



Techniques

BEGINNERS GUIDE (LEFT-HANDED)

WWW.53STITCHES.COM

Getting started

- 2 Reading patterns
- 3 Using a stitch marker
- 4 The "right" vs "wrong" side of amigurumi

Detailing techniques

- 16 Pick-up stitches
- 17 Colour change
- 18 Stuffing your pieces
- 19 Attaching limbs
- 20 Finishing off and closing pieces

Stitches

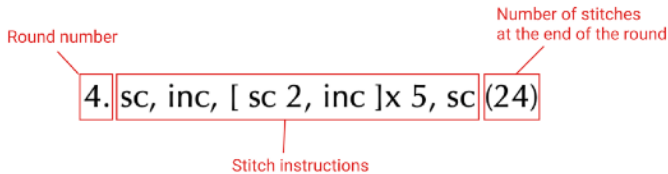
- 5 Slip knot
- 6 Chain (ch)
- 7 Magic ring / circle (MR)
- 9 Single crochet (sc)
- 9 Increase (inc)
- 10 Invisible decrease (dec)
- 11 Slip stitch (sl st)
- 12 Front loop only (FLO sc)
- 12 Back loop only (BLO sc)
- 13 Half-double crochet (hdc)
- 14 Double crochet (dc)
- 15 Popcorn stitch (e.g. 4sc popcorn)

You can also access all of these guides on the website <https://53stitches.com/> at any time. This left handed guide is made up of flipped images as I am right handed, so there may be some nuances to left handed techniques I'm not aware of, in which case I apologise for any confusion.

And if you're looking for an alternative view or description for these techniques - I learnt from a variety of places, but mostly from PlanetJune (<https://www.planetjune.com/blog/tutorials/crochet-tutorials/>). She has some fantastic videos and covers more techniques than I use, as well as demonstrations for both left and right handed crocheters!

Reading patterns

Each pattern is made up of a number of **rows** (sometimes called rounds); and each row contains a number of **stitches**. A single instruction line will follow the same format:



ROW NUMBER. stitches in the row (number of stitches when row is completed). The stitches in the row will be an abbreviated stitch descriptor, followed by the number of those stitches to complete. Take a look at the abbreviations and examples below to get a clearer idea.

ch = chain

st = stitch / stitches

sl st = slip stitch

sc = single crochet

MR 6 = magic ring with 6 single crochets worked into it

inc = increase, or sc 2 in the same stitch

dec = invisible decrease

hdc = half double crochet

dc = double crochet

4sc popcorn = popcorn stitch with 4sc worked into it

BLO = back loop only

FLO = front loop only

[sc, inc] x 2 = repeat what's in the square brackets two times => sc, inc, sc, inc

For each of these stitches, there's a more detailed photo tutorial within this booklet.

e.g. Example Pattern

I find everything a lot easier to understand with examples. So I've written a quick pattern out below, with a much more detailed description of what's going on in each row.

1. MR 6 (6) – 1st row. magic ring with 6 single crochets worked into it. Should have 6 stitches in the row at the end
2. inc 6 (12) – 2nd row. increase 6 times – i.e. 2sc in each of the 6 stitches from the previous row. Should have 12 stitches in the row at the end
3. [sc, inc] x 6 (18) – 3rd row. sc, inc – repeat this pattern 6 times. i.e. sc, inc, sc, inc, sc, inc, sc, inc, sc, inc, sc, inc. Should have 18 stitches in the row at the end.
- 4-6. sc 18 (18) – 4th, 5th and 6th rows. sc in each of the 18 stitches. There will be 18 at the end of each row, since we're not increasing at all.

Using a stitch marker

When you're first starting it out it can be difficult to keep track of your stitch count and where a row starts and ends. A stitch marker helps make sure the round is ending where you expect it to - it should end where you've marked.

I use bobby pins as stitch markers, they're easy to place, don't pull the yarn, aren't sharp and stay in place. Some people use safety pins, and you can also buy some really cute purpose built stitch markers.



