



An HJS Studio Pattern: Simple Knit Hat



Ever wish you could find a hat pattern that's easy enough for beginning knitters (no need for a gauge swatch!), yet looks great, functions well, shows off handspun yarns beautifully, and fits without lots of fiddly measurements? I think this pattern, which I evolved over years of knitting hats for winter wear, meets those criteria very well. I hope you enjoy using the pattern as much as I've enjoyed using the hats.

To the right is a selection of handspun hats I've made and used over the years. The mostly-white hat is the first, was made of handcard-ed Perendale wool, and has been used as my barn hat since we got our sheep in 1998.



Update in 2008: I generally use other hats now, that give me more coverage (including doubled cuffs) over the ears, on the coldest winter days, but still enjoy wearing this one in the fall and early spring.

I have included both a narrative-style pattern and a concise pattern, as well as easy variations and yarn suggestions for handspinners.

Narrative Pattern

Materials: You'll need about three ounces / 90 grams of sport or worsted weight yarn for a hat with a single turn-back cuff over the ears. Five ounces / 140 grams will give you a very long hat with a very generous double turn-back cuff. As little as 2 ounces / 60 grams may work for a cloche-style hat with no cuff. Handspun yarns should wrap about 12 to 16 wraps per inch to fall in the range of sport to worsted-weight yarn. Because the hat is knit in knit 2, purl 2 ribbing, which is very elastic, a wide variety of gauges will work well.

Equipment: Use a 16" circular knitting needle for the body of the hat. Select any size you're comfortable using with the yarn you've chosen. I like to use smaller needles than



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most people, as I knit rather loosely but like fairly dense knitted cloth, especially for winter woolies. I would use US 2 or at most 3 (2 or 3 mm) with sport or double knitting weight yarn, most likely US 3 or 4 (3 or 3.5 mm) with worsted weight yarn. After the first decrease round you will need to switch to 4 or 5 double pointed knitting needles of the same size (or a size smaller—not a big deal in a project like this).

You can work this hat flat, then sew it up, in which case add two stitches for your selvage stitches—but if you haven't yet tried circular knitting, this is the ideal project. Do be brave and give it a try, you'll be surprised how fast and easy it is!

Sizing the hat

Adult heads average around 21-22 inches / 53-56 cm measured from the forehead over the ears, to the back of the neck, and back to the forehead. Because the hat is knitted in knit 2, purl 2 ribbing, it's extremely elastic, so you don't need as many stitches as you might think to comfortably fit a head. I cast on about 88 stitches for worsted weight yarn, 96 for double knitting or sport weight yarn, for a total of 16-18 inches' (40-45 cm) worth of stitches if you did a stockinette stitch gauge swatch. When I have used more stitches, I've usually found the hat is too large after the first few wearings, and has a tendency to fly off on windy days.

So, if you're using worsted weight yarn, cast on 88 stitches. If you're using a lighter yarn, cast on 96 stitches. Join in a circle, making sure the stitches aren't twisted, and start knitting knit 2, purl 2 around.

The next question is how long to make the hat? Some questions to ask:

- ❖ Will the hat completely cover the ears?
- ❖ Will the hat have a cuff?
- ❖ Will the cuff be single, or will it be double or even triple for extra warmth?

A hat with no cuff, but which covers the ears completely, will be about 9 inches / 23 cm in length when finished (includes top shaping). The orange hat in the picture above is like this.

A hat with a single cuff will be about 12 inches / 30 cm in length, including top shaping.

A hat with a more generous cuff which covers the ears with a turn-back which extends slightly below and above the ears, will be about 13.5 inches / 35 cm long, including top shaping. The blue/purple/green hat just above the orange hat has a generous cuff that's wonderful on cold, windy, snowy days—when I pull the hat way down on the back of my neck, there's still enough cuff to cover my ears completely.

