

Tiny Rabbit Decoration

This tiny rabbit decoration is small and fiddly, and not really what you sensibly make on a knitting machine but here goes...

I've given instructions on how to knit this rabbit on a Silver Reed standard gauge knitting machine plus ribber. All the knitting is manual so you don't need any kind of automatic patterning.

The rabbit is knit as a simple stocking stitch (stockinette) tube, with tube knitted ears at the top. The front legs and tail are knitted on as i-cord. The rest of the rabbit shaping is done in the finishing.

Gauge really doesn't matter here- a little big bigger, a little bit smaller, it's all fine (I'd like some feltable laceweight to make a truly tiny rabbit).

The knitted rabbit shaping in this pattern isn't very subtle so, although it's fine when you finish knitting it, I think the rabbit looks much neater and sweeter if well felted after knitting- it smooths over the cruder bits of shaping and gives the opportunity to mould the rabbit into a better shape. For this, you need to use a feltable yarn- 100% wool and not superwash treated (the yarn care instructions should say handwash only). I've made my rabbits in 3-ply and 4-ply (fingering) weights, which makes them come out very small and sweet.

I'm not a very fast worker. Having memorised the instructions, these takes me about 18 minutes on the knitting machine (including legs and tail), about 16 minutes sewing & stuffing, 6 minutes felting (there are some economies of scale here if you're making a few) and 4 minutes sewing on the face. So all, in all, the time in which you could make something much bigger and much more useful.



You will need:

- 12m (13 yards) of feltable 3-ply or 4-ply/fingering weight rabbit-coloured yarn (I use Jamieson & Smith's Heritage Naturals for the rabbits shown here, Jamieson's Spindrift also made good rabbits)
- About 1.3m (1.4 yards) of 3-ply or 4-ply of tail-coloured yarn (I used Jamieson & Smith's Heritage Naturals)
- Tiny amount of stuffing (I used about 1.1g or 0.04oz of carded lambswool)
- Tiny amount of embroidery thread for the nose (I used stranded embroidery cotton)
- 2 tiny black beads for eyes (optional, preferably between 1.0mm and 2.0mm diameter or about 1/16")
- A wool needle
- A fine needle to fit through your bead eyes (optional)

Knitting the rabbit

You start by knitting the body and head from the bottom up as a tube in circular knitting.

By your preferred method, establish circular knitting in waste yarn over 12 needles on the main bed and the corresponding 12 needles on the ribber. For a tiny item, I do this by hand casting on L6 to R6 on the main bed, knit a few rows back and forth on just the main bed, hang a couple of claw weights, then transfer every other needle (EON) to the ribber. I knit a couple of rows back and forth on both beds (retaining the every other needle

setup) then switch to circular knitting (on a Silver Reed, this means setting the cam lever on the main carriage to 'C' and switching to 'O' on the left set lever on the ribber carriage). Knit about 4 circular rows (because one circular rows gives two passes of the row counter [RC], this will be 8 rows on the row counter). I use T6 for both beds throughout and don't worry about any minor tension difference between the two beds for these tiny, felted rabbits.

Switch to the rabbit-coloured yarn, starting with the carriage on the right. Try to have a yarn tail of at least 25cm on this cast on as you'll use it for sewing up later. You want an open cast on (that you can later sew through and pull closed for the base of the rabbit), so you set the row counter to 0 and just start knitting with the rabbit-coloured yarn, without casting on.

Knit one circular row (2 on the row counter) with the existing every other needle setup, then bring all the needles (L6 to R6 on both beds) to working position ('B' on Silver Reed).

Knit a further 28 circular rows (29 circular rows in total, 58 total on the row counter), ending up with the carriage of the right.

Knitting the ears

You've knit the body and head of the rabbit and now you're going to knit on the ears, starting with the right ear.

Set your machine so that it doesn't knit needles in holding position (on Silver Reed, both Russel levels on both carriages set to 'I') and pull the left 6 needles on both beds out to hold (on Silver Reed, 'D' position); now only R1 to R6 are in working position on both beds. Knit 8 circular rows (16 rows on the row counter). As soon as the ear starts growing, you need to hand weight it (i.e. gently pull down on right edge)- awkward but possible- to make sure that the needles knit off.

