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MODERN KNITS

from SWEDEN



A Warm Mix of Shawls, Scarves, Cowls, Mittens, Hats, and More



ERIKA ÅBERG

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Erika Åberg

Modern
Knits
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Photography:
Malin Nuhma



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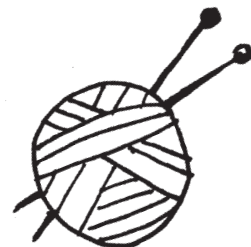
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MATERIALS

I've chosen to knit exclusively with natural materials in this book, partly because I've always loved how they feel against the skin and partly because I'm familiar with them. I know how they behave in all kinds of situations—when I use them, I know I won't be surprised! (It's always fun to try new materials, but sometimes it doesn't work out the way you'd expected ...)

Of course, it depends on what you want in a hand-knitted garment, or for clothes in general. I want garments to be durable in color and shape, and, if I'm lucky enough to still have them, to retain these qualities as they age. It's also important for the process of producing the material to be good for people, animals, and nature. And it's not as important for me to be able to throw the garment into the washing machine after every use. Call me lazy, but I'd rather hang a garment out to air!

I knitted most of the pieces in this book with wool yarn, but there's also a little alpaca, and one linen shawl, too. What are the differences between these materials?

WOOL

Sheep's wool insulates against both heat and cold and is warming even when wet. Wool is also stretchy, particularly when wet, so wool garments should never be hung up after washing—they need to dry flat to prevent them from losing their shape. Wool can absorb moisture twice as well as cotton, which is one of several reasons wool can be very pleasant to wear against your skin.

Each breed of sheep has its own combination of wool types and qualities. Fleeces generally consist of three types of fiber: outer coat (hair), undercoat (wool), and kemp (short, very coarse hair). The balance between these types of fiber will determine what that fleece will be suitable for. Wool (the undercoat) is soft, short, and crimpy. These fibers

are closest to the sheep's body and keep it warm, but don't repel moisture very well. The outer coat of hair covering the wool is thick, wavy, and has more strength. These fibers are lustrous and shed water. Kemp is usually only found on the most primitive sheep these days, and is hollow, coarse, and breaks easily. However, kemp can also be pretty, especially when the fleece is dyed, because the kemp doesn't take up dye the same way other fibers do. Wool's water resistance comes from a fat called lanolin, which gives wool a characteristic smell and is another of wool's good qualities.

Wool can, if it is not processed, be felted—this can be good or bad, depending on what you want. With some knowledge, you can felt a piece so the stitches will cohere, and you can shape the fabric and get what you want when you want. If you'd rather your garment didn't felt, processed wool is coated with a plastic film (in simple terms); it's still warming, but doesn't have all the positive qualities of unprocessed wool.

ALPACA

Alpacas are camelids that originated in the Andes: Peru, Bolivia, and Chile. There are basically two types of alpaca: Huacaya and Suri. Their fiber is lustrous, fine, and very, very soft. In general, alpaca fiber is drier and silkier than wool, because alpacas don't produce lanolin and because the individual fibers are usually finer than the fibers that make up sheep's wool. Even here, though, there are big variations. Some people who are allergic to wool can wear alpaca without itching or being irritated. Alpaca fiber is typically warmer than sheep's wool, too—it has microscopic "pockets" in its fibers that are full of insulating air. Some people find alpaca *too* warm, though, and in that case it's a good idea to blend alpaca with sheep's wool or silk. That way you can enjoy the good qualities of several fibers all at once.



A sojourn in Boge.

At the house of Birgitta Dasmussen and Benny Dandahl on the northeast part of the island of Gotland, we were able to greet and photograph alpacas, sheep, and lambs. They have a little farm with Huacaya alpacas and Leicester and Gotland sheep, as well as pygmy goats and a well-regarded dog kennel.



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BLOCKING AND GARMENT CARE

If you take care of your clothing, it'll last longer. A wool garment is at its best when worn. If you want it to last, it's a good idea to air out the garment regularly. Shake it out or brush it off between airings. By doing so, you can also ensure that unwelcome guests won't eat your favorite garments. Don't let your clothing hang too long—that can cause the fibers to tear and the garment will lose its shape. Also, do not leave your garments out in direct sunlight. If you air out your garments often, particularly those made of wool and alpaca, do so in humid weather.

There's nothing wrong with mending most garments, and it honestly doesn't matter very much if the darning shows a little bit. It doesn't hurt to save any yarn remaining after a garment is finished as a little stash of mending yarn—just in case.

Wash garments when necessary, but first clean off any specks with soap (wool-safe, if the garment requires it). When the entire garment needs to be washed, make sure you use the right amount of soap and rinse it out well. Wool fibers react well to acids such as vinegar and white wine vinegar, as do many other animal fibers; but they don't care for alkaloids like lye, which will make the fibers brittle.

Gently wash and rinse wool and alpaca fibers in lukewarm water. It's best to keep the water at 86°F / 30°C. Rapid changes between hot and cold water aren't good for these fibers—that increases the risk of shrinking or felting. If you want to felt something, that's another story. As far as regular washing goes: Never scrub, twist, or wring a garment. Fibers need care when they're wet, and it's easy to ruin their look.

Add a little white or white wine vinegar to the last rinse water to keep animal fibers lustrous.

