JULIA RIEDE

LACE KNITTING

FOR BEGINNERS

Sign up for the author's mailing list and get a free copy of her newest knitting pattern!

Click here to get started: www.knitting.today/subscribe

Copyright © 2018 Dr. Julia Riede
All rights reserved

First edition, May 2018

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julia (jriede on Ravelry) is a knitwear designer and nuclear physicist. Her website and blog can be found on www.knitting.today

Twitter: @jriedeknits
Instagram: @jriedeknits
Facebook:
facebook.com/JriedeKnittingToday

Contents

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 4

Introduction 11

What is Lace Knitting?

THE HISTORY AND TRADITIONS OF LACE KNITTING 12

ORENBURG SHAWLS 13

SHETLAND LACE KNITTING 14

ESTONIAN LACE KNITTING 14

AUSTRIAN AND BAVARIAN LACE KNITTING 15

OTHER TRADITIONS: ICELANDIC AND FAROESE SHAWLS 15

LACE KNITTING VS. KNITTED LACE 16

How to Start 17

The Foundations of Lace Knitting

CHOOSING YARN AND NEEDLES 18

GAUGE 19

HOW TO DETERMINE YOUR KNITTING GAUGE 20

EXAMPLE GAUGE CALCULATION 20

ABOUT SIZING 20

SHAWL SHAPES 20

READING YOUR KNITTING 21

STITCH MARKERS 22

Stitches in Lace Knitting 23

It's Like Learning a New Language

BASIC LACE STITCHES 24
INCREASES 24
DECREASES 26
CENTRAL DOUBLE DECREASE (CDD) 26
SPECIAL STITCHES: ESTONIA AND ALPINE KNITTING 26
HOW TO WORK NUPPS 26
ESTONIAN STAR STITCHES 27
AUSTRIAN STITCHES 28

Charts 29

Working With Charts in Lace Knitting

KNITTING SYMBOLS 30
READING CHARTS 30
WORKING FLAT OR IN THE ROUND? 32
HOW TO READ CHART SYMBOLS ON WRONG SIDE ROWS? 33
TAKING AWAY THE FEAR OF READING CHARTS 33
KEEPING TRACK 33

Stitch Patterns 35

Common Stitch Pattern Elements

CAT'S PAWS AND STRAWBERRIES 36
HORSESHOES 37
SHETLAND HORSESHOES 38
ORENBURG HORSESHOES 39
AUSTRIAN HORSESHOES 40
ESTONIAN HORSESHOES 40

OLD SHALE 41
PEAS 45
CHAIN HEARTS 46
DIAGONALS 47
STRIPES 47
LEAVES 48
LILY OF THE VALLEY 50
AUSTRIAN PAWS 51
COMBINATIONS 52
ESTONIAN SALTIRE 52
DIAMONDS 53
BORDERS & EDGINGS 54
ESTONIAN EXAMPLE BORDER 55
ORENBURG EXAMPLE BORDER 55

Design Your Own 59

How to Start Designing Your Own Lace Shawls

HOW TO PLAN A DESIGN AND DO THE MATH 60
DIFFERENT DECREASES AS DESIGN ELEMENTS 62
CREATING CHARTS 62
THE MAIN ELEMENT OF LACE KNITTING: EYELETS 63W
CREATING STITCH PATTERNS FROM SCRATCH 63
HOW TO CREATE CHARTS FROM WRITTEN DIRECTIONS 65
WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS 66

Useful Techniques 67

Life Lines and Finishing

WHEN DO YOU USE LIFELINES? HOW OFTEN? 68
HOW TO PLACE A LIFE LINE 69
BINDING OFF YOUR LACE KNITTING PROJECT 69
MY DEFAULT BIND OFF METHOD 69
LOOSE BIND-OFFS 69
SUSPENDED BIND-OFF 70
RIBBED BIND-OFF 70
SEWN BIND-OFF 70
TIPS AND HINTS FOR BLOCKING 70
HOW DOES BLOCKING YOUR KNITTING WORK? 71

Error Handling 73

Fixing Mistakes Without Frogging Long Rows

REPAIRING DROPPED STITCHES 74
TOO MANY STITCHES 74
TOO FEW STITCHES 74
FORGOTTEN YARN OVERS 76
MISSED INCREASE 76

Example Patterns

ELIANE 77
1000 SHAWL KNITTERS 85
ORENBURG MEETS GERMANY 93
WHITE ATLANTIC 101

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

What is Lace Knitting?

This chapter provides a short introduction to lace knitting, its history and traditions.

For most people, lace knitting has always been one of those types of knitting that gives them a little chill. Together, yarn overs and decreases can form anything from flowers to geometric shapes in a way that almost no other type of knitting can.

