THE Crochet™ CROWD

Designing

Getting Started with Crochet Designing

By Michael Sellick aka Mikey, ©2019 The Crochet Crowd

Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia

Why Design?

Do You Feel The Need to Create?

Do you feel like something is missing in the world of crochet patterns? You feel inspired to try your ideas in crochet design.

Do you think you can create something that others would enjoy making too?

Do you have desire to exercise your mind, to be challenged and to work through your new ideas step by step?

Would you feel the joy when others can duplicate what you have designed?

If you feel any of these emotions, designing could be in your future.

Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia

Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia

The yarn industry is not a get rich quick scheme. Nor, is it a place for instant recognition for your hard work. A few people have squeaked by the long journey with a quick pass that is usually related to main stream media. You should be prepared to make this a long term journey. If money or fame is your primary goal, this path is so long term and step by step. that most people will quit leaving opportunities behind.

Quick Steps Preview

To begin, you will need to observe, learn and try. I've been crocheting since 14, and now 31 years later, I am still in learning more about stitchwork.

With technology and quickly advancing programming, learning is constant.

Observe your followers and adjust.

Observe Others without Copying

By watching others that you think are role models in the industry, you can see commonalities between designers and online personalities. Each are unique but follow similar methods of execution.

In today's era, I believe that a person who wants to succeed in this field can do so if they are determined. I started back in 2008 when the online teaching element was still in diapers. Today's technology, 11 years later, has advanced so much that tools are readily available. I had to learn with limited tools but just kept asking questions and learned along the way.

For myself, I can tell the difference, generally speaking, between the photography of **Yarnspirations** verses **Red Heart**. Each of their subtle branding policies that can be seen when you compare photography structure side by side.

I can tell the differences of writing skills in the sense of **being self focused verses community focused**. Each attitude has their own pros and cons and strongly depends on the target demographic.

Look how often the your role model engages the public and watch how they speak with the public. This interaction will make or break a designer. Some designers can come across at know-it-alls while other designers can be humble and speak without standing on a soap box.

Learning to Read & Write Crochet Patterns

If you cannot read a pattern, the hope of writing a pattern isn't in your immediate future. If you can read patterns, even slightly, you are on your way to begin to design.

A website that you should get started with is the Yarn Craft Council. On the council sits yarn & implement manufacturers, publishers & more. Each one of the council members have access to designers and much more for consultation.

The role of the council is to standardize the industry. It's easier if a yarn user is seeing the same technical information such as pattern abbreviations, yarn weights and standardized packaging information on the ball bands. By working together, it makes it easier for the public to jump between brands, books and more.

When designing, most pattern abbreviations are out there. Google is your best friend to find lists. We also have a large list of known crochet abbreviations as well.

We also have a comprehensive tutorial on learning to read crochet patterns which also comes in handy in learning how to write the patterns as well.

Tutorial: How to Read Crochet Patterns

Lunenburg, Nova Scotia

Lunenburg, Nova Scotia

The Biggest Mistake of Writing Patterns

If you are too wordy in your instructions, you can turn a simple pattern into a novel. This is a turn off for a crocheter. While the saying of, "Don't judge book by its cover." is accurate. It's completely responsible whether a crocheter will do the pattern or not. A crocheter will judge to crochet the pattern based on the number of pages involved. Keep patterns between 1 - 2 pages. Obviously, there will be exceptions.

Example

Doable but Long Winded - Not to Standard

Row 1: Chain 3, count this as a double crochet in this pattern. Complete 1 double crochet in each stitch across to the end of the row. At the end, turn.

Row 2: Do the same as Row 1.

Simplified and to The Point - To Standard

Row 1: Ch 3 (counts as a dc here and throughout), 1 dc in each st across. Turn.

Row 2: Repeat row 1.

If you think my adlibbing above is exageration, it is a real example of one of the first patterns. I've had to learn to simplify to cut my words. Of course, if a pattern note is handy and means if someone will be successful or not, I will throw it in.

