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Susan Brittain

Project Designer



Crochet Patterns

by Susan Brittain

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Crochet Patterns For Dummies®

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Introduction

There's nothing like being able to sit down in a favorite chair for a while to catch up on some much needed down time, whether it's in the evening after the dinner dishes are done or on a rainy afternoon. If you're anything like me, though, you find it hard to just sit. This is when I like to get my crocheting out and sit and relax, but still be creative at the same time.

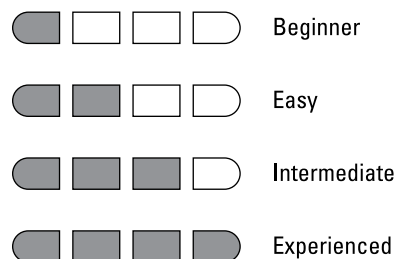
As with any new skill, practice makes perfect. Even after 30-plus years of working with a hook and yarn, I still learn new techniques and new ways to do old things. Mastering the basics is, of course, essential, and even if you've been crocheting for a while, it never hurts to review skills that may be a little rusty.

Crochet Patterns For Dummies was written so you can practice and enhance your skills in this time-honored craft, while at the same time create designs that are both useful and fashionable.

About This Book

The craft of crochet has been around for hundreds of years, originally developed out of necessity, and then continued throughout the ages because of the beautiful designs that can be created. I can't even begin to count the variations of stitches that can be crocheted, but one thing I can tell you is that they all begin with the basics. For that reason, I give you projects in this book that allow you to develop a strong foundation of the most commonly used stitches and stitch patterns.

Patterns' skill levels are categorized as Beginner, Easy, Intermediate, or Advanced, and some pattern books note the skill level using one of the following symbols:



I don't include the symbols in this book because most of the patterns fall into the Beginner and Easy categories. I note which patterns are more advanced in the pattern introductions. Each chapter is organized so the patterns graduate from the least to the most complicated, so you can pick and choose where you want to begin.

Each part of this book focuses on a different aspect of crochet, and the parts are further broken down into chapters pertaining to specific information, such as

- » Hook and yarn information, and how to choose the right materials
- » Deciphering crochet lingo, reading a pattern, and understanding garment sizing
- » A review of the basic stitches and stitch combinations, with a concise appendix containing step-by-step instructions for working these stitches
- » Loads of patterns separated into chapters for specific skills used

To give you an idea of what the projects look like when they're finished, I include photos:

- » Each set of project instructions within the chapter includes a photo of the completed item.
- » In the center of the book, you can find color photos of the projects. These photos also give you a better idea about the yarn colors I chose. (Of course, if you're not crazy about the yarn I used, you can always branch out on your own and choose colors that are more suited to your taste.)

Some instructions also include illustrations that show you stitch diagrams or project dimensions. Some things are easier to visualize than read about, and these illustrations are meant to show you how stitches or sizes relate.

Some projects include a “Variation” section after the basic instructions. This can be as simple as how to substitute materials, or it can give you ideas about creating a whole new project from the original pattern. Read these sections even if you don't want to employ them. They can expand your knowledge about crochet and how you can adapt designs and patterns.

The best thing about this book is that you don't have to read it cover to cover. You choose where to start. If something looks interesting, go ahead and flip to that chapter. If you need a refresher on a certain skill used, go ahead and flip back, make a practice swatch, and then continue on with the project.

Conventions Used in This Book

The following conventions are used throughout the text to make the patterns consistent and easy to understand:

- » New terms appear in *italic* and are closely followed by an easy-to-understand definition.
- » **Bold** is used to highlight the action parts of numbered steps and for keywords in bulleted lists.
- » When you see a set of bulleted (•) instructions in this book, work the stitches through once, and then go back and repeat them the number of times indicated.
- » If a new skill is introduced that is not included elsewhere in the book, you'll find it listed within that particular pattern under the heading “New skills.” In that section, you'll find step-by-step instructions on how to work that particular stitch.

