
Knit a Custom-Fit Dog Sweater with Wendy Bernard

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

- Hi, I'm Wendy Bernard. I'm a knitwear designer, dog owner, and I write a lot of knitting books. My favorite thing to do is to teach knitters how to knit beyond the pattern. And today, I'm going to, oh hello, today I'm going to show you how to use four simple measurements to essentially come up with two rectangular swatch-like pieces put together to make a simple and cute dog sweater. This is a great stash buster. For a dog this size, you can finish a sweater in probably an evening. ^ (upbeat music)

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- This project is really great, because you don't need a lot of materials. You'll need some yarn. I'm using Ewe Ewe Woolly Worsted. It's great because it's super wash. It does have a little wool content, and you can throw it in the washer. Perfect for a dog. For a small dog, you'll need less than this, and for a larger dog, you'll probably need more. A tape measure. Double pointed needles. Another set of needles. This can be a straight needle. I just prefer using circulars. Tapestry needle, a couple stitch markers, a pair of scissors, your handout for today, a pencil, and a calculator. And of course you're gonna need a dog to measure.

Chapter 3 - Knit Sweater

Measuring the dog

- Let's measure our dog. In this case it's a stuffed dog because Charlie's sleeping. The first thing that we do is we look at our handout and I have the four easy measurements laid out for ya. And first we're going to look at the back length. It's basically from the base of the neck to a little bit before his, the beginning of his tail. The beginning, like from here to here. Let me draw it on this for ya. We're talking about from here to about here. Every dog is different. Some dogs you will have a great big long back like my dog Rocco back at home, but this guy you'll see, this little guy, measures only about two inches from here to here. Two inches. The next place that you'll measure is the girth of the dog. Some dogs are pretty broad right under their front arms and some are not so broad there, but that's a really important measurement because that will be the widest part of the sweater. So you want to get right up under their arms. And usually that's where their rib cage is so he measures only six and a half inches around. So let me write that down. And then let me show you with this circle here, that's what you measured. The next measurement is the top back from shoulder to shoulder, is from maybe the shoulder bone right there where his arm starts to the other side. So let me measure that. And this guy measures about four inches from shoulder to shoulder. And this one goes from here all the way, and I'm just going to write an arrow there so we remember that. The last measurement that you will take is the torso to the no-pee zone. That's just the body plate that you're going to put on the sweater that covers their stomach area. You want it short enough so if the dog were to, you know, do something, that nothing is going to get dirty under there. So you'll turn your doggy over and you'll take the measurement starting at approximately the back of the neck where you had started from the backside to what you think is a safe place to end your sweater so it won't get dirty whey they go outside. So that's about three and a half inches. The last step will

be to determine our stitch gauge. Here are two swatches that I made. I made one in one by one ribbing and I made one with ribbing on one end, some stockinette and some ribbing on the other end. The reason why I have two sets of ribbings is because I wanted to test what the ribbing looked like in two different sized needles. What I like to do is put knots in the tails of my swatches and those knots if I count them will tell me what size needle I used in that part. One, two, three, four, five, six. That means I used a size six needle using this one by one rib and then this right here and this, I know I used a size one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, to get this fabric. I like this fabric better. When it comes to this one, this is just one by one rib. I used one, two, three, four, five, six needle. So a size six needle to get this rib. I'm happy with this rib and this right here, this stockinette, and I'm happy with this. So now I know what size needles I want to use in my project. Let's take a measure. I'm not going to measure this bottom ribbing because this is part of the project that you'll see in a moment. But if I look at my gauge and lay down my tape measure, I can count one, two, three, four, four and a half. I get four and a half stitches per inch. Notice how I didn't go crazy and make a huge swatch or count a lot of stitches. The reason is is that we're not talking about coterie here, we're just talking about a dog sweater. We want to make it fun and easy and you know if you get kind of a close to gauge count, it's perfectly fine. The dog's going to move around. You just don't want it to be too small so if you're going to err on any side, err on the big side. To measure your ribbed swatch, you'll want to stretch it a little bit, not a lot 'cause you want the sweater to be comfortable. So go ahead and stretch it a little bit. If you need some help, ask a friend. I'm just going to count the columns of stockinette stitch. That's one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. That's seven times two for those two inches. 14 stitches for two inches, half of that for one inch is seven. So we're getting seven stitches in rib and four and a half for stockinette. So go ahead and make your gauge but be sure that you take accurate measurements of your dog because dogs are all different shapes and sizes.

