
Reading Knitting Patterns and Charts with Debbie Stoller

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

(light music) - Sometimes people tell me they can't follow a knitting pattern or they can't read a knitting pattern. I have to say I never really understand what they mean. I mean, a knitting pattern is pretty much like a recipe. It's a set of instructions for how to make things, including ingredients or materials, abbreviations so everything doesn't have to be written out every single time, and then stitch by stitch directions about how to make what's being shown. I'm gonna walk you through some knitting patterns so you'll understand them, I'll even show you how to read a chart and you should have no problem with knitting patterns. (light music)

Chapter 2 - Patterns and Charts

How to read a knitting pattern

- We'll start with a really simple pattern. This is a pattern for a knit bag that's just made out of a couple of different squares and rectangles of fabric. We'll go through it step by step. First thing any pattern will tell you is the finished size of the project. In this case, 15 inches wide by 12 inches tall. It's telling me that because otherwise, I don't know. Is this like a huge hobo bag? Is it a tiny little purse? What size of bag is this instructions gonna make? Well, here, it's 15 inches wide by 12 inches tall by two inches deep. The next thing are the materials I'm gonna need. It is telling me the exact yarn it wants me to get, and then here it says MC is two skeins of blue flannel and CC is one skein of winter blue. What is MC and CC? MC stands for main color, CC stands for contrast color, but you don't need to memorize that abbreviation because every pattern or pattern book is gonna have a page where they explain what the abbreviations mean. So in this case, MC down here, like I said, it stands for main color and CC stands for contrasting color. Most patterns do use the same abbreviations, but they'll still always have a key to explain to you what the abbreviations mean. The next material I need is a pair of size eight knitting needles, or size needed to obtain gauge, which means if I'm not getting the right gauge that the pattern is calling for, I should change the size of my knitting needles so that I get the gauge. And so the very important information here is the gauge. It says 18 stitches and 24 rows should be four inches in stockinette stitch, st st. Again, that's an abbreviation, and it's right here, st st, means stockinette stitch. You know what the thing is gonna be, how big it's gonna be, you know the materials you need. You know the size knitting needles you need or you're gonna change up the size knitting needles to get this gauge. The next part of this project on this pattern shows me all these boxes with numbers around them. This is what's called a schematic, and it's showing me the finished sizes of a number of the different pieces that I'm gonna have to make to complete this project. For instance, here's a front piece, it's the front of the bag, and this is showing you that the front is gonna be 15 inches wide by 12 inches long. Here's a strap, it's telling me that piece of fabric is gonna be one and a 1/4 inches wide by 25 inches long. The instructions are gonna tell me how to make the fabric those sizes, but it's just giving me an idea of what I'll end up with after I finish making these pieces. So the next part of a knitting pattern is, of course, the directions, and usually these are broken up into smaller pieces so it's not so overwhelming. The first part of this project is to make front and back panels, make two. That just means follow these instructions to make a piece and then follow them again to make a second piece. "CO 68 sts in MC." (laughs) Well, CO, we go to our abbreviation page, means cast on. Cast on 68 sts. You may already know that that

stands for stitches, and MC, we already know that means main color. So what it means is cast on 68 stitches using that main color yarn which is the blue flannel. Next, work in st st, we know that means stockinette stitch, work in stockinette stitch for 11 inches. So I'm gonna cast on those stitches and I'm gonna keep knitting and measuring until my piece of fabric is 11 inches long. Then work in garter stitch for one inch. So next, after it's 11 inches long, I'm gonna work in garter stitch for another inch and then "BO all sts." That doesn't mean that the stitches have body odor, it means, BO, in this case it means bind off. So I bind all stitches, and then I have one piece done and then I do the second piece, okay, that part's done. The next part of the instructions, the gusset and the straps, you can follow them all exactly the same way. It tells you how many stitches to cast on, what yarn to use, what stitch to work it in and how long to knit it and when to bind it off. And then at the end here it tells you how to put the piece together. It says you're supposed to sew the front and the back panels together to this other piece, and it says you sew on the straps, it tells you exactly where to put it, in this case two inches in from the left and right edges, and then sometimes it'll also just say finish off yarn, which is something you would automatically do anyway, it's not always in the pattern. It's really easy to follow, it's as easy as reading a cake recipe. Now let's look at another pattern. This is for a sweater, this little hoodie here, and here's the pattern. We start out with the sizes. Now, this is a little bit different than in the bag pattern because the bag was just one size, but with a clothing item, people come in different sizes so you're gonna wanna make the clothes in different sizes. This pattern will give you the instructions to make a sweater that will come out in a small, medium, large or extra large size, and the reason it says small and then all these other ones in parentheses, is what it means is that from this point on, every time you see instructions, the first instruction is gonna be for the small size, and then in parentheses and comma, the next one will be for medium, the next one will be for large, the next one will be for extra large. So let's say I want to make a large sweater. Whenever I see instructions that are set up like this, I'm gonna follow the instructions that are in the middle of those three in the parentheses. Now, sometimes when I buy clothes I'm a large, sometimes I'm an extra large, sometimes I'm even a medium. How do I know which one of these is gonna look the best on me? Well, nicely, this pattern tells me what the finished bust size is. Now that's the finished bust, that's not my bust. I don't want the sweater to be the exact same size as my bust because that's probably gonna be too tight. This is a bit of a baggy sweater. So if I measure my own bust I might decide which of these finished sizes is gonna be the most comfortable, maybe my bust with an inch or two, and then I'll know okay, I'll follow the instructions for large, that's really the one that works the best. And finished length is a little bit different for each, that doesn't matter nearly as much. Alright, onwards. The materials, it's telling me the yarn. Now, here, it uses three colors, A, B and C, and we see this thing about the small, medium, large and extra large right away. For this color it says five, and then in parentheses five, six, seven, close parentheses skeins, so what, am I supposed to get five, am I supposed to get six? Well, I said we were gonna do the large size, so that's the number in the middle of these three. So I'm gonna need to get six skeins of color A, but you might only need to get five skeins if you're making a small or a medium, or seven skeins if you're making an extra large. The rest of these instructions follow that. It's telling me the size of the needle, the length of the needle. It wants me to also have some smaller needles, some stitch-holders, and it's giving me the gauge. This pattern also has some specific stitch patterns that it's gonna want you to use. A rib stitch and a border stitch, and so these are abbreviated explanations for how I'm supposed to do that pattern. Let's just look at this first one. It says rows one, three, five, and in parentheses it says WS. That means wrong side, so row one is gonna be the wrong side of the work, the work that's inside the sweater, and row two and four is