You're going to make decreases on the ear now, to give it a rounded top. Transfer one ear edge stitch onto the next stitch in on both edges of the right ear and on both beds, moving the emptied needles into non-working position (this will mean than only R2 to R5 on both beds are now in working position). Knit one circular row (2 rows on the row counter).





Repeat the previous decreases so that only R3 and R4 are in working position on both beds. Knit one circular row (2 rows on the row counter). Transfer R3 on the ribber to R3 on the main bed and R4 on the ribber to R4 on the main bed. Cast off (bind off) R4 and R3 on the main bed and you've finished knitting the right ear. Break the yarn and then re-thread the carriage for knitting the left ear.

First of all, use a transfer tool to move all the ribber needles from holding position into working position ("B" for Silver Reed, if still in holding "D" position, these will also be knit on the pass that's just supposed to knit the main bed). This ear is much easier to knit as it's well weighted and you can pull the needles out to help them knit off; to this end, set both carriages to knit needles in holding position (on Silver Reed set all Russel levers to 'II'). Because of the weighting, this ear sometimes comes off the machine looking a little longer than the other but this will (literally) come out in the wash.

Knit 8 circular rows (16 rows on the row counter).

Transfer one ear edge stitch onto the next stitch in on both edges of the ear and on both beds, moving the empty needles into non-working position (this will mean than only L2 to L5 on both beds are now in working position). Knit one circular row (2 rows on the row counter).

Repeat the previous decreases so that only L3 and L4 on both beds are in working position. Knit one circular row (2 rows on the row counter). Transfer L3 on the ribber to L3 on the main bed and L4 on the ribber to L4 on the main bed. Cast off (bind off) R4 and R3 on the main bed and you've finished knitting the left ear. Break the yarn.



Knitting the front legs

Make a leg on each side of the rabbit's body about 15 circular rows up from the bottom (or wherever pleases you). These are knitted just on the main bed, as 4 stitch i-cord (for Silver Reed, set the cam lever on the main carriage to "C"), using stitches picked up from the rabbit's body (so no cast on is required). To give a well-shaped start to the i-cord, I try to pick up these stitches in a rough square shape; hang the left leg of a stitch on L1, the other leg of the same stitch on R1, drop down a row on the rabbits body, hang the left leg of the stitch on L2 and the other on R2. I don't use weights here but just pull the needles out to holding position each knitting pass (make sure the Russel levers are on 'II'). In rabbit-coloured yarn, knit 8 circular rows (16 rows on the row counter). Break the yarn, thread it into a wool needle and sew through the stitches on the needles, take off the machine and pull closed. Sew down through the leg, coming out by the leg's cast on yarn tail and granny or reef knot the two together. You'll be able to lose these ends easily in the body later, when it's stuffed.



Knitting the tail

Make the tail on the midline of the rabbit's back, about 8 circular rows up from the bottom. Holding the rabbit upside down, its back facing the machine, hang stitch legs on four needles, as described for making the i-cord front legs. Knit 4 circular rows (8 on the row counter) in tail-coloured yarn. Break the yarn, thread it into a wool needle and sew through the stitches on the needles, take off the machine and pull closed. Sew down through the tiny tail, coming out by the tail's cast on yarn end, pull tight to squish the tail into a more bobbly shape and granny or reef knot the two ends together. Sew the yarns ends inside the body to lose them.

Finishing

Sewing up & stuffing

Thread the yarn tails from the top of the ears onto a wool needle and lose them inside the ears.

Use the yarn tail from in between the ears to cinch in the base of the ears; for each ear sew between its inner and outer edges at its base a couple of times, pulling tight to cinch closed. Secure the thread and lose the yarn end inside an ear.

Using the cast on yarn tail you'll find there, sew through all the open cast on stitches at the bottom of the rabbit. Cut and pull away the waste yarn. You'll stuff the rabbit through this open bottom.

