



Oregon 4-H Knitting Leader Guide

\$1.00

Helping 4-H members learn knitting can be a real challenge as well as a gratifying experience. You will find that some members master the skill easily, while others will have to struggle.

The knitting project offers boys and girls opportunities to exercise creativity, develop decisionmaking abilities, and learn skills that can give pleasure throughout a lifetime. Your role as a leader is to set the stage for these opportunities and help members to:

- Select, use, and care for knitting tools
- Learn to read and follow knitting instructions
- Enjoy creating articles for themselves and others
- Learn about using and caring for knitted articles
- Learn to work and share with others
- Keep simple records of project activities

The knitting project is divided into seven phases, with a choice of articles to make in each phase (see 4-H 960R, *4-H Knitting Member Guide and Record*). Younger members and those having difficulty can make small articles that can be finished quickly. Older or more experienced members can make larger, more complicated articles.

Members are encouraged to progress through each phase in order. Phases can be repeated once if done consecutively when needed to improve a skill. Phase can be repeated a number of times, with a different option selected each time. Phase 7 is only for members using knitting machines.

As leader, you will receive a 4-H Knitting Skills manual. In it are many different methods for the various skills to be learned. As knitters advance through the project phases, encourage them to try as many different techniques or methods and as many different yarns as possible. Place special emphasis on the importance of gauge and tension and the “Five Rules of Knitting” discussed in the manual.

An example of a meeting outline for Phase 1 is on page 4. These are only examples of how a series of meetings can be planned. You are encouraged to use your own creativity in planning. You may want to have more meetings. Since not all members will work at the same speed and some will need extra help, you might want to have some members come to your home one or two at a time between meetings.

Members enrolled in all phases will need work sessions in which techniques are demonstrated and

practiced. As skills develop, many members will be able to work on their own with just a bit of help from leaders in reading patterns. Older members also may wish to share their knowledge and skills with others through demonstrations, displays, and leader-teacher roles.

To help you in your planning, a section addressing “Questions leaders often ask” is included on pages 2 and 3. Teaching techniques you might wish to consider are discussed below. Also included is a section on helping members evaluate their progress.

Teaching techniques

As a 4-H leader you are a teacher. Using a variety of teaching techniques can help you stimulate and maintain interest in the project. Some of these techniques are described here.

Demonstrations

A demonstration is showing by doing. It is a technique particularly appropriate in knitting, where nearly all the subject matter can be taught most effectively by a demonstration followed by supervised practice sessions.

Try “capturing” short knitting sequences on a home video camera (tip: mount the camera on a tripod). A video demonstration can go home with members and be viewed as often as needed.

Not only will leaders be expected to demonstrate techniques to members, but members might be expected to share what they have learned by demonstrating techniques to others. Plan to give every club member an opportunity to speak in front of the group by giving an informal “mini” demonstration showing a skill they have learned. More formal, planned presentations may be appropriate later for fairs, workshops, training sessions, or other information-sharing opportunities.

Field trips and tours

Visits to yarn shops and pattern and notions counters are possibilities in almost every community. Store personnel usually welcome visits from 4-H groups, if notified in advance. Special community craft fairs or exhibitions also might offer opportunities to view a variety of knitting skills. Or, you might wish to

arrange a tour relating to wool processing or yarn production. A visit to a 4-H sheep, llama, or angora/pygora goat club also might be a possibility.

Samples and swatches

You could encourage members to make a scrapbook or organized collection of samples or swatches showing various knitting techniques learned in each phase. Making such swatches can provide good practice, especially for establishing gauge, before using a particular technique on a finished article, and each swatch is a good reference later when planning other articles.

Making only a small sample also allows each member to try many different techniques without having to make an entire article. Collections of swatches, incorporated into an educational display or presentation, also offer a way of sharing with others what members have learned.

Games

Various types of games can be a fun way to learn. Examples might be crossword puzzles using knitting terms, a matching quiz to pair knitting terms with their abbreviations, or team games where members try to identify different knitting tools. You probably can think of others appropriate for your particular group at various stages of their development.

