



RAILWAY KNITTING

Dela Wilkins

The Big Train Trip	9:00	
Souvenirs will be on display for purchase	12:00	
Prizes to be won!!	2:00	
This is where we can step off the train for a short walk	TBA	
Come join us for some tasty treats	5:30	
We will be sampling some of our Canadian wines	7:15	
<small>Friday! Please use excellent service by Dela Wilkins! (100% satisfaction guarantee)</small>		
Julie		
"Because I said So" featuring Diane Heaton + Mandy Moore	8:30	
Day-Gin + Tonic		
at to turn your watches back right before you go to sleep.		

Railway Knitting with Dela

Learn a new craft.
Hooks and yarn provided
at 5:30

Activity Poster for a Railway Knitting workshop

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E-booklet available from Lifecare on ravelry.com,
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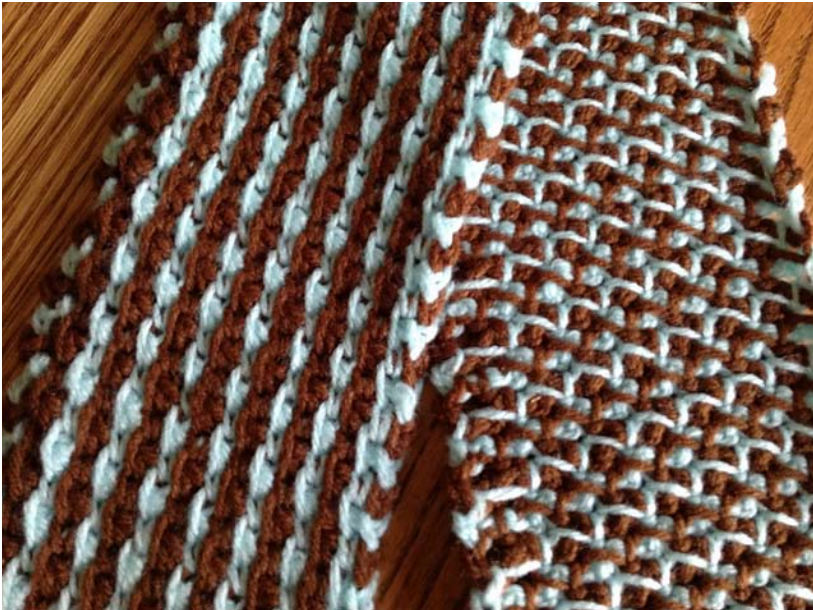
Dela Wilkins knitting on the VIA train Toronto/Kitchener, January 2012

Railway Knitting

Railway Knitting is one of the nicknames of a form of crochet known as **tricot crochet**. Other common names for the stitch are: Afghan or Tunisian crochet, Scottish or Shepherds' knitting and Tricot Ecosaise. The technique combines elements of knitting, crochet and weaving.

The first written reference to this stitch is in the 1860 *Ladies' Companion*, where the stitch was called the Princess Frederick William stitch. The project was a sofa pillow, and the hook was carved with a pen knife from a wooden knitting needle.

The French word for hook is *crochet*. The French word for knitting is *tricot*. Crochet uses about one-third more yarn than the same piece knitted.



reversible scarf

Crochet is unique, as most of the stitches done by hand cannot be accomplished by a machine. Crochet is reversible, sometimes with different patterns on each side.

For every 100 knitters there are 10 people who crochet. For every 100 crocheters, there are 10 people who do tricot crochet.

Before you begin

Select your yarn: Choose a yarn you love – the color, the texture, the thickness. Choose a yarn suited to the project – soft and washable for babies, thick and sturdy for bags, open and airy for summer, 100% wool for felting. Consider allergies when selecting yarn, both yours and the recipient's. It is easiest to learn and see new stitches with a lighter coloured yarn, or working with two colors in alternating rows. Experiment with a variety of yarns and colors; make samples with these to get the feel of the yarn.

Select your project:

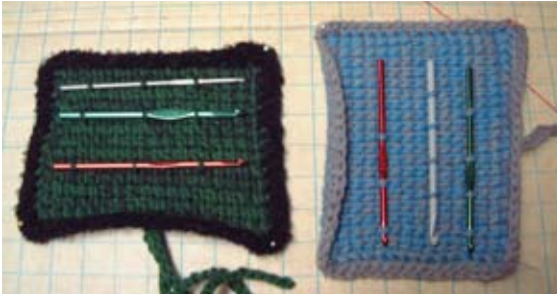
This is an opportunity to be your own designer. Dishcloths and scarves are nothing more than squares and rectangles, and can be made in any stitch of your choice. If you learn to make increases and decreases or work in short rows you can add more shape to a basic square or rectangle. You can use regular knitting patterns or crochet patterns, but don't be limited by these. Release your creativity. Often the yarn will "want" to be something other than what you planned!



