

PROJECT

How to knit a winter scarf

This is the perfect place to start for beginners, says Nell Frizzell, a keen knitter - and even makes watching telly feel productive

Exercise time 20 hours
Difficulty Easy

PHOTOGRAPHY Linda Nyland

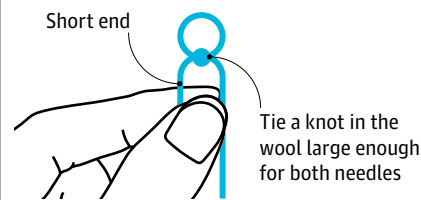
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You will need
4 balls of chunky wool (the bigger the wool, the faster the scarf)
A set of 5.5mm or 6mm needles (I use bamboo)

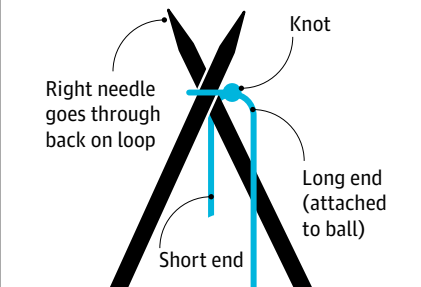
I was taught to knit by my father. As a young man, he would sit on his commuter train, travelling to college, knitting leg-warmers and little hats for my sister and me.

I like to imagine other new fathers today - as well as mothers, single girls, grannies and grandfathers - sitting on crowded trains, pulling out skeins of wool from their bags, the click of their needles a morning accompaniment to the clickety-clack of the tracks. A scarf, by dint of just being one long line, is a fantastically easy and useful thing to knit. It also makes watching telly feel productive. So go on, give it a try.

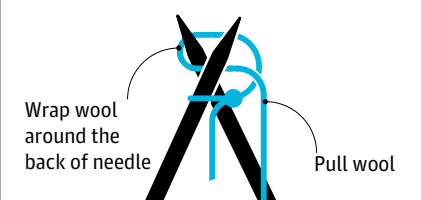
1 To kick off, you need to cast on. This is basically the same action as knitting, only instead of passing a stitch from needle to needle, you're creating those stitches in the first place. To cast on, make a little loop and tie it, leaving around two inches of loose wool on the side that isn't attached to the ball of wool. This is your first stitch. Put that on your left needle, with the knot at the back.



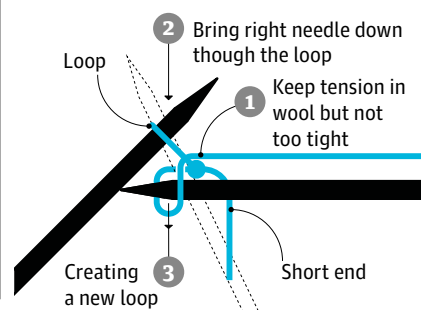
2 Put your right needle through the stitch, then push it behind the left needle so the needles are crossed.



3 Wrap the wool around the back of the right needle in an anti-clockwise direction, and then slip the wool into the gap between the front of the right needle and the back of the left needle, so it crosses the loop.



4 Now, imagine that the right needle is a little hook and that you're pushing that little bit of wool between the needles forward, through the loop to the front. Make sure the long end of the wool isn't too loose or too tight. If you have done it right, it should look like this:



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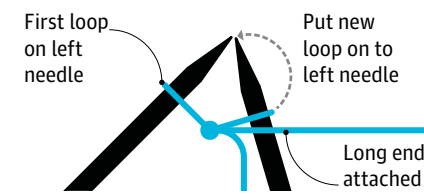


Graphics: Christine Oliver

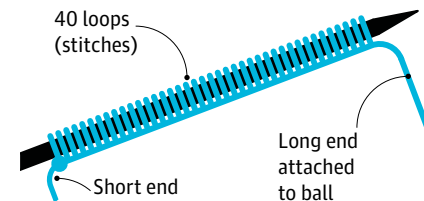


Share your project
We'd love to see the scarves you have knitted this winter - go to the link below to submit yours theguardian.com/witness

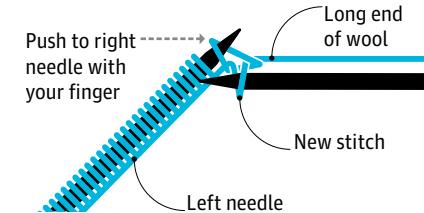
5 The little loop of wool on your right needle is now your second stitch. So, pop that on to your left needle and, hey presto, you have two stitches. Do exactly the same with the second stitch that you did to the first.



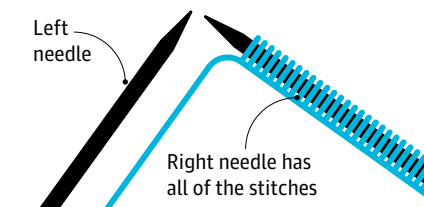
6 Keep popping these stitches on to your left needle until you have about 40. Now you are ready to start knitting.



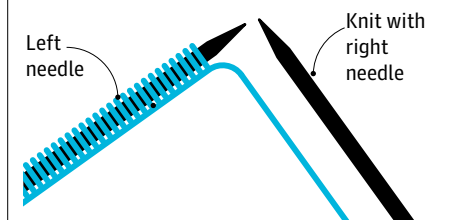
7 To knit, you do everything just as you did from step 1 to 5, but instead of putting that stitch on the right needle back on to the left needle, you use your right needle to pull the stitch from your left needle right up and off, creating a new stitch on your right needle. If you've done it right it will look like this:



8 The tail of wool connected to the ball now hangs off the back of the stitch on your right needle. So, keeping that stitch on your right needle, you pierce the next stitch on your left needle, and repeat steps one to 5, with the "slip off" finish of step 7. Eventually you will have passed all the stitches from the left to the right needle. Congratulations! You have knitted an entire row.



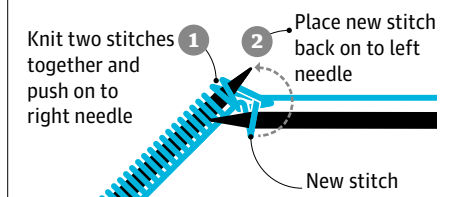
9 Now, swap the right needle into your left hand and vice versa. It will look just like it did when you first cast on, but with a tiny bit of knitting hanging off the left needle.



10 Repeat the whole process over and over again, trying to keep your fingers, wool and needles loose enough to move easily, but with an even tension.

11 When you need to join a new ball of wool, just knot the ends together (you can weave them in later). When you feel that the scarf is long enough, you are ready to cast off.

12 Casting off is easy. Instead of spearing one stitch on your left needle, you spear two at once. Wrap the wool round, hook it forward and slip it off just like normal. Then pass the stitch on your right needle back on to your left needle. Then spear the next two, and so on, all the way down the row.



13 Eventually you will be down to your last two stitches. Leaving a tail of a few inches, cut the wool. Now pierce and hook the two stitches as normal and, when you've slipped them off on to your right needle, pull the wool through the final stitch you just made, and knot it.

14 To neaten things up, weave that little tail of wool (and the one at the beginning of your scarf) back into the scarf so it's hidden. And that, my friends, is it. You're done. Go forth with brassy warm necks.

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For a step-by-step tutorial plus a visit to Nell's favourite wool shop, check out the audio slideshow online at theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/craft