Lace knitting is a style of knitting characterized by stable "holes" (eyelets) in the fabric arranged with consideration of aesthetic value. Lace is sometimes considered the pinnacle of knitting, because of its complexity and because woven fabrics cannot easily be made to have holes.

Knitted lace with no bound-off edges is extremely elastic and is deforming easily to fit whatever it is draped on. As a consequence, knitted lace garments must be blocked before use, and they tend to stretch over time.

Lace can be used for any kind of garment, but is commonly associated with scarves and shawls, or with household items such as curtains, table runners or trim for curtains and towels. (This book focuses on knitted lace shawls only.) Lace items from different regional knitting traditions are often distinguished by their patterns, shape and method.

The History and Traditions of Lace Knitting

Lace knitting has a long tradition in many parts of the world.

So where – and when – are the origins of lace knitting? Like for most other knitting traditions, it's difficult to pinpoint the exact history of lace knitting, but if we have a look on their origins it becomes a little clearer.

There are three well-known traditions in Europe: Orenburg, Estonian and Shetland lace. Besides these there are minor - but not less impressive - traditions of lace knitting in Alpine knitting, especially Austria and Bavaria, and Icelandic shawl knitting traditions.

Orenburg Shawls

The Orenburg shawls are one of the classic symbols of Russian handicraft. This type of finely knit, down-hair lace shawl originated in the Orenburg area about 250 years ago, in the 18th century. In the English-speaking world they are often called “wedding ring shawls” because, although the shawls are quite large, a shawl knit in the traditional fashion is so fine that it can be pulled through a wedding ring.[1]

Orenburg shawls are one of the classic symbols of Russian handicraft.

The shawls are made from a blend of silk and indigenous goat fiber, similar to cashmere or mohair. These shawls are so famous in Russia that even a stamp has been made to honor them in 2013. [2]

---

1 Wedding ring shawls also exist in Shetland lace knitting traditions.

2 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stamp_of_Russia_2013_No_1715_Orenburg_shawl.jpg. Last visited on May 3rd, 2018.

1_1
A modern interpretation of an Orenburg lace shawl: Details of the Orenburg Meets Germany shawl knitting pattern.

1_2
A modern interpretation of an Orenburg lace shawl:The Orenburg Meets Germany shawl knitting pattern being worn.

The most comprehensive reference book on Orenburg shawls is Galina Khmeleva's *Gossamer Webs: The History and Techniques of Orenburg Lace Shawls*[3].

Shetland Lace Knitting

The Shetlands have a rich lace knitting tradition dating back to Victorian England.

Shetland lace knitting became extremely popular in Victorian England when Queen Victoria became a Shetland lace enthusiast. From there, knitting patterns for the shawls were printed in English women's magazines where they were copied from everywhere.

The number one reference book on Shetland lace knitting is *Heirloom Knitting* by Sharon Miller[4].

Estonian Lace Knitting

The most prominent feature in Estonian lace knitting is the Nupp stitch - a bobble.

Estonian knitting is very particular in its techniques and patterns. The most different pattern feature is the so-called "Nupp" – a bobble, basically.

Nancy Bush popularized Estonian knitting worldwide with her book *Knit-*

3 Galina Khmeleva: Gossamer Webs: The History and Techniques of Orenburg Lace Shawls. Interweave Press 1998.

4 Sharon Miller: Heirloom Knitting. Shetland Times Ltd. 2002.

1_2
A modern interpretation of an Orenburg lace shawl: The Orenburg Meets Germany shawl knitting pattern being worn.

ted Lace of Estonia[5].

The main source of Estonian lace stitch patterns and techniques is the book *Pitsilised Koekirjad* by Leili Reimann[6], known in American and European lace knitting communities as the "Estonian lace book".

Austrian and Bavarian Lace Knitting

Alpine lace knitting has a long tradition in socks and cardigans.

Unknown by many is there is lace knitting traditions outside of he three major regions Orenburg, Shetland and Estonia: There is knitted lace in Austria and Bavaria, too.

Although not used for shawls but mostly for socks and sometimes traditional knitted cardigans, lace patterns similar to the three main traditions can be found there.

The most comprehensive resources I came across so far is the book *Omas Strickgeheimnisse* by Erika Eichenseer[7] and the three-volume series *Bäuerliches Stricken*[8] by Lisl Fanderl and *Überlieferte Strickmuster aus dem steirischen Ennstal* by Maria Erlbacher[9] (all written in German, the native language of these areas).

Other Traditions: Icelandic and Faroese Shawls

There are Icelandic and Faroese lace knitting traditions, too. They don't have such a broad variety in their stitch patterns, though - these shawl knitting traditions are mostly using single eyelets and eyelet rows, not really complicated lace patterns.

