

The tiniest beasts are often the fiddliest to knit but this little squirrel is surprisingly straightforward. You knit the squirrel in one piece, from tail tip to nose, and then wet felt it down to a neat miniature of itself. The legs and tail are knitted as simple short rows. The squirrel is knitted as a length of **i-cord**. To knit i-cord, when you have finished working a row, push all the stitches to the wrong end of the double pointed needle, so that the working yarn is attached to the stitch that is furthest from the working needle tip. Begin working the next row, knitting the first stitch a little more tightly than usual, to help pull the two edges of the knitting together into a tube. The strands that join the i-cord form a slightly open ladder, though which the squirrel is later stuffed. The ladder disappears during wet felting.

SIZE: 8.2 cm / 3.25 in long

TENSION: 25 sts and 34 rows over 10 cm / 4 in, in stocking stitch using 2.75mm needles, prior to felting. The tension is not critical for this project.

NEEDLES: 2.75mm double pointed needles (only 2 needed)

YARN: Jamieson's of Shetland Spindrift, jumper (4 ply/fingering) weight, 100% Shetland wool, 105 m / 115 yds per 25g ball, 9 m / 10 yds needed per squirrel, Shades Paprika (261) or Burnt Umber (1190) both make naturalistic red squirrels,

OR 4 ply / fingering yarn that knits to the specified gauge and is wet feltable, i.e. 100% wool and not superwash treated.

NOTIONS

- Tapestry needle
- Brooch pin
- Sewing needle for embroidery
- Black embroidery thread for sewing nose, 40 cm (e.g. 40cm of 2 strands of stranded embroidery cotton)
- Optional: 2 black beads for eyes, c. 2.2mm diameter (10/0 glass seed beads, but 9/0 and 11/0, at between 2.0 and 2.8mm diameter, work well). Tiny beads may need a fine beading needle to fit through their hole. You can replace the beads with embroidered French knots, in which case you will need a little more embroidery thread

ABBREVIATIONS

K: knit

P: purl

WS: wrong side

RS right side

st: stitch

K2tog: knit 2 together

Kfb: Knit twice into the same stitch- once through the front loop, once through the back loop

Kfbf: Knit three times into the same st- once through the front of the loop, once through the back loop of the same st and once more through the front loop.

PATTERN

Cast on 2 st and work all rounds as i-cord.

Round 1: Kfb x 2. 4 sts

Round 2: K4.

Round 3: K, kfb x 3. 7 sts

Round 4: K to end.

Round 5: K2, kfb x 3, k2. 10 sts

Rounds 6 – 14: K to end.

Round 15: K3, k2tog x 2, k3. 8 sts

Round 16: K2tog x 4. 4 sts

Round 17: K2tog x 2. 2 sts

Round 18: Kfbf x 2. 6 sts

Round 19: Kfb x 6. 12 sts

Round 20: [K1, kf&b] x 6. 18 sts

Round 21: K to end.

Round 22: K2, work back leg, k10, work back leg, k2. 18 sts

Rounds 23 - 24: K to end.

Round 25: [K2, k2tog] x 4, k2. 14 sts

Round 26: K2tog, [k1, k2tog] x 4. 9 sts

Round 27: K4, k2tog, k3. 8 sts

Round 28 - 29: K to end.

Round 30: K1, work front leg, k2, work front leg, k1

Round 31: K to end.

Round 32: K2tog x 4. 4 sts

Round 33: Kfbf x 4. 12 sts

Round 34: K4, work ear, k2, work ear, k4.

Round 35: K to end.

Round 36: K2, k2tog, k4, k2tog, k2. 10 sts

Round 37: K2, k2tog x 3, k2. 7 sts

Round 38: k1, k2tog x 3. 4 sts

The legs and ears are worked as simple short row loops, with no wrapping.

Back leg:

Short row 1 (RS): K2, turn. 2 sts

Short row 2 (WS): P2, turn.

Work **short rows 1-2** a further 3 times, ending with a WS row.

Short row 9 (RS): K2.

Front leg:

Short row 1 (RS): K2, turn. 2 sts

Short row 2 (WS): P2, turn.

Work **short rows 1-2** a further 2 times, ending with a WS row.

Short row 7 (RS): K2tog, turn. 1 st

Short row 8 (WS): P1, turn.

Short row 9 (RS): K1, turn.

Short row 10 (WS): P1, turn.

Short row 11 (RS): Kfb, turn. 2 sts

Short row 12 (WS): P2, turn.

Short row 13 (RS): K2, turn.

Short row 14 (WS): P2, turn.

Short row 15 (RS): K2.

Ear:

Short row 1 (RS): K1, turn. 1 st

Short row 2 (WS): P1, turn.

Work **short rows 1-2** a further 2 times, ending with a WS row.

Short row 7 (RS): K1.





FINISHING Break yarn leaving a 30cm / 12 in tail and use the yarn tail to sew through the four st on the needle, gently pull closed and secure. Using the same tail, sew down through the inside of the squirrel, bring the needle out at the base of the upper side of a front leg. Sew three stitches across the upper edges of the leg, and then repeat on the lower leg edge, closing the leg loop into a tube. Repeat for the other three legs, secure, and lose the yarn end inside the squirrel. Lose the cast on yarn tail inside the squirrel. Using the i-cord stitch ladder on the underside of the squirrel and something pointed, such as a pencil, stuff a 23cm / 9 in length of yarn into the head, a 15cm / 6 in length of yarn into the front end of body, a 30cm / 12 in length of yarn into the back end of the body and 25cm / 10 in length of yarn into the tail. Soak the squirrel in warm water for 15 minutes, then wet felt it by handwashing it very roughly, using a little hand soap or detergent, alternating very hot and very cold water, for about 6 minutes. Start the felting process relatively gently to prevent the yarn stuffing initially escaping (if it does, just push it back in). As you felt, roll the legs and ears between your fingers to help

them form tubes. The squirrel will shrink from about 10.0 cm / 4 in to 8.2 cm / 3.25 in.

Squeeze out as much water as you can, squashing the squirrel in a towel. Push and pull the squirrel into a good shape, rolling the legs and inserting a pin at the tips of the ears to pull them out. You can be quite rough but take care with the narrow connection between tail and body. Pin the squirrel into shape on a blocking mat or other soft surface. Pull the ears to points and pin down through them so that they dry erect. Leave to completely dry.

If your squirrel has become hairy through felting, trim over with scissors, except for the tail; brush the tail to make it fluffier.

Experiment with pins to find and then mark the best positions for the eyes and nose.

For eyes, either sew on beads or embroider French knots.

For the nose, threading 2 strands of black embroidery cotton, sew a 3 mm vertical stitch. Then sew a horizontal stitch 4 mm wide, centred 1.5mm above the top of the vertical stitch and passing through it, to form V shaped nostrils. Similarly, sew a horizontal stitch 4 mm wide, centred 2 mm below the bottom of the vertical stitch and passing through it, to create an upside-down V shaped mouth.

Optionally, sew a brooch pin onto the underside of the squirrel's body.



WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO WITH YOUR SQUIRREL?

The red squirrels make good **hanging decorations** glued onto pine cones or baubles (make sure a cone has first fully opened by leaving it somewhere warm and dry for a couple of weeks).

If you want to make a **sitting squirrel**, repeat round 6 two extra times to lengthen the tail and work four extra short rows to extend each back leg, then pin to dry in a sitting position. Once dry, a few discrete stitches between the paws and underside, and between the tail and the back, help to hold the position secure. You can give it a little metal acorn or cone charm to hold, or a tiny real acorn.



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