

SNAKE BABY RATTLE TOY

By Leyla Alieva

This toy uses stitches with different textures to stimulate the development of a baby's tactile sense, which is very important in the early months. It exploits the self-stripping pattern of the yarn as a cue to change stitch patterns.

The project is a sampler of some classic and very basic stitch patterns: stockinet, garter, seed, 1x1 rib, but it also uses more complex techniques – bobbles and loops/fur stitch.

This pattern is not written in the style where each little step and stitch is written out and explained. It leaves room for experiment and imagination. Please read carefully through the whole pattern before starting the project.

This pattern is not meant to serve beginner knitters. However, if you are a beginner that likes challenges and happily plunges into unknown waters, I'd be glad to help.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at silkandwool.eu (at) gmail.com.

2013 is the year of snake according to Chinese zodiac, so this toy could be a great symbolic gift for babies born in that year. People born under the sign of snake are said to be wise, intuitive, strong-willed. They are not outwardly emotional. Although not great communicators, Snakes are able to plan and scheme well ahead to make things turn out as they want.



MATERIALS

- KnitPicks Felici – 199m/50g (218yds/1.76oz); 75% merino and 25% nylon. You can use other self-stripping yarn, or make stripes yourself, using several balls of yarn in different colours. I'd recommend sport weight sock yarn that's machine washable. Machine washable yarn is great so that the toy is easily washed. Nylon makes it more durable. Using sport weight yarn and a small-sized needles will create fabric that will not let any of the stuffing out. You'll need 15-20 grams / 65-87 yds. I made 1 women's sock and 1 snake from 1 skein of yarn. My snake has 21 stripes created by the yarn.
- 2mm / US 0 needles, or size that will give you a dense fabric. Use any kind of needles that allows you to knit in round with a very small circumference – dpn's, 1 circular (for magic loop) or 2 circulars
- Machine washable stuffing. I used stuffing for pillows.
- Darning needle
- Dark scrap yarn to embroider the eyes.
- Some rustling plastic from a plastic bag – optional (to stuff part of the snake for a different feel)
- Stitch marker – optional to mark the beginning of the round.
- A small bell – optional, to make the toy a rattle, put it in with the stuffing.

SIZES

One size.

Approximate finished measurements: circumference - 12 cm / 4.7 in, length - 30 cm / 11.8 in.

STITCHES AND TECHNIQUES USED

- Cast on
- Knitting in round (on dpn's, two circulars or magic loop – any method suitable for very small diameters)
- Knit and purl
- Increase – knit front and back, make 1
- Decrease – knit two together
- Bobbles
- Loop or fur stitch

GAUGE

30 sts = 10 cm / 4 in. Exact gauge is not vital for this project. If your swatch has more stitches per cm/in your snake will be thinner, if less – it will be thicker.

Row gauge – 8 rounds in stockinet or seed stitch gives 1 stripe of colour (2cm/0.8in wide). Not essential either.

ABBREVIATIONS

K – knit

P – purl

Sts – stitches

(...) – repeat instructions in brackets until the end of the round

Kfb – knit in the front and in the back leg of a stitch

M1 – make 1, lift the bar between the stitches, put on the left needle and knit through the back leg.

Bobble – k1, yo, k1, yo, k1 - all in one stitch, turn, p5, turn. [k2tog]x 2 times, k1, pass the first two stitches over the last.

L – loop stitch. I used double loop: knit into the next stitch, but do not slide the stitch off the left needle. Pass the working yarn to the front between the needles, make a loop around your right hand thumb, pass the yarn back between the needles, then again to the front, this time over the left hand needle, make a second loop around the thumb and pass the yarn to the back between the needles. Knit the stitch together with yarn that was passed over the right needle. Pass the first stitch you knitted over this one as you would in bind off.

INSTRUCTIONS

I knitted with self-stripping yarn, using stripes as an indication of when to change the stitch pattern. If you have different yarn that has different length of stripes, or your gauge is different, your stripes will have different width, so you may want to change stitch pattern after a different number of stripes than stated in instructions.

Use any method to knit in the round that you prefer.

