



Kurrajong Handcrafts



Steeking Made Easy **Part Two – Knit Your Swatch**

Once you have everything you need it's time to knit a swatch. Then it will be time to chop it up – but we'll do the swatch first and give you time to admire it!

Instructions are for a two-colour Fair Isle swatch. Steeking and Fair Isle tend to go together. The nature of stranded colourwork makes us want to knit with the right side of the work facing us all the time – so circular knitting is good. Also, the weaving together of the two strands in Fair Isle knitting gives the fabric more structure and 'cling' and it is less likely to unravel when it's cut.

If you're not quite up for the Fair Isle, simply knit the swatch in one colour and steek it in the same way. Be aware, without the added support of the double strands the steek may unravel a little more – but it still won't fall to bits!

Notes on successful colourwork

This series is focused on Steeking rather than Fair Isle, but since we're doing some stranding I'll mention a few pointers.

1. Keep the dominant yarn consistent. Whether you hold two colours in the left hand, or in the right, or one in each hand, one colour is always slightly more prominent in the pattern than the other. If you switch back and forth the difference will be noticeable.
2. Keep your floats straight. There is no need to twist the yarns unless the float is longer than 7 stitches. If you notice a twisted float on the back, check that you haven't switched the position of the colours.



3. Yarn floats should be smooth but not tight. Check the length by stretching out the knitting on the right hand needle at the middle and end of each row, the stitches on the needle should not pull out of alignment. You can always loosen or tighten the stitches in the row before moving onto the next one, you will soon get a 'feel' for the correct tension.





On To The swatch!

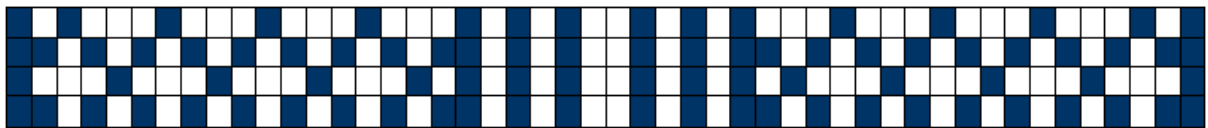
Even though Fair Isle knitting and Steeking are really for knitting in the round, I have knitted my swatch flat. It makes taking photos much easier! By all means, knit your swatch in the round for a true Steek experience but it doesn't really matter.

Instructions:

Cast on 52 sts (48 if knitting in the round), 48 sts from chart and two edge stitches on each side to be knitted in garter stitch throughout. Knit 2 rows.

Next row: k2 edge sts, k19, place marker, k10, place marker, k19, k2 edge sts.

Commence chart.



The markers are 10 stitches apart and outline the steek stitches. The k1, k1 pattern helps to hold the stitches firmly when the steek is cut and the two pattern-colour stitches in the centre provide a clear cutting line.

Work as many repeats of the chart as you like. I have done four repeats so far and will probably do another two. Finish off with a few rows of garter stitch in the main colour again, cast off. Wet block or steam your swatch if you like to even out the Fair Isle and help prevent any curling.



Part Three will cover cutting the Steek, picking up stitches for a band and finishing the cut edge neatly.

Further Reading:

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

<http://www.philosopherswool.com/Pages/Streamingvideo.htm>

http://www.knittinghelp.com/knitting/advanced_techniques/