Cross Compare Pattern Writing Skills

There are times where I am at a loss of words to describe what I need to say. With the current technology, I can observe others in pattern writing skills to see how they would have said something. **Is it wrong? No... it's realistic.** You have the access, use it.

In the industry, there are positions that are called **Technical Editors**. These are people who comb through patterns with no apologies. Meaning, they are supposed to catch everything, reword and correct the pattern. They checking accuracy of counting and much more. These people are kept well buried behind the scenes of the industry. They are highly accurate and if something does slip between the cracks. They are busy people. I would never be a great technical editor as I am not fussy enough.

I find based on the publisher, you can seem to pick up the styling of a technical editor's preference in wording. It's so slight but it's there if you look for it.

Though you have the power to cross compare, do not plagiarize. Use what you have access to as a learning resource, not a skip the work process. You will not become a great designer if you skip the fundamentals of learning.

Boho Ornament Afghan In R & D Stages

Treble Crochet - tr
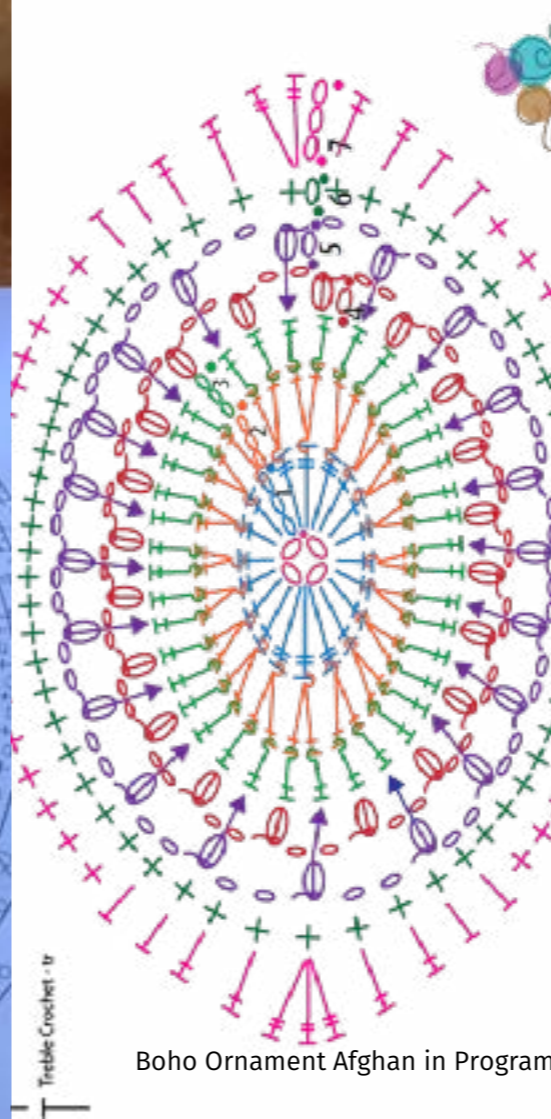
Boho Ornament Afghan in Program

20% Myth of Changing to Create New Design

This particular topic can send social media into angry overload. There are so many misconceptions on what is open source verses copyright.

The two questions that you have to ask yourself:
- Who decides what 20% is between a design that has been modified with some tweaking?
- What would you say to a judge in a court of law?

There are project types where they are considered utilitarian. Meaning, it's a standard of human living. Example would be socks, pants and more.

You want to be a designer, design. It's pointless to take other patterns and change a few lines. Be creative, it's why you are doing this.

Changing a few lines, yarn brand and colour isn't enough. Put original thought and think about the design as you beging to work through it.

The Fight Between Two Designers

I had a designer come after me for ripping off her design. It was ugly and completely out of hand. The designer, in her 20's, accuses me of design theft. It turns out, we both designed something similar to each other. She discovered I had launched by pattern after hers. So I must have stole it.