You place your marker at the start of a row, before starting the first stitch. Pull open the loop on your hook and pop your marker on it.



Then pull it tight and complete your first stitch. You can see the marker stays in place but can easily be removed if needed.



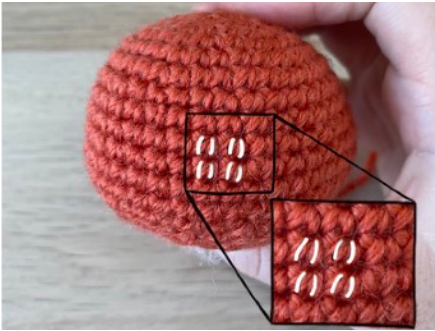
You'll have completed the round when your next stitch is the one with the marker in it. At this point, remove the marker and add it to your open loop to mark the start of the next round.

The “right” vs “wrong” side of amigurumi

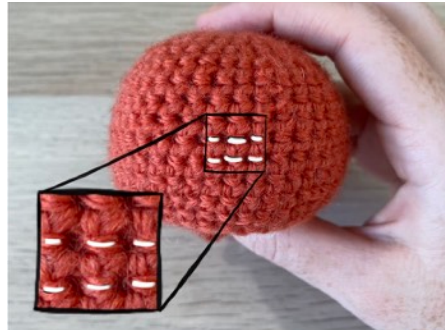
There are two sides to each amigurumi piece that have slightly different patterns - one is generally considered the “right” or “outside”; and the other is the “wrong” or “inside”.

There are two pieces below demonstrating each, with a highlight of the difference in pattern. Which side you prefer is completely up to you, despite its name, neither side is “wrong”. It simply comes down to a visual preference.

If you want your pieces to have the “right” side on the outside of the doll, usually at some point you will have to flip your work inside out, as it will tend to curve in the opposite direction. For very small pieces (such as arms), I usually do this after round 2. For larger pieces, I make sure I’ve done it before any decreases start.



“Right” side - you can see little upside down “v” or on my work they always look like little brackets - ()



“Wrong” side - you can see a straight line marking every stitch which you won’t see on the other side

Slip knot



Loop your yarn like this, so the tail end is behind the working yarn.



Pinch the section where they cross over.



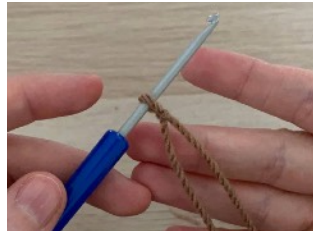
Reach through the circle (front through to back) to pull the working yarn through the hole.



Pull the tail end so that the loose knot tightens.



There you go!



Put it onto your hook and pull the working yarn (the piece attached to the ball) to tighten!

Chain (ch)



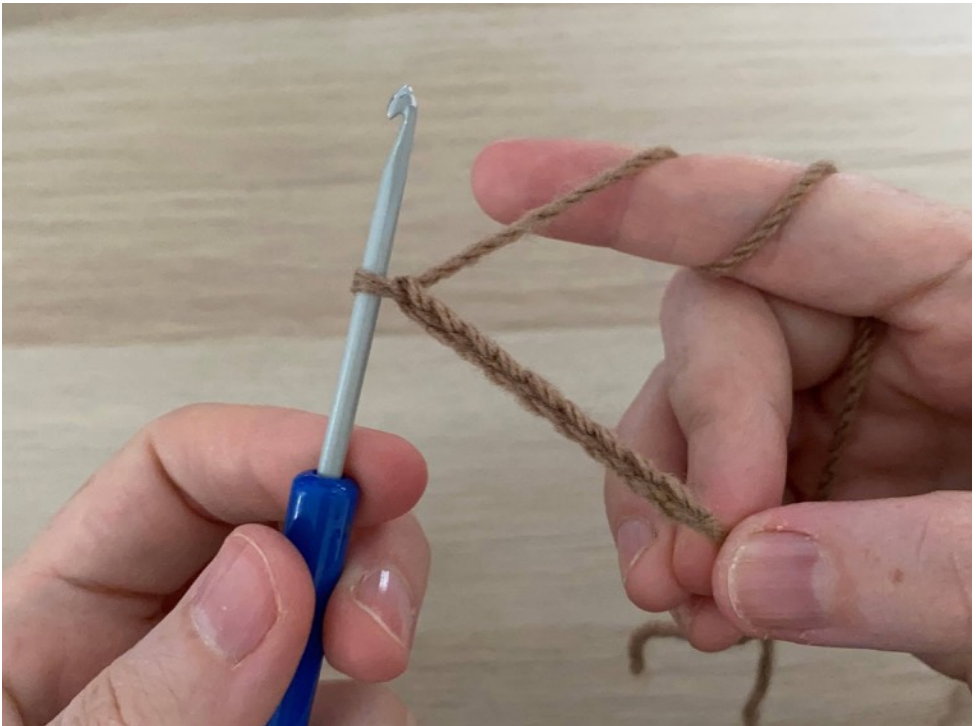
Make a slip knot and put it on your hook.



