

# Lion Brand Yarn + Michael's Community Classroom

## Fair Isle Basics

**Prerequisite Skills:** Must have a solid understanding of knitted increases and decreases and be able to recognize a knit and a purl. Must know how to knit in the round.

**OPTIONAL Materials List if you'd like to follow along in class:**

Yarn – Heartland, 1 ball each of main color (A) and contrast color (B)

Needles – US size 7 16" circular needle, US size 8 16" circular, US size 8 double pointed needles (DPNs)

Notions – stitch markers, darning needle

**OPTIONAL Homework to do before class:**

With US size 7 16" circular needle, cast on 80 sts in the main color (A). Join to work in the round and work knit 2, purl 2 ribbing for 1.5"

### What is Fair Isle?

Typically worked on double pointed needles in the round, Fair Isle knitting is a form of stranded knitting that became popular on the island of Fair Isle, north of Scotland. While the term "Fair Isle" has come to be synonymous with stranded knitting, the technique is used to produce different designs in other areas. In general, there will not be more than a few stitches of one color before switching to another color, and while Fair Isle garments and accessories may contain many colors, only two are worked in each row.

In contrast with other forms of color knitting such as stripes, slip stitch patterns and intarsia, stranded designs carry two colors all the way across a row, worked alternately in pattern. The "stranded" part of stranded knitting refers to the strands of yarn carried behind the color being knitted. This makes a thicker and warmer fabric than single strand knitting. It is important to be mindful of your tension when carrying the strands along the back, as pulling too tight will create puckering in your fabric, leaving the strands too loose will create loops that can get caught on fingers or jewelry.

Tips for working Fair Isle designs:

- Stretch your stitches out every inch or so on the right hand needle after working them, especially before knitting the first stitch of a color that has been stranded to ensure that your strands are long enough and your fabric does not get puckered.
- Be mindful of how the colors stack up from one row to the next--this will help you to notice mistakes before they are several rows behind you and keep you oriented as you work.
- Yarn management: Fair Isle knitters can hold both strands of yarn in one hand or one strand in each hand, whichever is most comfortable. Experiment with different holds to find out what works best for you. It is a bit like learning to knit again, and requires the willingness to push past the awkwardness of incorporating another strand of yarn.

## SAMPLE PATTERN – NOT SHOWN IN FULL DURING CLASS

**Pattern Number:** L40074

**GAUGE:** 16 sts + 21 rnds = 4 in. (10 cm) in St st worked in rnds (k every rnd) with larger needles.

### STITCH EXPLANATION:

**kfb (knit in front and back)** Knit next st without removing it from left needle, then k through back of same st – 1 st increased.

**sk2p** Slip 1 as if to knit, knit 2 together, pass slipped stitch over – 2 sts decreased.

### PATTERN STITCH

**K2, p2 Rib worked in rnds (multiple of 4 sts) Rnd 1:** \*K2, p2; rep from \* to end of rnd. Rep Rnd 1 for K2, p2 Rib worked in rnds.

### NOTES:

The color work pattern uses 2 colors per rnd. When working stranded color work, carry unused color across the WS of the piece.

The color work for the body of the Tam is worked by following Chart 1. Read all rnds of chart from right to left.

The crown (top) of the Tam is shaped with decreases. Follow Chart 2 for the decreases and color work on the crown.

Tam is wet blocked over a dinner plate to create a traditional shape.

### TAM

With smaller needles and A, cast on 80 sts. Divide sts onto 4 needles, with 20 sts on each needle. Place marker for beg of rnd and join by working the first st on the left hand needle with the working yarn from the right hand needle and being careful not to twist sts.

Work in K2, p2 Rib worked in rnds for about 1 1/2 in. (4 cm).

Change to larger needles as you work the next rnd. (To change to larger needles, simply knit the sts off one needle at a time, using the larger needles.)

Increase Rnd: With A, \*k1, kfb; rep from \* around – 120 sts. Change to St st worked in rounds (k every rnd).

### Begin Chart 1

**Note:** Chart 1 shows a 4-st rep, this means that you should work the 4 sts 30 times on each rnd. Beg with Rnd 1, work the 4-st rep of Chart 1 around.

Continue as established in St st worked in rnds and changing color following Chart 1 until Rnd 20 of chart has been completed.

### Shape Crown (top of Tam) Begin Chart 2

#### Notes:

-Chart 2 shows a 20 st rep, this means that you should work the 20 sts 6 times on each rnd.

-Chart 2 shows both the color changes and the decreases needed to shape the crown (top) of the Tam. The white areas of the chart represent the decreased (missing) sts.

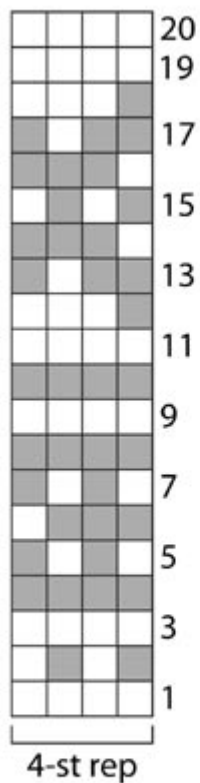
Beg with Rnd 1, work 20-st rep of Chart 2 around.

Continue to follow Chart 2, changing color and working decs as shown until Rnd 18 of Chart 2 has been completed – 12 sts rem. Cut yarn, leaving a long yarn tail. Thread tail through rem sts and pull to gather. Knot securely.