For every additional cuff turn-back, allow at least 4 inches / 9 cm in length. The grayish hat at the bottom left of the picture has a double turn-back cuff, for three layers of knitting over my ears. The entire length of the hat is 17.5 inches / 45 cm, and will be my new barn hat this winter.

The decreasing at the top will take approximately 2 inches / 5 cm of the length of the knitting. Knit until your hat is as long as you like and covers all but the 4 inches / 10 cm "crown" at the top of your head when you try it on (yes, pop it on your head to try on, needle and all! :)



The decreasing consists of decreasing one stitch of each purl rib (knit 2, purl 2 together around), continue with knit 2, purl 1 for about an inch / 2.5 cm or so, then decrease one stitch of each knit rib (knit 2 together, purl 1 around), continue with knit 1, purl 1 for another inch / 2.5 cm or so, then finish the decreasing with two rounds of knit 2 together all around. Break off your yarn, thread it through all the loops left on your needles, draw it up tightly, and finish it off inside the hat.

At some point you will need to knit onto double pointed (dp) needles, as the circular will be too long to hold them all. Just pick up a dp needle and use it in place of the working side of the circular needle. Knit about 1/3 or 1/4 of your stitches onto the dp needle, then begin to knit onto the next dp needle. Continue until all stitches have been knit onto the double-pointed needles, and then keep knitting in rounds. Wooden needles slip less than metal ones do, if you're knitting loosely.

Basic Pattern

Materials: You need about 3 ounces / 90 grams of sportweight, double knitting weight, or worsted weight yarn if making a hat with a cuff over the ears. A hat with an extra-generous double turn-back cuff requires about 5 ounces / 140 grams of yarn.

If you're using handspun and aren't sure what commercial yarn your handspun is equivalent to, wrap it snugly around a ruler, counting the times it fits into one inch without overlapping (and don't push the yarn along the ruler—that squashes it unnaturally). About 10-12 wraps per inch (wpi) is typical for worsted weight yarn, 14 for double-knitting weight, and 16 wpi for sport weight yarn. None of these are exact equivalents, though, since handspun is usually quite a bit loftier than commercial yarn, but it will work just fine in a simple project like this.

Equipment needed: Circular needles, 16 inches / 40 cm long and a set of double pointed needles in the same size or a size smaller. Choose a size needle you like to use with the yarn you want. Tapestry (blunt) needle that you can thread your yarn through for pulling the yarn through the last few stitches and securing it inside your hat.

Cast on 88 stitches for worsted weight yarn, 96 stitches for double knitting or sport weight yarn. Knit in rounds knit 2, purl 2 ribbing until you've reached the desired depth of your hat minus the 2 inches / 5 cm needed for shaping:

- ❖ A hat with no cuff will be knit in 2/2 ribbing for about 7 inches / 18 cm before shaping.
- ❖ A hat with a single cuff will be knit in 2/2 ribbing for about 11 inches / 28 cm before shaping.
- ❖ A hat with a double cuff will be knit in 2/2 ribbing for about 15 inches / 38 cm before shaping.

Decrease round 1: Knit 2, purl 2 together for one round. You will have 66 stitches left if you cast on 88; 72 if you cast on 96. Continue with k2, p1 ribbing around for about 1 inch.

Decrease round 2: Knit 2 together, purl 1 for one round. There will be 44 stitches left if you started with 88; 48 if you started with 96. Continue with k1, p1 ribbing around for about 1 inch.



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Decrease round 3: Knit 2 together around all stitches two full rounds. You will have 11 stitches left if you cast on 88, 12 if you started with 96. Break off yarn, leaving a tail about 12 inches / 30 cm long. Thread the yarn into your tapestry needle, and thread it through all the loops on the knitting needles—pull a little bit snug, then repeat so the yarn passes through all the loops a second time. Draw up very tightly (but not so tightly you break your yarn!). Poke the needle through the hole at the center and take several stitches across the hole on the inside, then darn the yarn on inside of the hat so it won't come undone.