---

5 Nancy Bush: Knitted Lace of Estonia: Techniques, Patterns and Traditions. Interweave Press 2010.

6 Leili Reimann: Pitsilised Koekirjad. Kirjastus Monokkel, 1995.

7 Erika Eichenseer: Omas Strickgeheimnisse. Rosenheimer Verlagshaus 2008.

8 Lisl Fanderl: Bäuerliches Stricken (Volumes 1-3), Rosenheimer Verlagshaus 2011.

9 Maria Erlbacher: Überlieferte Strickmuster aus dem steirischen Ennstal (Volumes 1-3), Verein Schloss Trautenfels 2011.

Lace Knitting vs. Knitted Lace

Some consider that "true" knitted lace has pattern stitches on both the right and wrong sides, and that knitting with pattern stitches on only one side of the fabric, so that holes are separated by at least two threads, is technically not lace, but "lacy knitting", although this has no historical basis.

Personally, I consider knitting that includes a fair amount of eyelets to be lace knitting, no matter whether it is patterned on both or only one side.

CHAPTER 2
HOW TO START

The Foundations of Lace Knitting

Choosing Yarn and Needles

How to choose the right yarn & needles for your first lace knitting project

There is a wide range of yarn weights and fiber contents available to knit lace shawls.

From the finest Cobweb yarns, thin as sewing thread, up to worsted weight beautiful shawls can be created. But be careful: not every chart works well in each yarn weight and not every shape is suitable.

It would not be the best idea to work an Orenburg Shawl with worsted weight (you would end up with a carpet).

Lace knitting is usually done on larger needles as for standard knitting. Gauge ranges are difficult to determine. Make sure to work a swatch to ensure you like the result of your yarn and fiber combination!

Be careful when using thick yarn and heavy fibers like cotton, silk or bamboo. Especially for large shawls, they might loose their shape in no time. For large shawls lightweight fibers like Mohair, wool and Cashmere are the best choice.

Yarns with Mohair fiber content should be knitted with larger needles than usual. The haze of the Mohair makes lace patterns appear less open.

What kind of needles to use depends on personal preference. Using wooden needles can help preventing stitches from sliding off.

If you are struggling to form lace stitches it's probably your needle tips. Try something sharper and work decreases on the taper, not the shank.

Gauge

What is knitting gauge, and why it is so important in lace knitting?

Working a gauge swatch before you start knitting your main project will let you get to know your yarn, the combination of your yarn and needles and the resulting fabric, as well as eventually preventing you from frogging your work (especially when working sweaters or similar, but also when knitting shawls).

You might not like the pattern when you use a wrong needle size, or you might decide that the wildly self-striping yarn might not be the best choice for showing off the complicated lace pattern you chose.

Gauge is the number of stitches and rows you need to achieve a certain width and height in knitting. Working at a gauge of 24 stitches and 30 rows in 10cm (4in) in stockinette means that you need to cast on 24 stitches and work 30 rows to achieve a swatch that measures 10 by 10 cm (4 by 4 in) in stockinette stitch.

To ensure proper blocking and room to measure, I recommend knitting more stitches than necessary for the swatch. For example, you could cast on enough stitches (and work more rows, accordingly) to achieve a target swatch size of 20 by 20 cm (8 by 8 in), or even more. The larger your swatch, the more accurate your measurements will be.

Every knitter is unique, and so is his or her gauge.

Every knitter is unique, so if a yarn ball states that this yarn will result in a certain width and height with a given needle size, it does not automatically make sure that you will achieve the same measurements when knitting as specified. Make sure to work a gauge swatch in the yarn you are going to use for your project with a needle size that suits you and your knitting style.

I am a very loose knitter, my mother knits very tight. If I would knit socks using the same yarn with the same as her needle size (she uses 2.5 to 3.0 mm needles for socks), I would end up with a loose little washcloth instead of pretty socks. Instead, I usually knit my socks on 2.0 mm needles.

First work a swatch in the planned yarn and needle size. If you like the texture and look, you are ready for the calculations coming up next.

How To Determine Your Knitting Gauge

Finding out your knitting gauge for a specific stitch pattern is the basis for every calculation.

Count the number of stitches and rows in your gauge swatch and measure the width and the height.

Divide the number of stitches by the width. This is your stitch gauge.
Divide the number of rows by the height to calculate your row gauge.

Gauge is usually given in sts and rows per 10 x 10 cm (4 x 4 in).

Example Gauge Calculation

An example gauge calculation.

