



A BEGINNER'S FIELD GUIDE

Navigating the Yarn Aisle

What to look for to start your first knit.

1 Put on blinders.

Ignore the bulky, the shiny, and the chenille. No hate on the novelty yarns, but most patterns for wearables won't use such chunky yarn. And while thicker yarn might knit up faster, it's actually harder to work with, and will make getting good tension with those essential knit and purl stitches way harder.

2 What should you look for?

First, have you picked out a pattern? If you want to knit a garment that looks like the pattern promised, you need to choose a yarn similar to what the pattern maker used. Read the pattern you plan to use and note the qualities of the yarn: the weight (lace, fingering, sport, DK, worsted, aran, bulky) and the composition (wool, acrylic, alpaca, blend), and try to find something similar. If that feels like too much, look at the size of the recommended needle. When you're reading yarn bands, choose a yarn with the same needle size.

If you haven't selected a pattern yet, plan to look for a nice DK or worsted weight yarn in a wool or wool blend. Acrylic is inexpensive and readily available, but it's also a little harder to actually work up. Something with wool will give you a little more grit as you get accustomed to knitting.

3 How much to buy?

For an adult hat, my recommended first knit, you shouldn't need more than 100 g of yarn, which is one or two skeins depending on their weight. If you're worried about running out, buy two skeins.

4 What color to buy?

Whatever makes you happy. Whatever you'd like to wear. There's an argument that a solid color is better for beginners because it'll be easier to see your stitches, but if a fun variegated, nubby, or self-striping yarn is gonna make you sit down to knit, choose that!

5 What needles to buy?

Your pattern, your yarn, or both will tell you what needles to buy, but if you're planning to work on a wearable garment, do not buy the iconic ideal of two straight knitting needles. You're looking for circular needles: two shorter needles connected by a flexible cord. A 16" to 20" cord in 4 mm, 4.5 mm, or 5 mm is likely what you want for an adult hat, but check your pattern and yarn!

6 Where to shop?

Your local craft store (RIP Joann) has everything you need for your first project. If you want more variety, the Drops brand of yarn is a great option for beginners wanting to knit garments. It's inexpensive, has a wide color range, and quite a few composition options.

Want to learn how to knit more than just bad rectangles?

Get my free Beginner Knitting Guide at rachelfletcherwrites.com

RACHEL FLETCHER