A handy knitting carry-all

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WITH the approach of winter comes the knitting season again, when a bag for wool and needles is required. Here are instructions for making a handy knitting carry-all.

MATERIALS
To make the bag, you need:

- Remnants of tapestry, felt, heavy cotton or linen, brocade, furnishing fabrics or leatherette can be used.
- Half a yard of 27-inch fabric is enough.
- A 10 in. zip fastener and sewing cotton to match.
- Two 12 in. lengths of piping cord, soft rope or wool scraps to thread through the handles.

The bag is approximately 12 in. long 2½ in. wide and 3½ in. deep.
PATTERN

If material is plain, or if using leatherette, the outlines can be drawn on the wrong side. For other fabrics, cut a paper pattern as follows:

Base Sides and Ends—

Draw a rectangle 21 in. x 11 in. From each corner take out a 4 in. square. Be sure that all corners are right angles (use a set square if possible) and measure accurately, as imperfect angles and measuring will make sewing up difficult.

Top of Bag—

Draw a rectangle 13 in. x 3 in. Draw a line down the centre, stopping 1½ in. from each end. (This is the position for the zip fastener.)

Handles—

Cut two pieces 12 in. x 2 in. for a fabric bag, or 12 in. x 1½ in. for leatherette.

If working in leatherette, cut out a ¼ in. wide strip from along the zip line, as it will be too thick to turn under.

For a fabric bag, at each end of the zip opening make two small (¼ in.) diagonal cuts to allow edges to be turned in. Press turnings to wrong side.

MAKING THE BAG

Top—

Insert zip fastener in top of bag, and re-inforce open end of zip with hand fishbone stitch. A second line of machining can be done around the zip to hold zip webbing to bag.

On leatherette, rub a little talcum powder around on the stitching line to help it slide smoothly under the presser foot.

Handles—

For a fabric bag, fold each strip of material, right side inside, lengthwise, and stitch ¼ in. from edges. Turn inside out, inserting piping cord or wool as you go, or afterwards threading it through with a bag needle or bodkin.

For leatherette, fold strips right side outside and stitch ¼ in. in from fold. Do a second line ¼ in. nearer to the edges, then thread the cord or twine through with a bag needle. (Talcum powder or French chalk will again be necessary on the leatherette to allow it to be stitched freely.)

Base and Sides—

Fold base piece diagonally so that the 4 in. section of a side and an adjacent end are together. Stitch ¼ in. in from edges. Repeat on the other three corners. Put a second line of machining ¼ in. closer to edges to re-inforce seam and prevent the escape of fine knitting needles.

Loop handles and pin to top edge of sides of bag, one each side, placing each end of handle at an angle and 2 in. in from each end.

Hold up and check position, then fold down and stitch so that edges of sides and ends of handles are together and all raw edges will be enclosed when top is stitched on.

CUTTING OUT

If possible, place pattern pieces so that the grain runs the same way in each.

Material may be joined if necessary before cutting out, but avoid a join across the zip line on the top piece.
Joining Top to Base—

Turn base of bag inside out. (The handles are now inside). Place right side of top to right side of bag, matching the corners of the top with the corner seams of the bag.

Stitch across the ends and down one side, then turn bag right side out and complete the last side by sewing through the zip opening. Stitch ¼ in. from edges, and re-inforce the attachment of the handles with another line of machining across the handle ends. Tie ends of cotton, push corners into shape, and attach a small pulling tag to the zip.

Lining—

If desired, a lining can be made. Follow the pattern and instructions for the bag, omitting the handles and zip. Place lining, right side inside, in the bag and attach by sewing by hand to the zip webbing.

HINTS FOR KNITTERS

NOT many knitters can achieve a really well finished look to their work. But if you know some of the “tricks of the trade” you can achieve that finished look—with comparatively little extra effort.

Here are some pointers that could make the difference between second and first prize for knitwear in your district show.

Keep it Clean

The beginning of a garment often becomes slightly soiled. Avoid this by loosely tacking the centre fold of a large handkerchief or a scarf along the edge of the waist. As your knitting lengthens, tack the protecting material further up. Keep a scarf or plastic bag under your work as you knit, and wrap before putting away.

... and Neat

A double welt has more elasticity and a neater appearance at its edge than the single welt—simply knit the welt twice as long as needed, then, when sewing up the garment, fold the welt in half and neatly hem casting edge to top.

For longer line cardigans and blazer-style jackets, a plain-knitted edge, that is, stocking stitch, can be hemmed when garment is finished or knitted into the fabric when the correct hem depth is reached. This gives a neat, tailored appearance to the edge, which does not “roll.”

Press Lightly

When pressing work use only light pressure with a moderate iron; do not “press it to death.” Protect work with a slightly damp cloth (even if using a steam iron) but too wet a cloth, can cause shrinking. Avoid pressing ribbing or patterns too heavily, as the beauty of these is the way in which they stand out from the plain surface.

Sewing Up

The sewing up of a garment is as important as the knitting, and is always looked at very closely by show judges. Seams should be as neat as possible. For baby wear they should be very flat, although machined or back-stitched seams are permitted for adults’ wear.

For set-in sleeves and wherever you intend to machine or back stitch the seams, begin each end of each row with a knit stitch. If, however, you intend to hand-sew flat seams, begin each knit row with a knit stitch and each purl row with a purl stitch. This makes the loops more easily picked up.

When sewing, have the two right sides upwards and the edges meeting, and pick up each loop along the edge of each piece of knitting. The stitches are then evenly spaced and sloping uniformly. When casting on or off, allow sufficient length of wool to sew up part of the seam.