Knit sweater back

- When I'm making a new project, I love to have a sketch pad and some fun colored pencils to play with color and make some simple design decisions. I have these here and I have a sketch pad that I've already been drawing in and a bunch of yarn that I've been playing with. And actually knit up a bunch of swatches too. So what I usually do is I just lay 'em on the table and sort of play with color and keep moving 'em around on the table just to see what I think strikes me. And sometimes I will literally draw little stripes with the matching pencil. In this project I decided that I liked the gray and this aquamarine together very much. So that's what I'm going to use. The next step after choosing your yarn or maybe going into your stash pile and mixing and matching is to cast on for your first rectangle. This is the rectangle that's gonna cover the dog's back. And my measurements, looking at them, I was thinking for a second that this back length of two inches might be a little bit too short, so let me take a moment to remeasure him. See, two, I'm thinking more like three inches. This is a flexible project, so if you need to you can make adjustments on the fly, it's really no big deal. So I'm gonna stick with three inches. Before we cast on, let's use these measurements and figure out what size rectangle to make for the top of the back. We have a three-inch back length, just say it's three inches. And we have a top back from shoulder to shoulder four inches. I don't know how representative this is of the actual but we can write this in. I have a gauge of four and a half stitches in stockinette stitch. So I need to know how wide to make it, the four inches, four times four and a half stitches per inch. Is 18 stitches. I wanna round it up to 19. 18 stitches for my top back. And work until it's three inches long. I do want to put a garter edge on it. And all that means is that two

stitches on either side will always be knit. Okay? For the top back section, I'm using this aqua color. Twelve. Thirteen. Fourteen. Here's 18. Now, depending upon the size of your dog, you will probably want to make a smaller one-by-one ribbed edging for a smaller dog. And a wider one for a larger dog. This is something that you're going to kind of knit on the fly, so make your own design decision based on the size of your dog. In this case I'm probably just going to make, oh, four or five rows of one-by-one rib. So these are just knits and pearls. Pearl one, or knit one, pearl one. This is a one-by-one rib, and it's just knit one, pearl one. This will ensure that the back will not curl up. You're working from the back end of the dog toward the neck. So as you go you'll find with one-by-one ribbing that you are purling the pearl stitches and knitting the knit stitches. After I've worked about four or five rows, ending on a wrong side row, I will begin working in stockinette and doing some stripes. You could do color block, you could do random stripes, you could, if you have a chart available, maybe do an intarsia heart. Or a star. Or later you could embroider something on it or attach something on the back. This is just a really fun, loosey-goosey project that you don't have to be very serious about. I'm going to work one-by-one ribbing, for just one more row for a total of five rows. And then I'm going to bring in another color and start working some stripes. The way I'm doing stripes, I won't have to be cutting the yarn. I'm just going to carry the two colors up alongside of this top back section. So let's bring in the other color. This is the wooly worsted in a gray color. I just love it. And by now I'm going to start the stockinette section of this piece. But we want a non-rolling edge. So on this first stockinette or knit row put this on hold and add the gray. I'm going to place the markers. So let's knit the two stitches here, the first two stitches here and then go get a marker. Knit all the way across. Until just two stitches from the end and place your second marker. This marker will remind you to knit those two stitches all the time regardless of what side is facing you. So even on the wrong side you will be knitting these stitches. Now this marker's reminding me that I need to knit them, knit those stitches. And now I can go ahead and continue with my stockinette stitch by purling the wrong-side stitches. Let me show you how to carry up the second color along the sides so you don't have to cut your yarn in between color changes. I just finished using this gray and I want to have a two-row stripe. So it's time for me to use the aqua. All I do is drop the gray, leave it attached to the yarn, and I bring in the aqua, just as simple as that. Just bring it in and start knitting with it. Now if you're using a larger stripe or a wider stripe I would suggest cutting the yarn. But just for two or maybe four rows, you can carry it up along the side. Be sure when you're carrying up a new color from previous rows, that you don't pull this first stitch too tight, give it a little room. Because otherwise your rectangle will be squished on that one side. Just continue knitting your stripes and carrying your color changes up along the side of the work until it measures your top back measurement. In my case it'll be three inches. And then after that, bind off, just bind off.

Knit sweater front

- Our next step is to make the chest plate. This is the piece that will be on your doggy's chest. It's the ribbed piece. I used smaller needles to make a nice dense rib, and that's what I measured my gage with. I got seven stitches per inch in that one by one rib. I'm using the aqua colored yarn, and now I'm going to figure out how many stitches to cast on. This is going to be a rectangle that is a lot smaller than this top back. What I need to do is figure out what the total girth is of the dog. Which is 6.5 or six and a half inches. We know that we already had a top rectangle or a top back that's four inches wide. So we already have four inches accounted for. We subtract those four inches from the total girth. We get two and a half inches. So we know we need this chest plate to be two and a half

inches wide. The length is simply this one. This torso to no pee zone. We need this one to be three and a half inches long. So to cast on we need two and a half inches worth of stitches. My rib gage is seven stitches to an inch. So seven times two and a half inches is 17.5. For this you want an odd number. The reason is, is because you want to be able to begin and end with a knit stitch in you one by one rib. I have 17.5. I want this to be a comfy sweater, so I'm rounding it all the way up to 19 stitches. Let's cast on. I've chosen to use this in one solid color, so this will go really fast. I'm using double pointed needles because they're here, they're available. I just happened to have 'em and it's so tiny that these will work just fine. And they're the right size, like I said. So there's two. You can see that I'm using a long tail cast on. Number 19 Alright. Now all I'm going to do is work one by one rib until this piece measures 3 and a half inches. Then I'm going to bind off in pattern, which means when you're binding off, you knit or purl the stitch as it appears to you so while binding off you knit the knits, and purl the purls as you bind off along that edge. Go ahead and finish your chest plate. Bind off. Grab your dog, and then we're going to assemble the sweater.

