



Introduction

The right tools are an important part of any project and knitting is no exception. Fortunately, getting started with good quality materials need not be expensive and with a few basic tools you can be creating wonderful projects in no time.

To begin your knitting journey you can be on your way simply with a couple of pairs of knitting needles in different sizes, some yarn, a tape measure and a pair of scissors. A suitable pair of knitting needles will be your first point of call.

Knitting needles

Knitting needles come in a wide range of materials, shapes and sizes, from practical plastic or metal to wood, bamboo and even glass! When it comes to choosing your first needles, try as many different types as you can. Ask friends who knit or visit a local yarn store. Try needles of different lengths, shapes and materials if you can.

Remember that you may need at least two pairs for your first project so consider your budget when making your first purchases. If your budget is limited, plastic or metal needles will be fine and some bamboo needles are quite inexpensive.



You can often pick up needles from thrift/charity stores, on upcycling sites such as Craigs List or Freecycle or from yard sales.

For the introductory programme you will only need a limited range of needles:

Needle types

Single-pointed pairs of needles

Widely available and commonly used, single-point needles are sold in pairs and have a point at one end and a knurl, knob or other stopper at the other end to prevent the stitches sliding off. Use these needles for knitting flat fabrics.

Needle lengths

The most common lengths for pairs of single-pointed needles are 12in (30cm) and 14in (35cm) and these will suit most knitters. For small projects (toys, accessories etc.) and for working with children, shorter needles of around 6-8in (15-20cm) are available.

Needle materials

Plastic needles

Plastic needles are inexpensive and are readily available in a wide range of sizes. Plastic needles are the first choice for many knitters, beginners and experienced knitters alike. Flexible and light in use, you can buy a pair at a time or choose a pre-packaged set with a range of sizes.

Bamboo

Bamboo needles are flexible, lightweight and warm to the touch, making them popular with knitters who have arthritis or rheumatism. Budget bamboo needles can split with use so buy best pair within your budget. They can be lightly sanded with emery paper if they develop rough spots over time.

Wood

There are many beautiful wooden needles on the market and many knitters find these the most comfortable needles to work with as they are warm, light and easy on the hands. Like bamboo they can break but can be sanded with care.

Metal

Many knitters prefer metal needles as they are virtually indestructible. They are the needles of choice for many lace knitters as they have the sharpest points for fine work. The very smooth finish also makes them a popular choice for knitting at speed. Prices vary significantly for metal needles.

Glass

A luxury choice, lovely to use and very beautiful. More durable than you may imagine as most are made from Pyrex although naturally they are best kept away from the rough and tumble you may subject your normal needles to. Not as wide a range of sizes, particularly small sizes, but now available in single point, double and circular formats.

Needle Shapes

Round

Far and away the most common needle shape on the market. Easy to use and available in all formats, sizes and materials.

Square

Many knitters with dexterity problems report that these needles are a much easier shape to grip and manipulate. Worth a try if you find traditional round needles uncomfortable. Square needles are currently not available in all materials and are more expensive than round but prices will no doubt become more competitive with time.

Hexagonal

A newcomer to the knitting market these needles are on the upper end of the price scale but are very pretty and comfortable to use. The shape also makes them less likely to roll off the table! Currently only available in wood.

TOP TIP

Build your needle collection gradually, buying only as you need needles for each project. It will save you money and you can try different needle types until you find the ones that are most suited to you and work best with the project you are working on.

TOP TIP

Look after your needles by keeping them in a needle roll, case or store flat in a sturdy plastic tube. Check wooden and bamboo needles for snags and gently file with emery paper as required. Clean plastic and metal needles with warm, soapy water and dry thoroughly. Other needles can be carefully buffed with a lint-free cloth to remove oils, perfumes and marks.

Knitting accessories

As with most crafts, there are many accessories and gadgets on the market for knitters. Some are essential, others are helpful and others simply enhance your knitting experience.

In addition to your knitting needles there are a few items that you will find extremely useful and a small number that are essential. In the majority of cases you will already have what you need at home. There are, of course, lots of gadgets and accessories that you may wish to purchase as you progress. Let's start with the essentials:



Pen, pencil and notepad

Essential knitting-bag items, useful for marking off where you are in a pattern and making notes about patterns and any alterations you may have made. If you are designing your own knits, jot down any thoughts, ideas and inspiration for this and future projects.

Scissors

Choose small scissors with sharp points as these will allow you to cut neatly and in the right place. It is worth investing in good quality scissors as cheaper ones may snag your knitted fabric.

Sewing up needles

Referred to variously as bodkins, darning needles and knitter's needles, you will need a small selection of sewing needles for sewing up your knits. Blunt or round-ended needles are useful for sewing up seams where it is important not to split the yarn. Choose a size appropriate to the yarn.

Sewing or tapestry needles

Needles with slightly sharper points such as the type used for needlepoint or tapestry sewing are useful for sewing in ends where you may need to split the yarn. Ordinary sewing needles may also be needed for adding buttons, zips and other accessories. Again, select a size to suit the thickness of the yarn you will be using.

Smooth, contrasting thread

You will find that 10g ($\frac{1}{2}$ oz) or so of smooth thread (cotton is a good choice) in a contrasting colour to your knitting will have many uses. It is very useful for holding stitches, marking key stages in your knitting, indicating the location of pattern repeats and for certain techniques.

Tape measure and ruler

Use a tape measure for body measurements and for measuring anything that isn't flat. A ruler is useful for measuring stitches and rows for tension swatches. It also doubles up as a handy marker for keeping your place on knitting charts.

Pins

Pins hold together your knitting when making up. Choose large-headed pins where possible so you can see them easily. A selection of longer pins for longer seams and shorter pins for smaller areas will be useful. Discard any damaged or rusty pins as they may snag your work.

Knitting needle gauge

A good needle gauge will enable you to identify the size of any knitting needle and is useful for converting between different measurement systems (eg. metric, imperial, US, Australia).

Optional items

Stitch holders

Available in several lengths to accommodate different numbers of stitches, stitch holders look like large safety pins. A safety pin can be used for a small number of stitches but be careful not to snag the yarn on the hinge. Alternatively, stitches can be transferred onto a piece of contrasting thread.

Row counters

Pen and paper is perfectly adequate for recording your knitting progress, but there are also lots of handy row counters on the market. These range from very simple plastic click mechanisms and barrels that sit on the end of your needles, to clever apps for you to download onto your mobile phone.

Stitch markers

Ranging from inexpensive plastic to beautifully handmade beaded sets, stitch markers denote key points in your knitting, for example, marking the end of a round or pattern repeat. Choose a size slightly larger than your needles, checking that they slide easily and that any beads won't catch in your work.

Split rings and padlock markers

Useful for marking key points in your work where you need to leave the marker in the work and return to it later.

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