gonna be the right side of the work or the side that shows. Then P2, I know that means purl, purl two. Now, here it gets kinda funky, right, there's a star and it says K1, comma, P2, semicolon, rep from star across. Now what does that mean? Don't be afraid, it's really easy, I'll explain it. All it wants you to do is knit one, purl two, and then repeat from star, so then knit one, purl two, knit one, purl two, it says across until you get to the end. So once again, I would purl two and then I would knit one, purl two, knit one, purl two, knit one, purl two, knit one, purl two, until I got to the end of my work. This little structure with the stars and the semicolons, you'll see that all the time, and now you know how to read it. Again, you'll see here in the beginning of the instructions for the back, it says "CO 86, 95, 104, 113 sts." Well, we already know that that means cast on. Now, do I cast on 86 stitches or 95 stitches or 104 or 113 stitches? Well, we know I'm doing the large size which is in the middle, so I'm gonna cast on 104 stitches. What some people do with a pattern like this is they'll actually highlight the number that corresponds in all of these set-ups to the size that they're doing so they don't have to try and find it every time. You can do whatever you like with that. And just like before, it's showing me a schematic, in this case what the finished size of the pieces that I'm gonna be knitting are. And again, the measurements of each is a little bit different whether I'm making a small one or the large one or the extra large, et cetera. And so all the rest of it is just like the other pattern, just follow that to make a sweater.

How to read a knitting chart

- Here's a pattern that has all the usual suspects of almost every knitting pattern, the sizes, the materials, the gauge, the directions? But this pattern also has one extra thing, which is right here. It's the knitting chart. And this chart is gonna show you how to knit this skull that's on the sleeves of the sweater when it's done. So how do you read a chart like this? The first thing to know is that every box represents a stitch in most of these charts. It's also showing me here a key. This is telling me that when I see an orange box on the chart, it's supposed to be using the main color, and when I see a white box in the chart, I should be knitting that with the contrast color yarn. Obviously the colors aren't white and orange, and they might not be black and white like in the project. I might be doing a sweater that's yellow and blue, and I'll decide which one is the main color, and the contrast color. So how can we read this chart? The first thing to know, it's really important, is that a knitting chart always shows you what the front of the fabric looks like, the right side, the side of the fabric that is facing the world. It doesn't show you the wrong side of the fabric, what to do there. So here we're gonna see that the first box on the lower right here is one. These are all numbered, and that will help us remember that you read knitting charts from the bottom to the top. You work your way up with each row. Row one would be your first right side row, and you read this from right to left. That's not so terrible because when you're knitting stitches, you're knitting them off the left hand needle, working from right to left, so you would knit a main color, knit a main color, blah, blah, blah, until you get here, you would knit with the contrast color each box is a stitch, until you get to the end. So now you've just finished your right side row, you've finished the row that faces. This is made in stockinette, so you've just finished making a knit row. Now you're up to the purl row, but I said this is only showing you the front of the fabric. Well, for the purl row, you have to read it the other way. So row two, you start by reading from the left, do-do-do-do-do-do to there. Row three, you read back this way, row four, you read back that way, and that's if you're knitting flat, back and forth. This sleeve is knit flat, and if you think about it, that is really the way your fabric gets built up when you're knitting, right? It doesn't really get built like this. The yarn is actually traveling, it's making some stitches this way, and then it's making that row of stitches from that side, and it's making this

row of stitches, it's just you have to be able to flip that around in your head a little bit. So the rows until I get all the way to the end of this chart which is at row 51. Sometimes these boxes can stand for different stitches, like they want you to make a knit or they want you to make a purl. You'll always have a key that'll tell you what the boxes mean and you just do what it says. The one time that you don't read these charts the way I told you in this zig zag pattern, is if you're reading a chart where you're knitting in the round. When you're knitting in the round, you never turn around and go back like you do when you're knitting straight. And then you would read every row from right to left, which is, of course, a little bit easier, because it corresponds to the way you're knitting the stitches off your needle. One last thing about charts. It's easy to lose track, so I like to use post it notes. I just stick them right above the row I'm about to work, so here I'm about to work row seven. I put them right there. And that way I can see not only what I need to do, but also I can use the stitches below as landmarks, so I can know when I get to that white contrast color stitch on the row before, I need to make one in the row that I'm working also. And every time I finish a row, I just move them up to the next row, and so on. A lot of people like to do it this way. They cover up the stitches they've done instead of putting it above, but like I said, I like to do it above so I can use the stitches in the previous row as sort of landmarks and help me remember my place in the chart. And that's it's. That's knitting charts. Easy peasy.