Select your hook: *Regular crochet hooks* come in various lengths, from 5 inches to 8 inches. Railway Knitting samples or small projects of 10 to 15 stitches can be made on a regular crochet hook. For wider projects *afghan hooks* come in various lengths from 8 inches to 16 inches. *Double-ended hooks* are used for working in the round, or for two-sided projects. Hooks come in steel, aluminum, plastic, or wood, and some have a cable attachment for wider projects. A few ivory or bone hooks have survived from the 19th century.



The most influential part of the hook size is its **diameter**, marked in **millimetres**. The smaller hooks such as 1.4 to 3.5 mm are used for thread and finer yarns. Sizes 4 to 6.5 are used for most regular crochet projects with double knit or worsted weight yarns, and the larger sizes for heavier yarns, holding several yarns together, or making a loose or lacy fabric. Hook diameter can run up to 25 and 50 mm for **mega crochet**.



Samples as crochet-hook holders

Make a sample or swatch: Test your yarn, your hook size and the stitch pattern by making a small square or rectangle. Some patterns will specify a gauge of x number of stitches by x number of rows equals 4 inches/10 centimetres. The ball band will suggest a needle or hook size for the yarn. For Railway Knitting, choose a hook **2 to 3 mm larger** than the recommended size, as the fabric you make is thicker than regular knit or crochet. For self-designed projects this won't be critical; just be sure you get the "feel" of the fabric, the drape you want. If the yarn will shrink, wash your sample in the washer and dryer to see by how much. Trace the sample dimensions onto a piece of paper before washing, and again after drying it. If it is too stiff or too small, make another sample with a larger hook or a more open, lacy stitch.

Make yourself comfortable:

Sit in a comfortable place, with good lighting. Take a break about every 20 minutes to stretch your shoulders, your hands and fingers. What better place to learn Railway Knitting than in the Park Car on VIA Rail's *Canadian*?



The Journey Begins

The hardest part of learning to crochet is the *first row*. Next is keeping the same *number of stitches* in every row, and third is *counting the rows* and stitches.

Crochet begins with a *slip stitch* placed onto a hook, and a row of chained stitches. The *chain row* has a front side and a back side; when this chain row hangs down vertically from the hook held horizontally, the front of the stitch will look like a V and the back side will have a bump called a *camel hump*. Each V below the hook each counts as one stitch (the loop on the hook does not count as a stitch). Make this first row loose enough to be able to insert your hook into it later. A very tight chain is useful as a drawstring; if you chain tightly, use a larger hook to make this first chain and then change to a size smaller for the rest of the project. Consider this the “leg room” of the stitch; you want train-size leg room, not airplane-size. The working yarn will travel into and through the stitches you make in each row.



starting chain, front V



starting chain, back bumps

To make a *chain stitch*, wrap the *yarn around the hook (YRH)* like a scarf around the throat, coming around the back of the hook, then under the chin of the hook, and pull the yarn through the loop on the hook. After some practice you will be able to “hook” the yarn without using your fingers.

When you have a chain the length you want, begin your first row, called the ***foundation row*** in Railway Knitting. This row is a base row, and differs slightly from the rest of the rows to come. The aim is to pick up and collect loops in a ***forward pass row*** by working into the chain stitches so that you end up with the same number of loops on your hook as the number of stitches in the chain. The single loop on your hook is the first stitch of the forward pass row. It comes out of, or lives in, the first chain beside the hook. Position your chain row horizontally, front facing you. Insert your hook under the top loop of the second chain from the hook, YRH, and pull this yarn through the chain. You now have 2 loops on the hook. Continue to pick up loops this way until the end of the chain. You will be working from ***east to west if you are right-handed*** and ***from west to east if you are left-handed***. Count the loops on the hook. If this is correct, continue to the second part of the row.



first row completed



forward pass



return pass

To remove all the loops off the hook, one at a time, the second part of the row is called the *return pass*. This is worked the same as a chain row, which captures and locks each loop into place like linking rail cars, on its way back to the end where you started your first row.



linked rail cars

Begin the return pass by hooking the yarn (YRH) and pulling it through the first stitch. This removes the end stitch from the hook. From here on you will yarn over (YRH) and pull through two stitches each time. The first of these stitches is part of the chain; the second stitch is a vertical loop. At the end of the row you will have one stitch left on the hook, which is the first stitch of the next forward pass row.