Yarn over (wrap the yarn around the hook from back to front).



Pull the yarn through the loop on the hook. Done!



Build up a number of these and you can see why it's called a chain. Each "v" shape is one stitch.

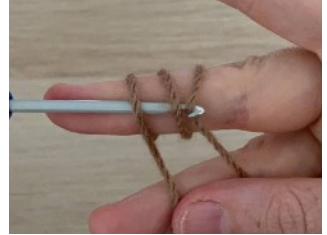
Magic ring / circle (MR)



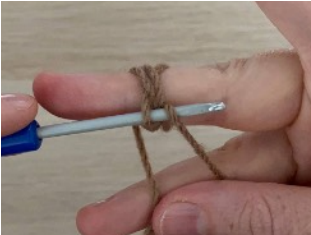
Wrap the yarn twice around your finger.



Insert your hook under the first two loops.



Grab the working yarn (attached to the ball) and pull this through both loops.



Carefully yarn over, making sure not to unravel anything.

Pull through the loop on the hook (ie. chain 1).



You can now take the loops off your finger.



Insert your hook into the two loops you pulled off your finger, yarn over and pull through. Then, yarn over again, and pull through the two small loops on your hook.



You've just completed the first sc in the circle. Do this as many times as stated for the magic circle/ring. Most of them start with 6 sc.



Gently pull at both of the pieces of yarn to see which one is loose.



Pull the loose one tightly shut until you have a small hole.

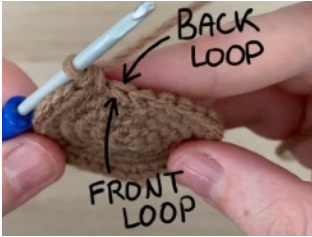


To close the remaining hole, pull the tail end of the yarn.



There you have it! The magic ring. It's quite difficult to describe without seeing it action. I've made a video tutorial of this technique here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZU4EVHGqjk> so you can see the steps in movement.

Single crochet (sc)



Each stitch makes a "v" shape, and consists of a front loop and back loop.



Insert your hook under both of these loops.



Yarn over and draw yarn through both loops.



You should now have two loops on your hook.



Yarn over again, and draw the yarn through both loops on the hook.



That's a single crochet!

Increase (inc)

An increase is one of the building blocks of amigurumi – luckily, once you've mastered the single crochet it's very simple. You may also see an increase referred to as a 2sc in other patterns – that's because an increase is simply 2 single crochets completed in the same stitch.



Start by doing a single crochet in the next stitch.



Normally, after that you would go to the next stitch. Instead, go back into the stitch you just completed, and do another single crochet. And done!

Invisible decrease (dec)



We'll be joining two stitches. Insert your hook into the front loop only of the next stitch.



Then, keeping both loops on the hook, insert your hook into the front loop of the second stitch.



