



TIPS & TRICKS FOR KNITTING TENTACLES

Your Gripping pattern, by Hunter Hammersen, is truly all you need. It takes you through knitting and assembling your tentacles in clear language with pictures at every step.

If you're like me, though, you enjoy having a knitting friend tell you about the parts they found tricky and the ways they avoided trouble. Or, even, the ways they got *into* trouble so you can learn from their misakes!

Here are my tips of things to be mindful of:

1. YARN CHOICE, NEEDLE SIZES & GAUGE

Your kit includes several yarn weights and colors. The kit is intended for you to mix and match your yarns to play with color. You have enough yarn to make small (2 inch square) swatches if you want to see what your options are and play with gauge.

I swatched every combination and if you want to see *my* swatches and the colors they made, download the knitalong slides [here](#).

Here are the yarns and needle sizes I tested, together with the resulting gauge. *Keep in mind* that your gauge might be different which will result in different yarn usage and a different final size of tentacle. But, since you have adequate yarn in your kit and because the final size of your tentacle doesn't need to be precise, *you'll likely be fine* just casting on with the same needle size I used.

Targhee Sweater (worsted weight) + Mohair-Silk Lace
Size US 7 (4.5 mm)
5 stitches per inch

Harvest Sport + Mohair-Silk Lace
US Size 5 (3.75 mm)
5.5 stitches per inch

Targhee Sock + Mohair-Silk Lace
US Size 4 (3.5 mm)
6 stitches per inch

80/20 Sock + Mohair-Silk Lace
US size 4 (3.5 mm)
6.5 sts per inch

Targhee Sweater (worsted weight)
US size 6 (4.0 mm)
5 stitches per inch

Harvest Sport
US size 4 (3.5 mm)
6 stitches per inch

80/20 Sock
US size 2 (2.75mm)
8 stitches per inch

2. CASTING ON

If, like me, you need a refresher on how to do Judy's Magic Cast-On, [here is my favorite knitting teacher, the late Cat Bordhi, demonstrating it](#).

I found the cast-on to be the second most fiddly part of the project (the most fiddly for me was the wiring). Hunter instructs you to wind off a number of yards before starting. This is the yarn you need to knit the base of the tentacle, which happens *after* you've knit the tentacle itself. If you want to follow Hunter's instructions precisely, I recommend learning how to wind the yarn into a well-secured butterfly, which keeps it secure while you're knitting.



Little Skein

Here are a few things I did to help smooth my process.

1. Cast-on without winding those 8 to 9 yards first. I found that I had enough yarn management going on just joining half of your Judy's Magic Cast-On for knitting in the round. Later, when the pattern instructs you to unwind your butterfly and knit the base of the tentacle, just join a new strand of yarn. You'll have two more ends to weave in, but that's honestly not such a big deal. (I found it easier than managing a yarn butterfly while also knitting small circumference in the round.)

2. Instead of moving half of my cast-on stitches to waste yarn, I left them on a set of spare needles. I find that moving stitches from waste yarn to needles can be tricky when I'm working at a tight gauge and with two strands of yarn, so leaving things on a set of spare needles worked well for me.

3. WHICH CHART SHOULD YOU USE?

Chart A makes a tentacle with a garter stitch panel, and Chart B makes a tentacle with a panel of three rows of purl bumps and one row of stockinette, which gives the tentacle the feeling of an "articulated joint." I knit Chart B in my sample.

4. NOTE THAT THERE ARE OPTIONAL CHART REPEATS

There are green boxes in the chart; be sure to note these because they are optional repeats. I initially overlooked this because I printed my chart in black and white.

What you need to know is this: Each "straight" section of knitting (in other words, without a decrease), you decide whether or not to repeat it, creating a bit more length in that particular width of the tentacle if you want.

I repeated each section twice until I got to the final chart section. This created a mostly pyramid shaped tentacle, quite reminiscent of San Francisco's [Transamerica Pyramid](#).

