

Multicolored Sweater



Sweater: medium-large size, Shepherd's Wool yarn mill ends in fingering weight (sold by Deb McDermott of Stonehedge Fiber Mill in East Jordan, MI) 10 skeins, 60 slot Auto Knitter, largest stitch size, 1:5 mock ribbing. This is sewn to purposely have no visible seams on the inside and to be completely reversible; this is why I chose to make tubes rather than panels; I also wanted it to be thicker than it would be if made of a single layer since I used lightweight yarn. Medium size finished with suggestions for larger sizes. Finished length is just below the waist, but it is easy to make it longer if you wish.

I found it easiest to wind all skeins into balls and knitted into tubes with scrap yarn on either end and leaving a length of yarn at the ends. I planned on sewing them together down a center stitch (of the 5), so I placed 3 needles behind the side hash mark (thus 2 in front of it) to make it easier to count rows and plan ahead. Some skeins had knots, so when I caught one I cut it off and rejoined using a Russian join. Skeins ended up to be 230 rows or a little more. (Absolutely no color plan ahead of time.) You will want 30 to 50 additional rows for larger sizes or a longer sweater, so plan on more skeins than I used.

I chose 4 tubes to be the back and front sections to go over the shoulders and sewed those together first. (Two sewn together form the back and front so there is only one seam down each side of the chest with the tube going from the bottom of the back, up over the shoulder and down to the bottom of the front.) Seam down the center stitch (of the 5) of two pieces matching them for length. (It might be a good idea to consider the color scheme at this point so you don't get blobs of one kind all in one big chunk.) Repeat for other side. Then sew up the back as far as you want it to go--less than 1/2 the length of the tubes so you can ease for the neck opening.

For larger (width) sizes, create one tube about 100 rounds long for the center back. Sew down each side connecting to the back pieces. Kitchener across the topmost end. (You can sew a collar to this section later if you wish.) For Extra Large, you might want 3 panels on each side rather than 2 and follow the same instructions as for a medium. Then you could go without the center rear panel.

For sides: knit 50 rounds and finish on scrap yarn. Repeat. These will be sewn to the front and back pieces at the sides to become the underarm. You will sew the ends of this piece to the square end of the gusset piece. To make mine reversible, I closed tubes at the ends using the kitchener stitch.

Collar: depending on how long you want it, knit a tube and kitchener closed at both ends. Position it on each front edge with about 3" of slack in the center. Sew straight up several inches on each front piece keeping the seam even, then gather or ease the remainder in around the back of the neck. The length you make this piece will be determined by how far up you sewed the center rear seam (on the medium sizes) or whether you added another panel to the back (for large sizes). You might want yours to go all the way down the front rather than being like a lapel. (Your turn to be creative.)

Sleeves: gusset section (underarm to elbow)--Knit 50 rounds. Raise all rear needles. Knit back and forth twice. Decreases: by using first 3 needles at each end of a row, move stitch on 2 to needle 3 and from needle 1 to needle

2. (Or, use 4 needles and move 3 to 4, 2 to 3 and 1 to 2). This will give a clean edge for sewing and will not be as tight as it would if you just move the last stitch over one needle. Knit the decrease row and make one pass without decreasing. Repeat until you are down to 3 or 4 stitches and run end yarn through those stitches. Repeat same shaping on rear needles. This piece will be sewn underneath the armpit (square end to the top of the side piece). Make another one for other sleeve. Sew pointed sections together.

Remainder of sleeves: knit 3 tubes 100 rows in length. Sew together as above inserting gusset piece from armpit to slightly below elbow. (Thus, from the elbow down, you will have the width of 3 tubes and 4 from armpit to elbow.) Sew together all four pieces; space evenly easing into the armhole opening (in other words, stretch to fit armhole and sew in place).

For 3/4 sleeves, kitchener the ends closed. For longer sleeves, knit a tube the length you want it around your wrist and kitchener the ends together. (Mine was 75 rows.) Sew end of sleeve tubes to this piece easing as needed. If you wanted a tighter cuff, you could also rib a section on the machine and graft it to the sleeve end.

Create a final tube the length of the distance you want it around the bottom; kitchener ends closed. Sew base ends of tubes to this piece, easing slightly as needed. This will likely take slightly more than a full skein. (Mine did.)

If you want buttons:

Make 3 sections of Icord of a length suitable for forming a buttonhole (will depend on the size of your buttons). Using buttons of identical size, sew them completely through both layers evenly spaced so there is one on the inside and one on the outside. Thus, your sweater will be completely reversible and less apt to tear or stretch out of shape if there is any stress on the buttons even if you always wear it with the same side out. I liked mine hanging open in front and did not use any closure.

Optional: if you wish pockets, knit a panel the same width as your sweater panels and about 40 to 50 rows long. I suggest a picot edge for a top. Sew it exactly over top of one of the panels. You will need to do this on both sides if you want everything reversible. Pockets can also be added in a different pattern of course. This part is naturally up to the designer. I didn't want the extra bulk, so I didn't add them. If you want a reversible item, I'd put the pocket on a different panel on each side to reduce bulk.

Tips for sewing:

I found it easiest to kitchener by putting the last rows on needle so that I didn't have strings hanging everywhere and the scrap yarn could be removed easily. Be sure to stitch in the center of the middle stitch (that is, of the 5 between mock ribs) when seaming, and stay in that same wale the length of the piece. Take 2 rungs from one side, cross to the other piece and take 2 rungs. When you return to the first piece, be SURE to go in the stitch that you came out of EVERY time. This will bed your seam deeper than the stitches and none of your sewing will show. I worked in all ends on the outside of the mesh going up and down a wale at least 4 to 7 stitches and reversing twice. NO KNOTS!

When you are sewing the bands for cuff or waist, you will not have evenly numbered rungs to stitches since knit stitches are not equal in length and width. Thus "fudge it" as you go making sure that the piece for the waist is not baggy.

The finishing techniques on this piece are essential to the final appearance. Don't take shortcuts. If you don't like to kitchener stitch, this is not a pattern for you. This item went much more smoothly than I expected and knitted up (even counting the hand sewing) much faster than it would if I had knitted it by hand. If you use a different yarn in sockweight, the directions would still work fine, but you'll need to experiment for numbers of rows and stitch size.

When items are judged at fairs (and likely other competitions), the inside of the item will be judged as well as the outside. You'll be amazed at how professional this looks inside and out. And, it will look completely different in other types of yarn. I really liked the color-blocks that remind me of a quilt, but

you might like self-patterning yarns or even solids. Experiment. What a great way to use up left-overs--or a reason to buy some on purpose!