In trying to state my case, she wasn't having it. Nor accepting that it's plausible for two designers to have the same thoughts of implementation. Trust me, the concept wasn't earth shattering. It was basic.

So I went on her website and looked at her designs. I found a design that I knew wasn't new in concept. So I questioned her on that design. She insists that she thought of it herself. However, the concept, was so basic, that it was from a design in the 1950's. **She didn't steal the design, but the concept is not new.** So I flipped the tables on her telling her she has stolen the design. I knew she hadn't. However, she was placing me in the same situation of accusing me of copying her basic design when I hadn't.

What can save you in a situation like this is called a **Crochet Design Journal**. Mine is just a few dollars from Walmart. The book details my notes and things I work on. Sometimes, I work with our partners to film their designs and I write my notes as I work through the process. Inside my journal are my notes if I have to refer back.

Generally speaking, I tend to write out the designs with pencil in graph format and then come back and write my pattern afterwards. Once I am done, I staple my notes into this book so everything is together in the event I need them.

The notes prove original thought, process, execution and steps along the way. Even if I type out o my pattern, I still print the design and write my notes on the pattern and then go back to edit document in digital format.
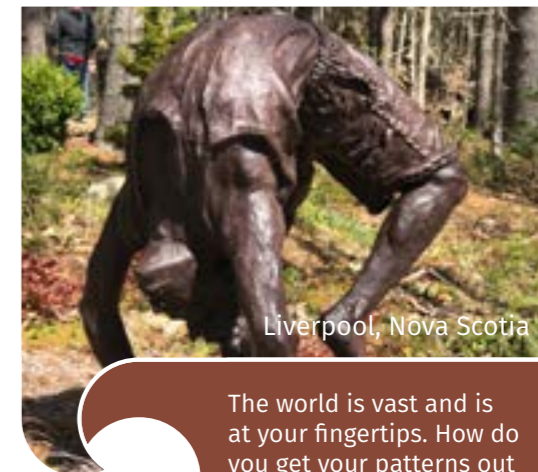
Mikey's Crochet Design Journal

Few Vs Many
Understand the Demand

Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia

Liverpool, Nova Scotia

The term 'everyone' is overused today and creates misguided intentions for a designer. I've seen great designers get caught up in trying to accomodate the few, believing they are accomodating the many.

When a crocheter is requesting for you to design something, weigh the pros and cons. Is the idea just for them or do you think many people will love it as well? Your time is valuable.

When designing, you have to keep yourself interested but keep your followers engaged too. Due to available and, most times, free tools that easy to use, you will be able to measure the publics' interest in your design. Use the metrics to determine your future. This is a way for the public to review you without them noticing. It's your way to self improvement.

The world is vast and is at your fingertips. How do you get your patterns out there? You need a delivery platform, aka, website.

Making a website, for many, is a scary process; however, your future depends on it.

You are, in fact, the creator of the projects and marketing all-in-one.

Website & Online Properties

Every designer needs their own website. Your website is your home base of everything. For the cost of a website, invest in yourself to have your own unique online presence. You can still participate in other sites like Ravelry, ESTY or other publishing websites. The advantage of your website is that you can design your website to have your own personal flare and control what you publish.

- Start immediately with a unique website name. If you use a free service, chances are you will have their advertising as part of your website address. **Registering a website is about $10 - $20 USD. It's cheap.**
- If you are unsure which type of website to have. The easiest, which happens to be the best entry level website, is a **blog based website**. The advantages to blog format are incredible.
- When you sign up for a website, you are aiming to look at a **'Wordpress'** blog. While there is such thing as free wordpress sites, the options for customization are really limited that can hinder you later on as you grow. If you want to do more bells and whistles, you will most likely not have them.
- In the beginning, you can still use your Ravelry or ETSY to sell instead of fancy programming. On your articles, redirect with a link to the site where the pattern can be purchased.

