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3rd edition

**by Karen Manthey and Susan Brittain**

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## Crocheting For Dummies®, 3rd Edition

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# Introduction

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No longer is crocheting considered something your grandmother did while sitting on the porch in her rocking chair. Crocheted designs are everywhere, from the racks in your favorite clothing store to fashion catalogs — even to the runways in Paris and Milan. Celebrities have started crocheting, and the craft even shows up in movies and television shows. The reasons for this comeback are many, and we hope that by reading this book you discover some of those reasons and begin to enjoy a lifelong affair with crochet.

Even though crochet is a time-honored craft, that doesn't mean it's behind the times. Advances in technology have made yarns softer and more colorful, with wonderful new textures appearing every time you turn around. No longer are crocheters limited to solid or variegated colors; yarn is now hand painted and space dyed. Although worsted-weight yarn is still a staple in every crocheter's yarn cache, so many varieties of weights and textures are available today that we're at a loss as to how to categorize them all.

You're never too old or too young to discover crochet. The skills that you master, the benefits that you receive, and the beautiful heirlooms that you create can last a lifetime and, ideally, be passed on to future generations.

## About This Book

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*Crocheting For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, gives first-time crocheters hands-on experience with new skills and serves as a reference tool for those who already have some basic crochet know-how. We kick off the book by taking you step by step through the process of gathering your materials, crocheting your first stitches, and finishing off a piece of crocheted fabric. If that sounds somewhat overwhelming, relax. We include detailed written instructions and easy-to-follow illustrations throughout this book.

Each part of *Crocheting For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, contains chapters full of information relevant to each other, with successive parts adding more building blocks to your crochet knowledge. If you already have some crochet experience and are looking to refine and expand your techniques, then the later chapters are for you. There, we include more advanced stitches and techniques, along with many tips to guide you. Finally, each part contains several projects that allow you to practice

your newfound skills on fun and useful designs while feeling a sense of accomplishment for a job well done.

We also use the following conventions throughout the book to make the world of crochet even easier for you to dive into:

- » New terms appear in *italics* and are closely followed by an easy-to-understand definition.
- » **Bold** text highlights the action parts of numbered steps.
- » Web addresses appear in monospace. (Some URLs may have broken across multiple lines as we laid out this book, but rest assured we haven't added any spaces or hyphens. Just type in the address as you see it.)
- » When we first introduce a new stitch or technique, we include its abbreviation in parentheses to help you become familiar with the shorthand used in crochet patterns. We also include the abbreviation the first time a stitch is mentioned in a set of numbered steps.
- » In addition to the abbreviation, we include the crochet symbol whenever a new stitch is introduced.
- » 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, that stitch is shaded so you can see exactly where to go.

## Foolish Assumptions

How does that saying about assuming something go? Well, never mind about that. We explain each step as clearly and concisely as possible, so you don't need any prior experience to understand the concepts introduced in this book.

We are assuming, however, that by picking up this book, you have a desire to master the art of crochet. Beyond that, all we ask is that you give it your best shot and don't give up.

## Icons Used in This Book



REMEMBER

This icon highlights important points. You should remember them and apply them when dealing with the skills shown.



TIP

This icon clues you in to some tips of the trade that more experienced crocheters have discovered over time.



WARNING

When you see this icon, read carefully. It marks potential pitfalls and helps you steer clear of frustrating and time-consuming mistakes.

## Beyond the Book

In addition to all the great information and step-by-step instructions included in this book, you can find even more online! Head to [www.dummies.com/go/crochetingfordummiesfd3e](http://www.dummies.com/go/crochetingfordummiesfd3e) for ten free tutorial videos that show you how to tackle various stitches and crochet in the round.

You can also find a handy online Cheat Sheet with a list of international crochet symbols and stitch abbreviations, abbreviations for common crochet terms, and info on making and measuring a gauge swatch. Just head to [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and search for this book's title.

## Where to Go from Here

Now that the introductions are over, it's time to begin. The fun part is that where you start is entirely up to you! *Crocheting For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, is written so you can start reading whatever section best fits your skill level.

- » If you're an absolute beginner, we suggest starting with Part 1. It has all the essential information that you need to begin crocheting.
- » If you already have some experience with the basics and want to expand your knowledge, then look ahead to the chapters on more advanced stitches and techniques. Whenever we feel that you should know something that was covered in a previous chapter, we refer you to that chapter.
- » If you used to crochet and are coming back to it (sometimes life just gets too busy for fun stuff like this), skim through the chapters to reacquaint yourself with the techniques. The stitches themselves haven't changed, but the materials have, and you may come across some useful info.



# 1

# Crochet 101

## **IN THIS PART . . .**

Get the lowdown on the basics of crochet.

Become familiar with the tools and materials you need to begin crocheting.