There will be three (probably tight) loops on the hook. Yarn over and draw through the first two loops.



You will still have two loops on your hook. Yarn over again, and draw through the remaining loops.



Done! Going through the front loop instead of both loops gives a neater, more "invisible" decrease.

Slip stitch (sl st)

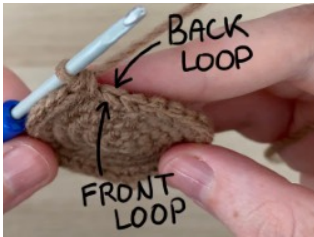


Start as you would a single crochet. Insert your hook into the stitch, yarn over and draw through. You now have two loops on your hook.



Now, instead of continuing a single crochet, draw the second loop (on the right towards the crochet hook tip) through the first loop (on the left, towards the crochet hook handle). Done!

Front loop only (FLO sc)

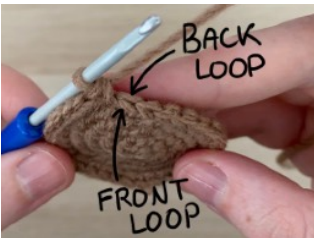


A front loop only stitch is the same as a single crochet, except that, as the name suggests, instead of inserting your hook through both loops of the 'v' shaped stitch, we only go through the front loop, the one facing towards you.

Insert your hook into the front loop, yarn over, and pull through both loops on the hook as you would for a normal single crochet.

Crocheting a round in the front loop only helps to shape some of the items I make. It makes a good hat brim for example.

Back loop only (BLO sc)



Same as the front loop only stitch, except we are crocheting into the back loop this time - the one furthest away from you.

Insert your hook into the back loop, yarn over, and draw through both loops on the hook as you would for a normal single crochet.

Crocheting in the back loop only gives a seam and is useful for making flat bases, such as those at the top of a top hat, or the base of a foot.

Half-double crochet (hdc)



Before inserting your hook into the next stitch, yarn over.



Now insert your hook into the next stitch.



Yarn over and pull through.



You should have 3 loops on your hook.



Yarn over and pull through all three.



Done!

Double crochet (dc)



Before inserting your hook into the next stitch, yarn over.



Now insert your hook into the next stitch.



Yarn over again and pull through.



You should have 3 loops on your hook.



Yarn over and pull through two of the loops



There should be 2 loops left on the hook.



Yarn over and draw through the remaining loops.



Done!

You won't see many double crochets in amigurumi, every now and then I'll use them to try and make a taller stitch, but it's usually on a flat piece. It's a good crochet stitch to know anyway, since you'll often see it in other crochet projects – such as a beanie's, blankets, etc.

Popcorn stitch (e.g. 4sc popcorn)



I like to use a stitch marker so that I can easily keep track of which was the first stitch.



For a 4sc popcorn stitch, do 4 single crochets in the same stitch.



Then remove your hook, draw out the loop so you don't lose it.



Insert your hook into the first sc that was made in the first step (marked by the bobby pin), and then put the loop from the last sc back onto the hook and tighten.



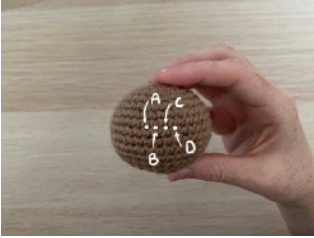
Yarn over and pull through the loop on the hook and through the first stitch.



I use the popcorn stitch to make thumbs for hands as it pops out.

For the next stitch in the round, it can be a bit tricky to manoeuvre around, I usually try to go "behind" the popcorn, just to help it pop a bit more. Hopefully that helps and isn't more confusing.

Pick-up stitches



Picking up stitches can be used for a number of things, I use it mainly to add limbs without having to create separate pieces and attach them later.



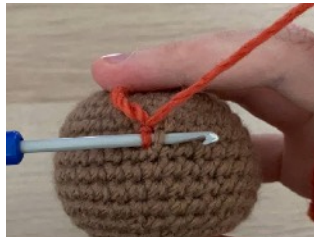
Insert your hook into one of the stitches (A), and poke it back out of the stitch directly next to it (B) (or up, down, depending on what you're creating).