ZIGZAG COWL



FINISHED MEASUREMENTS:

6¾ x 64½ in / 17 x 164 cm

MATERIALS: CYCA #2

(sport/baby) Visjö from Östergötlands Ullspinneri (100% wool, 328 yd/ 300 m / 100 g)

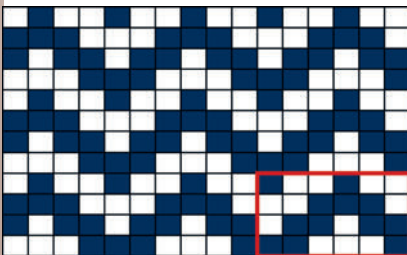
COLORS: Dark Blue, Light Gray, Sky Blue, White

YARN AMOUNTS: 100 g each of Dark Blue and Light Gray; 40 g each of Sky Blue and White

NEEDLES: U.S. size 8 / 5 mm, circular

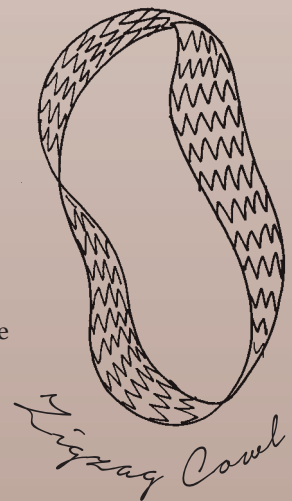
GAUGE: 28 sts in charted pattern = 4 in / 10 cm.

Adjust needle size to obtain correct gauge if necessary.



A soft and very practical cowl knitted with four colors in two color sections. The pattern is simple and you can easily vary the overall look by blending in several colors at shorter intervals. I knitted this cowl with two colorways to lighten it up a bit. It's a little like the sea and sky here on Gotland on a clear and cold winter day, with white geese on the waves and puffy clouds spread over a light blue sky. A true favorite!

- The pattern is a repeat of 6 sts. If you want a wider or narrower cowl, cast on multiples of 6 stitches. One repeat is slightly less than 1¼ in / 3 cm wide. The cowl shown here has 16 repeats, with the last repeat losing the last stitch to join the knitting in the round.
- CO 95 sts. I cast on with two colors, following the first row on the chart. Grit your teeth and it will go well. This cast-on will make it much easier to join the piece when the time comes. Being careful not to twist cast-on row, join; pm at beginning of round. Work in pattern following the chart. The red frame encloses the repeat.
- When the piece is approx. 50 in / 127 cm long, ending with a Row 3 on the chart, change colors so Sky Blue takes the place of Dark Blue and White substitutes for Light Gray. Continue in pattern for another 14½ in / 37 cm. Save a bit of the Dark Blue and Light Gray for the finishing.
- After binding off, finish the cowl. I washed the piece, blocked to the finished measurements, and left it until dry. Join the cowl by twisting the tube one turn and joining the cast-on and bound-off edges as follows:
 - This finishing takes a little patience, good lighting, and concentration. I threaded two tapestry needles—one with Dark Blue and the other with Light Gray. I worked in Kitchener stitch to join the ends, matching the colors as in the pattern. It is worth the trouble to seam the piece so the join is almost invisible and very smooth.
 - After joining, I gently steam-pressed the seam so the stitches would align well.





This cowl is knitted as a long tube. It will be very warm because it is doubled. That means you can also knit it somewhat loosely because the doubling will make it feel substantial. Don't knit it too loosely, though, or the pattern won't show well.



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Arrow Scarf















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*Chimney Sweep
Hat and Point to
Point Shawl*

KNITTED SAW-TOOTH EDGING

Do you have a scarf that you've gotten tired of that needs a second chance? Maybe you want to liven up a pair of wrist warmers or a simple triangular shawl such as the linen one on page 49? This edging is a perennial favorite. It's easy and fun to knit. A shawl with a sawtooth edging immediately feels more finished. And the edging can be worked in a different yarn than used for the shawl or scarf!

- With RS facing, use a circular needle to pick up and knit sts along the entire edge. CO 4 new sts to begin the sawtooth edge. The first row will be the WS.
 - **WS:** K3, p2tog with the last edging st and next st picked on garment edge. Turn.
 - **RS:** Sl 1 knitwise with yarn behind and work Row 1 (see below). Turn and continue with Row 2, etc:
-
- **NOTE:** Always slip the first st knitwise wyb.
 - **Row 1:** Sl 1, k1, yo, k2.
 - **Rows 2, 4, 6:** Sl 1, k to last st, p2tog (joining edging and shawl sts).
 - **Row 3:** Sl 1, k2, yo, k2.
 - **Row 5:** Sl 1, k1, yo, k2tog, yo, k2.
 - **Row 7:** Sl 1, k2, yo, k2tog, yo, k2.
 - **Row 8:** BO 4 sts knitwise and knit to end of row (including join of edging and edge sts).
 - Repeat Rows 1–8.
 - BO. Weave in all ends neatly on WS. Block completed garment (see page 30) or gently steam-press only the edging.



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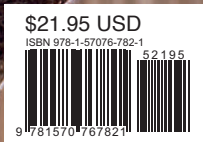


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- Find your favorite contemporary knits, all in one book: more than 20 shawls, scarves, cowls, hats, wrist warmers, and half gloves!
- Get creative with handy tips and instructions for adding a quick-knitted sawtooth edging, tassels, or pompoms.
- Enjoy easy-to-wear accessories in all sizes and styles, from classic and elegant to cozy and colorful, garter stitch and stockinette to entrelac and herringbone.
- Discover how to choose, work with, and care for natural materials—and garments made with them.



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