

READY, SET, KNIT

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Colorwork Series, Workshop#1, Stranding

Colorwork Series

Workshop #1, Stranded Knitting

1. What's the difference between **stranded knitting** and **Fair Isle Knitting**?

Fair Isle is a type of stranded knitting which involves using specific patterns which originated in the Shetland Islands.

2. What is **stranded** knitting?

a. It requires the use of 2 colors in a row; one or both colors can be changed on subsequent rows.

b. It is generally worked in stockinette.

c. Although it can be done on straight needles, stranded knitting is most commonly done on circular needles.

d. Traditionally, the knitter holds one of the strands in the right hand and the other in the left. If you use this method, be sure to decide ahead of time which color you will hold in which hand; be consistent with your colors throughout the knitting or the pattern may look a bit strange when you are done. Place the ball of the color you are holding in your left hand to your left as you knit and the other ball to the right. You will throw your yarn in the English manner with the right hand and pick the yarn in the continental manner with the left. For a good video of the traditional method, go to knittinghelp.com, click on Advanced Techniques, and scroll down to "How to Knit with Two Colors at the Same Time – Stranded Knitting". If you are a continental knitter, you may wish to hold both colors in either the left or right hand. For a great demonstration of this method, I recommend the DVD, *A Knitting Glossary with Elizabeth Zimmerman and Meg Swansen*. Meg demonstrates her technique and shows the placement of the strands on the fingers quite clearly. Amy from knitting.help.com also demonstrates her version of this technique.

e. The strand not in use is carried across the back of the piece you are knitting. Be very careful not to pull the carried strand too tightly as this will pucker your knitting and make it unsightly. Also be careful not to leave the carried strand hanging too loosely as the loops may catch on rings or fingers when you try to put the item on. It is generally agreed that you should not carry the yarn across more than 5 stitches. If your pattern calls for a longer carry, you must trap the strand every few stitches as you continue knitting with the working strand. I think Meg Swansen's technique is the best I've ever seen --- you can trap the carried yarn without twisting the yarns and making a mess of your knitting. Of course, you can manually twist the carried strand around the working strand, but this is time-consuming and messy.

f. Stranded knitting patterns are presented on charts...do not let them intimidate you! Each square on the graph paper represents one stitch. Charts may be in color or colors may be expressed by different symbols. Unless otherwise noted, charts are read from bottom to top. Right side rows are read from right to left; wrong side rows are read

from left to right. If you are knitting in the round, read charts from right to left for all rows. Keeping your place on a chart is the main challenge in color knitting. Consider enlarging the chart and placing it on a magnetic board equipped with a magnetic straight edge. Place the straight edge just above the row you are working on; this way, you will be able to see the row you are working on and the rows you have already completed. Seeing where you've been gives you a point of reference for subsequent color changes. I also hedge my bets with a Kacha Kacha row counter as I'm always afraid the straight edge will move (cats, dogs, grandchildren) and I will lose my place.

Note: If you plan to design your own charted motifs, be sure to use knitter's graph paper because knitted stitches are slightly wider than they are tall and the squares in regular graph paper are, strangely enough, square. Free knitter's graph paper is available at several sites on the Internet.

Workshop #1

Stranded Project: Bird in Hand Mittens

1. Getting Ready

a. Go to www.kategilbert.com and download Bird in Hand pattern (\$5.95). You may also order the pattern from WEBS at www.yarn.com or from Customer Service at 413-584-2225.

b. Measure your hand around the widest part – across the knuckles below your fingers. Do not include your thumb. Note down this measurement and choose the size that is closest to your measurement. My hands are smaller than size 8, so I went for a gauge of 28 sts = 4" instead of 29 and that seems to be working just fine.

c. Choose 2 highly contrasting colors of worsted weight yarn (one could be variegated) and do a gauge swatch in the round for your size. Change needle sizes if necessary to get your gauge. You don't want the mittens to fit a giant or an elf; you want them to fit you! You will need about 215 yards of each color. (I'm using Valley Yarns Amherst and Artyarns Supermerino variegated.)

d. a set of dpns that get the required gauge

e. tapestry needle and cotton scrap yarn for stitch holders

Holding the Yarns in the Traditional Way



Picking the Yarn in the Left Hand
in the Continental Manner



Throwing the yarn in the
Right Hand
in the English Manner

