



Kurrajong Handcrafts



Steeking Made Easy **Part One – Gather your Supplies**

Welcome to the Steek-a-Long! There is safety in numbers, so they say, so we can all start together, chop together, finish together, and defeat the dreaded Steek Monster! There will be 3 parts to the Steek-a-Long, today we will look at what you will need, and a bit of general information about Steeking.

Steek

\Steek\, Steik \Steik\, v. t. [Cf. Stick, v. t.] To pierce with a sharp instrument; hence, to stitch; to sew; also, to fix; to fasten. [Scot.]

Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, © 1996, 1998 MICRA, Inc.

Why steek?

Steeking, or cutting, is most commonly used when a garment is worked in Fair Isle, or other forms of colourwork. Most knitters believe colourwork is easier to implement from the right side, and steeks allow the work to continue in the round all the way to the neck without having to stop and divide for the armholes and neckline of a sweater.

Another useful application for a steek is when using self-striping yarn with long colour repeats, such as Noro Kureyon. Steeking a v-neck or the front opening of a cardigan will allow for perfectly matching stripes which are practically impossible to achieve otherwise.

But won't it unravel?

Many knitters machine-stitch the steek edge to reinforce it before cutting, but traditionally edges were simply cut and then overcast for neatness. Think of different dress fabrics you've seen cut - slippery rayon or synthetics will fray all over the place but cut into a tightly woven tweed suiting and it will go nowhere.

Thus, the unravel factor depends a lot on your yarn. A Shetland yarn, for example, is quite fuzzy and 'clings' to itself, making it highly unlikely that the stitches will unravel once cut. Smoother yarns, like pure silk, are far more likely to fray.

What will I need?

We're going to cut an un-reinforced steek, on a swatch of Fair Isle knitting. Safety in numbers remember!

Choose a yarn which has a bit of surface fuzz and not too much squooshiness. I am using Tess Dawson Merino 4-ply which is pure wool and has enough fuzz to make it 'cling' but is still nice and soft. If you prefer to work with larger stitches, the DK will also be great, or any other yarn you have that is a bit fuzzy.

Anything super soft and bouncy, like Cashmerino for example, will not be so good. If you want





to Steek without doing the Fair Isle, just follow all the directions for stitch count etc, but in one colour throughout. The swatch isn't going to be super-huge, oddments you find in your stash would be fine.

You will also need sharp scissors, two stitch markers, and needles of the size to achieve a nice, firm gauge. Stretchy, open knitting does not work so well with Fair Isle or with Steeks. I am using 2.5mm needles, with a DK I'd recommend about a 3.5-3.75mm.



Next week: The Swatch!

Oh, and I think I might have mentioned a little prize draw for all those with the courage to chop up their knitting at the end.

Further reading:

http://www.eunnyjang.com/knit/2006/01/steeking_chronicles_the_should.html

<http://www.tradewindknits.com/tbsteek.html>