Easy Pattern Variations

Once you've made a hat or two, try these easy variations:

- ❖ Knit in k2, p2 ribbing for a bit, then purl 3 stitches in the next purl 2 rib, and continue with k2, p2 around. This will shift the ribs by one stitch. Repeat the shift at regular or random intervals. The fit will be the same, but the hat is a bit more eye-catching. Decrease as above. The top left hat in the picture above illustrates the subtle spiral this results in.
- ❖ Try knitting the section that will be directly over the ears in an angora or angora-wool blend yarn, or a yarn with lots of alpaca in it. Pure warmth and luxury!
- ❖ Knit one hat as given here. Then, using the next smaller size needles or a slightly finer yarn (try an angora blend!), pick up stitches at the bottom of the hat, and work another in the opposite direction. Push the second hat inside the other. You now have a lined hat that will be quite wind-resistant. I've written a more specific double hat pattern for that type of hat, if you're interested.
- ❖ Try knitting your hat in a lacey rib stitch, lined or unlined. Both dressy and functionally warm!
- ❖ A jaunty finish is to add a pompom or tassel made from your yarn, or some other yarn that complements or matches the hat. In that case, break off a longer piece of yarn for finishing the hat off with. When you've secured the stitches, take a few stitches across the hole on the inside of the hat. Then bring the tail of the yarn back to the right side, through the center hole. Carefully attach your pompom or tassel to the tail, bring the tail back into the hat, and darn it off so it will be well secured.
- ❖ Children's heads are not that much smaller than adult heads. Try knitting with a bit finer yarn and smaller needles to fit kids under 10 years old, or do a gauge swatch in stockinette stitch, multiply your gauge by the child's head measurement, then subtract about 15 percent of the stitch total to cast on (remembering to make the number a multiple of 4). This should give a hat with a bit of growth room to it.

The Yarn

Here are some thoughts on spinning yarn for these hats.

Trite, but true: The sky's the limit when you spin your own yarn for a hat! Let your creative juices flow as extravagantly as the sensibility of the eventual wearer will allow. Almost any kind of yarn can be used to make a functional hat.

Hats offer an opportunity to make the most of beginner handspun. If the fiber is soft enough to be worn touching hair and ears and forehead, and the yarn pliable enough to knit with, it can make a hat.



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All sorts of wools can be used successfully in hats. One of my favorites is Perendale. It has the strength of Border Leicester or Romney, but with more crimp and a touch of crispness, giving it a lot of loft, bounce, and warmth.

Fibers can be prepared by any method. Spin locks of wool from the fold, or tease them and spin from the fluff. Use commercial roving or top. Spin fiber you've carded or combed yourself.

If you played with small amounts of exotic fibers as a new spinner and don't know what to do with them, consider a hat. Ply finer yarns together so the knit gauge will be similar to your thicker yarns. Group colors harmoniously, or be wild and go for contrast. Alternate textures for visual impact, or place according to warmth needs—fuzzy angora where it will touch the ears, for example, smoother silk on the outside of the cuff.

Novelty yarns are another great possibility for fun and unusual hats. One of my favorite hats, given away a long time ago, was a blue-green wool with locks of bright green mohair inserted during the plying. Talk about "bad hair day"! I never wore it in public, but the recipient did :)

There's an exception to every rule, and center top hat in the photo is one. Normally, firmly-spun singles will slant in knitted pieces, even when worked in rounds. This hat used yarn left over from my first all-singles woven piece. Because the yarn was dyed after spinning, the twist seems to be quite well set. I didn't want to take the time to ply the leftover yarn I wanted to use in this hat, so I just held two singles together and knit away. It's interesting to see how differently the dots of color play in knitting compared to the scarf woven using the same yarn.

If you make a hat using this pattern and your handspun yarn, please send me a picture, I'll be delighted to show off your work here or in my gallery, with credit to you.



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