Chapter 4 - Finish Sweater

Seaming the sweater

- I've completed my two rectangles. I have my striped top back rectangle, and I have my chest plate. All we need to do is first try it on our dog. We have our trusty one that doesn't move very much. You'll notice, by the way, that on this sample I had more garter stitch along the edges than the other one, but you can completely customize it, it's really flexible. So I'm holding it onto him, seeing how it will fit. It looks like a good fit. Then I'm taking this chest plate. You can see this is the right side. How do I know? Because I wove in some stitches, and these are sticking out, so let's make this the wrong side. I'm going to kinda slip it on him, kind of stretch it a little bit, pinch it at the top, here. The first thing I'm going to do is tack about three rows, using mattress stitch, of knitting, here, to the knitting, here, at the very top. So let me do that for ya. I need a little bit of aqua yarn and my tapestry needle. I'll start by putting my tapestry needle in here. I'll use the tail to tidy up later. This is the tail. Then start mattress stitching to this side. I'm using the mattress stitch, which means I'm using these horizontal bars in the knitting to connect the two sides. And if you remember, I just needed a few rows to tack together, so it will fit the stuffed animal. Now it's a stuffed animal. He doesn't move. It's easy to fit 'em. So if you have your real animal, you might wanna try it on 'em and use pins or clips to connect the pieces together. So now, I'm just going to tidy this up on the back side. This is one section where you want to maybe tie a knot, make it really sturdy. This is for a stuffed animal, so I'm not going to concern myself too much with super neatness. I'll make a knot here. 'Course, you can take more time and weave in your ends really well. And this is the tail I'm going to tack together, just here. I can just do some weaving in here. Let's try it on the doggy. Alright, I can see. If I attach it to this blue stripe, starting at about, here, all the way to the bottom, it looks like it'll fit pretty well. It doesn't have to be super accurate because this does stretch. Normally, I would use the tail, here, to mattress stitch it together, but since it's not really located in the right position, I'll get another piece of yarn. Now remember, it was this row, this aqua row, blue row, I think we said. And one last one, here. I'll tack these in. Weave in your ends. Do the same maneuver on the other side of the sweater. Now I have the completed top and underneath portion finished. Now I want to pick up stitches around this plain edge, not the ribbed edge, the plain edge, to form my collar. To do this, I'm using this aqua yarn. You could use any color you like. You could use multi-color, make stripes, use variegated yarn. You could do anything you want. I'm using double-pointed needles for knitting in the round. These are in the smaller of the two sizes, so that

the rib is kind of nice and tight. If you have a big dog, it's fine if you don't go down a needle size because if their neck is quite large, and you're not quite sure if it's going to be comfortable for them, you'd be better off if you kind of err on the size of a larger needle. So now, I'm gonna pick up stitches around this edge. I'm going to start in the middle of this chest plate, pick up and knit stitches with my aqua yarn. I know that I'm going to do a one by one rib, so I need to pick up an even number of stitches around this edge. I've knit a bunch of these sweaters, and there have been times that I have needed to go back and pull out the picked-up stitches because I felt like it might be a little bit too tight for my dog. So if this might be your worry, then definitely pick up more stitches than you normally would. In other words, pick up stitch for stitch. Also, since this is such a on-the-go project, something that you can kind of do on the fly, and this is really a small aspect of the project, don't feel afraid to just go ahead and take out your picked-up stitches and try again. I'm gonna get this one right there. Let's put 12 stitches on this needle. I'm not really consciously putting a certain number of stitches on each needle, but it's usually easiest to do one by one rib by putting an even number of stitches on each needle, so that you always know you're beginning with a knit stitch on each needle. See how this connection is a little loose? I don't wanna put my needle in this hole and pick up a stitch because it'll just make it look even larger than it is, so I'm going to kinda sneak into another area, and that will tidy it up. See? (knitting needles clicking together) Let's start our one by one rib. (knitting needles clicking together) With one by one rib, all I do is knit one, purl one, knit one, purl one, all the way around. In this case and because it's for such a small dog, I will probably echo what I did on the bottom of the top portion of the back and just work about four or five rounds, and then bind off in pattern. Since this is for a really small dog, this small stuffed dog, I don't have a lot of room to make the collar very different than it is. Really the only opportunity that I have is either to make the ribbed one by one, or two by two, or possibly just work stockinette stitch and then just binding off and allowing it to roll back. So this is the back. There's a little bit of extra fabric there. Let's put his little head through. (faint speaking) And then his little leg. And then his other little leg. This is such a fun project. Not only is it a stash buster, it is such a small canvas, especially if you're working on a smallish dog, that you can take all kinds of design risks. You can mix and match colors. You can pretty much do anything you want. You can even work a Fair Isle type of pattern, like this, when you get better at it. It's the same pattern. It's worked the same way. And if you're a swatcher, like I am, you will have a lot of swatches to choose from to use the rectangles and make more dog sweaters. Hey, Charlie. Do you like your sweater?