Exhibits and displays

Exhibits and displays are optional and may occur at project meetings, fairs, or other community display or “showcase” opportunities. Young people as well as adults usually like to show what they have learned to others. Exhibits and displays also might offer opportunities for both formal and informal evaluation from others.

Other ideas

Other learning opportunities are available by participating in county events such as “Stitch and Share Day,” training sessions, fairs, and exhibitions; fashion revues; and other county and community events. Check with your local Extension office to find out what events might be scheduled in your county.

Evaluation

Young people measure progress in terms of goals or plans. They gain satisfaction when they can see improvement or progress in their work.

Evaluation can occur in a variety of ways. Fair exhibits, for example, offer an opportunity to be evaluated by a qualified judge. Evaluation and feedback from peers and others may occur when finished articles are worn, displayed, or presented as gifts.

Perhaps even more important is the opportunity for self-evaluation. You can encourage members to

evaluate their progress periodically by asking them to ask themselves the following questions:

- What am I learning?
- How well do I think I’m doing?
- How do I feel about what I’m doing?
- What do I want to do next?

Questions leaders often ask

1. What length of knitting needle is best for beginners?

Easiest for beginners to use in making small articles are 10-inch needles. Older beginners might buy 14-inch needles, since they will probably want to knit a sweater or large article as soon as they learn the basic knit and purl.

2. If a member needs to economize, what size needle is best for using in several articles?

A size 8 needle, 14 inches long, is the size most often used by a beginning knitter using 4-ply knitting worsted.

3. Are aluminum knitting needles a better purchase than plastic, steel, or wood?

Steel needles are found only in small sizes used in making fine lace. Large wooden needles have now been replaced by plastic. Whether plastic or aluminum needles are purchased is a matter of personal choice. Aluminum needles are quite rigid and do not break easily. Low-quality plastic needles are more pliable and will break. High-quality plastic needles perform well. Knitting shops carry a choice of good-quality needles; ask for assistance in evaluating the choices.

4. What should one look for when buying needles?

Long, tapered points are easier to knit with than short, blunt ones. Buy the proper-length needle for the number of stitches to be knitted. (See the section on knitting needles in the skills manual.) Buy a color that will contrast with most of the colors of yarn that will be used. Stitches are hard to see if the needle and yarn are both the same color.

5. What color and kind of yarn is best for beginners?

Stitches are hard to see if black or dark-colored yarn is used, and white and pastel-colored yarns soil easily. Encourage beginners to choose something in between. Beginners also will find it easier to get good tension if they use 100% wool yarn.

6. Can washable yarns be substituted for knitting worsted in making slippers, hats, etc. in Phase 1?

They can, but all-wool yarn is easier for beginners because it is more resilient and it’s easier to get good tension. It also can be blocked to decrease or increase the size slightly—which can’t be done

with synthetic or cotton yarns. Washable wools are a fairly new choice.

7. How do I teach a left-handed knitter?

Knitting is a two-handed skill and most patterns give right-handed instructions; therefore, teach as you would for a right-handed person.

8. Are K & P (knit and purl) the only two stitches ever used in knitting?

Yes. All other stitches are the result of knit and purl and their combinations or variations.

9. If you are off only half a stitch on your gauge, is this OK?

No. If you're knitting a sweater, half a stitch an inch off the required gauge could make your sweater as much as 3 or 4 inches too large (if you're half a stitch under) or 3 or 4 inches too small (if you're a half a stitch over).

10. How do you increase and decrease so it will blend in with a pattern stitch?

It depends on the pattern stitch and where you are required to increase or decrease. If possible, increase and decrease one stitch in from the beginning or end of a row. If it must be done within the row, the directions will tell you where to do it in order to keep the pattern stitch correct.

11. Can members make other garments that are not suggested in the project book?

Yes. Any article may be made that fits the project guidelines.

12. Can members make doll clothes?

For learning and extra activity purposes, doll clothes are OK. For a fair exhibit, no.

13. How do you splice yarn that already has a knot in it?

Untie or cut out the knot and then proceed as you would when attaching a new ball of yarn.