Understand the importance of gauge and how it affects everything you crochet.

Find out how to read a crochet pattern — and what all those symbols mean!



## IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Beginning with the basics of crochet
- » Surveying fundamental techniques
- » Expanding your selection of stitches and techniques
- » Wrapping up your projects and sharing tips for a lifetime of happy crocheting

# Chapter **1**

# Hooking into a Life of Crochet

**C**rochet has numerous beneficial qualities. Here are just a few of them:

- » The soothing rhythm of creating stitches can calm even the most frazzled nerves. If you're one of those people who can't stand to be idle, crochet is a wonderful way to let your body get a bit of rest and not feel like you're wasting time. If your family is always clamoring for you to sit down and watch a TV show or a special movie at night, go ahead, but bring along your hook and yarn.
- » Crochet is also a wonderful take-along project. You can crochet on family road trips as well as on trains and planes.
- » According to psychological studies that have been done on the benefits of crochet, the focus needed to create something takes your mind off the bazillion little things hollering for your attention and gives your brain some much-needed downtime.
- » Crochet also serves as an outlet for your creativity and provides a sense of satisfaction when you complete your design and can look at it and say, "I created this myself."

» Crochet has physical benefits as well. People suffering from various forms of arthritis have used it as a form of physical therapy. The constant movement required helps keep the hands limber and the joints from stiffening up.

We hope that at least one of these reasons is enough to set you on the path to practicing this enjoyable craft. To find out more about crochet, take a look at the basics we present in this chapter.

## Starting with Crochet Fundamentals

If you're like most people these days, finding the time to figure out something new can be a challenge. With crochet, you can pick it up when you have some time, put it down when you don't, or take it with you on the run. There's no mess to clean up and nothing to babysit. And you can easily find hooks and yarn at your local discount or craft store as well as at the many specialty yarn stores that have cropped up in many towns. Basically, you don't need to wait to start crocheting while you special order some obscure item.

In the following sections, we introduce you to the fundamentals of crochet: the tools you need, how to measure gauge, and how to decipher crochet patterns. These fundamentals are what you need to know to successfully start your new crochet hobby.

### Gathering all your tools

One of the greatest things about crochet is that you don't need to invest in tons of fancy materials or create a new room in your house to store a bunch of equipment. All you need to get started are a couple of hooks, preferably from different manufacturers so you can find a style you're comfortable with, and a skein of yarn. You probably have the other stuff that you need, such as a pair of scissors, a bag to keep all your supplies in, and a comfy place to sit, at home already.

Chapter 2 gives you the skinny on the various types of hooks and yarns as well as some of the other crochet gadgets available. As with any new undertaking, understanding the basics about the materials that you're working with is essential.



TIP

If you bought this book ten minutes ago and are already at the yarn shop, you probably just want to get a cheap hook and some yarn so you can start practicing stitches right away. Here's what you need to get started (for less than \$5):

- » **A size H-8 U.S. (5 mm) crochet hook:** This size hook is comfortable to work with, and the size of stitch it creates is easy to see.
- » **A light, solid-colored, worsted-weight yarn, preferably made of acrylic or wool fibers:** Acrylic and wool yarns are great for practicing with because they're inexpensive, and light-colored yarn is best initially because you may have a hard time seeing your stitches if the yarn you're working with is too dark or multicolored.

## Adjusting tension

Making sure that your finished projects end up being the correct size is important. After all, who needs a doily the size of a coaster or an afghan that can double as a slipcover for a sectional couch?



REMEMBER

By using some simple math and working a gauge swatch (see Chapter 3), you ensure that your stitches are the right size and tension for your design. So don't skip over the stuff at the beginning of the pattern directions; checking your materials and gauge keeps you out of trouble.

## Crocheting from a pattern

Even crocheters with years of experience work from patterns, so knowing how to read them is important. Chapter 4 tells you what the abbreviations and symbols in patterns mean and how to decipher the instructions. To ease you into the language of crochet, we provide an explanation immediately after each line of instruction, although we urge you to take a stab at reading the “normal” instructions because that's how all crochet publications present them.

### GIBBERISH ANYONE?

A while back, we had an experience that shows just how funny crochet instructions can look when you're not familiar with the terminology. A young girl was leafing through a crochet magazine looking at the pictures, or so we thought. When we started paying attention to the noises she was making, we laughed so hard our sides split. The girl was reading the instructions phonetically (*ch 3, dc in next sc, sc in next dc* — see what we mean?). Try this with one of the patterns at the end of the chapters, and you'll see what we mean. Crochet abbreviations really can look like a bunch of gibberish. Don't worry, though; they're actually pretty simple to decipher, as you find out in Chapter 4.