I'm demonstrating this in a different colour. Make a slip knot and put this on your hook. Then draw the slip knot back through both of the stitches (A and B).



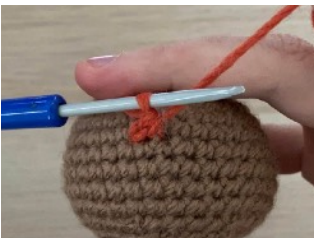
There is now a loop on your hook coming out of stitch (A).



Insert your hook back into stitch (B) and poke it out of the stitch next to it (C). Yarn over as before and pull through both stitches (B and C).



Now you have two loops on your hook. Yarn over and draw through both loops as you would for a single crochet.



Repeat this method. Insert into (C), come out of (D/ red), yarn over, pull through both (C and D), yarn over, pull through both loops on hook.



You can see here the single crochets that have been formed. You can change the direction of the row by inserting down into the row below for example and continuing.



Once you have a complete circle or row you can continue to crochet as normal.

Colour change



Start doing a single crochet in the first colour. Insert, yarn over, pull through. When you have two loops on your hook, stop before the last yarn over you'd usually do to finish the stitch.



Yarn over using the second colour of yarn (what we're swapping to).



Then pull the new colour yarn through both loops on the hook to finish the stitch.



Tie the two ends of the different colour together on the inside with a knot. It gives a tighter stitch and will be a neater colour change.



Continue as normal in the new colour!

TIP: For colours in vertical rows it's extra important to tie the ends to get that tight finish. e.g. stripes like this: |||

But for colours in horizontal rows, making the first stitch in the new colour a slip stitch will help smooth out that colour change. e.g. stripes like =

Stuffing your pieces

There's not too much to stuffing you're pieces - you're just trying to find the sweet spot between:



Too empty - the piece doesn't hold it's shape as well as it could



Just right!



Too full - you can see the stuffing between the pieces

When you're still figuring out that balance it can help to break the stuffing into little pieces at a time and remove / add them as needed. I also like to roll the piece around in my hands to try and mould it into the shape I want it to take.



TIP: If you've got leftover yarn or fabric that you can't use in other projects, they're also great recycled as stuffing. And if you have old pillows that have degraded - you can cut them open and give them new life as an amigurumi!

Attaching limbs



First, pin the new limb in place where you'd like it to go. Usually the piece you're attaching to the main piece has a tail so that you can thread that onto a yarn needle and use it to attach to the main piece.



Basically what you're trying to do is insert your needle under the stitches as close to the edge of where you're attaching as you can.



When you pull it tight, you can see that you can't really see where the thread went in.



Then bring your needle back under the next stitch in the piece you're attaching to the main piece.



And pull tight, the stitches are pretty invisible!



Then go back into the same stitch you just came out of, and repeat the process!



Then bring your needle back under the next stitch in the piece you're attaching it to.



Do this in every stitch for a nice neat finish.



Finishing off and closing pieces

To “finish off” most pieces, you simply do a slip stitch either in the last stitch of the round, or after it. This will lessen the gap between the end of the row, and help tidy it.



For open pieces where the opening needs to be closed there are a few more steps.

This is usually what your work looks like when you’ve finished a piece and just need to close it. First, you want to thread the tail yarn onto a needle.

Bring your need under the next stitch from the outside towards the inside and pull.



Keep doing this in every stitch, this helps tidy the look of them. We’re basically recreating the look of the magic ring from the start of the work.

One that’s done, the whole already blends in a lot more and looks smaller.

And lastly, I just bring the yarn over from one side to the other and pull tight to close the last of the circle.



Now it’s fully closed and fairly hidden.

Then just thread the end of the yarn through the middle, and then I bring it out somewhere else, cut if, and poke the stray end back into the piece.

Done!