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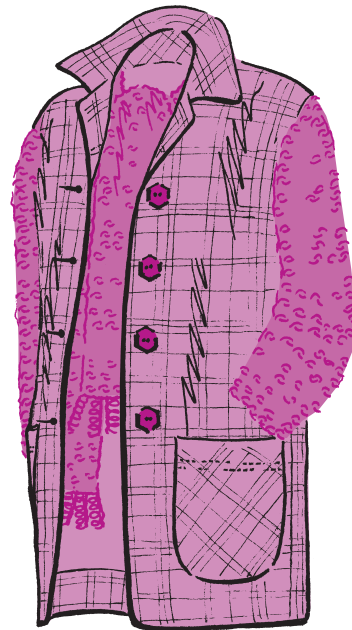
American
Sewing
Guild

Notions

Knit One, Sew Too!

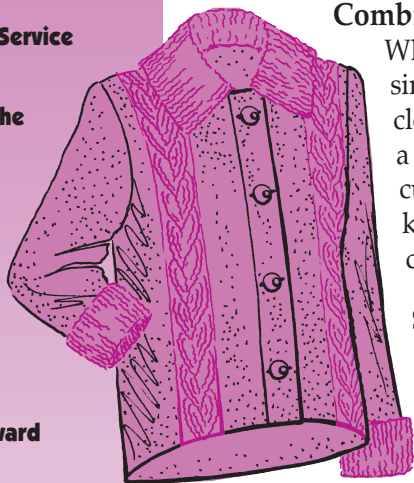
by Susan Lazear

The current interest in hand knitting and the wonderful yarns that have evolved have brought lots of people, both young and old, into the world of textile arts. It only seems logical then that yarn and knits should meld forces with sewing and allow us to create magical mixed-media garments. The combination allows you to express yourself through your choice of colors, textures, and stitch patterns. The result is a one-of-a-kind garment that you will never see walking down the street on someone else, as you have in essence become a designer of a unique outfit.



Combining the Two Mediums

Whether you are an accomplished knitter, a novice knitter, or a non-knitter who simply loves yarn, you can find wonderful ways to incorporate yarn into your clothing projects. Consider: a coat with knitted sleeves and a chunky knit collar; a knitted hat and jacket with matching knit trim; a Chanel-style jacket with custom-knitted edgings; a funky skirt with a knitted border; a child's coat with knitted cuffs and hood; a tweed jacket with cable knit inserts; or a cut-and-sew cardigan with knit borders.

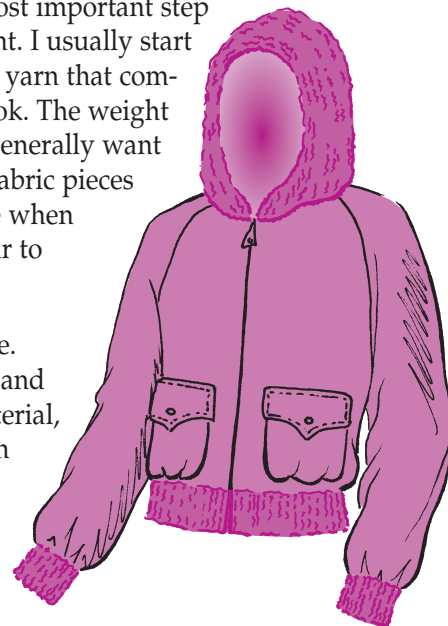


So, where to begin? There are several factors you need to consider. The first decisions are the creative ones. What look are you after? Will it be casual, sophisticated, or funky? This will dictate your choice of fabric and yarn.

Deciding what type of yarn to use to complement the fabric is probably the most creative decision and thus the most important step in the process of planning your garment. I usually start

with the fabric, and then head to the knit shop to find a yarn that complements the fabric in texture, color, feel, and overall look. The weight of yarn after it is knitted needs to be evaluated as you generally want the knit pieces to be similar in hand and weight to the fabric pieces you are combining it with. Fleece is a great fabric to use when mixing fabrics and knits. Its weight and hand are similar to knits and thus all parts work together well.

Your second group of decisions is the more practical one. Consider the fragility versus the stability of your fabric and knit pieces. If you are using a heavier, more rugged material, such as upholstery fabric, knitting a delicate lace pattern would not be appropriate. Attempt to keep the weight and hand of the fabric and of your knit the same. This generally results in a successful garment.

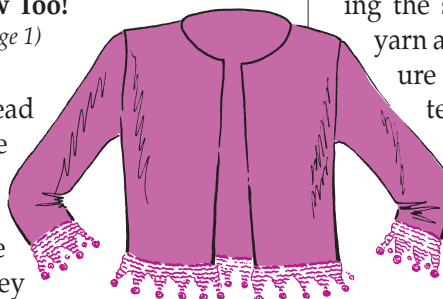


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Knit One, Sew Too!