- » The specific part of an illustration that relates to the step you're working on is shaded dark gray. For example, if you're inserting your hook into a certain stitch, only that stitch is shaded so you can clearly see where to go.
- » The patterns included in this book are all written in typical crochet fashion, as you'd see in any publication. Crochet has a language all its own, most of it abbreviated. To brush up on the lingo, see Chapter 4.

Foolish Assumptions

My greatest hope is that, by picking up this book, you are looking to further develop the crochet skills that you already possess. If you have a working knowledge of the basics and are ready to take your skills to the next level, then you've come to the right place. This book does contain a little bit of very basic, beginner-level information to help jog your memory, but you should have at least some prior experience.

If you're looking to learn to crochet from the start, then look around the bookshelves for *Crocheting For Dummies*, the companion book to this one. In that book, you'll find in-depth information about crochet from start to finish. If you're feeling really adventurous, pick up both books so you'll have a complete set.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided into five easily identifiable parts, with a total of 17 chapters and two appendixes. Any brand-new stitches that are introduced within a particular chapter are illustrated in the "New skills" section. If at any point it seems that you need specific knowledge about a concept, I'll point you in the right direction.

Part 1: Reinforcing Your Crochet Foundation

This part contains all the reference material you need to crochet your way through the rest of the book. It starts off with choosing the right hook and yarn, and then moves on to figuring out gauge. Information about reading patterns, sizing garments, and understanding stitches and their relationships to each other is included in this section. And last, but not least, you can refresh your memory about how to change colors correctly, increasing and decreasing stitches, and crocheting in a circle.

Part 2: Hook, Yarn, Action! Crocheting Simple Projects

Part 2 has five chapters packed full of patterns designed to get your fingers moving. Each chapter focuses on a different aspect of the basic skills. You can choose a project in which you concentrate on crocheting your stitches evenly, or one that has you shaping the design through increases and decreases. You can make great accessories while crocheting in the round, or you can crochet multicolored patterns designed to get you into the color-changing mode.

Part 3: Putting Your Skills to the Test

Ready to take your skills a step further? The patterns in this part of the book combine all of the basics and more. I include a whole bunch of sweater designs, as well as more home décor and accessories. You'll use some slightly more advanced techniques, as well as see what it's like to work with unconventional materials such as hemp and wire.

Part 4: The Part of Tens

Not to be outdone, Part 4 has loads of patterns as well. Included are quick 'n' easy designs that are great for when you need a creative fix. I also came up with a whole bunch of designs with the younger set in mind. I hope these patterns get them crocheting, but they're great for you to make as gifts for tweens and teens as well. This part also contains information on caring for your work after it's done.

Part 5: Appendixes

When you get stuck, turn to this part for a little help. Appendix A walks you through how to do basic and not-so-basic crochet stitches. Appendix B provides yarn companies' names and contact info that you can use when you can't find the yarn you want in your neighborhood craft store.

Icons Used in This Book

To make this book easier to read and simpler to use, I include some icons that can help you find and fathom key ideas and information that are worth taking a second glance at.



TIP

This icon appears any time I provide information that can make your work a bit easier or show you a trick that experienced crocheters have developed over the years.



REMEMBER

Any time you see this icon, you should know that the information that follows is important. It highlights different points in the skills or pattern that you should remember.



WARNING

When you see this icon, be sure to read carefully the information that follows. It can help you avoid common mistakes and pitfalls that can lead to a disastrous finished design.

Beyond This Book

Whether you're new to crocheting or have been doing it for decades, you'll find that I pack a lot of information into this book. Some of it, however, I know you'll need to look up constantly, likely when you don't have this book handy. So I made sure to put things like crochet abbreviations, standardized yarn weights, and metric conversions into an online Cheat Sheet you can easily and quickly access. To find this Cheat Sheet, just go to www.dummies.com and type "Crochet Patterns For Dummies" in the search box. You'll find a link for the Cheat Sheet there.