Cast on 4 stitches, join in the round. Optionally, place marker to mark the beginning of the round.

Tail/increase/stockinet stitch section.

Round1: kfb in each stitch = 8 sts

Rounds 2 and 3: k all sts

Round 4: (k1, m1, k1) = 12 sts

Rounds 5 and 6: k all sts

Round 7: (k3, m1) = 16 sts

Rounds 8 -10: k all sts

Round 11: (k4, m1) = 20 sts

Rounds 12-15: k all sts

Round 16: (k5, m1) = 24 sts

Rounds 17-20: k all sts

Round 21: (k6, m1) = 28 sts

Rounds 22-25: k all sts

Round 26: (k7, m1)= 32 sts

Then knit all rounds until the end of current colour, end the round you are on. At this stage I have 3 stripes and 6.5 cm (2.5in) long tail.

Garter stitch section.

Round 1: k all sts

Round 2: p all stitches

Repeat these two rounds until there are 4 stripes / section is 6.5 cm (2.5 in) long / you're happy with the result.

Bobbles section

Rounds 1 and 2: k all sts

Round 3: (k3, bobble, k4)

Rounds 4 and 5: k all sts

Round 6: (k7, bobble)

Repeat rounds 1-6 two more times for a total of 18 rounds (or to your liking). Knit all rounds until the end of a current colour. For me it was two more rounds, for a total of 4 stripes, or 5 cm (2 in).

I recommend stuffing the tail and garter stitch sections when you're done with bobbles. I stuffed mine not very tightly, just enough to hold the shape, so that it's soft and squishy. I used some rusty plastic from a bag to stuff the garter stitch section to add an additional stimulus.

Seed stitch section

Round 1: (k1, p1)

Round 2: (p1, k1)

Repeat these two rounds until there are 4 stripes / section is 6.5 cm (2.5 in) long / you're happy with the result.

Neck / rib section

Round 1: (k1, p1)

Repeat this round until there are 4 stripes / section is 6.5 cm (2.5 in) long / you're happy with the result.

Stuff the rest of the body after finishing the neck.

Head / loop stitch / decrease section

Rounds 1 and 2: k all sts

Round 3: k6, l4, k until the end of the round.

Round 4: k all sts

Round 5: k5, l6, k until the end of the round.

Round 6: k all sts

Round 7: k4, l8, k until the end of the round.

Round 8: k all sts

Round 9: k5, l6, k until the end of the round.

Round 10: k all sts

Round 11: k6, l4, k until the end of the round.

Rounds 12-15: k all sts

When you're done with round 15, take a look at your loop stitch area from the inside – mine was very loose, and I didn't want the stuffing to get through here. So I took a piece of yarn from the other end of the ball and enforced the area from the inside



Stuff the neck, too, at this stage. Use less stuffing, so that the ribbing can pull in and the neck is thinner than the body.



Round 16: (k3, k2tog, k3) = 28 sts

Round 17: k all sts

Round 18: (k2tog, k5) = 24 sts

Round 19: k all sts

Round 20: (k2, k2tog) = 18 sts

Round 21: k all sts



After round 21 stuff the head. Stuff it much tighter than the body, so it's round in shape. While stuffing, I used a piece of yarn of the same colour as the second stripe of the neck to thread around the neck at the join with the head and pulled tightly, so that the stuffing from the head didn't go through to the neck section. When I was done stuffing the head, I let it a bit loose, but kept the yarn in place and hid the ends inside the body using the darning needle to enforce the border between the neck and the head.



Break the yarn, leaving at least 10 cm / 4 in tail. Using darning needle, thread the tail through the live stitches, take them off the needles. Pull the tail to close the opening. Weave in the ends.

To finish off the snake, first embroider the eyes – I made just two narrow lines, but you could also do French knots. Where you put the yarn through the last stitches and pulled serves as a mouth.

Secondly, you need to give the body a twist, so that the toy looks like a snake. Bearing in mind the orientation of the head choose a place where you would like body to take a turn, thread some yarn through as shown in Picture using tapestry needle, leaving tails about 10 cm/ 4in long. Then pull the yarn. The wider is the space between top and bottom stitches, the sharper the turn.



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