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Think ahead about the care procedures for both the yarn and the fabric. They should agree with each



other. Wool would not be an appropriate choice to mix with a fabric that you know you want to throw in the washer and dryer. An acrylic that looks like wool would be a better choice.

Consider the time you have available for making the garment and choose a sewing pattern and a stitch pattern that are appropriate. Lastly, consider your skills in knitting and sewing and putting the two together. If you are comfortable with all parts of the building process, you can tackle more advanced projects. If you want to keep things simple, choose to knit the sleeves or a simple collar for your garment. These pattern pieces will have the simplest shaping and thus don't need a lot of math to calculate the knitting instructions.

Nuts and Bolts

So, where do you get a pattern that allows you to build some parts of the garment with fabric and other parts with hand knits? You have a few options:

You can choose a sewing pattern that is rather simple in its design, so that chosen pieces can easily be translated to knitting instructions using basic math and stitch and row gauge. Drop shoulder styles, square armholes, and other basic shapes work well to allow you to easily chart out the knit section of the garment. There is no escaping knitting a test swatch to determine your gauge, so be prepared to do this.

If you are a bit brave, you can use a more intuitive approach and knit to a template using your pattern pieces as a guide. Begin as above, by determin-

ing the stitch and row gauge of the yarn and stitch pattern. Then measure across the bottom of the pattern piece, and cast on the appropriate number of stitches. Then begin knitting, and as you progress, lay the knit piece down on the pattern to determine when to increase or decrease stitches.

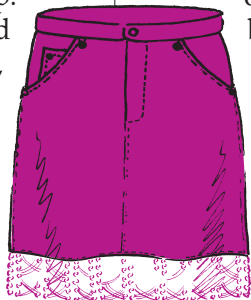
If you are computer comfortable, you can use software to assist you in obtaining the knitting instructions. I use Garment Designer, the software program I designed and produced. Since I have knit and sewn since I was a child, my software is capable of creating both sewing patterns and knitting instructions. I begin by designing the garment I want. I choose my size (using a standard size or my body measurements) and then I begin to style the garment for my sewn and knit combination, choosing the appropriate style options of neckline, armhole, sleeve, etc.

When I am happy with my choices, I print the paper pattern on multiple 8½" x 11" pages and tape them together. I then print out knitting instructions for the pieces I want to hand knit. I often print out the paper pattern for the knit pieces as well, so I can use them as a template for blocking my pieces when I have finished knitting them.

No matter which approach you use to generate the knit pieces, your goal is to replicate the regular pattern piece by hand knitting its shape. Once you've finished knitting and before you move on to join it with the other sections of your garment, you must block it to set the shape. The easiest



way to do this is start with a brown paper copy of the pattern section. Place the knitted section on top. Working on your ironing board or other well-padded surface, gently steam it and manipulate it with your fingers until it matches the brown paper shape. Use non-rusting pins to secure it to the ironing board and leave it alone until it is thoroughly dry. Ribbing is the exception to all of this. Do not block ribbing; its ability to stretch and recover will be destroyed.



Joining Hand Knits to Fabrics

There are several ways to join your hand knit pieces to the fabric pieces. If you are not a knitting “purist” (which I suspect most sewers aren’t), you can simply sew the two pieces together. I like to work with a Teflon foot or a roller foot and place the knit piece on top as I sew. If I am working with a rather thick knit, I position it so that when I sew, I only have 1/8" to 1/4" seam allowance on the knit and 1/2" seam allowance on the fabric. So, in other words, the raw edges do not align. This might seem a bit tricky at first, but it is actually pretty easy to do, and it eliminates extra bulk in the seam allowance caused by a hand knit.

An alternate technique is to hand-baste a line of stitches on your fabric using sturdy thread. Then with your knitting needles, pick up into the stitches and knit down from them to create the attached knit piece. No sewing machine is involved. You can also use a crochet hook and chain stitch into your fabric (if you can poke holes in it), and use this as the base row for picking up stitches. When you are finished knitting, remember to stop and block the section.

More Wonderful Ways with Yarn

If you don’t want to knit an entire garment section, there are lots of other ways to use wonderful yarns with your fabrics. Here are a few suggestions:

- Knit bands can be attached to woven edges. For inspiration, check out “Knitting on the Edge” by Nicky Epstein. The book is a collection of more than 350 knitted edgings, borders, and trims that will add a special touch to your garments.
- Knitted cuffs attached to fabric sleeves to finish the garment.

