

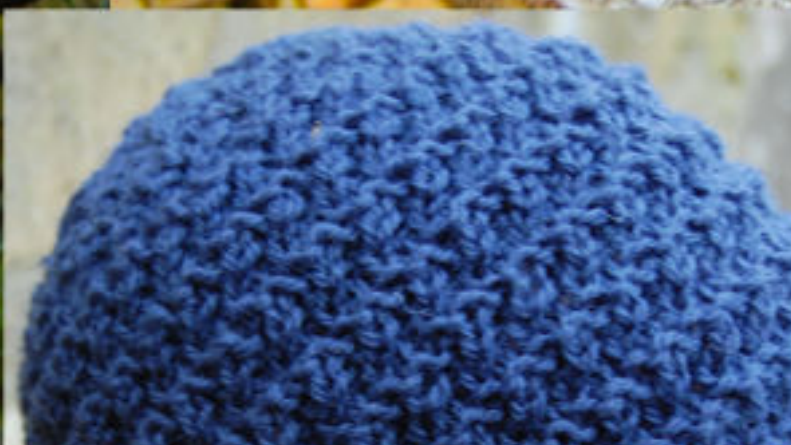


HATSTAR

knit hats like a pro

Elizabeth Felgate

preview





HatStar: Knit Hats Like a Pro

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
A word about perseverance and patience.....	4
Components of a hat.....	5
Hat brims	5
Simple shaped brims.....	6
More complex brim shapes	7
Shaping the crown of the hat	8
Basic crown decreases	8
A more refined crown decrease recipe.....	12
Stitch patterns for hats	17
Considerations when choosing stitch patterns.....	17
Stitch choices for hat bands	18
Hats without band patterns	20
Stitch gauge for hats	20
Yarn choices for hats	21
Cast-on choices for hats	21
Firm cast-ons	22
Stretchy cast-ons.....	22
Provisional cast-ons	22
Top down cast-ons	23
Finishing hats	23
Bind-offs	23
Blocking	24
Hat embellishments	24
Sizing a hat.....	25
Ease at the brim/band	28
Horizontal ease on the crown of the hat	29
Vertical Ease on the crown	30





HatStar: Knit Hats Like a Pro

The design process	31
The design concept	32
Example design brief.....	34
Researching the design	34
Developing design solutions.....	35
Select a solution	35
Swatching	35
Evaluating your swatch	36
Completing calculations and starting the hat	37
Worksheet for calculating hat circumferences	38
Worksheet for calculating hat vertical dimensions	39
About the Author: Elizabeth Felgate	40
A final word	41
Table of images	41
Pattern: Absolutely Cloche.....	42
Pattern: Mama Hat.....	48
Pattern: Partner Hat	54





HatStar: Knit Hats Like a Pro

Introduction

Ever wanted to move beyond following patterns to making something that is your own creation? Not sure how to start? This e-book is aimed at bridging that gap and growing your confidence in making design choices by showing you how to create hats, for any recipient, in any yarn and stitch pattern of your choice.

This is not a mix and match kind of pattern—you will genuinely be making most of the choices here from yarn, gauge, sizing, stitch pattern, and even cast-on. This is a book designed to make you work and think, and is not a simple set of instructions.

This book will guide you through the decision making processes, and math required to end up with a completed hat that came out of *your* head. You will be expected to have some prior knowledge (or willingness to do your own research) about:

- the concept of row and stitch gauge,
- knitting in the round.

Being able to read and draw charts will help you use the book to work on more complex crown designs, but it is not essential.

Please note that this e-book is not an introduction to pattern grading (how to create a pattern in multiple sizes), but is aimed at the knitter who wants to make unique things for themselves, and their family and friends. That said, there is a lot of information here that will allow you to think about how to make design choices, which will more easily translate into different sizes, if that is what you want to do.

A word about perseverance and patience

Your first piece of knitting probably had a few holes, inadvertently twisted stitches, and some differing tension. Maybe your first attempt at designing won't be exactly what you intended, either. But you will have learned enough to ensure that the next is a lot closer to your vision. Avoiding a real failure is all about swatching, and being ready to admit when something isn't quite right, and then going back a step. Practice in selecting the right stitch patterns, techniques, and yarns to go together for a project will increasingly mean harmonious designs, which fit the recipient's needs.

Patience is just as important to success as perseverance. Make sure that you have thought through and swatched at least as far ahead as the point where you will decrease the crown, before you start knitting the finished hat. *Ideally* you will have the whole plan worked out before you start, but I appreciate that a hat is a small enough project to be its own swatch and you can work this way if you prefer. Don't be tempted to cast on and just do the brim until you have decided on your overall design; you might be limiting your design without realizing it.





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Figure 1 Hat crowns I designed using the refined gradual decrease method.

