

Free Pattern of the Month – November 2003

The Break-all-the-rules Hat

This easy rolled brim hat will use up your odds and ends of worsted weight yarn while allowing you to design “on the needles” with no thought to “The Knitting Rules.” This hat is easy for a beginner (you need only know how to Knit, Purl and Knit 2 Together) and the design possibilities are endless for a knitter of any level. This pattern will fit an average adult and at the end of these instructions is a basic formula to help you design your own hat using any weight yarn.



Materials: Odds and ends of hand spun and commercial worsted weight wool yarn. Use acrylic if hand washing is an issue in your house. Otherwise, use wool – it’s warmer.

Gauge: 4.5 stitches per inch, 5 rows per inch.

Needles: I used a US #8 16” circular needle, but use whatever size you need to get gauge. Or close – it’s only a hat and heads come in all sizes – you’ll find one that fits.

Size: Approximately 23” around – average men’s size. The numbers in () will make a hat to fit most women.

So let’s get started –

Cast on 99 (90) stitches onto a US # 11 needle (or one at least a couple sizes larger than you will use for the body of the hat – you want the cast on to be loose.)

Join in the round, being careful not to twist – this is the only “rule” that you need follow. You don’t even need to place a marker at this point!

Work in stockinette stitch (knit every round) until the roll brim has been formed and the knitting wants to be flat again. If you choose a neutral color for the brim the rest of the colors can be as wild as you like and it won't clash with your intended's skin tone. Remember that anyone can wear his or her hair or eye color.

At this point (about 1" or so) you can start to change colors. If you want a smooth hat, simply pick up another color and knit one stitch with the yarn from the new and old color held together, and then continue with the new color. Pull the ends to the outside and leave them a couple of inches long for little fringes later. Yes, pull them to the outside – there are no ends to work in later with this hat!

If you want the color changes to show up (and add even more texture to the hat) purl a round at each color change. Simply purl the next stitch with both the new and old yarns held together (be mindful of this two-loop stitch on the next round – knit them together as one stitch or you'll end up with a hat that gets larger as you go) and leave the ends on the outside. After one round, go back to stockinette until the next color change.

What about the "jog," that place where you change colors that doesn't line up in perfect stripes, since knitting in the round produces a spiral? Don't worry about them! This hat breaks all the rules – no need to work a "jog-less jog" or any other knitting trick to cover up the jog – the jog is the point! When you come around to those two loose ends tie a nice, firm square knot (Yes! Tie a knot in your knitting!), and let them hang there. Try to vary where you change colors so that these loose ends don't all end up in the same place – it's more fun that way!

Continue, changing colors at your whim until your hat measures about 4 – 5" (or what your brain tells you will fit **your** head) from the point where the brim stops curling. Now it's time to decrease for the crown. Place a marker (it doesn't matter where, wherever you are will work just fine!) and work the next round thus:

* Knit 7, Knit 2 together * repeat from * to * around.

Knit the next round plain.

* Knit 6, Knit 2 together * repeat from * to * around.

Knit the next round plain.

And so on and so forth, fudging at the end if you need to in order to end up with 3 stitches left and switching to DPN needles when there are too few stitches to fit around the circular needle.

Work a few inches of I-cord and attach a tassel, as I did, or Knit 3 together and bind off the last stitch, or attach a big, fluffy pom-pom – whatever suits your fancy!

Now go back to those little ends and trim them off about an inch long. Then un-ply the strands and mush them up with your fingers (or give the hat to a toddler to play with for awhile if you have one handy) until they are fuzzy.

That's it! Use wild colors or subdued colors, or all the same color with a few purled rounds added for texture.

Send me a pic of your Break-all-the-rules Hat and I'll post it in my customer gallery on my web site.

Here's how to determine how many stitches to use if you want a bigger (or smaller) hat or want to use a different yarn –

First, work a swatch. I know, this kinda means playing by the rules, but it's the only sure way to make sure the darn thing will fit! For this example, we'll assume that the gauge is 6 stitches per inch.

Measure the recipient's head at the widest point. For this example, we'll assume that the head in question is 23" around.

Do the math – 23" X 6 stitches – 138 stitches. That number is fine if your recipient likes a fairly loose hat. If not, you need to subtract some stitches to make the hat fit snugly and not get blown off in the first stiff breeze. To make the rest of the math easier, let's round down to 130 stitches.

So, cast on 130 stitches; join in the round, etc, etc, etc. Change colors as you like, work to 4" + or – and get ready to decrease for the crown.

To keep things simple, let's divide 130 by 10 = 13 stitches. So the first decrease round is worked thus: * Knit 11, knit 2 together * repeat from * to * around. Work a round plain and then decrease again: * Knit 10, Knit 2 together * repeat from * to * etc. until you have only a few stitches left and then end off however you like – I-cord, flat crown, tassel, pom-pom, whatever.

Happy knitting!

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