The Hornepayne station stop: If you stop working in the middle of a row, and don't remember which direction you are working in, gently loosen the last stitch worked. As you tighten it up again, the working yarn will show itself coming out of the back end of the last stitch worked. On the forward pass the travelling yarn will have *one loop* lying above it, the last vertical stitch worked. On the return pass, there are *two loops* lying above the travelling yarn and the last stitch worked is a horizontal chain. If in doubt, count the completed rows below each side of the stop. When two trains meet at the Hornepayne station, one train will always pull out before the second arrives, making sure no passenger goes the wrong way.



Park car, Hornepayne

Options: Here is where the possibilities are endless. Looking at your foundation row, you can see all kinds of spaces and loops where a hook could fit into, to pick up a new loop for the next row. You can work any combination of these options into a pattern repeat.

The loops on the hook are the *front vertical* and *back vertical* parts of the stitch created on the forward pass. The return pass created a horizontal chain with sideways Vees and camel humps. These are the *upper horizontal*, *lower horizontal* and *back horizontal* parts of the stitch.



location of stitch parts

There is a narrow gap between the front and back vertical bars of the same stitch, there is a wider gap between two vertical stitches. All of these areas present opportunities to create a pattern by repeating the same hook insertion. These stitch options will be described in the next section.

Basic Rules: Not so much rules as guidelines, these will help you keep the shape and slant of your work fairly even. Fabric at the first stitch end of the forward pass will tend to be loose. You can pull on this first stitch each time you reach that end, to tighten it up. The last stitch of the forward pass can be picked up with two threads on the outside of the stitch, the front vertical, and the lower horizontal, which curves like an arch from the bottom of that stitch to reach the centre bottom of the return pass of the previous row. This will create an edge that appears like a row of chain stitches. Fabric at this edge of the row will often be tighter than the starting edge. Work this end stitch a bit more loosely to compensate.

The completed fabric piece may still lean left or right depending on the stitches used. Work an edge of single crochet stitches around the full outside edge to finish the fabric. This will draw the looser edge in. The finished project is often



last stitch forward

blocked, pinned to shape and dampened to its preferred dimensions.

Working a stitch in the new row will change the *appearance* of the previous row. This may make counting rows more difficult. Since the return pass does not change in the stitches described here, it may be easier to count this portion of the row for the row count.

The Stitches

There is no current standard naming for Railway Knitting stitches, so it is always best to read the description of the stitch in a pattern and practice it in a sample.

Edge stitches

The first and last stitches are considered *edge stitches* and not part of a pattern stitch. Sometimes two plain stitches per edge create a firmer *selvedge*.

Tunisian Simple Stitch: TSS – slide the hook behind the front vertical stitch, keeping the hook at the front of the work. YRH, and pull up a loop. Keep the loop on the hook.

Tunisian Reverse Stitch: TRS – drop the working yarn to the front of the work, between the stitch on the hook and the next stitch to be picked up. Slide the hook behind the front vertical as in the TSS; bring the working yarn to the back. YRH, and pull up a loop. This forms a knob in front of the stitch.

Tunisian Moss Stitch or Honeycomb pattern: – work one TSS, then one TRS, alternating across the row. On the next row position the stitches above their opposites. This stitch combination is effective when you use two colors, changing them at the full hook edge. If you place the stitches above each other you will get a different pattern.

Tunisian Purl Stitch: TPS – tilt the work toward you, peek over the top edge to locate the back vertical portion of the stitch. Slide the hook behind the back vertical as in the TSS, keeping the hook along the back of the fabric. YRH and pull up a loop.

If the whole fabric is worked all in TSS or TPS, the fabric will *curl*. To avoid this you can work in alternating TSS/TRS or TSS/TPS within a row, or one row of each. You base your choice on the appearance of the stitches. A larger hook will also prevent more curl.

Tunisian Knit Stitch: TKS – insert the hook from the front through to the back of the work into the space between the front vertical and back vertical parts of the same stitch. YRH, pull up a loop. This fabric will be very thick, as the yarn now wraps completely around the return pass chain. Often you need a larger hook for this stitch. This stitch creates a stretchy fabric, but the work will measure shorter than the same number of rows in other stitches with the same size hook.

Tunisian Full Stitch or Waffle Stitch: TFS – insert the hook from the front to the back of the work into the space between two stitches. Because this stitch is worked into the spaces between stitches, it should be worked either before a stitch or after a stitch. This means in one row you will start working between stitch one and two (before the second stitch) and the space between the last two stitches at the far end is not worked; in the next row, the space between one and two is not worked (working after the second stitch), but the last space is worked. This will balance the row. If you do not compensate for working into the spaces, the work will slant towards one side, and grow by one stitch per row.