Where to Go from Here

The beauty of this book is that you can start anywhere you want. If it's been a while since you've crocheted, or if you're still a relative beginner, then by all means start at the beginning. If you're ready to jump right in, browse through the project chapters or take a look at the color insert and choose one that looks like fun. Chapter 12 is all about sweaters. Chapter 15 has a bunch of patterns that you can make in an hour or so. And I've scattered accessories and home décor items throughout the project chapters.

Remember, though, that you can always seek additional, in-depth information in the companion book, *Crocheting For Dummies*. It provides detailed explanations on everything provided in this book.

1

**Reinforcing
Your Crochet
Foundation**

IN THIS PART . . .

Getting your crochet gear and knowing how to use it properly

Understanding gauge and measurements

Checking out patterns and abbreviations

Picking up some stitch basics

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Deciphering the difference between hooks
- » Unraveling yarn mysteries
- » Collecting other crochet accouterments
- » Holding the yarn and hook

Chapter **1**

Gearing Up and Getting Started

When embarking on a new project, gathering the necessary supplies is a must before you can even think about starting. To begin a new crochet design, you need a hook and some yarn, and you're all set to go.

Like most crafts, even those with the simplest needs, there are variations in the tools used. This chapter covers the differences between the various types of hooks available and when it's appropriate to use each type. Additionally, you can now find yarns available in a huge array of colors, textures, weights, and compositions. After you have a basic understanding of the more common yarns available, you will have an easier time choosing which yarn is best for your project.

And if you want to brush up on the best way to hold your hook and yarn, you'll find that information in this chapter, too.

Taking a Look at the Crochet Hook

A hook is one of two essentials for crocheting. (The other being yarn, of course — more on yarn later.) Choosing the proper crochet hook is essential to your comfort and the outcome of your design.

Crochet hooks are all basically the same in design. They each have a point, throat, shaft, and handle, and most (except the largest sizes) have a thumb rest (see Figure 1-1).

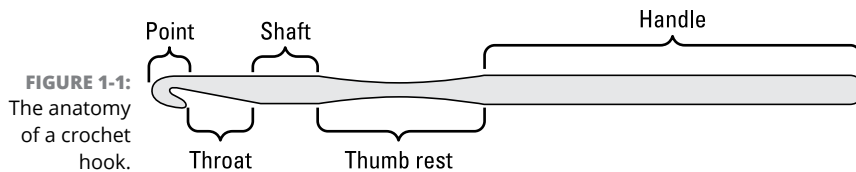


FIGURE 1-1:
The anatomy
of a crochet
hook.

You can, however, find subtle differences in the hook's shape. Some hooks have rounded points, which generally work easiest with thicker yarns, while others have sharper points that are ideal for thin yarns, wire, and other detail work. Some hooks have distinct, cutout throats that help to keep the yarn in place on the hook. Others have a smoother, more rounded throat, which enables you to work through stitches very quickly. As for which features to look for on your hook, it's just a matter of preference. Practice with every type to see which features you prefer. Sometimes it's just a matter of selecting the hook you like best for a particular yarn, stitch, or project.

Considering hook types and construction

Crochet hooks are typically divided into two primary categories, based on the diameter of the hook shaft. You can find hooks ranging from a fraction of a millimeter in diameter up to hooks larger than your finger. Depending on the size, a hook can be sorted into two primary categories:

- » **Standard:** These hooks are typically used when crocheting with yarn, and they range from 2 millimeters up to 20 millimeters in diameter.
- » **Steel:** These hooks are smaller and generally used when working with crochet thread, size 10 and smaller.

Steel hooks are made of, well, steel. But standard hooks can be made of different materials including aluminum, plastic, and even wood. The following list helps you weigh the pros and cons of each material:

- » **Aluminum:** These hooks are lightweight and smooth, helping you work with the yarn quickly and without catching. Aluminum hooks are some of the easiest to find and are often coated in a spectrum of colors.
- » **Plastic:** These hooks are also lightweight, but they can feel sticky to work with. While inexpensive, some crocheters feel the grippy plastic slows them down.
- » **Wood:** Crochet hooks can be made out of hard woods such as ebony, rosewood, and oak with fine woodworking techniques. These hooks are beautiful to look at, and, when made properly, can be as pleasant to use as your favorite aluminum workhorse. You also can likely find inexpensive bamboo hooks, even in your local megastore. These also have a bit more "grip" than aluminum, but many crafters enjoy how they stay warm in your hands.

