

Crocheting Overview

Crocheting has been a favorite craft for generations, and with good reason. Mastering the art of crochet enables you to create wonderful and useable pieces of art, at a very reasonable cost.

Today's crochet patterns are more interesting and inspiring than ever, and incorporate vibrant colours and exciting new fibers. Using new patterns, you can create fun, fashionable, functional and economical pieces to wear.

Over the years, people have taken up and enjoyed the art of crochet for many reasons:

1. Most people who enjoy crocheting find the hobby to be very calming and relaxing
2. Most crochet enthusiasts find it interesting and rewarding to work with a variety of colours and textures.
3. Creating items of clothing to proudly display, like hats, scarves and sweaters, is incredibly rewarding.
4. Getting together for a crochet party with friends and family can be a great social activity.
5. Crocheting is portable; you can take your project along, wherever you need to be.
6. People who crochet make the most of their idle time, for example, crocheting while watching television.
7. Completing a crochet project provides a sense of pride and achievement.
8. Crocheting is an inexpensive hobby, and a great way to create beautiful and practical homemade gifts.
9. Self expression is an important element of crochet, giving the opportunity to design new patterns.

To begin any crochet project, you need to purchase some yarn and a needle. Crochet hooks come in different sizes and materials. Hook sizes G, H and I are recommended for beginners, as smaller hook sizes are much more difficult to manage. Steel hooks for crochet are normally used with fine threads to create intricate patterns. These hooks are usually available in sizes 00 up to 16, whereby higher numbers denote a smaller hook size. On the other hand, hooks for yarns are identified with letters starting at B and ranging up to Q, with B being the smallest and Q the largest.

You can start crocheting with any type of knitting yarn. Just be sure that the yarn and the size of the hook are well matched.

Purchase one dark colored and one lighter colored yarn, to be able to track your progress and see how you are doing with the stitches. Buy an ordinary yarn to get started. Specialty yarns like wool and chenille are more difficult to work with. When buying yarn, test its strength by rubbing several strands between your thumb and index finger. If the yarn unravels a lot, don't purchase it. Keep trying different yarns to feel the difference and find the best quality. It's a good idea to purchase a little more yarn than what your pattern calls for. If you happen to run out of yarn and need to return to the store, you may find that the colour batch is sold out, or the yarn is out of stock entirely.

A hat is a great beginner's crochet project. Here are simple instructions to crochet a hat:

Purchase your materials:

- * Size "G" crochet hook
- * Worsted weight yarn of any one color, or a combination of colors
- * One yarn needle, with a big eye
- * Small scissors

Follow the steps:

1. Hold the crochet hook in your right hand, with the hook pointed in, and then create a slipknot on the hook.
2. Carry the yarn over with the hook, starting from the back going to the front. Take the yarn with the hook.
3. Draw the hooked yarn through with a slipknot, and onto the hook. This makes one chain stitch.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 in sequence, 28 times. You'll need a total of 29 chain stitches with the loop staying on the hook.
5. Skip the first chain stitch.
6. Insert the hook to the center of the next chain stitch. Draw the yarn through the chain stitch, and then work up to the hook; this results in two 'loops on hook'.
7. Bring the yarn over the hook, starting from the back to the front, and pull it through both loops on hook. There should be one loop that stays on the hook. This is called a single crochet stitch.
8. Repeat steps 6 and 7 for another 27 chains. Make sure that you work in the very last chain. You have now completed one line of single crochet.

9. Measure your piece. It should be about 7 inches wide. If your piece is overly wide, start over and try again using one less beginning chain. If it's too narrow, try again and add extra beginning chains.
10. Create a single chain stitch at the tip of the line or row, and turn your piece counter-clockwise. Be sure that you leave the yarn with the hook in the chain. Begin making another row, working through the stitches as you did in the previous row.
11. Make a single crochet stitch in the first stitch, and also in each remaining stitch of the preceding row. Make certain to work into the last stitch. "Chain 1, turn."
12. Repeat step 10 until you have created a block that measures 9" long.
13. Cut the yarn from the ball, leaving 6 inches at the end. Pull the hook directly upwards, inserting the yarn into the loop that remains on the hook, and then thread the yarn needle and interlace stitches back and forth to secure it.

The following is a sample of a basic hat pattern:

Chain 4: Join with a slipstitch in the first chain to form a ring.

R1: Chain 2 (this counts as "half double crochet")- 11 "half double crochet" in ring; join with a slipstitch in top of chain 2, twelve stitches.

R2: Chain 2- Half double crochet in the same chain as joining; two half double crochet in each half double crochet around; join in the top of chain 2, 24 stitches.

R3: Chain 2- Half double crochet in same chain as joining; half double crochet in the next half double crochet; two half double crochet in the next half double crochet; half double crochet in next half double crochet; repeat from * around; join, thirty-six stitches.

R4: Chain 2- Half double crochet in the same chain as joining; half double crochet in the next 2; half double crochet; 2 half double crochet in the next half double crochet; half double crochet in the next 2; half double crochet; repeat from * around; join, forty-eight stitches.

R5: Chain 2#Half double crochet in each half double crochet around; join.

R6: Chain 2#Half double crochet in same chain as joining; half double crochet in next 3 half double crochet; 2 half double crochet in the next half double crochet; half double crochet in the next 3; half double crochet; repeat from * around; join, sixty stitches.

R7: Chain 2#Half double crochet in back loops only of each half double crochet around; join.

Rs 8-14: Repeat round 5.

"Brim-Round" 15: Chain 2#Half double crochet in the same chain as joining; half double crochet in next 2; half double crochet;

* 2 half double crochet in the next half double crochet; half double crochet in the next 2 half double crochet; repeat from * around; join, eighty half double crochet.

Rounds 16-20: Repeat Round 5. Fasten off. Weave in ends.

Abbreviations:

* = Repeat whatever follows* (asterisk)

R = row

Once you get to know the basic techniques, you'll find it very easy to follow a pattern and complete an easy project, such as a hat. After finishing your first project, you can find new patterns in specialty shops, magazines or on the Internet. Challenge yourself and improve your talents by taking on more complicated projects. Before you know it, you will be a seasoned crocheter and thoroughly enjoying your new hobby.