

*The swatch that
mistook itself for a
hat, and its
friends...*



By Pat Feeley, for High Country
Knitwear

I was swatching, about six inches wide, for a pattern for a prospective gansey when a friend of mine asked me to go with her to a knitting affair for which admission would be a hat for the homeless. “Okay,” I said, and simply extended the 30 stitch pattern swatch I was working on until it was 22 inches long, a pretty decent size for a man’s hat.



Then I knit the cast-on to the bind-off for a back seam, matching pattern as best I could, and picked up 3 out of four edge stitches to obtain 78 stitches.

I marked them into six groups of 13 stitches each. The first knit row began the decreases, and thereafter every other row was a decrease row, with the last three rows having a decrease on each, until I had only 12 stitches left on the needles. I cut a long end, and threaded it twice through the remaining stitches, and snugged it up carefully, because this is fundamentally a pencil roving that tends to pull apart if you pull it.

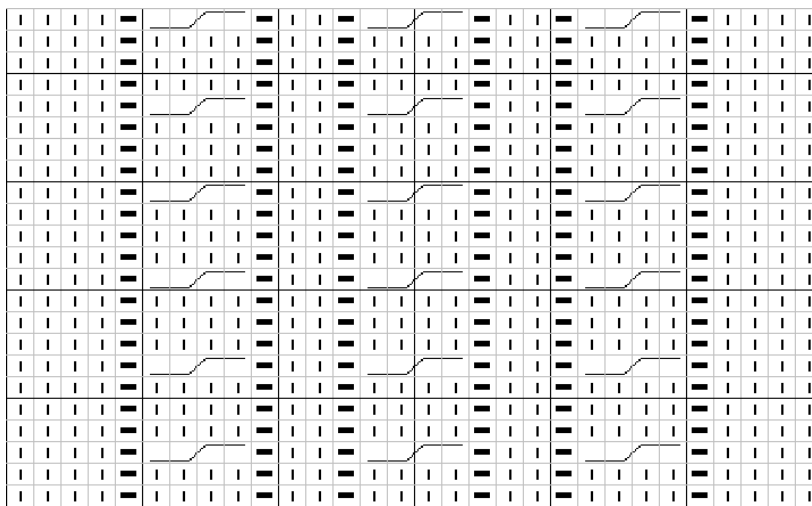
It couldn’t be simpler, nor, working on #8 needles with [Brown Sheep’s Lamb’s Pride Bulky](#), could it have been denser or warmer.

You could make it a little smaller by taking out up to five stitches from the pattern to narrow it, and making it a little shorter—20 inches for an average woman, 21 for a good medium size. The crown size adjusts to the circumference, but try for about six groups about 11 stitches (66 altogether), 12 stitches (72 altogether) or 13 stitches (78 altogether). You can also make it smaller by using a smaller yarn and needles, and swatching carefully.

This hat is much easier to do with a fairly short cable repeat; a 32 stitch repeat is probably not what you want if you care about matching them up. But you can use any stitch pattern that pleases you, including plain stockingette. For women and children, or for less rigorous climates, you could also use a worsted yarn and #5 or 6# needles, or a DK yarn on #3s. Swatch to make sure that the width of the band is right.

Here's the stitch pattern I used—just a four-stitch/four row cable with purl stitches on each side, separated by two knit stitches, and flanked by four knit stitches.

This is fairly simple even for someone new to cabling; using a cable needle or double point. Lift the first two stitches on each crossing row (all right side rows) onto a cable

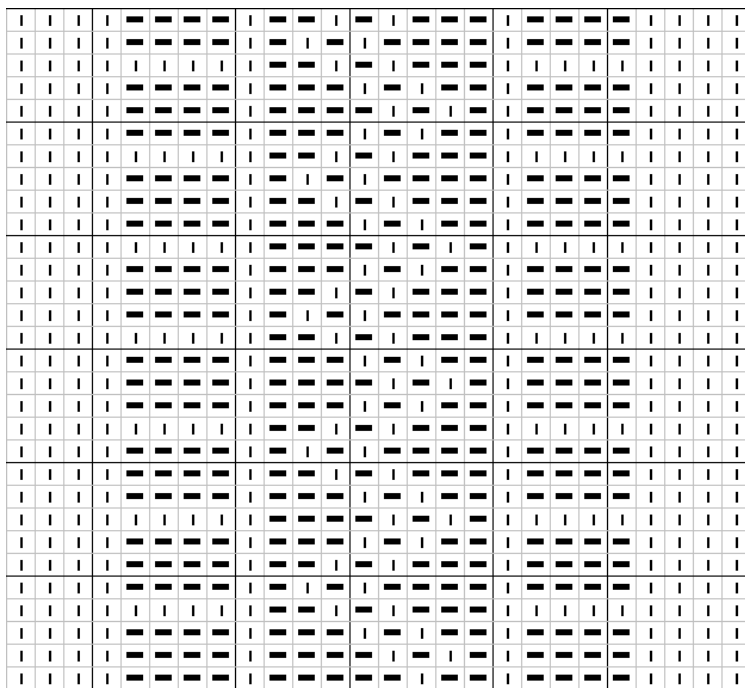


needle or double-point and hold the cable needle at the back of the work.

Knit the next two stitches on the left needle, then knit the two stitches that are on the cable needle.

