

Knitting: Cheaper than Therapy.
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If you ask the wrong person, it's still called a "dying art." But for someone in the know, it's the latest fad, a national craze, even a cultural phenomenon. For me, knitting is more personal than phenomenal. Yes, it's the new yoga, a portable stress reliever, and a Zen thing. If you've never tried it, you definitely should. Because knitting is easy to learn, and will change your life. A friend of mine is sleeping better because she knits before bed. Another knits scarves and gives them away freely when they are simply admired by others she meets. My sister in law gets lost in it – not an easy feat with two boys each under the age of 4. For so many knitters, knitting is a relief cheaper than therapy.

I taught myself to knit in college, more years ago than I care to remember. It was my junior year and I was studying in England. I coveted an Aran sweater more than anything. Incredibly lucky just to be abroad in the first place, such a sweater was beyond my means. I would have had to trade my ticket home for one. Then I found myself outside a wool shop, and without realizing that cabled sweaters are not ideal first projects, I was suddenly the proud owner of needles, pattern, and blue wool yarn. It was frustrating ripping out my initial attempts, but I wore the completed sweater home on the plane ride I hadn't turned in for someone else's knitting.

Therein lies the secret to knitting. If you don't know that you shouldn't, there's nothing to stop you from accomplishing it. Once you accomplish it, what's next is even more exciting. Yes, you can start with cabled sweaters, or eyelash yarn, or even socks. Knitting heartily rewards those who say, "I can." You may find inspiration in the hottest Internet pattern, and knit-along with hundreds of other knitters through an online mailing list. You could start with a simple scarf or handbag or throw. There is balance between the Zen-ness of the craft and the challenge of it. Start off with an idea of what you'd like to do, find your pattern, yarn and needles. Not necessarily in that order.

I should warn you, however, that knitting is addictive. It's more than the yarn stash, more than the accessories and finished items. Knitting allows a person to be social and selfish at the same time. I dare you to try reading a book while at a family gathering. The accusations of rudeness will fly rampant. But take out your knitting and suddenly you're the in-thing, the Artisan. Non-knitters view it as work, while knitters know it as a gift to themselves. Next time you see a PDK, or public display of knitting, ask what's being created. Knitters in the zone are very likely to share, especially with a potential convert.

You'll learn that there is a language to knitting, but everyone who knits speaks the same one. In the midst of the knitting boom, there is a wide gap between the beginners and those of us who have been knitting for years. According to the Craft Yarn Council of America, 36% of American women, or 53 million, know how to knit or crochet – a 51% increase over the past ten years. The majority of the increase has been in the last couple of years, possibly a reaction to an unsettled world. I've heard veteran knitters both amazed that knitting is enjoying its first revival since people had to knit their own clothing, and smugly admitting they knew it all along. Only what took the rest of you so long to figure it out?

There couldn't be a better time to take up the needles for the first time, or get reacquainted if you've been away. I will share stitches, patterns, accessories, and yarn stash management – and my philosophy of knitting. But knitting isn't for everyone. It's been said that one needs to be creative in order to knit well. I think if your only claim to creativity was that you owned crayons as a child, you can knit. Come to me, I'll teach you. I'll be right with you, just let me finish this row.

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