Avoiding Seams

Side seams can be avoided in pullover-type garments by knitting as far as the armholes on four or more needles or on a circular needle. [This can be made from a 34 in. length of heavy gauge copper wire...]

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with ends filed to smooth points and bent round to form an overlapping circle. Bend wire again across the circle so that points cross at an angle comfortable for knitting. Clean and polish wire before using. Side seams can also be avoided in cardigans by knitting a front, the back and the other front all in one piece, again as far as the armholes.

Sleeves too can be knitted on four needles, sock-wise, to avoid seams. Where any increasing is needed, put a marker loop of contrasting coloured wool level with the beginning, and increase each side of this marker.

The neatest method of increasing is to knit then purl into the one stitch, then in the next stitch purl then knit.

Most people find plain knitting quicker than purling so a circular piece of knitting will be quicker and smoother than alternating rows of plain and purl. With some fancy patterns all plain knitting may not be possible—try first on a sample piece before beginning the garment.

Testing the Tension

It really is worthwhile knitting a small square to test your tension before commencing each garment.

Use the size needles and wool recommended and knit a piece large enough to check both number of stitches and number of rows accurately. If necessary, change to a larger or smaller needle to obtain the right measurements.

Do not try to knit more loosely or tightly to achieve this, as it is hard to change a normal knitting tension, and an uneven surface will result.

Raglan Sleeves

Raglan sleeves (sewn with a diagonal seam from armhole to neck) are recommended, for children's wear in particular. There is no shoulder seam to droop down the arm if garment is too big, or to be pulled far in on the shoulder if garment is too small.

If knitting from the top down (to allow for lengthening from the cuff next season) the directions are more easily reversed as there is no shoulder seam shaping. The raglan seam can be neatly hand-sewn and be a feature of the garment—it can be emphasised by doing a cable or other simple fancy pattern in a line between the decreasing and the edge.

Neater Set-in Sleeves

When set-in sleeves are used, shoulder seams can be grafted instead of sewn for a neater appearance. The line can be reinforced with tape or ribbon sewn at neck and armhole to stop stretching.

Avoid "Bobbly" Patterns

It is best to avoid very "bobbly" patterns, where many stitches are made in one row and knitted together a few rows later. The raised surfaces become soiled before the rest of the garment, necessitating more frequent laundering, and being subject to more friction often fade and wear before the rest of the garment. Cable patterns where the twist covers too many stitches causing a lot of strain are also not recommended.

The Neckband

Picking up stitches for the neckband is another place where marks may be gained or lost—pick up evenly so that there will be no holes when band is knitted. Use a fine needle to pick up the loops—use three or four for neck of a pullover-type garment. A crochet hook can be used for this operation—put the hook through the loop, bring through a loop from the ball of wool and place it on the needle, repeat. Count the stitches and if necessary adjust the number before starting to knit.

Joining the Wool

Joints in the wool should not be noticeable in the finished garment.

Overlapping the ends of the wool, or darning one end into the other for several inches often results in a thick patch on the work (though these methods are better than using knots.)

The neatest method is to splice the wool—split each end of the wool in half for at least four inches on fine wool and up to six or eight inches on the very thick, speedy-knit wools. Overlap the halved pieces so that a little of the spliced wool runs with a little of the whole strand at each side of the join. Twist or rub together so that join is firm and the same thickness as wool each side of the join.
If joins occur at the edge of the work, loop ends together and leave until the sewing up stage when they can be used to sew up or can be incorporated in the seam.

Needles Should be Perfect
Check your needles too—too sharp a point can mean many split stitches and slower work. Too blunt needles also make work slower. If your plastic needles are bent and awkward to use, warm them in a jug of hot water then gently straighten. Allow to harden before using again.
Feel the surface of needles before buying—they should be smooth so that stitches can be easily pushed along. Imperfect needles mean fluffy, grubby work.

Correct Uneven Stitching
Some knitters find that their purl row is little tighter or looser than their knit row. If this is the reason for unevenness in your stocking stitch fabric, try using a needle a half size larger or smaller as needed to correct this.

Casting On—and Off
Casting on and off needs care. Do not have stitches so tight that welt elasticity is lost—using a size larger needle can prevent this. If knitting a single collar or having a single welt edge at the neck, cast off from the wrong side by purling to give a neat, flat chain stitch on the right side. (It may be necessary to reverse direction in circular knitting to achieve it.)

Finishing Off
Finally, before presenting garment for judging, turn inside out to check that all loose ends have been darned away. Press lightly (there should not be a crease down the sleeve) and fold neatly.

A RECIPE FOR WASHING WOOLLENS

Here is an easy recipe for washing soiled woollen:
Ingredients are:—
8 oz. of mild soap flakes.
2 oz. of liquid eucalyptus.
½ pint of methylated spirit.

Method.
Put half the soap flakes in a basin and mix with 1 oz. of eucalyptus and ½ pint of methylated spirit.
Add the remainder of the ingredients in two or three lots.
A complete paste will not result, but mixing must be continued until all the flakes are moistened.
The mixture will keep indefinitely in a screwtop jar.

Use.
It takes only a dessert spoon of the mixture to obtain a satisfactory lather on two gallons of water.
Woollen articles of any weight and age—even the oldest and grubbiest work cardigans—will come up clean and soft.
Shake the garment, and wash it in the usual way by kneading and squeezing.
Do not wring, simply squeeze the moisture out.
Very soiled articles are best washed twice.
With bulky knits, it is an advantage to roll them lightly in a towel and pat to remove some of the moisture before spreading them out to dry.
Woollens washed in this mixture dry more quickly than if washed in the usual way.
Try it, and you too will become one of the many enthusiasts who give glowing reports of complete satisfaction!—N.S.W. Department of Agriculture.
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