



Making it Special: Personalising your Gifts

At times we've all struggled to find the "perfect" gift for a loved one; something that will be memorable and special to them. Hand-knitting or crocheting a gift is a great way to show someone how much you care. Your finished project reveals the time and effort you've put in to create something just for them with your own hands; and each and every hand-worked item is unique, displaying its own character and style.

The simplest means of personalising a gift is to select colours, textures and yarns you know they'll love. This is an easy way for even the newest of knitters to show someone you've put thought into your gift to create something special just for them. More experienced knitters could choose to work stripes into their piece using a palette of favourite shades, or could use fairisle knitting (using two colours in one row) to incorporate a much loved pattern such as diamonds or spots into their work (which are a great favourite of mine!).

Those looking to take this personalisation one step further could even work the recipient's name into the finished work, or an image important to them into the finished piece. Intarsia (a technique of multi-colour knitting most commonly used for pictures, single motifs or geometric patterns) can be used to form complicated and intricate designs such as flowers, footballs, firetrucks or even ballerinas! It's best to wind small quantities of the shades required onto bobbins before starting work, to avoid tangling of the yarn - with experience you'll start to get a feel for how much of each colour will be needed, but as a guide you'll need 3 times the width of the finished stitches to create the stitches. Intarsia patterns are worked from charts, which are an art-form in themselves: with experience, you could begin to create your own charts and incorporate your own unique pictures into your knitting. The sky's the limit!

If you're not quite ready to take the intarsia plunge, embroidered details (best worked over a finished piece of stocking stitch) can look just as good. You can use embroidery thread, tapestry wools or even knitting yarn in a ply just as thick or slightly thicker than the yarn used (to prevent the design from sinking into the background). By using a technique called Duplicate



With intarsia, finding the perfect gift for the budding ballerina in your life is easy!

Stitch or Swiss Darning (you'll find numerous tutorials for this in a Google search), you can make the stitches look as though they've been knitted into the fabric, fooling viewers into believing you knitted a complicated intarsia design without the hours of struggle!

Another simple yet effective alternative is to add beads, bows, ready-made or handmade felt patches, novelty buttons or other bits and bobs available from craft stores to your finished piece, to create your personalised theme. With a little know-how and loads of imagination, your next gift will be treasured long after the birthdays, Christmases or special days have passed... and will be a lot of fun to make too!

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This adorable little felt owl adds a personal touch to an otherwise unadorned piece of knitting - without the added difficulty of creating complicated intarsia designs.