Tunisian extended stitches: – to increase the height of a row, add one chain stitch to the top of each loop as it is completed on the hook, including the first and last stitch of the row. Consider this the *dome-car option* for a looser fabric.

Changing colors: colors can be changed at either end or both ends, using two or more colors of yarn. To change colors on the full hook, use the new color to begin the chain stitch return pass. Changing at this edge will make a blended color change. To change the color before the next forward pass, use the new color to remove the last two stitches from the hook during the return pass. The new color becomes the first stitch of the next row. Changing at this edge creates a solid line color change.

To get a tidy *change-over* of colors on the back side, give the new incoming color the right-of-way by moving the travelling yarn forward in its east or west direction to a siding in an over-and-out motion. Bring the new color under-and-in; the colors will wrap round each other at the back of the work.



reversible honeycomb – changing colors

Increasing: To add an extra stitch into a row, work the regular stitches and then work into the space between the two stitches where you want the extra stitch to appear, or into the top horizontal bar between these two stitches. To add several extra stitches at the beginning of a row chain the number of new stitches required when you have completed the return pass and pick them up in the next forward pass. To add several extra stitches at the end of a row, you

can use *knitted cast-on* stitches, or make a small chain with extra yarn before picking these up in the current forward pass. To double the number of stitches in a row, you can also work a **Yarn Over (YO)** before each stitch, and treat each YO as new stitch in the return pass. A Yarn Over is hooking the yarn as if to pull it through the stitch; do not pull it through. It remains as a replacement for one of the next two stitches which you will work together as if they are one, or as an extra stitch.

Decreasing: work two stitches together as one for each decrease; slide the hook under the two next verticals and work as a single stitch in TSS. Another method is to work the two stitches individually and then pull the second stitch through the first of this pair, leaving only one loop on the hook for these two stitches. The second method works better if you are working a combination of stitches. Always keep the first and last stitch of the row as the edge stitches, do not use them as part of the decrease set.

Making Windows: Slip stitch the required number of stitches in the forward pass where you want the space to appear. On the return pass add the same number of extra chain stitches to bridge the gap. On a taller stitch, you can use a YO to create the opening, and work it as a stitch on the way back. This is used for buttonholes, or to create a mesh open work crochet which can be used to weave other yarns through. Consider this the *dining-car stitch*.



*making windows:
the dining-car stitch*

Yarn over (YO) and yarn round hook (YRH) are used in the following ways:

To make a chain, YRH and pull it through the current loop on the hook to make the next chain stitch, or to extend a stitch height.

To make a new loop on the forward pass, position your hook through the loop or space, then YRH and pull it through to make the new loop.

To make a **Tunisian Double Crochet (TDC)**, YO first, then insert hook for a stitch, YRH and pull up one loop. YRH again and pull through the new loop and the first YO to complete the Tunisian double crochet stitch. This increases the height of the stitch; if done in a whole row the first and last stitch of the row will each need to have one chain added to increase their height. This can be called the **top bunk stitch** as it involves several steps.

To make a more **open fabric**, YO and work the next two stitches together, repeat across the row. On the return pass, treat the YO loops as regular loops, maintaining the stitch count for the row.

Finishing the last row with slip stitch: Railway Knitting fabric should be finished at the top by loosely working a final forward pass in the pattern stitch. These stitches are not collected onto the hook; pull the new loop through the last loop worked leaving only one stitch on the hook each time. At the end of the row, cut the yarn, leaving about 6 to 8 inches, pull the end of the yarn through the last stitch and tighten to close it. With a tapestry needle, weave the loose yarn ends between the layers of fabric in a Z or N shape.

Edging one piece or joining two pieces together with **single crochet**: insert the hook under two strands of yarn on an edge (the two that look like a chain), YRH and pull through to make a loop (2 loops on hook), YRH and pull through both loops.



slip stitch closed

To join two pieces, work through the edges of both as if they were one piece. This is often done with a hook a size or two smaller than the afghan hook.

The Journey Continues

To continue your Railway Knitting when you return home, there are several sources you can turn to: family and friends who knit or crochet, the Internet, library books, yarn shops and local crochet groups. **Ravelry.com** has forums for those new to Tunisian Crochet, and many free patterns.

Dela Wilkins enjoys traveling by train and sharing her enjoyment of knitting and crocheting with fellow passengers. You can find her projects on **Ravelry.com** under people: Lifecare. Her free patterns will be available online from Knotty by Nature (<http://www.kbnfibres.ca/>), where she teaches crochet classes. You can contact her by e-mail at put.togetherbydela@gmail.com.

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Notes
