



Keep calm and carry yarn

by Jane Thompson



Many of us, at some point, will have been taught to knit by our grandma or our mother, but how many of us have carried on knitting as an adult?

As an avid knitter (yes, I'm that annoying person who brings the needles out at every opportunity – waiting for a train, then on the train, family days out, family days in – you get the idea), I'm often approached by people looking rather nostalgic whose opening line is "I learned how to knit as a child, I wish I'd carried on with it".

So, as the nights draw in and winter approaches, now's the time to revisit an old, forgotten skill, or try your hand at a new one, and begin knitting. There's more to knitting than meets the eye.

Knitting can give you health benefits, such as:

1. Relaxation

The rhythmic motion of knitting can help lower your blood pressure and heart rate, therefore reducing feelings of anxiety and stress.

2. Memory improvement

The repeated action and concentration needed to follow a pattern helps improve your memory and can slow the onset of dementia.

3. Keeping your hands mobile

Knitting can improve dexterity in your hands and keep your fingers flexible.

4. Motivation

Creating something from scratch and having goals gives you a sense of purpose and achievement when you reach them.

5. Enhanced relationships

Investing your time and patience making something for a friend or loved one makes them feel valued.

6. Being part of a community

Ok, so at the moment knitting groups like 'knit and natter' or 'stitch and b*tch' are on hold, but there are online forums and knitting groups out there to join. You could even start your own on Zoom or WhatsApp.

So, hopefully having convinced you that sitting in front of the fire knitting your first Harry Potter scarf is worth a try, where do you start?

Beginner's guide to knitting – getting started

Needles and wool

I'd suggest 3.25mm and 4mm knitting needles (10's and 8's in old money) and Double knitting (DK) acrylic yarn to start off with. Stick to lighter colours that you love as the stitches will be easier to see.



Where should I buy from?

Boyes has a good selection, or online shops such as:

[Seaside Yarns](#) (based in Hornsea) 01964 530473

[Wool n Stuff](#) (based in Wakefield) 01924 565740

Learning how to knit

There are loads of clear and comprehensive videos on [YouTube](#) which teach you the basics of casting on, stitching ('knit' and 'purl' are popular techniques) and casting off. And then it's a case of practice, practice, practice!

What should I knit?

The 6 million dollar question!

There are thousands of free knitting patterns on the internet that you can download from sites like [Ravelry](#) (free to sign up), [Saga](#) or simply Google 'free knitting patterns'.

However, for some intentional knitting to start practicing with, I'd recommend the following.....

Make a blanket for a homeless cat at [Cats Protection](#)



Cats Protection provide blankets for cats which go with them to their new homes to help them settle in. They suggest a size of 50cm x 50cm (20ins x 20ins) which can be knit in squares as follows:



- Cast on 40 stitches and knit until you've made a square
- Repeat this until you have 9 squares
- Sew the squares together to make one larger 3x3 square
- Don't worry if it's not purrrfect – cats don't mind if the dimensions aren't spot on or if the colours are hideous or you've dropped a stitch and had to darn it!

Make some Christmas angels to attach to presents!



[Download the free pattern](#) and get creative – why not make them topical by adding a felt Covid mask!

Make some poppies for Remembrance Day



Welton Church are hoping to decorate the churchyard with knitted poppies for Remembrance Day. Get involved using these [free poppy patterns](#).

Two needles, one ball of yarn, endless possibilities!