Recommonded Online Resources to Have

· Website
· Ravelry Account To List Projects
· Facebook Page / Group
· Google Drive for PDF Writing & Storage
· Photoshop

Remember everything costs money to start. You should not expect anything for free. You have to invest in yourself first.

New Ross, Nova Scotia

Tips for Effective Photography

Today, we are in a society of people who wish not to read much. They have run into you, they are more motivated by your photography. **You need to concentrate the best on photography.** If your photography is stellar, a crappy written pattern could get you through as people are motivated by your photo.

Tips for best photography can be found on YouTube. It's amazing, today's camera phone can take really excellent quality photos.

The project is the focal point. The background shouldn't want to catch peoples' interest. It's not uncommon for designers to use white foam board as a backdrop. When editing, zooming in so eliminate the non-relevant background.

Use as much natural light as possible for best results.

Use your photoshop to zoom in and get the best view possible.

Tips for Effective Writing

Time and time again, I hear, **I'm not a great writer** and is considered a mental road block. Generally speaking, crocheters are looking for your patterns. While you can introduce part of your personal life into the mix. **There's a fine balance of being a resource verses an 'everyday life' blogger.**

- **Stay on Topic** - I designed this shawl because a friend of mine was dealing with chemo. Her daughter was unable to go to the hospital until later in the day as her car broke down and she had to call for a taxi. The daughter didn't make it on time to the hospital and the mother was discharged. They missed each other. So my shawl design was in the spirit of this situation. **Cut the fluff, get to the nuts and bolts about the design. The more fluff people read, the more likely they will go find a design elsewhere.**
- **Easy to Find Pattern Information.** You have to think about how the person is going to get your pattern. Make the article easy to read and show where to get the pattern. It's best practices to use a downloadable option where you write the pattern in programs like DOCS on Google Drive and save it as a PDF. Upload it to your chosen website. Link your article to the file so people can download it. If you are using paid services for charging for your design, following their procedures on how it is to be presented. Most likely, downloadable PDF.

• **Keep articles concise and short.** If you feel you want to write a lot about your personal life. Consider a separate web space or even Facebook.

• **Stay clear of heated topics that are known to create drama.** Yes, we all have opinions but there is a time and place for that.

Read Your Reviews Through Metrics

Most website properties provide what is called as **Analytics**. It's through Analytics that you are getting a raw report card on how you are doing. **The metrics don't lie.**

Earlier, I spoke about **Few VS Many**. The metrics will give you what the truth is. It will tell you if people are liking your projects. It will tell you how often someone is coming back to your properties looking for more projects. If you are taking a risk of a different type of project, the metrics will tell you if the risk was a dud or maybe it proved to be a good one. Your metrics age and tell your story, digitally, to know your future.

Designs of tomorrow should be heavily weighed to the metrics of your properties. Yes, you may just be starting out, but we each start somewhere and your metrics become your pathway forward.

For example, anything **thread related** based for me is a dud. I know this from the lack of engagement, lack of clicking and lack of people visiting that type of themed article. So my future is not a thread based project. If you don't watch your metrics, you won't know information like this.

The yarn industry cycles like the retail store. The Northern Hemisphere greatly affects The Crochet Crowd. **Do two you see two valleys?** This is showing 2 years. The valleys are the summer time. I'm still working, but the crocheters are less engaged due to the heat. You will see your metrics fluctuating with the weather. The warmer the fall, the longer it takes for crocheters to get back into the swing of crocheting over the winter.

Lunenburg, Nova Scotia

Each designer puts in their 100% to attract yarn users to trust in their patterns and follow them. Their online space, whether it be a website or social platform is their own and should be treated as their personal space. Designers should not squat on other designer's pages without consent. **Many designers will say no for other designers to self promote.** It's not selfish, it's self preservation.