As for the basic version above, work out a number by which the stitches in your hat can be divided. However, if you used a stitch pattern with greater multiples than approximately 4, you may just want to refer to the number of repeats used at the start of your hat. For example, our 90 stitch hat was made up of 18 wedges of 5 stitches, so we could start with 18 wedges of 5 stitches each and could place the decrease in the most aesthetically pleasing position in the stitch pattern. Note: this means that we will have 18 stitches decreased in each decrease round, which is 20% of our total stitch count. This is about the maximum we can decrease in one round without puckering the fabric, and means that we will have to space our decreases wider apart to get the depth of crown required. These are the steps you need to follow for this process:

1. The brim and body have been worked to $\frac{2}{3}$ of our desired final length (or if working a hat with ease on the length, $\frac{2}{3}$ of the crown depth of the recipient to the base of their ear **plus** our desired extra length).
2. You should know how much depth you want from the crown—this is the remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ of the hat. Using your row gauge, now work out how many rows this equates to. In this example, I want an additional $2\frac{3}{4}$ "/7cm for my crown and my row gauge is 32 sts per 4"/10cm (8 rows per inch or 3.2 rows per cm). I then multiply row gauge by the crown measurement; e.g., $8 \times 2.75 = 22$ rounds (using inches) or $3.2 \times 7 = 22.4$ rounds (using cm). I now know that I want to space my decreases over approximately 22 rounds for a nice rounded crown that will give me my desired final hat length.
3. Now I go back to my stitch pattern, scrutinizing which stitches I will eliminate in which rounds, in order to reduce the pattern in an aesthetically pleasing fashion. Ask yourself, what features of the pattern you want to maintain as far as possible. This might be a cable in the center of the pattern repeat, or a line of raised decreases. Which areas of plain knitting can you eliminate to condense the pattern widthwise? For the best shape I will decrease more slowly at the start, and then gradually decrease more rapidly. This process is easiest to plan if you are able to read and



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Hats without band patterns

In those instances, where your main pattern stitch does not curl (or you will hem it, or allow it to curl) you have the choice to run the main pattern all the way up the hat from the cast-on edge. This choice gives a very clean and simple affect to a design. The brown design below ([my Brother Hat](#)) is in a knit and purl pattern, while the grey hat is in garter stitch worked sideways (this is my [Subtle Hat design](#)). The whole rise of this grey hat, before decreases, is worked as for the sideways brim discussed above, as it has an i-cord applied to neaten the edge at the brim.



Figure 2 Hats with continuous brim and crown patterns: note that these hats have negative ease from cast-on edge to crown decreases.

Stitch gauge for hats

Lace	Fingering/ sock	Sport	DK/light worsted	Worsted/ aran	Chunky	Super chunky
33-40 sts	27-32 sts	23-26 sts	21-24 sts	16-20 sts	12-15 sts	7-11 sts

The table above shows the range of standard recommended gauges, for various yarn weights over 4"/10cm. For general purposes, a gauge somewhere in the range for your yarn weight will be fine. For a really wind and rain proof winter hat, work at the higher end of the range. For a stiff wide brim that will stand alone without inserts or starch you can try working at a really tight gauge. For openwork hats, designed for spring or early autumn wear, you will probably want to work with far fewer stitches than recommended for open and airy lace. However, you'll probably want a brim in the recommended





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range, or the brim may sag out of shape causing the hat to slip (unless of course this is a wide brim hat that will have the brim supported by wire or will be stiffened).

Yarn choices for hats

There are no hard and fast rules here. Personally I believe hats are very good vehicles for luxurious natural fibers, for two reasons. Firstly, hats require relatively little yarn, and are therefore affordable to make. Secondly, except when being worn for manual labor, for outdoor pursuits, or by small children, they don't take much direct wear. Unlike sweaters, gloves or socks, which must withstand constant friction with the environment, hats are safely perched on top of your head most of the time. If you make allowances in your design for the amount of drape and memory in your yarn, then you can use pretty much any yarn you like.

The warmth and washability of different yarns is something to take into consideration. If your hat is for a child, they may well drop it in muddy puddles repeatedly—making a machine washable synthetic yarn useful. If you want a hat for a particular season, consider the insulating properties. Most animal fibers, like wool, alpaca, cashmere, and yak, are excellent insulators, breathe well, and allow sweat to evaporate. Acrylic is one of the better synthetic fibers for insulation, although not as good as wool, and does not breathe as well. Cotton and linen have great breathability, but less insulating properties, which means they keep you cooler and allow your sweat to evaporate more readily in hot weather, and are the traditional choice for summer hats.

One of the great joys of designing your own hats is that you don't have to hit someone else's gauge. This means that you can be really creative with yarn combinations. You can even try out working with yarns of different weights at the same time—for example, holding strands of metallic thread together with plainer yarns.

Choosing colors, to suit individuals and work together in a design, is a subject in its own right, which this little book doesn't have space to cover. If you want to read more about this, you could start with [basic color theory](#). Also useful are the free online color swatching tools that allow you to pick a color and then offer you complimentary or contrasting palettes, in a range of hues. Try [Paletton](#) or [Adobe Color CC](#).

Cast-on choices for hats

There are two basic schools of thought on bottom-up hat cast-ons. Firstly, are those who like their hats to have a good firm edge that holds onto the head and does not flare (often a consideration when using rib). Secondly, there are those who like a really stretchy cast-on that adapts to a growing head, or hair-up or -down days. There is no right or wrong here; it is purely a matter of preference. I personally like