For my next tentacle, I plan to decrease more rapidly and knit only one of each section until I get to the second to last section and then to knit very long ending tapers.

5. YOU'LL WANT TO KNIT YOUR TENTACLE MUCH LONGER THAN YOU THINK.

The adorable curlicues at the end *really do* require a lot of i-cord at the end. I knit about 12 repeats of the last chart section, and I actually wish I had kept going for another 12. It's the coils that make this tentacle super fun, so keep knitting as long as you can stand it!

6. GUIDE THREADS & WIRING

Steps 12 to 20 in Hunter's pattern show you how she used guide threads to pull the wire along each edge of the purl panels. The wire is what gives your tentacle stiffness and poseability. The wire is essential; however, it is easily the most fiddly part of the project.

I did the wiring slightly different than Hunter's process (think of my way as *less perfect* but also slightly easier). I did not use guide threads, and next time, I won't bother threading them at all.

- 1. You will need to snip your wire to be a few inches longer than your actual tentacle.** If you have jewelry wire cutters, use these. If not, pinch the wire with your needle nose pliers (included in your kit) and bend it back and forth until it snaps.
- 2. Turn about 75% of your tentacle inside out—** essentially everything except that last long i-cordish section. I then threaded my wires through the purl bumps in roughly every other row, along the edges of the purl panel. Technically, they run through the first stockinette stitch, and it was easy to see that first purl bump on the wrong side of the fabric.
- 3. Carefully turn the whole thing right side out.** I stretched the yarn at the edges (so I could see where the wire was) and continued to push the wire up and into the very skinny tip. I didn't worry so much about securing it in every other row. I'm okay with a little bit of wonkiness. I then repeated this process for the other side, and pushed the wires through the top of the tentacle.

7. STUFFING & WEIGHTS

Play around with how stuffed you want your tentacle to be. Be sure to fluff open your wool and stuff it in pieces. Like me, you might find that you like your tentacle not quite as firmly stuffed as you might make a toy.

At the very bottom, tuck in your sea stone *plus add some additional rocks or coins* to give it a bit of weight at the bottom.

8. DO YOU NEED TO USE THE MAGNETS IN ORDER FOR YOUR TENTACLE TO STAND UPRIGHT?

No. If you put enough weight in the bottom of your tentacle, it will stand up just fine without magnets.

If you want to use the magnets, however, here's how I did it:

1. Take two magnets and mark their polarity. In other words, open them up like a book, and mark the sides that need to touch. (I used a Sharpie.)
2. Using superglue, glue one unmarked side of one magnet to a metal lid.
3. Glue the unmarked side of the second magnet to a second metal lid.

Repeat this process for the *other* two magnets so that you end up with *two magnets on each lid*, and the two lids can “snap” together.

Put one of the lids inside the base of your tentacle, and the other lid will be your tentacle's platform.

I found that the heavy fabric of my tentacle meant that I needed a magnetized platform. I couldn't just stick the magnetized tentacle to, say, my refrigerator and have it stick. It needed the extra “pull” of two more magnets as a base.

9. PICK UP STITCHES TO KNIT THE BASE

If you followed my shortcut and did not wind off yarn to start with, you'll need to pick up stitches at the base (pick up and knit one stitch in every cast-on purl bump) and knit the base.

8. SHAPING YOUR TENTACLE

After the knitting and stuffing and end weaving is done, you get to have the most fun! Seriously, shaping and twisting your tentacle is *the absolute best part* of the whole process. The wire is strong and sturdy and you can twist and reshape multiple times without damaging or breaking the wire.

9. CUTTING OFF THE FINAL ENDS OF YOUR WIRE

I played with my wires and created little antenna twists. Have fun twisting, coiling and circling your wires; just remember to tuck in the last pokey ends of them so they don't catch or scratch any folks who might want to play with them.

10. YOU CAN DO IT!

All the digital resources for your kit are linked on this page: bit.ly/gripping-kit

You can also email me at anne@littleskein.com if you run into any trouble, and I'll do my best to help!