Knitting and Crochet for Visually Impaired People

If someone has limited sight, or is losing their sight and would like to learn how to knit there are things to consider:

- Be sure to give them time to practice and learn
- Use feedback from their sense of touch.
- Start slowly with simple items and move on to more difficult projects as their confidence builds. They will get there!

Getting Started and Organizing the Work Area

Check the Lighting.

- If they have low vision, make sure that the lighting in the work area provides sufficient illumination. A lamp with an adjustable flex-arm or gooseneck is usually a good choice because you can adjust the direction of the light as needed. Some lamps also have built in magnifiers.

Use Light/Dark Contrast.

- Use a contrasting background, such as a light or dark cloth draped over their lap, to help them see and locate the knitting.
- Use needles and hooks that contrast with the yarn colour.
- Create contrasting work areas by using light and dark non-skid shelf liner, placemats, or plastic table covers.

Useful Tips:

- A good way to begin is to switch to larger-gauge materials, such as bigger needles or thicker yarn. This will help with counting stitches and reviewing pattern.

- If they are a beginning knitter, try to avoid using mohair wool or any type of yarn that splits easily. Consider using multi-colored yarn in place of a design that requires various changes in yarn colour.

- Enlarge the knitting instructions or patterns on a photocopier, record them on a Dictaphone or Audio CD, or use a closed circuit television (CCTV) or video magnifier.

- Get them to work with their fingers close to the tips of the needles. They will be more likely to be aware of stitches falling off the needle (dropped) or left on (added). You can also ensure that each stitch is done correctly.

- To keep count of rows or stitches, place a **"counter" --** such as a penny, a button, or a matchstick -- inside a container as each row is completed. Count them as needed. Some people use a cribbage board to keep track of rows. Others use a small abacus.

- Identify stitches by the location of the loops. The loops on **"knit"** stitches are on the side away from them, while the loops on **"purl"** stitches are on the side closest to them.

- Organize the yarns by colour, using large print or braille labels. Use large **bold** print with easy-to-understand abbreviations made with a wide-tipped felt marker, or a tactile marking in <u>braille</u>.

- Place the yarn in plastic Ziploc bags or old coffee cans with plastic lids. Create a one-inch hole in the center of the lid and thread the yarn through it to prevent it from rolling away or getting tangled.

- Keep each knitting project (yarn, needles, and pattern) together in its own bag or container.

- When storing work for the day, place corks or rubber bands on the tips of the needles to ensure that stitches will not drop off accidentally. For added security, push your work to the back of the needles.

Additional Knitting Links and Resources

www.horizons-blind.org
They provides braille, large print, and audiocassette instruction in crafts; plants and gardening; recipes; knitting; crocheting; and sewing needles and craft supplies.

www.lionbrand.com
This site provides free instructions to help someone learn to knit or crochet, along with free knitting, crochet, and craft patterns.

www.outloudaudiobooks.com
This site records the best of knitting, yarn and fibre literature. provides free instructions, and free knitting, crochet, and craft patterns.

Yahoo Blind / Low Vision Users Knitting Group
www.groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/VIP-Ewes/info
The group offers instructions and resources from a group of blind knitters.

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