For most of your crochet projects, the hook you'll require is generally 5 to 6 inches long and falls into one of the above categories. Don't be surprised to read about — or see in the store — other hook-ended tools, including

- » **Afghan hooks:** These hooks range from 12 to 16 inches in length, with a hook at one end and a knob at the other. These hooks are used for afghan or Tunisian stitches that require you to keep more than one loop on the hook shaft. For examples of some of these projects, check out Chapter 13.

» **Double-ended crochet hooks:** Also long like afghan hooks, these tools have a hook at each end. They are used for something called *double-ended crochet*, which makes a thick and reversible fabric.

Selecting the right size

There are two separate sizing categories when it comes to hooks, one for standard hooks and one for steel hooks. Knowing which is which is invaluable. The pattern that you're working from will give you the size hook used to crochet the original design. This is especially important because not only is it the proper size for the type of yarn used, but it also determines the size of the stitch it creates, which determines the gauge (see Chapter 2 for detailed gauge info). The gauge, in turn, determines the final size of the design.

Hooks come in a wide range of sizes (see Figure 1-2) and are labeled accordingly (most standard hooks are labeled with both the U.S. and Continental sizes). The labels are sometimes embossed on the side of the shaft. On other hooks, you may see a raised letter or number on the round end of the shaft. Hooks with padded or "comfort" grips may display this information on the grip.

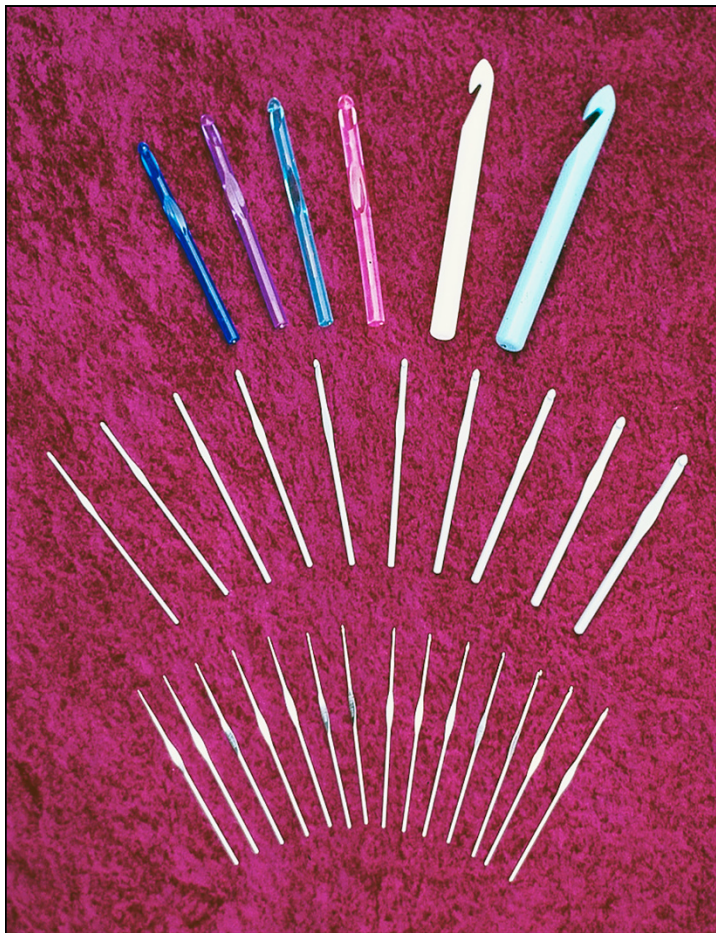


FIGURE 1-2: The wide array of sizes for both standard and steel hooks.