14. Which method of knitting is best?

Both the English (throwing) and the Continental (picking) methods of knitting are included in the project manual and both are acceptable. Experienced knitters generally can knit faster with the picking method.

15. How are rows of knitting counted?

Either vertically count the nubs on the purl side *or* count the center of the knit stitches on the right side.

16. How should buttons be sewn on?

Buttons may be sewn on either with yarn or matching thread. They should have a metal or thread shank and be attached securely.

17. May buttonholes be machine-made?

Yes, but some people feel it detracts from the hand-knit look.

18. Should the front bands on a cardigan sweater be reinforced?

Not unless it's needed to make the band firmer. Consider adding reinforcement where the buttons will be attached, rather than continuously.

19. What types of seams should be used?

Use a seam that is strong, flexible, inconspicuous, and not bulky. See the skills manual for types of seams and their uses.

20. Can a member do more advanced techniques than the project recommends?

Yes, but it will not affect the fair exhibit. Members will not get "extra credit" for extra work beyond project guidelines.

21. Where can I get help in adapting a pattern to fit different-size members?

To make a sweater one size larger than the directions indicate, add the number of stitches equaling 1 inch to both the back and front of a slip-on *or* 1 inch to the back and 1/2 inch to each of the fronts of a cardigan sweater. Subtract the same amount to make the sweater a size smaller than the directions indicate.

Use the armhole shaping the same as given, leaving the extra stitches in the shoulder seams if making a size larger, or subtracting them if making a size smaller. If the sweater is in a pattern stitch, you might have to add or subtract a stitch or two extra to keep the pattern multiples correct. Don't adjust for more than one size difference.

22. Why do needles get sticky and need frequent washing? How can this be prevented?

Beginning knitters usually try very hard and are rather nervous when they start knitting and their hands perspire. This usually stops as they begin to relax and feel more at ease.

23. Our members find it much easier to knit yardage and cut it to fit. Is this acceptable?

No. That would be a clothing project, not a knitting project. Pieces should be knit to the shape of the desired pattern pieces. Knitting yardage would give no more learning experiences than in Phase 1 or 2.

24. What can our club do besides learn to knit?

You might wish to plan a tour or field trip or participate in some county-wide activities (see suggestions on pages 1-2). Topics for meetings might include those relating to principles of clothing selection: color coordination, figure types, wardrobe-building, and pattern selection. Knitting techniques have originated around the world over many years. Learning a bit about the history of some aspects of knitting also might interest some members.

Sample Meeting Outline (Phase 1)

Meeting number and roll call	Meeting activities	Do at home
1st Parent(s) and member attend	Fill out enrollment forms Review project Display suggested articles to make Discuss knitting tools and yarn Make plans for knitting baskets, boxes, etc. Lesson on clean hands and fingernails	Make knitting box Obtain yarn and needles to start practice square
2nd Name a favorite knitted item you own.	Learn how to wind yarn Learn to cast on and knit stitch Choose a club name Practice 4-H Club pledge	Practice casting on Practice knit stitch by making squares
3rd Name a knitting tool.	Discuss the five rules of knitting Learn purl stitch and how to count rows Knit squares and learn how to bind off Elect officers	Practice knitting and purling Bind off if square is complete
4th Show or tell how much you have knitted since the last meeting.	Have a pattern available; decide on an article to make Discuss correction of mistakes Learn to check gauge Practice pompons, tassels, and fringe	Practice knitting to gauge Practice pompons, tassels, and fringe Purchase yarn for first article
5th Name a knitting abbreviation or knitting rule.	Start article Learn to join new yarn and finish ends	Work on article
6th Show pompon, tassel, or fringe	Review mistakes and correct them Learn to sew seams Learn to block finished items	Finish article
7th Tell about a problem you are having with knitting.	Start second article Discuss how to evaluate knitted articles	Work on second article Prepare exhibits for county fair
8th–10th Finish second article and do any other activity the club would like to do. Possibilities include:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join practice squares to make a lap robe or afghan to donate as a community service project • Give presentations • Make educational displays • Plan a sharing activity • Practice for Fashion Revue • Complete project records 	

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