For a gauge swatch consisting of 24 stitches and 30 rows measuring 10 x 10 cm, the stitch gauge is 2.4 per cm; the row gauge is 3.0 rows per cm.

In common units this equals to a gauge of 24 stitches / 30 rows per 10 x 10 cm (4 x 4 in).

About Sizing

Sizing in shawl knitting is usually not a big issue.

Sizing in shawl knitting usually is not such a big issue as it is in knitting garments. If you want to make sure your lace shawl comes out the right size, work a gauge swatch first.

Measure the width and height of your swatch for one pattern repeat. To ensure your shawl is of the right size, divide the desired size by the width (height) of your sample. The resulting number is the number of repeats you need to work in total.

Shawl Shapes

Shawl shapes are a topic on their own and fill a whole book on their own: Shawl Design in Plain English.

Most lace shawls, especially following the main traditions, are either square, rectangles or triangles.

There is a myriad of alternatives from circles over crescents and Faroese to exotic shapes like stars and vortices. This book - covering traditional lace knitting - focuses on rectangles and triangles (square shawls are special forms of rectangles)[1].

1 If you want to learn more about other shapes and shawl design in general

Most square shawls are started with a provisional cast on and worked straight until a certain height is reached. The border is then worked in the round, picking up stitches along the edges and undoing the provisional cast on, after the main panel has been finished.

Reading Your Knitting

Learning how to read your knitting will help you in the long run

Are you one of the knitters who use row counters when working lace stitch patterns? I have to admit row counters might be a handy tool, but I only own one and can never find it when I need it.

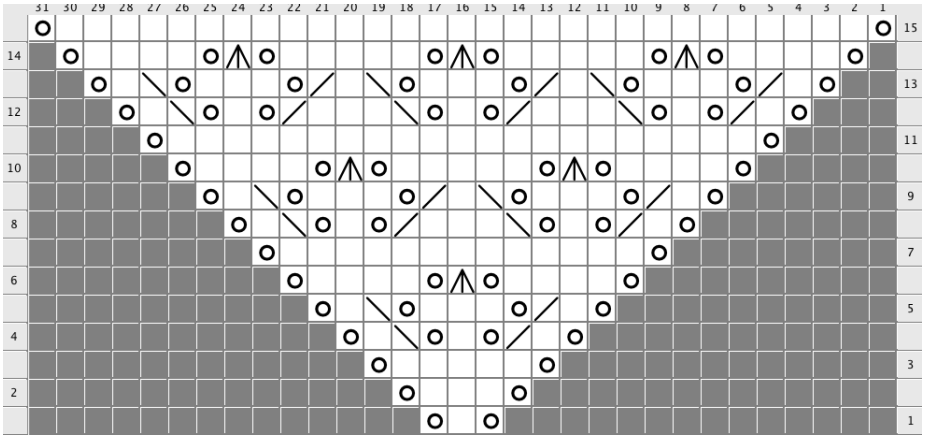
When it comes to lace knitting, I have to rely on being able to read my knitting to find out which row I am. Especially after picking up knitting after a break this can be a real challenge.

The solution is to learn how to read your knitting, and the easiest way of reading your knitting is to use yarn overs (YO stitches) as landmarks.

The example chart in Fig. 2_1 shows the beginning of a triangle lace shawl featuring a strawberry lace stitch pattern. In this chart, dark gray squares represent no stitches, whites squares are knit stitches. Circles rep-

---

you should consider reading one of my other books, Shawl Design in Plain English.



2_1
An example chart for a triangle lace shawl featuring the strawberry stitch pattern. In some knitting traditions this stitch pattern is referred to as Cat's Paw.

resent yarn overs, and the slash resp. backslash are k2tog resp. ssk[2] stitches. The three-legged triangle is a central double decrease stitch[3].

The positions of the yarn overs (the circles in the chart) can be used as landmarks by comparing their positions in the chart versus the appearance in your actual knitting: the white arrow in Fig. 2.2 marks the top left yarn over in row 6, column 17 of the chart.

Using the stitches between two yarn overs as orientation points works as well. In Fig. 2.3 below, the two arrows point to stitches between two yarn overs: the lower one pointing to one stitch in between, the upper on towards three stitches.

Stitch Markers

To keep track of your knitting consider using stitch markers. They really are handy little tools and come in a broad variety of sizes, shapes, colors and materials.

Place them between panels or other prominent orientation points using them as landmarks in your shawl knitting landscape.

Instead of buying stitch markers you can put a string of yarn at the position in question. Make sure to use a different color than the one of your main working yarn.

---

2 k2tog: knit two stitches together. ssk: slip, slip, knit.

3 The central double decrease reduces three stitches to one. Alternatively, a knit three together works too.