- Knit collars are a great way to accent a garment. The collar can be a simple rectangle. Measure along the opening of your neckline to determine how long the collar should be. Then cast on the appropriate number of stitches and knit a rectangle to your desired depth/width. You can use the sewing machine to attach the collar.

- Knit I-cord, or use one of the I-cord machines to create a mini tube of knitted yarn which can then be couched or stitched to the surface of your fabric. If you aren’t familiar with how to create I-cord, visit www.chickknits.com/tticord.shtml, where you’ll find animated directions.



If your skill set runs to crocheting:

- Use yarn to crochet a trim on fabric edges. You can run a hand basting stitch and use it as a base to crochet into, or on fabrics like fleece, you can poke into the fabric with your crochet hook.
- Crocheting a collar onto a garment can also be a quick and easy way to trim a garment. Again, measure the neckline opening. To make a ruffled collar, chain stitch a strip of stitches the same length as the neckline, then single crochet into each chain stitch. On the next row, double-crochet twice into each single crochet,

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TIPS FOR KNITTING WITH FABRIC

Choose a lightweight fabric that feels flexible, not stiff.

Choose a fabric that is printed with the design showing through to the reverse side of the fabric.

Try knitting a fabric swatch to find your knitting gauge.

Once you know your knitting gauge, you can use other patterns that call for a similar gauge. (For example: strips cut approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ " will knit to the approximate gauge of knitting worsted yarn on a U.S. #10 needle.) The finished fabric will be a little heavier and somewhat stiffer so you need to choose patterns appropriately, but it is fun to experiment.

You can cut your fabric strips with scissors, a rotary cutter, or you can even rip the fabric into strips.

Cut the fabric along the lengthwise grain in order to obtain longer strips to knit.

Attach strips to each other by sewing (most time consuming), tying together (a little knotty), looping (cut a slit in both fabric strips, layer matching slits, and insert opposite end of new strip up through both slits and pull all the way through), or use fabric glue (easiest).

You can use a ribbon needle to weave ends of fabric in or to sew pieces of knit fabric together.

If you plan on making matching napkins for a knitted placemat, or lining a knitted bag with matching fabric, choose fabric with colors and a pattern you like. If you're just using the fabric to knit, choose fabric for the colors—you won't be able to see much of the pattern. It makes it interesting to see how some fabrics turn out. More color, more fun!!

Don't forget to embellish! Add beads, add buttons, add ribbon. Use more than one fabric for stripes (no weaving in ends if you glue strips together). Most of all, use your imagination!

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Knit One, Sew Too!

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and on the last row, create two treble crochets into each double crochet. Easy—and charming!



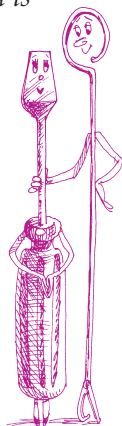
Knitting with Fabric

Yarn isn't the only medium you can use. Narrow strips of fabric can be treated just like yarn. Choose a lightweight fabric that feels flexible, not stiff. Rayons and soft cottons are good choices. Lightweight fleece also works well. You can purchase pre-cut strips (see Knit Shop) or cut your own. For tips on knitting with fabric, check out the sidebar to the left.

Knit Now!

Combining hand knitting, yarns, and sewing allows you to express your creativity in new ways. You have more elements to combine and the results can be fantastic as you broaden your world of color, texture, and fibers. Even if you don't knit, you could choose to collaborate with a friend who does, or you can simply raid her stash to bring some new elements to your work. The results will be truly unique and the process is rewarding.

Susan Lazear is a professor of fashion at Mesa College in San Diego where she teaches various fashion courses on computer design. She designs wearable art and unusual fine art crafts and is a computer graphic artist. In addition to her teaching, she combined her skills to create a line of software for sewers and textile artists under the Cochenille Design Studio name. www.cochenille.com



KNIT SHOP

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www.knitonecrochettoo.com

PJ's Fleece Ribbon: pre-cut fleece strips in 50 gram (88 yard) balls suitable for knitting on #10 needles

Books

"Fast, Fun & Easy Fabric Knitting"

by Cyndy Lyle Rymer

C&T Publishing, 48 pages, color photos/illustrations, ISBN 1-57120-303-6, \$14.95

"Knitting on the Edge"

by Nicky Epstein

Sixth & Spring Books, 160 pages, color photos, hard cover, ISBN 1-931543-40-2, \$29.95

"Knitting over the Edge"

by Nicky Epstein

Sixth & Spring Books, 160 pages, color photos, hard cover, ISBN 1-931543-75-5, \$29.95