To help you get used to all the abbreviations and symbols, we include them in parentheses every time we introduce a new stitch or technique (which we fully explain in plain English, by the way). The first project patterns at the ends of the chapters either partially or completely explain the directions in plain English, but by Chapter 8 we provide the directions solely in Crochetese. (Never fear; you can always flip back to Chapter 4 if you don't remember something.)

## Mastering Basic Crochet Techniques

Aside from figuring out the basic stitches, you need to understand a few fundamental techniques: adding and subtracting stitches, changing colors, and working in a circle. All these techniques are really quite easy, and mastering them can help you create fabulous designs. We give you a brief introduction to these basic techniques, as well as the importance of practicing them, in the next sections.

### Practice makes perfect

You don't learn to walk or ride a bike in a day, so don't expect to become a crochet pro in just 24 hours. Getting good at crochet takes practice but probably not as much as you may think. Start with the basic chain stitch (described in Chapter 5), and practice until you're comfortable with the motions your hands must make. Then move on to another stitch. Each successive stitch, which we walk you through step by step in Chapters 5 and 6, builds on another, so try not to skip any of them, at least in the beginning. We don't want you to get frustrated and throw your work down. Believe us, in no time at all, you'll be moving right along.



TIP

For those of you who are visual learners, head on over to our book's page on [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com), where you can see short videos on how to work the basic stitches.

The majority of *Crocheting For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, presents techniques from a right-hander's point of view, but we don't forget you lefties. All the information contained in this book (and there's plenty of it!) applies to you as well. In Chapter 5, we get you started on the basics by illustrating steps from both the left- and right-handed perspectives. There, we also give you a few tips to help you work your way through the rest of the book from a left-handed perspective.

### Shape up

After you have the basic stitches down, it's time to break away from the straight lines and give your projects some curves. Check out Chapter 7 to see just how easy

it is to shape your projects by adding and subtracting stitches. Don't worry; the math is simple, and so are the techniques.

## Round and round you go

Because crochet stitches are so easily manipulated, you can go where other forms of needlework can't, such as in circles. Although the first few chapters have you going back and forth in rows, Chapter 8 throws open the door to the world of crocheting in the round. All sorts of great projects — think doilies, afghans, and sweaters — are worked in rounds. This basic variation is easy, so don't be afraid to try the projects in this book that are worked in rounds.

## Color it in

Crochet is by no means monochromatic. Yes, you've seen homes with white doilies scattered on every surface or the hat and scarf sets made in a single, dull color. But just wait until you walk into your local craft store or yarn shop. Your senses may just be assaulted by the multitude of colors and textures now available.



REMEMBER

Changing colors and carrying colors are variables you can take into consideration to turn a ho-hum design into a work of art (and Chapter 9 shows you how to do just that).

# Adding New Stitches and Techniques to Your Crochet Repertoire

When you've mastered the basics, then you're ready to move on to even more fun stuff — new techniques and stitch combinations that add up to some creative works of art, as explained in the following sections.



REMEMBER

Many so-called specialty stitches (see Chapter 10) are nothing more than the combination of a couple of different basic stitches, just with a new name. So don't be intimidated if a new technique or stitch seems too complex. Broken down, it's nothing more than the basics you already know.

## Having fun with new stitches

You can do many amazing things with your crochet hook. Who says you have to work stitches in only one place? Because crochet is just a bunch of interlocking

loops, you can stick your hook in myriad places to create stitches that are flat or textured, square or round — the variety is nearly endless. Chapter 11 has more on working your yarn in different spots. It also includes a fun technique called felting, which takes your project from loose and flimsy to solid and durable.

## Creating funky fabrics

Two types of crochet that create unique fabrics are Tunisian crochet (see Chapter 12) and filet crochet (see Chapter 13). You work them by using very specific stitch placements and by following a chart. Both of these techniques are easy to master, and the designs you create with them make you look like you've been crocheting for years.

## Being square (and other shapes, too)

Crochet doesn't need to just go back and forth; you can create lots of cool shapes with your hook. The granny square is one of the most popular motifs in the crochet stitch library, but many more motifs exist in all shapes and sizes. Make just one for a decoration or join them together for a blanket, wrap, or pillow. The possibilities are endless! Head to Chapter 14 for all the details.

# Finishing Your Work: Taking Pride in What You've Made

More goes into finishing your work than simply weaving in that last end of yarn. You may need to sew pieces together, add a pretty border, or tack on a tassel. After all that handling, often your new creations look a bit misshapen, so you need to do some blocking or shaping to pretty 'em up. And although you may not have spent a fortune on materials, we bet you probably don't want to ruin that new sweater on the first wash. The next sections give you a preview of what all can go into finishing your masterpieces.

## Putting the pieces together

Many crochet designs are composed of several pieces that you need to put together to form the whole. Chapter 15 walks you through the various methods for joining fabric, whether you sew pieces together with a yarn needle and yarn or you use