In the U.S. and Canada, standard hooks are labeled using letters, with B on the small end and S on the large end. In the U.S. and Canada, steel hooks are labeled using numbers. These hooks range from the smallest fraction of a millimeter to about 2 millimeters in diameter. Table 1-1 gives the most common sizes for steel crochet hooks and standard crochet hooks. Take note

that the U.S. and U.K. sizes for steel hooks are the opposite of what you'd expect — the larger the number, the smaller the hook. And the U.K. sizes for standard hooks are a bit backwards, too — the smaller the number, the larger the hook.

Table 1-1 Common Crochet Hook Sizes

Steel Crochet Hooks		
U.S. (American)	Continental (Metric)	U.K. (English)
6	1.8mm	3½
7	1.65mm	4
8	1.5mm	4½
9	1.4mm	5
10	1.3mm	5½
Standard Crochet Hooks		
U.S. (American)	Continental (Metric)	U.K. (English)
E-4	3½mm	9
F-5	3¾mm	(no equivalent)
G-6	4mm	8
G-7	4½mm	7
H-8	5mm	6
I-9	5½mm	5
J-10	6mm	4
K-10½	6½mm	3

Keeping your hooks in tiptop shape

Over time, you'll build up quite a collection of hooks. And although hooks aren't expensive, you don't want to have to run out and buy the same hook over and over again because you damaged or lost the first one you bought in that size. Follow this advice to keep your hooks like new and safe:

- » **Cleaning:** You may not think this is too important or wonder how the hooks get dirty. But if you stop to think about it, it becomes obvious. The hook is tucked in your hand or between your fingers for each and every stitch you work, and your hands have natural oils that protect the skin. Over time, these oils build up on your hook and may rub off on your yarn.
 - For your steel hooks, a good soaking in rubbing alcohol does the trick. Follow the bath by rubbing down the hook with a clean, soft cloth.
 - Aluminum and plastic hooks benefit from a thorough washing with a mild detergent. Dry completely before storage.
 - Wood hooks are a bit trickier to clean. Although most have been lacquered or coated to resist splintering, it's not advisable to soak or scrub the hook. Instead, use a damp cloth to wipe clean. Be sure to dry it with a clean towel almost immediately.
- » **Storing:** Proper storage ensures that the hook you need for your next project is ready, willing, and able for work when you are. Invest in a case specially made to store hooks. They are readily available at craft and yarn shops. If you can't find one, or don't want one, roll your hooks in a piece of felt, keeping them separated.



WARNING

Throwing your hooks in a bag or box can cause them to bang together, creating pits, which in turn can cause snags in the yarn as you work. Plastic hooks can bend and become warped as well as pit.

Comprehending Yarn Complexities

When I first started crocheting, choosing yarn wasn't much more difficult than deciding which color to use. Aside from crochet thread, there were only a couple different sizes, and no interesting textures. Colors were either solid or *variegated* (meaning they contain multiple colors). As I'm sure you've seen, that's not the case today. Just walk into the yarn aisle of your favorite craft store or any yarn shop, and you can literally spend hours sorting through the variety of colors and textures available.

Most of the time, you'll decide to make a particular project based on how the item looks; you like the overall design and the material it's made with. Although pictures are nice, you can't always see all the details, and understanding what type of yarn is used to craft the project can go a long way in determining if you'll really like the finished design. The important points to note about the materials can be found on the yarn label. Pay close attention to yarn size or weight and yarn content, but don't be afraid to mix it up. The "A ply for a ply: Swapping yarns" section later in this chapter tells you how.

A light discussion of yarn weights

When the word *weight* is used in relation to yarn, it generally means the thickness of the yarn. The thicker the yarn, the larger the stitches you'll be able to create.

Yarns are labeled with any of about a dozen names that all describe the weight of the yarn. You may see the words "worsted," "aran," "double knitting," "sport," or "chunky." All of these words (and several more) roughly correspond to the thickness of the yarns. So, if a pattern asks for a chunky yarn, you can't really use a substantially thinner sport weight and expect the same results. But you can expect all worsted-weight yarns to crochet to more or less the same fabric. These yarn weights correspond to the gauge, or number of stitches per inch, that you can expect to obtain while crocheting.