It's a pretty good introduction to cabling, and on a project that is fairly quick to do.

As an alternative to cabling, the next chart is a simple knit/purl pattern



These are just ideas to get your creativity going.

Any good stitch dictionary will supply many more, but the formula is the same for all of them—more a recipe than a pattern, and fun for the thinking knitter who adapt a basic scheme. Cables, intarsia, jacquard, stitch pattern, different yarns, anything that takes your fancy will work with this.

As always, swatch first!

And as long as I was making hats, I raided my oddments—a half ball of this left from a sweater, a spare ball of that from something that took less than expected, a bit left over from something else—and kept going on hats that used various colors and sizes of yarn. They add up, and sooner or later you have a bag of mismatched balls. When I've finished a larger project, or several, I often try to use up at least a few of these, and sometimes I purchase mismatches deliberately, to combine in a variety of ways.

I especially like to convert my odds and ends into hats and mittens. Sometimes these are for me, or for family and friends, but everyone needs hats, including your local homeless community, a school teacher or principal who might have some around to give to children who come to school without them, and Afghans for Afghans and other charitable organizations. Beyond the conventional hat with the striped cuff, I long ago moved on to the one with a jacquard band, elaborated and improved into Crested Butte, with its cozy lining. And now I've really taken to playing with the yarns left over from other projects.

I started with with the largest yarns I could find for the cuffs (sometimes two or more partial balls of a smaller yarn, worked together to make a bulky or super bulky). And I work them much tighter than I would a sweater or other garment; hats don't need to be flexible as much as they need to be thick and warm.

I swatched, then cast on stitches sufficient to make an adult band—usually 20 to 22 inches in K1, P1, or K2, P2 rib for an adult hat—and worked the cuff to about 3 ½ inches, then working a knit row as the turning row.

Then, using a contrast yarn in a conventional weight, I begin the crown of the hat by increasing.



Recently, I worked a this blue variegated yarn into a band with 70 stitches, and increased by * k6, k1 tbl, k1 * to obtain 80 stitches; made the base of the crown 5 ½ inches long, then decreased by k8, ss/k2tog on alternate rows. When I had 24 stitches left on the needles, I worked the decreases on the remaining rows until I had 8 stitches through which to thread a long end through the loops on the needles, and draw it tight, weaving in on the inside of the hat. The cuff was knit on #9s, and the crown on #6s. These would be too tight for a garment, but they make a snug, cozy hat. This was a

child's size (dictated by the small amount of the blue variegated remaining), and went to a school benefit auction to raise funds for supplementary library, art, and music materials.

Another superbulky, at right, got 20 inches in 66 stitches, and a turning row, and was increased with the smaller yarn by k5, k1 tbl, k1, to obtain 77



stitches. The crown on this was also 5 ½ inches to the decreases, and the decreases were K9, ss/k2tog. I finished the crown off the same way. The cuff was knit on #10s, the crown on #6s.

You could make very nice mittens using the same general approach—big thick cuffs, but workable palms and thumbs. And for turning a not-always-becoming color, such as that gold, into something special, by using an accent yarn, this technique can't be beat. I'm thinking about trying it for the collar, cuffs, and edgings of a big hooded sweater that's on the drawing board.

Rules of thumb:

Two strands of fingering combine to make one strand of DK; two of DK to make one of worsted; two of worsted make one of bulky; two of bulky make one of super-bulky.

With combined yarns, it is especially important to compare their sizes and make sure they will **either** knit to the same gauge, or that you know how much **adjustment** (increasing or decreasing the number of stitches) you need to make to get a smooth transition from one yarn to another or a reasonable transit for decreasing.



The hat on the left combined a strand of worsted and a strand of variegated mohair that ran out above the ribbed cuff on #7s. I continued as long as I could on #6s until the mohair ran out; then made the transit to plain worsted on #5s, for several rows, to substitute for a decrease, and finished the crown in the worsted with alternate row decreases. It's still a warm and cheerful hat.

There is no gift like the gift of warmth, and that holds true whether it's to a friend or family member, or to a stranger in need.

One of my experiments with combining yarns was my heavy winter sweater, Geologica, for which there is no pattern. It is based on the classic Norwegian sweater shape: a T, with rectangular body, square shoulder, ribbed hem and cuff, and slightly increased sleeves worked up from the cuff, with a big turtleneck. The background, sleeves, and collar are chocolate brown bulky in a K4, P1 wide rib, and the intarsia rectangles worked in reverse stockingette are all different. I held the yarns together, looking and feeling to see if they matched for size. It's the only thing I've ever made that has been shown in an art



exhibition.

Here's a pictorial guide to what went into each:

<p>Left:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Cream/beige/brown/black silk with worsted and a strand of fine mohair2. Brown/beige/cream variegated with a strand of black DK3. Medium brown worsted with a beige/cream novelty4. Cream/beige/brown/black silk with medium beige worsted5. Cream/beige/brown varigated	<p>Center:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Collar2. Beige/black/rust silk with black worsted3. Westminster Wooly Stripe4. Oak worsted with beige and cream novelty5. Oak worsted with black novelty	<p>Right:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Light beige with black novelty2. brown DK, beige DK, mohair brown DK, black DK, cream DK, mohair3.4. variegated brown worsted, novelty5. brown worsted, cream worsted
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