



An HJS Studio Pattern: Super Simple Knit Headband



Another knit pattern ideal for beginning knitters, and really great for showing off small amounts of soft luxury fibers. All the headbands shown here are made of angora, but I bought myself some cashmere that I'm drop spinning when the mood hits, that will ultimately be a headband, too. They are incredibly warm when the winter winds blow, but more fashionable than most winter hats.

Notes before starting

The yarn can be of virtually any type, if it's soft enough to touch the skin. Using garter stitch means not only is the headband very easy to make, but it remains elastic enough to stay firmly in place even when made of a non-elastic fiber like angora.

It's a great project for beginning spinners with lots of small amounts of luxury fiber yarns they've spun. Ply lightweight yarns together if you're also using heavier yarns (or, if already plied, hold them together as you knit), so they will knit at similar gauges.

Gauge is not a major issue in this project. Use any size needles you're comfortable with for knitting that yarn. The number to cast on that I suggest is based on medium-sized needles (US 3 through 6 or even 7, or about 3 through 4.5 metric) and yarn similar to sport weight (wraps around 15 to the inch / 6 per cm). Very fuzzy fibers can be knit with needles that are large relative to the yarn, while smooth fibers will need more yarn and smaller needles. In angora, the headbands run about 1/2 to 3/4 ounce (15-20 gm) of yarn. I haven't yet remembered to measure yardage requirements, but that will be extremely variable anyway. More weight is needed for thick yarn than for thin, or densely spun vs lofty.

Pattern

Cast on about 20 stitches, or about 3 inches / 8 cm in width. Knit in garter stitch in rows (knit every row) until, when stretched firmly, the ends just reach around the head you want to fit, worn over the forehead, ears, and down toward the back of the neck a bit.

For a smooth edge as you knit, slip the first stitch of each row as if to purl: Bring the yarn in front of the needles, move the first stitch to the working needle without knitting it, then pass the yarn back between the needle tips to the back of the knitting. The edges will be more finished looking this way.

Bind off and sew the ends together, or use Kitchener Stitch (aka weaving or grafting) to weave the ends together, or hold the end needle together with the cast on end, pick up a stitch from the beginning, knit it together with one on the needle, and bind off as you go.



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The least bulky finish is Kitchener Stitch; the easiest is probably sewing the ends together, if your knitting yarn can stand the strain of sewing.

If you like to play with patterns, it would be quite easy to use fewer stitches at the beginning and end of the strip, increasing to the full width for the center 3/4 of length, so that the portion worn at the back of the neck is narrower. I keep meaning to try this but haven't gotten around to it yet. One of the WWII patterns on my website, Other Warm Things, has a shaped headband, which widens over the ears only. I personally like having a wider section over the forehead as well, as my sinuses really hurt when it's very cold.

Ways to wear the headband

This headband can be worn with a hat or hood or without it, over the ears and forehead for lots of winter warmth. Some girls wear it to hold back their hair like a traditional rigid headband. Others use it like a scrunchie to tie their hair into ponytails. It could even be slipped down over the head and worn around the neck! It's quite versatile for such a simple project.

Turn the headband into a hat!

If you know how to pick up stitches, do so in each slipped stitch along one edge. Join, and work knit 2, purl 2 ribbing to two inches shallower than your desired hat depth (with the 'headband' as a cuff or single layer). Follow the simple hat instructions to decrease the stitches, finish it off, and you've got a headband hat! Of course, then you can't use it as a scrunchie :)

Caring for the headband

Handwash gently in cool water with shampoo or liquid handwashing dish detergent, rinsing thoroughly in cold. Roll in an absorbent towel to blot out most of the water, being careful to not wring or stretch. Lay flat to dry. Angora may need a light brushing to restore the loft of the fiber after it dries. Be very gentle to not pull out any fibers or snag the yarn.

And, of course, when you're not using the headband for any extended period, do make sure it's safe from bugs. Clothes moths in particular love angora and other very fine fibers. Since it's so small, I'd first make sure it's completely dry (even to the extent of making sure it's not a humid day) and then store it in a sealed ziplock bag. Merely adding lavender or cedar to a dresser drawer isn't enough—clothes moths are known to invade such places! If a bag doesn't appeal, use a well-sealed plastic, metal, or other very solid box. Make sure the box has no ventilation holes; it's surprising how small a hole the moths can get through.



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