can make it difficult to keep the class "together" as they usually can knit and sometimes purl a few stitches and are ready to go forward.

I teach a hat for the first project, but I only really teach adults who have signed up so they all arrive with a good attitude. As opposed to children or young adults, who may not want to be there. I ALWAYS cast on (about 24 sts) for everyone first, and then I teach the knit stitch. We use size 9 16-inch circular needles and heavy worsted or aran weight yarn (but nothing too bulky). I taught a Kleenex packet cover for children or young beginners; I will post that pattern on Ravelry.

Often someone who has done crochet will have preferences already established with how they hold their yarn. Most crocheters will prefer to hold their yarn in their left hand, so you will need to take that into consideration. I have found that even if I am teaching knitters how to "throw" with their right hand. A crocheter will automatically continue to want to grab the yarn with their left hand. I have to make the decision to just "go with it" but I do knit continental most of the time so it is an easy switch for me.

KNIT STITCH RHYME: (say it aloud, over and over)

In through the front door

Run around the back

Out through the window

And off jumps Jack

I first show the movements on giant needles and a cord (like super bulky yarn) that makes it easier for everyone in the room to see. I repeat the rhyme several times while they watch. I then ask them to try with me. A couple more times with my big yarn and needles and then I move around the room to each student. I move slowly and check in to see if each person seems to be catching on or is really struggling. I often must put my arms around the person from behind them to help guide their hands. I ALWAYS ask person to get that close first.

I make everyone knit at least 3 rows (of these 24 stitches) because that's about how long it takes for your brain to teach your fingers what to do without a struggle or thinking too hard. If the class isn't struggling, I will teach the knitted cast on or the purl stitch as well in the first class, although I can't imagine doing that with kids.

I have an hour and a half of time each week for 3 or 4 weeks, we often run overtime.

PHONE A FRIEND: I require 15 minutes a day of knitting practice but also give each person in my classes a business card so that they can have "2 phone a friend" calls. I don't ever want a knitter to go from one week to the next without being able to knit/practice every day because they've made some type of error that they can't fix, or everything has fallen off the needles. They can text or call, and I will meet them, or they can drive to my house and I will fix whatever problem it is that they have encountered. I find, that in about 30 seconds, I can usually fix any beginner trouble and they can be on their way. If a student can't practice or has such a mess on their needles that they can't continue, they will many times drop out of class and I'll never see them again. (Remember, the class here is free so they have no incentive to stick it out.)

PURL STITCH RHYME

In under the fence,

Grab the sheep,

Out the gate,

And off we leap.

CLASS PROJECT Basic Beginning Knit Aran Hat (there is a coupon code for anyone teaching a new knitter to get the pattern for $1 – code: iteach)

WEEK 1

Cast on for each class member

Teach knit stitch

Each student works at least 3 rows over 24 stitches. (knitting flat)

If time allows, teach knitted cast on or purl stitch

WEEK 2

Teach purl and cast on (I'm reading the group to see how quickly we can move)

Each student purls at least 3 rows over 24 stitches. (knitting flat)

Practice ribbing – the hat uses 2X2 rib, so we need to practice that a lot

Get stitches cast on if possible, some will be able, and some won't as they'll still need practice

Joining your cast on in the round. Here's a good video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXJpwbE0mtk

IF I HAVE 4 WEEKS FOR CLASS – I will save the rest for next class.

A visual reminder of moving the yarn from the back to the front (and vice versa) between the needles is necessary. Show the rhythm – K2, move yarn to front, P2, move yarn to back repeat

If time allows cast on hats and start ribbing

Homework: practice knitting, purling and ribbing; some will work ribbing section

WEEK 3

Get all hats cast on and ribbing completed. Some will be well past this and others lagging behind

Explain stitch markers and how they work. Mark BOR for everyone. They will need to bring (or make) some stitch markers before next class. Use yarn, string, tiny rubber bands or purchase

Some will be ready to learn K2tog decreases because they'll get to that before next week.

WEEK 4

Show K2tog stitch and explain abbreviations and where to find them in patterns.

Show first round of decrease section and how to count it out.

Finish top of hat decreases. (I do this using 2 circulars, half the stitches on each, rotating thru on the last couple of rounds of decreases. Once the knitter gets to 4 stitches in each sections the knitting is too tight to stretch around the circumference of the needle.)

Show how to pull yarn through and cinch at the top.

Teach weaving in ends.

Talk about blocking hats. (I use wet blocking, often these first hats need some real manipulation to get them looking better. I talk about using a balloon to stretch the hat and allowing it to dry.)

First day of class handouts: (to be fair, the library copies everything for me – providing the list could work just as well, but I have had a number of students without computer access)

https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Slip-Knot

https://blog.tincanknits.com/2013/06/14/knitted-cast-on/

https://www.wikihow.com/Do-the-Long-Tail-Cast-On

https://blog.tincanknits.com/2013/06/14/knit/

https://blog.tincanknits.com/2013/06/14/purl/

https://blog.tincanknits.com/2013/08/17/k2tog/

<u>Notes for Knitters</u>

local yarn store –BE @ Lakeside, Excelsior

Web's America's Yarn Store – www.yarn.com

Join Ravelry – pick a fun user name

Knitting Books for Beginners

Evie Rosen's, <u>Teach Yourself to Knit</u> $9.95

Susan B. Anderson's <u>Kids Knitting Workshop</u> $9.50

3 types of needles	**2 stitch types**
Straight, circular, double-pointed	Knit and purl

Sizes/Weights of yarn (# of stitches to the inch)

Fingering	7-8 sts
Sport	6-6.5 sts
Double-knitting (DK)	5.5-6 sts
Worsted	4.5-5.5 sts
Heavy worsted	4-4.5 sts

Bulky	3-3.5 sts
Super bulky/polar	1.5-2.5 sts

For your "Yarn notions bag"

scissors, pencil, Chibi needles, tape measure, stich markers

I want you to learn how to knit easily and stress free. I am usually hesitant to teach you everything at once. I will teach in steps, in order to move you along, but once you are ready to take on a new technique yourself, speak up and I will try to accommodate. It will be much easier for me to fix your problem and then send you on your way as opposed to trying to teach you how to fix something that you may not be ready to even "see" yet. Once you have been knitting for a while, stitches become easier to see and your confidence in fixing twisted stitches or dropped stitches will also rise.

Knitting Rhyme	**Purl Rhyme**
In through the front door	In under the fence
Run around the back	grab the Sheep
Out through the window	Out the gate
And off jumps Jack	and off we leap

Minnesota Knitter's Guild –3rd Tuesday of each month, 7-9 pm; MN Textile Center

www.knitter.org newsletters, Yarnover event is last Saturday in April

Teaching someone who knows how to crochet