

## Free Pattern of the Month – September 2003

### A trio of Lacey Bags

(a lesson in gauge)

This month's pattern features an easy Gauge lesson and the bonus of a lacey bag when you're done.



Webster's defines gauge (as related to knitting) thus: the fineness of a knitted fabric as expressed in loops per every 1.5 inch (3.8 cm): 15 denier, 60 gauge stockings.

So, what does that mean? Gauge (the buggaboo of every beginning knitter) is simply the number of stitches and rows per inch of knitted fabric, usually measured over stockinette stitch. If your gauge is 5 stitches per inch (by far the more important number, as the row gauge can be fudged) you have 5 knit stitches per horizontal inch of knitted fabric - perfect for a worsted weight sweater. If your gauge is 2 stitches per inch, you are either knitting lace on very large needles or very bulky yarn on large needles. The ball band of your yarn will list what gauge the yarn works up best at, but don't take this as gospel - knit a swatch with likely looking needles and change needle size until you create a fabric that pleases you.

The bags shown above are nothing more than gauge swatches - those little squares of knitting that we make to see if we will be able to get the gauge that a pattern calls for, or to see what a particular yarn looks like knitted up. In this

case, I used a lacy design for the "front" and knit the back in plain stockinette (knit on the RS rows, Purl on the WS rows) which is where I'll take my gauge measurement. There is no reason that our gauge swatches can't be functional after they have served their purpose. Each of the bags above was knit using the same chart (below) the only changes were the yarn and needles - the patterns and stitch count are exactly the same. They are different sizes because my gauge was different.



This is the smallest bag, knit on a US #1 needle with J & S Shetland 100% lace weight wool yarn. It measures 2 1/4" x 2 3/4". The gauge for this bag is 12 stitches and 15 rows per inch. The row gauge is almost always larger than the stitch gauge because a plain knit stitch is wider than it is tall, rather rectangular in shape. Garter stitch is one exception when each row is knit (both RS and WS) the resulting swatch is square - a handy thing to know.



This bag was knit with Socka wool yarn on a US #3 needle and measures 3 3/4" x 4 3/4". The gauge for this bag is 6.5 stitches and 9 rows per inch.



This is the largest bag, made with Rowan Cork and a US #11 needle. It measures 10" x 10" and has a gauge of 3 stitches and 4 rows per inch.

I measured the gauge on the back (plain) side with a regular fabric tape measure. Simply lay the knitting down on a flat surface, smoothing it (but don't stretch it!) flat. Lay the tape on the fabric, lining it up with the knit loops and count how many you have in 3 or 4 inches, then divide to get an average inch measurement. For example, if I have 20 stitches per 4", then my gauge is 5 stitches per inch. The reason for measuring over several inches is that sometimes the stitches are slightly different in size, and taking your gauge measurement over several inches will give you a more accurate count.

When making a gauge swatch for a project, it is often a good idea to knit the swatch and then wash it as you will wash the finished garment. Sometimes a yarn will pill, bleed, shrink, stretch or do some other horrible thing, and it's good to know how it will behave before investing a lot of time in a large sweater only to have it stretch out of shape or shrink with the first wash. If your swatch changes dramatically in size or shape, you can then make changes to the pattern before you knit the garment.

All of these bags have a pleasing hand and all are suitable for their purpose - the tiniest for a sachet bag, the middle purse for a doll or small girl, and the largest is big enough for a small project bag. These bags can be lined or not and you can use whatever you have on hand for a drawstring. I had some ribbon handy, so that's what I used, but I-cord or twine, or a crochet chain would work as well.

So, here's the pattern

All rows are charted on the chart below, and the abbreviations are listed. Line-by-line instructions follow the chart. The chart is read from bottom right to bottom left (the same direction as your knitting assuming you're right-handed) for RS rows, and each WS row is worked the same Slip 1, Purl across and is shown as a row of blank boxes across the chart.

Here's the chart and symbol key:



Here are line-by-line instructions -

Cast on 27 stitches using your favorite method, but be sure that it's loose!

Work 4 rows stockinette (Knit on RS rows, Purl on WS rows). Slip the first stitch on each row to make a neat chain selvedge for sewing up later.

Work the eyelet row (RS) thus: slip 1, \* YO, K3tog \* repeat from \* to \* across.

Work 4 more rows stockinette and begin the pattern rows on the chart. This lace pattern is called English Mesh Lace and can be found in Barbara Walker's First Treasury.

Row 1 (and all WS rows) Slip 1, Purl across.

Row 2 (RS) Slip 1, \* Knit 1, YO, SSK, Knit 1, K2tog, YO \* repeat from \* to \* across, ending Knit 2.

Row 4 Slip 1, \* Knit 1, YO, Knit 1, S2KP, Knit 1, YO \* repeat from \* to \* across, ending Knit 2.

Row 6 Slip 1, \* Knit 1, K2tog, YO, Knit 1, YO, SSK \* repeat from \* to \* across, ending Knit 2.

Row 8 Slip 1, K2tog, Knit 1, YO, \* Knit 1, YO, Knit 1, S2KP, Knit 1, YO \* repeat from \* to \* 3 times, ending Knit 1, YO, Knit 1, SSK, Knit 1.

Repeat these 8 rows 4 times.

Purl the WS row, Knit the RS row, then Knit the next WS row, Knit one row, Purl one row. This will make a turning ridge.

Work the back of the bag plain thus: work 36 rows stockinette, work the eyelet row again, and then work 4 rows stockinette and bind off.

Or, you can work the chart again to make both sides of the bag lacey start at row 2 (RS) and work the chart again from bottom to top, then work 4 rows stockinette, work the eyelet row, then 4 more rows stockinette and bind off.

Wash and block the bag flat, then seam up the sides, keeping the turning ridge at the very bottom and matching up the sides, fudging a little if needed. Run a ribbon (or something) through the eyelets and you're done!

As always, if you have any questions or comments about this pattern, please feel free to drop me a note - catmccall at msn.com.

Happy knitting!

P.S. I have several similar charts with different lace patterns if you'd like to try one - just e-mail me and I'll e-mail one to you in .jpg format. If you have a favorite lace design that you'd like to see charted to make one of these bags, please drop me a note.

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