

## MARKET BAG WORKSHOP: DESIGN YOUR OWN BOTTOM-UP BAG

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This stretchy market bag starts from a solid base that's knit flat, then grows circularly to whatever size you like in an openwork trellis, and is finished off with a garter stitch band and adjustable knotted strap. It stretches to accommodate an amazing amount of stuff.

### Needle

Use a 24" long circular needle two to three sizes larger than you'd usually use with the yarn, to produce a stretchy open fabric. Needles with pointy ends and smooth joins to the cable will make it easier to work the lace section. The bag shown was worked on a size 9 US (5.5 mm) needle.



### Yarn

Choose a yarn that is tightly twisted with very little stretch so that the bag will wear well. Linen, cotton and hemp work well. Test the yarn before making your bag by trying to break it. If it breaks easily, it's not a good choice for a bag that will carry heavy weight. The bag shown,

which is 14" (36 cm) tall and about 34" (86 cm) in circumference), required the following amount of sport weight yarn, which was used doubled throughout: 710 yards (650 meters), weighing 5 ounces (140 grams). If you use worsted weight yarn to make a bag the same size, you'd need about the same weight, but half the yardage (355 yards/325 meters). For a smaller bag you'd need less yarn. For a larger bag (either taller or bigger around), you might need two or three times as much.

## Other Supplies

Split markers (so you can place them on the needle without removing the stitches) and a darning needle with a sharp point for weaving in ends.

## Making the Bag's Bottom

Cast on 3 stitches any way you like and work flat.

Pattern Row 1: Knit 1, increase by knitting into the front and back of the next stitch, knit to the end of the row.

Repeat Pattern Row 1 until the width of the knitting is at least 8 1/2" (21.5 cm). Each of the two sides will be about 6" long (15 cm). Make the bottom bigger than this to create a larger bag.

Pattern Row 2: Knit 1, K2tog, knit to the end of the row.

Repeat Pattern Row 2 until 3 stitches remain, then K3tog and leave this last stitch on the needle. Do not cut the yarn.

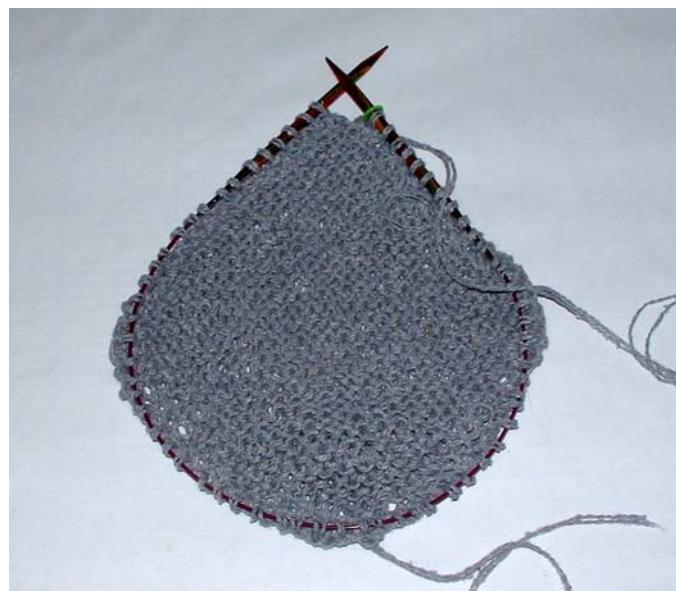


## Making the Bag's Sides

Do not turn. Working along the edge of the square to the left of the last stitch, pick up and knit one stitch between each garter stitch ridge. It's easiest to insert the right needle tip into the fabric just one strand from the edge, wrap the working yarn, and knit up a stitch.



At the next corner, stop and count your stitches. Pick up the same number of stitches along the other three sides of the square. Place a marker to indicate the beginning of round and begin working circularly.



\*K1, YO, repeat from \* to the end of the round, doubling the number of stitches. The number of stitches will stay the same up to the top of the bag.

Pattern Round 3: \*K2tog, YO; repeat from \* around.

Repeat Pattern Round 3 to create the sides of the bag. Continue until bag is 1" (2.5 cm) less than desired height. The lace portion of the bag shown measures 13" (33 cm) in length.

### Hints for Working the Lace

Make sure your stitch marker stays to the left of the yarn over at the end of the round. If it shifts to the right of the yarn over, it will get in your way working the final K2tog of the round. Shift it out of the way until you've completed the last K2tog and YO, then put it on the right needle and continue.

If you're missing a yarn over at any point, insert the left needle under the top strand between the two needles from the front to put the yarn over back on your needle, ready to be worked.



### Making the Top Band

Continuing to work in the round, work garter stitch for 1". Do this by alternately knitting one round, then purling one round. Stop at the end of a purl round.

## Making the Straps

Place four markers on the needle, directly above the center of each side of the bottom square. Space them so that there is an equal number of stitches between each of these markers. If there is an extra stitch or two, arrange the markers so they are divided as evenly as possible.

If the first marker is not at the beginning of round, knit until you reach it. Bind off all the stitches up to the second marker. Knit to the third marker. Bind off to the fourth marker. Knit until you reach the point where you began binding off. Remove all markers from the needle. Do not cut the yarn.



Turn and work the first strap flat. The stitches for the second strap will wait on the cable of your needle until this strap is complete.

Pattern Row 4: K1, K2tog, knit to the end of the row.

Repeat Pattern Row 4 until the strap measures 2" wide.

Stop decreasing and knit every row until strap measures desired length to top of shoulder.

Now repeat Pattern Row 4 until 3 stitches remain. Slip 1 knitwise, K2tog, and pass the slipped stitch over, so only one stitch remains. Cut the yarn and pull it through this last stitch.

Work the second strap on the remaining stitches. Begin with the wrong side facing you and work the same as the first strap, but 4" longer. The unequal lengths will make the knot fall to the front or back of the shoulder, which is more comfortable when carrying a loaded bag.

Weave in ends on the inside.

## Variations

The design of this bag is open to many variations in pattern and shape.

- Choose a different lace pattern. Increase or decrease a few stitches on the second round if needed so that you have an even multiple of your pattern stitch.
- Make the sides solid and substitute closed increases for the yarn overs on the first round. Since a solid bag won't stretch as much, you may want to increase again to make the circumference larger.
- Make the top band narrower or wider.
- Make the top opening smaller by decreasing some on the first row of the band.
- Apply i-cord around the opening and straps to reduce stretching.

As you can see, there are really no limits to what you can do, once you get this versatile bag started from its bottom base.