Figure 1-3 compares some of the more common weights and textures, but keep in mind that the photo is far from inclusive.

Over the course of the last few years, the yarn industry has been making inroads into standardizing yarn weights. This is really a wonderful effort because one particular weight of yarn can be called several different names (for example, yarns categorized as worsted, afghan, and aran all have the same weight).

So if you really love a project but don't like the suggested yarn, you can use the yarn-weight symbol to find another yarn of the same weight that will work just as well for the item. If the yarn or the pattern you like doesn't use a standard yarn-weight symbol, you can still substitute effectively. Just look at the gauge information provided on the ball band (or yarn label) and pattern and make sure they match. (Chapter 2 goes into more detail on the concept of gauge.)

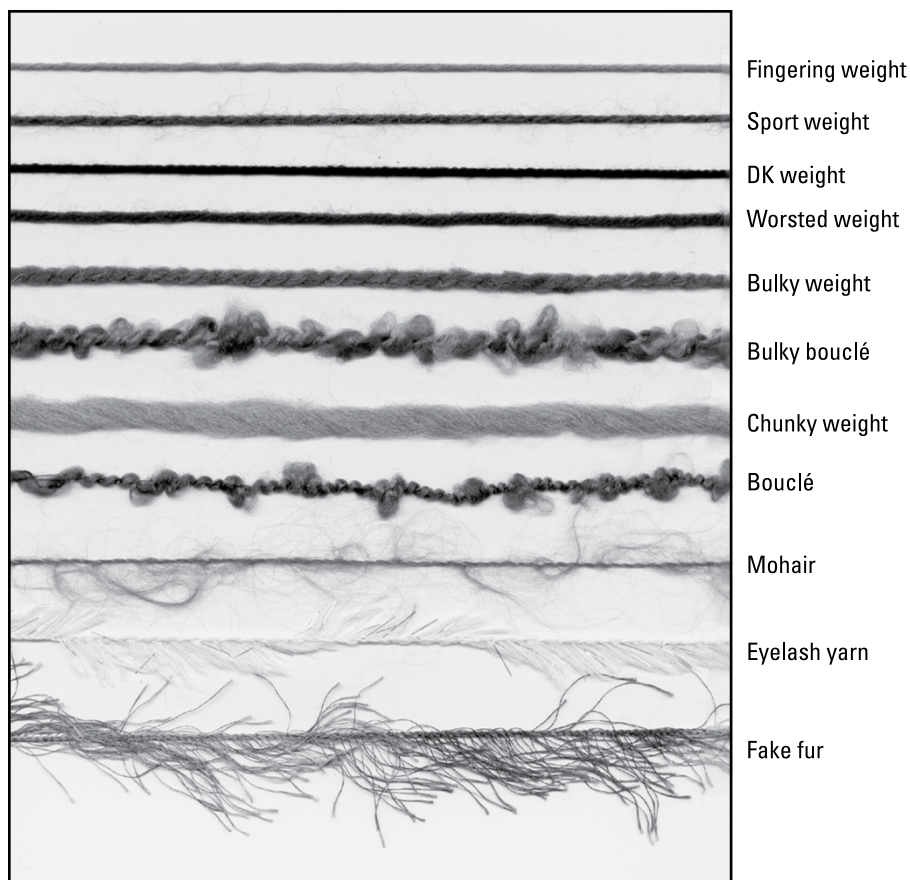


FIGURE 1-3:
Comparison of
commonly
used yarn
weights.

Understanding what your yarn is made of

Something to keep in mind when working with yarn is its composition. Do you prefer manmade materials, or are you a natural person? Yarns are readily available in both, and sometimes it comes down to your favorite choice. Garments are especially nice if they're made of natural fibers such as wool, silk, or cotton, while items such as afghans lend themselves to synthetic fibers, such as acrylic, mainly because of the reasonable cost and ease of care.