**FINISHING:** Weave in ends.

**Blocking:** Stretch Tam over a dinner plate, then spray lightly with water to block. Allow to dry.

CHART 1



Key

- #149 Great Smoky Mountains (A)
- #098 Acadia (B)

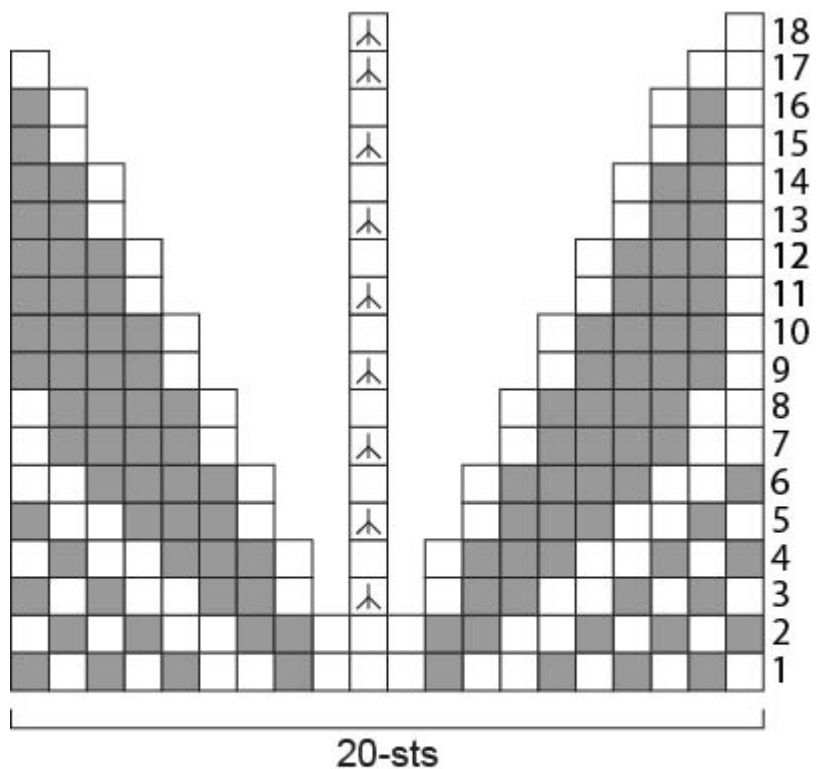
Charts for circular knitting are read from right to left on every round.

Each row is repeated as many times as necessary to work all the stitches of one round. (For example, you will have to work the 4 stitch repeat described by row 1 of Chart 1 30 times in order to work all 120 stitches of the hat. At that point you will begin to read row 2.)

Decreases are worked in the color of the box in which the symbol appears. Don't be concerned with the color of the stitches in the row below.

Place stitch markers between the 20 stitch repeats for the crown decreases.

CHART 2



Key

- #149 Great Smoky Mountains (A)
- #098 Acadia (B)
- ⋈ sk2p: Slip 1 as if to knit, knit 2 tog, pass slipped st over - 2 sts decreased

CHART 2

These charts both illustrate decreases for the same hat (Pemberly Tam, #90104). The wedge chart on top more closely resembles the shape of the sections you are knitting. However, it distorts the relationship between stitches from round to round - notice the 4 square blocks of berry stitches forming the "V". There is actually no point when you should be knitting 2 berry stitches into 2 berry stitches from the row below.

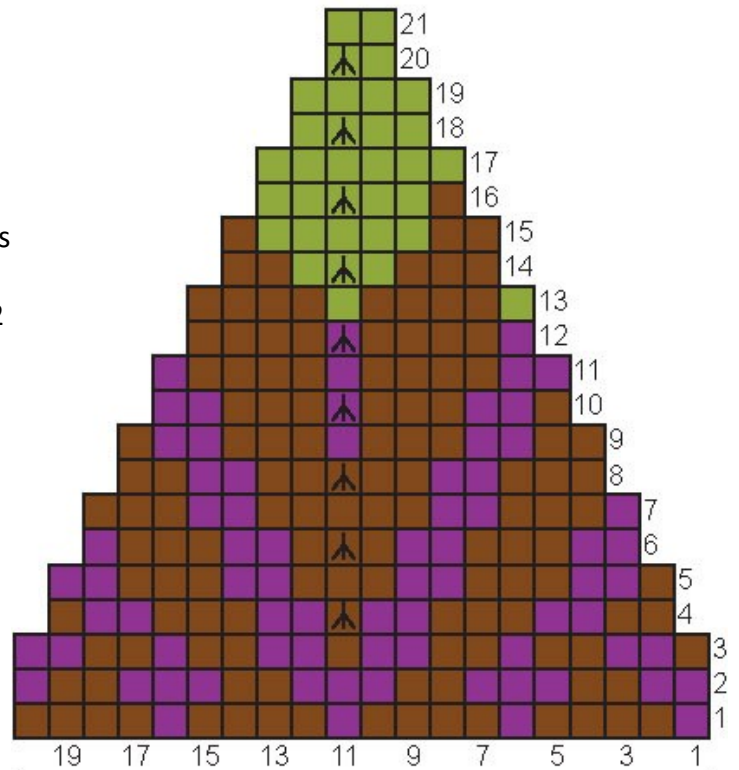


CHART 2

Compare that with the "V" in this chart, which moves the 2 berry stitches to the left or right by one stitch in each round.

In this chart you can check that you're knitting into the correct color stitch in the row below. The two berry stitches should overlap with the two in the previous round by one stitch.

