

# Penny Pocket

If you or your child has never knit before, start with the penny pocket, a tiny lunch money purse that will give you a handle on the mechanics of basic knitting. Completing the penny pocket is only as important as you or your child want it to be. You can quit whenever you want to and move on to the mittens.

## MATERIALS...

- About 14 yards of bulky yarn, wound into a ball
- Two U.S. size 8 knitting needles
- A yarn needle



## CASTING ON...

The first step in knitting is to cast on, or put the first row of yarn loops on your needles. Kids often find this the hardest part of learning to knit. This method, though not the prettiest, is the easiest for beginners. Basically, you tie on a series of half-hitch knots. Leaving a 5-inch tail, lay the end of the yarn across your right palm. Wrap it around your thumb and over the needle and pull to tighten. You have now cast on 1 stitch. Keep hold of the needle and tail end with your left hand. Wrap the yarn around your thumb again and pick up the loop with the needle. Cast on 5 more stitches, for a total of 7.

## KNITTING...

Hold your left needle (the one with the cast-on stitches) under your left palm. Rest the right needle in the hollow between your thumb and index finger. Control the tension of your yarn by pinching it in the crooks of your right little and ring fingers. Or, wrap it once around your little or ring finger. Use your right index finger to guide the yarn around the needle when knitting. To help remember the steps of each stitch, try this poem that mothers have used for generations to teach children how to knit. My grandmother used it when she was little, too.

- In through the front door,* (push the point of the right-hand needle through the front of the stitch from the left side.)
- Once around the back,* (wrap the yarn around the tip of the right-hand needle once and hold it, not too tight, then)
- Peek through the window,* (Slide the point of the needle back the way it came until it can peek through the hole with the new stitch still wrapped around it.)
- And off jumps Jack.* (Push the right-hand needle through the new stitch so it won't slip off. Slide the right-hand needle to the right so that the old stitch hops off the left-hand needle. One stitch is done.)

Knit the remaining 6 stitches to complete your first row. Turn the work around and knit into the stitches you just made. Continue knitting back and forth from one needle to the other, turning the work at the end of each row. The result will be a bumpy pattern, called garter stitch. Knit 27 rows total.

### **BINDING OFF...**

Now that your penny pocket is the right length, you have to bind off to give it a finished edge. Loosely knit the first 2 stitches of row 27. With your left needle, lift the first stitch over the second stitch and off the end of the needle. You will now have 1 stitch on the right needle and 4 on the left. Loosely knit another stitch, then lift the second stitch over the third, and so on until there is only 1 stitch left. Leaving a 12-inch tail, break the yarn and pull the tail through the last stitch to lock it.

### **FINISHING THE POCKET...**

Fold the strip of knitting in half, then use the tail end and a yarn needle to sew down one side of the penny pocket; break the yarn and sew up the other side. Work all the tails in and out of the back of the penny pocket for about 6 stitches, then cut them off. Braid a cord of yarn long enough to slide over your head, then tie the ends to the top corners of the pocket. When you and your child have completed the pocket, you have cast on, knit 187 stitches, and bound off. You can knit. Move on to something exciting; mittens on four needles.