When beginning to crochet, most people find it easiest to learn on a smooth wool or wool/acrylic blend. Although pure acrylic yarns are often the most inexpensive and easiest to find, they don't have much elasticity. When you're just starting out, this means your stitches may look more uneven than in a wool or wool-blend yarn. Slippery fibers, such as cotton or silk, create beautiful fabric but can be tough for an inexperienced crocheter to keep on the hook. After a little experience, you'll be able to crochet wonderfully with any yarn.

As far as price is concerned, on the cheaper end of the scale are usually pure acrylic and other manmade yarns. On the high end are cashmere, silk, and other luxury fibers. Workhorse wools, cottons, and blends of more than one fiber type fall in the middle of the spectrum.

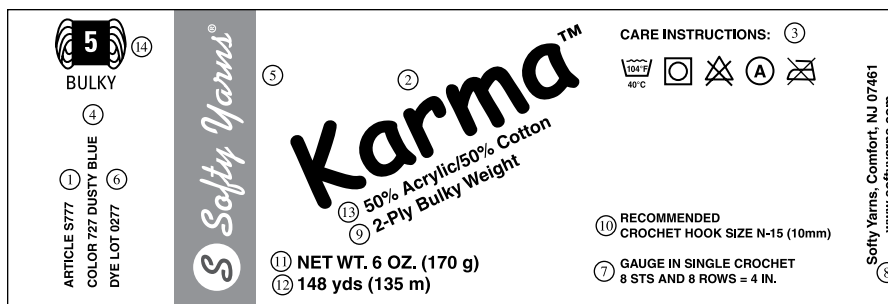
When looking for yarns of different fiber types, be aware that every store carries a different range of products. Although you may have a great variety of budget acrylic yarns at your local megastore, you may have to go to specialty yarn shops for pure silks and wools. But this is changing. It's now not uncommon to find great quality natural fibers in some of the same stores that were long known for carrying only synthetics.

Most patterns, however, specify a particular yarn because it makes the design what it is, so keep that in mind if you substitute a different brand or type of yarn. No matter what you do, that fluffy wool yarn won't look the same as a shiny cotton when crocheted.

Unraveling a yarn label

Whether packaged in a neat little ball, a long, log-like pull-skein, or a twisted skein or hank, all yarns come with a label that gives you invaluable information about its possible use with your project. As shown in Figure 1-4, all the information necessary to choose the right yarn can be found in one small space.

FIGURE 1-4:
Essential information located on a yarn label.



Yarn labels typically include most, if not all of the following information:

- 1. Article number:** This is a code that the manufacturer uses to keep track of different products, and you won't always find an article number on a ball of yarn.
- 2. Brand name:** This is the name of the yarn. For example, "Silk Purse," "Baby Soft," or "Regia 4ply."
- 3. Care instructions:** Is easy care important to the project? If so, look for yarns labeled "Super wash" or that give care instructions that allow for machine wash and dry. More delicate yarns will tell you to hand wash or dry clean to prevent shrinking.
- 4. Color name and number:** A particular yarn color is given a name or a number (or sometimes both) by the manufacturer.
- 5. Company name and logo:** The manufacturer's name and logo will be prominently displayed on the label. Note that this should not be confused with the brand name of the yarn.
- 6. Dye lot number:** Yarns that have been machine or hand dyed will include an identifying number that relates to the batch, or lot, in which the yarn was dyed. When a project requires more than one skein or ball of yarn, be sure to purchase yarn from the same dye lot if you want the colors to match perfectly. Yarns from different dye lots can have subtle (or not-so-subtle) variations in color that could have you seeing stripes.
- 7. Gauge:** The suggested *gauge*, or number of stitches that fit in 4 inches, is often given on the label. Sometimes only a gauge in knitting is provided. Knitted gauge is given generically, such as "20 sts = 4 inches," and does not relate to the crochet gauge at all. More often than not, though, both knit and crochet gauges are given. For crochet, look for any crochet stitch abbreviation, usually "sc" (single crochet), or a small picture of a crochet hook next to a number. For example, "12 sc = 4 inches" is an example of crochet gauge.