Marketing
Respecting Space

The Crochet Crowd

While it appears that you make friends with a popular designer that you can bypass the slow and steady route, you still have to have solid foundation of your own work. The Crochet Crowd took three years to get our first sponsorship. It took five years to get a solid working contract. It took seven years to become financial stable. With so much work to get here, we protect our spaces as we have put the time and energy in.

Greenwich, Nova Scotia

Slow & Steady

Remember the days where it was a luxury to have a TV? Remember when having a landline phone was just being installed? Remember the days before internet? **Today's generation doesn't remember these monumental steps and we have grown up with these conveniences.** The fact that I can even write this mini booklet on a Sunday here at my home and use my own photos to share this is a miracle.

One of my mentors shielded me from an opportunity for becoming a household name and move more into the entertainment side such as reality shows and more. You may think, they held me back. However, their logic proves to be true. In mass entertainment, you can be popular this season and out next season as a has been.

We are now working in year twelve of The Crochet Crowd. We started at the bottom of the barrel and it took us a long time to get our footing. Through the journey, people have gotten to know us. **We don't do many live shows due to the expenses of traveling.** I would rather spend my money on programming and then throwing it to the airlines and hotels. Yes, it's super to meet people who follow along with us, but we cannot go broke trying to do that part of the business. **So you have to decide your own priorities.**

Your best friends are the yarn users who follow you. They are most likely to advocate for your work. You gain their trust, in turn, they refer you. It's not an overnight thing. Like a catepillar to a butterfly, the transformation takes time. Work on the trust of the public, and in turn, the right referrals will slowly gain your followers. These are the type of referrals most large companies wish for.

Sponsorship
Funding Yourself

While selling patterns or web ad clicks may help you fund your desinging, parternships are really important in working with others.

The majority of the public believe that your sponsorships should pay for everything. Sponsorships are partnerships that goes in both directions. It's a give and take relationship. You have to be balanced and both mutually benefiting from the experience. In the beginning, while pioneering this industry, most payments were in the form of free yarn to do the projects you wanted to show. However, yarn isn't accepted as a form of payment at the power company. So the industry, over time, has been changing to not only provide product support but also time monetization. Everyone is unique in what their pay is. There are no set standard rates.

Some relationships have more benefit then just monetization. You can gain traffic and your own brand awareness. There are times where your monetization may be less than ideal in the moment but have longer terms objectives in mind. If my sponsors asks for a favour, I don't ask for more. It's give and take.

Being fun and fabulous isn't enough for sponsorships. For a sponsor to consider you, you have to have an established following base. This is measuring through your social platforms and website analytics. There's no point exa-

gerating your numbers as they have ways to check to see if your claims are accurate. If you haven't been interested in analytics, the sponsorships lean on that the hardest. If you have done the hardwork, you will likely be noticed. If you haven't been paying attention to analytics, you should will be a at this point as your future relies on it.

You have to set your own personal ground rules on what you will or won't do. There are certain types of marketing campaigns I refuse to be part of. My sponsors know what they are and understand as well.

A really big myth in sponsorship is that the partnership will elevate you. Yes, it could happen but in all of our experiences, it's ultimately up to you to self market your own content. While you may get mentioned once in a while from a sponsor, the best results are usually your own traction and patterns you create. Getting sponsorship isn't the road to easy, kick back and relax mode. You are accountable in every sense. Sponsors want reliability, not excuses.

Finally, the last key peice of advice is that sponsors, designers and key figures behind the scenes are either indirectly related or in communications with others. So if you express your dislike for a sponsor or designer, chances are it could impact your future.

Sponsorships are limited, so you have to put your best foot forward and see where the path goes.

Hopefully you have found this information helpful. Throughout this book, you have seen views of our home province, Nova Scotia. All photos were taken by our cell phones.

I could write the individual tips and key drill down into more but learning this industry from the ground up is vital to your long term success.

Google is your best friend. Dig in and explore. Your future could depend on it.

Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia

Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia

Liverpool, Nova Scotia