

## Fair Isle Knitting

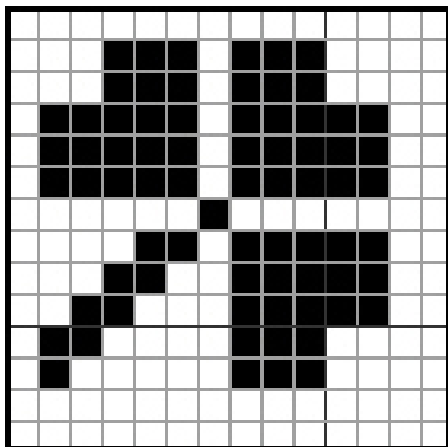
Fair Isle knitting comes from an island in Scotland. It is a technique involving working 2 or more colors into the same row. This type of knitting has a definite right and wrong side. The wrong side is where the floats (strings left hanging on the back where the color is carried between stitches when it is not in use. Often this type of knitting is done in the round where carrying the floats is easier. Fair Isle knitting is most often done in stockinette stitch (alternating rows of knitting (front) and purling (back)), unless done in the round where all rows are knitted.

1. Cast on 14 stitches in your background color. To repeat the design for a wider fabric, cast on multiples of 14.
2. Read the chart beginning on the bottom right. As you read the chart, you will knit every other row and purl the rows between. Knit rows are read from right to left and purl rows are read from left to right. We begin following the Shamrock pattern by doing a row of knitting and then a row of purling both in the background color.
3. The third row is knitted, the first 4 stitches are in the background color. Then knit 3 stitches in the shamrock color. Pick up the new yarn from under the yarn you've been knitting with. This twists the yarns together so a hole does not show on the front. Leave a tail of 4-6 inches. Don't pull too tightly or too loosely when changing colors, you want to just keep the yarns snug. Don't worry about the tail right now, you can weave it in later on, if you want you can loosely tie it to a nearby string on the back to keep it from unraveling or to hold it out of your way. You can untie it and weave it in later. Drop the new color after completing your 3 stitches and pick up (always pick up the new yarn from underneath the former working yarn) the background color again for 5 stitches. Then pick up the shamrock color for 1 stitch and then the background color for 1 stitch.
4. The fourth row is purled. Remember to read the chart from left to right for purled rows. 1 stitch background, 2 stitches shamrock color, 4 stitches background, 3 stitches shamrock color, 4 stitches background.
5. The fifth row is knitted. Remember to read the chart from right to left for knitted rows. Continue following the chart and changing colors as needed, alternating knitted and purled rows until the chart is complete, 14 rows. When you change colors make sure you are pulling the new yarn from underneath the old yarn being certain that they twist preventing holes.
6. When the chart is complete, bind off the edge and your sample is complete.

Periodically, you have to untwist your working yarns. This is normal. When you are finished with a particular color, clip the yarn leaving a 4-6 inch tail that you can weave in later on.

You can use any charted pattern for this type of knitting. Simple cross stitch or plastic canvas patterns often work well.

Intarsia is a similar knitting technique in that blocks of color are knitted and charts are followed as in Fair Isle, but in intarsia there are no floats on the back of the work. Every time a new block of color is started a new ball of yarn is joined to the work. Rows are worked by dropping the yarn from the ball and picking up the yarn from the next ball until all the blocks of color are finished all the ends are woven in.



© April 2014 Pam Girard

<http://www.illuminatedspaces.com>