Push up enough stuffing to fill the rabbits head. To cinch in the neck, use one of the leg yarn tails to sew a line of stitches right around the body (in the row just above the legs, I try to pick up one leg from each stitch to be neat), finishing up where you started. Pull tight to cinch in the neck (carefully if you're using an easily breakable yarn like Shetland). Secure and lose the yarn end in the head.

Stuff the body. Close the bottom of the body by pulling tight the yarn tail going through the open stitches there. Secure and then use this yarn end to sew up a vertical line of stitches from the bottom of the rabbit to about halfway up it's body (stop just before the tail), going up the midline. Make sure that the stitches go right through from the front to the back of the body to create a groove that defines the two back legs. Secure and lose the end in the body.

Sew the three remaining front leg yarn ends to lose them in the body.

Felting

Hand felt the rabbit to a nice dense, mouldable fabric. Hand felting is easy- just roughly hand wash them in the hottest water you can bear, with a little laundry detergent or liquid hand soap, alternating with cold water- keep going until the fabric becomes dense- it takes me about 6 minutes of pummelling and hot and cold shocking. As a guide, my rabbits shrank from about 8.3cm high to about 6.8cm high, with little stitch structure visible at the end. Squidge out the water, shape and dry. You can be fairly brutal with the shaping, pulling or squashing the rabbit





until you're happy. You may have to peel the ears open a little if they have felted into a solid tube. You can use pins to skewer the rabbit's arms into your preferred position as they dry. Some yarns get hairy when felted; if yours has, you can give the rabbit a quick trim over with small, sharp scissors.

Making the face

Sew on 2 tiny bead eyes and embroider a 'X' nose using embroidery thread. You could replace the bead eyes with embroidered french knots. The placement of the facial features makes a surprisingly big difference here- removing the eyes a millimetre or two can turn the rabbit from sweet to sinister. Mine unintentionally come out looking cross and a little tragic. It can be helpful to experiment first by sticking in pins with coloured heads to stand in for the nose and eyes before you choose their final positions. Hiding the place where you make the little stitches to secure the embroidery thread can be tricky- in the armpit or under the tail can work here.



Sweet or sinister?

Experimenting with the position of eyes and nose using pins with coloured heads



Options

✂ Give the rabbit a jumper by switching to jumper-coloured yarn on RC12 and switching back to rabbit-coloured yarn at RC30 (you'll knit on the i-cord front legs in the top two jumper rows and sew to cinch the neck in the following rabbit-coloured row)

✂ Instead of knitting on a rabbit tail, you could make a little fork pompom for the tail (there are lots of YouTube's showing you how to do this- you just wrap yarn around the prongs of fork about 15 times, tie it off around the middle between the prongs and trim it down to size- about 9mm (3/8") diameter looks good- don't trim off the strand you tied the pompom off with, as you'll use this to sew it onto the rabbit). Sew the pompom to the rabbit's bottom, using one of the long strand ends, reef or granny knot this with the other long yarn strand and sew them both inside the rabbit to lose them. You can sew on the pompom before felting (to get a felted bobble) or after felting, to retain the fluffiness.

✂ A crocheted bobble also makes a great tail

✂ Give it a spring flower to hold. Crochet a magic loop, (slip stitch into the magic loop once, chain 3) 5 times, slip stitch into the first slip stitch, cut yarn and pull end through. Pull the magic loop closed and use the hook to pull the cast on yarn end through the centre of the flower to the other side. Granny or reef knot with the cast off (bind off) tail. When you sew it on to the rabbit, you can use a contrasting yarn and make a french knot in the centre of the flower. I used a 2.5mm hook and 4-ply yarn. Slip stitch and chain are the same in UK and US terminologies.



This isn't a suitable toy for a small child or baby. Even unembellished, the rabbit would not meet EN71 UK/European toy safety standards (it presents a choke risk as it couldn't pass the small parts or torque & tension tests and, unless your yarn is EN71-3 certified, there is a

possibility of toxic chemical ingestion when sucked). Soft toys are all considered to be attractive to small children and so must pass all the EN71 tests; it would not be legal to sell these rabbits in European/UK jurisdictions.



You are very welcome to this pattern for personal use but please remember that it is not suitable for little ones- please credit Woollen Wave

