

Crazy Cowl (a project for handspun yarn)

There is nothing finer than knitting something beautiful with yarn you spun yourself. The trouble is – when you're learning to spin, most of what comes out is giant fluffy blobs abruptly followed by lengths of tiny thread. After that stage, you'll probably be achieving 'bulky' for a good while. What can you do with all that beginner handspun? Knit a Crazy Cowl, of course. The reversible stitch hides some of the yarn's gauge irregularities and the final shape celebrates all of them. Plus: so much fun to wear!

Materials

Twisted Fiber Art Lively (100% superwash merino wool roving, 113g/4oz), 1 skein, spun 8.0mm/US lace tip needles, or size to get gauge
One needle 1 size larger, or several sizes smaller to hold with original needle, if desired
2 buttons, approximately 1.75" diameter
darning needle

Gauge

15 sts/18 rows= 4" in pattern stitch

Finished Size

Width: 6"; Length: 40" (Size is approximate and will vary with your own yarns.)

Notes for Stitch Count

The length of the cowl can be shorter; after all, it just has to wrap your neck once to be functional. Your primary goal is to achieve approximately 6" in *width* at the cowl's widest point. In very bulky yarn, you may need just 18 sts; in a lighter weight, 26 sts may do a better job.

The cowl stitch works for any multiple of 4 sts, plus 2 sts for the border.

If you do adjust gauge significantly, your button size requirement may also change.

Abbreviations

K: knit.

P: purl.

P4tog: purl 4sts together.

st(s): stitch(es).

yo: yarn over.

Directions

Using 8.0mm needles and the longtail method, cast on 22 sts to work flat, leaving an 8-10" tail.

Setup Row: Knit. To simplify the P4tog in the next row, you may wish to knit onto your larger needle or hold a small needle alongside what you have. If you knit loosely enough, this may not be necessary (hello, living proof here.)

Rows 1, 4: K1, *yo, P4tog; repeat from * to last st, K1.

Rows 2, 5: K1, *K1, (K1, P1, K1) into back of yo from previous row; repeat from * to last st, K1.

Rows 3, 6: Knit, accommodating the coming P4tog as before as needed.

Repeat Rows 1-6 in full until you do not have enough yarn left to accommodate another repeat; ensure that when the next row is facing you the cast on tail is hanging down from the right side of the work (fig. B).

Cast off knitwise, leaving an 8-10" tail.

Note

You will probably have at least one break in the yarn, and threading crazy handspun yarn through a darning needle is not delightful. Instead of leaving tails to run in later, allow the two ends to lie parallel to each other for at least 2", and knit them as though they are one (fig. A).

Finishing

Sew on buttons using the cast on and cast off tails such that one is on the 'right side' and the other on the 'wrong' (fig. C). If you cannot thread the yarn through a darning needle, use the butt end of the needle to push them through the holes, and your fingers to weave the ends through a few inches' worth of stitches. Wet block in Soak (<http://www.soakwash.com>) to soften fabric, or simply put the cowl on and show off your artistic genius.



Even a terribly irregular cowl...



... looks deliberate when it's on.



Fig. A



Fig. B



Fig. C

So many ways to wear the crazy!



loose and architectural



shoulder wrappy



snug and warm