

# Wren ★ Feathers

Let's knit with a crochet hook – part 1



Sweater pictured on American Girl Blaire.

It can also be made to fit slim-bodied 18" dolls such as Götz Happy Kidz if you don't increase for the body at the underarm.

Oh, yes, I can already make stitches that look knitted with my crochet hook...

No, I don't mean waistcoat stitch, or Tunisian knit stitch I mean **real, true, stretchable, knit stitches that are purled on the back.**

Sometimes I've thought, "I would rather crochet than just about anything else" but when it comes to colorwork, there's always the fact that it can look blurry in comparison to the crisp motifs knitters are able to achieve. Tunisian crochet, which I also love, has better-defined stitches in colorwork, but has the major limitation of return passes. That means your Tunisian knit stitch motifs end up elongated vertically if you just try to use a motif from a regular knitting chart. When I learned about V-stitch (AKA waistcoat stitch) in crochet, I thought, "Yay! Perfect!" But when I actually tried to "knit" an entire doll sweater with it, I gave up. It was hard on my hands to force the hook into the right spot on the V, even experimenting with different hook/yarn sizes, and it seemed to lack stretch even more than plain old sc.

### **Enter Knooking.**

So, there's this thing called "knooking" that seems to have been a popular a little over 10 years ago. As far as I can tell, Leisure Arts sold a set of hooks and instruction books starting around 2011. The hooks were bamboo inline (AKA Bates-style) needles with holes in the end, through which a cord could be inserted.

I started learning it with garter stitch over the summer and was astonished! True knit stitches that were FASTER than knitting or crocheting? Amazing! But then came learning to purl. Just like with knitting, the yarn had to be held in front of the work, and it was challenging to tension it evenly. Worse, purling requires a twist of the loop on a cord to insert the needle backwards and my subsequent loops got pulled tighter as I went. Even though people all over youtube had different ways of doing it, the purl rows still seemed tricky and slow compared to crochet. Yes, it's possible to do it without the tricky twist, but just like some forms of loom knitting, you don't actually end up with *true* knit stitches.

I thought this could be the best technique ever, if only I didn't have to purl. Then I realized that working in the round was the answer! Knitting in the round with no worries about double pointed needles *and* a safety (ravel) cord always in place in case you make a mistake? A technique that is faster than knitting or crocheting? YES! The holy grail of knitted colorwork...if you're making a hat or not afraid to steek your doll clothes.

**The following tutorial is for an experienced crocheter that can understand following colorwork charts, and might also have some familiarity with Tunisian crochet/actual knitting.**

If you're a knitter and can get the same gauge (4sts/in), it might work to knit this sweater with traditional needles, although I haven't tried it.

## Where do you get these hooks with holes?

If you crochet, you are no doubt aware of the endless debate about tapered (Boye-style) vs. inline (Bates-style) hooks.



Top to bottom: Lacis rug-hooking hook, Tulip tapered head, Clover Tunisian inline, and Bates inline.

For knooking, it's easier to find ready-made inline hooks, and they will work just fine. However, because of the sideways motion, a tapered hook seems to help eliminate a bit of the extra twisting motion your hand needs to do when using an inline, which could be a little faster.

- If you have Tunisian crochet hooks with long, but **very flexible** cables, you're all set!
- Leisure Arts has a beginner knooking set with 3 inline bamboo hooks with holes and cords that they no longer sell on their site, but can still be found easily online on places like ebay/[amazon](#) for ~\$10-15.
- Lacis rug-hooking needles (the blue one above) are [also sold as knooking hooks](#), and they do not fall into either the tapered or inline category. In comparison to the other hooks, I find they are the BEST for purling, which we won't be doing in this project. They can feel awkward to hold because they are a little longer than a regular crochet hook, but depending on your grip, this may not matter to you.

## Adapting a regular crochet hook

The quickest, cheapest way to get started is to use a wooden or bamboo hook you already have, find someone with woodworking skills and ask them to drill a hole for you. Just make sure the handle part has the same diameter all the way down - an ergonomic hook with a handle that tapers wider at the end will NOT work.

I have done this with everything from plastic to aluminum hooks and here are my thoughts:



- The hole needs to be just large enough to hold your cord. If the hole is too large, it can split the handle.
- If you're using plastic hooks, **ONLY** use a hand-operated (not power) drill. Our drill press bit went so fast it actually melted and deformed the plastic on the first one we tried.
- For bamboo or wood hooks, it's helpful to sand a flat spot and maybe drill a small pilot hole so the drill bit doesn't jump around and you can get it perfectly centered. It's easy to drill through these materials with any hand or power drill.
- I don't recommend trying this with an aluminum hook. It's very hard to drill through, and leads to sharp aluminum shavings/dust.

### What size hook should you use?

Through trial and error with different yarns and hooks, I found what worked best was to **use the knitting needle size in mm listed on the yarn label, and choose that size in mm of crochet hook**. So, for my Wool-ease, the label recommends a 5mm knitting needle (size 8) and translating that to crochet hooks, 5mm is an **H hook**, which is smaller than I'd actually crochet that yarn with, but works great.

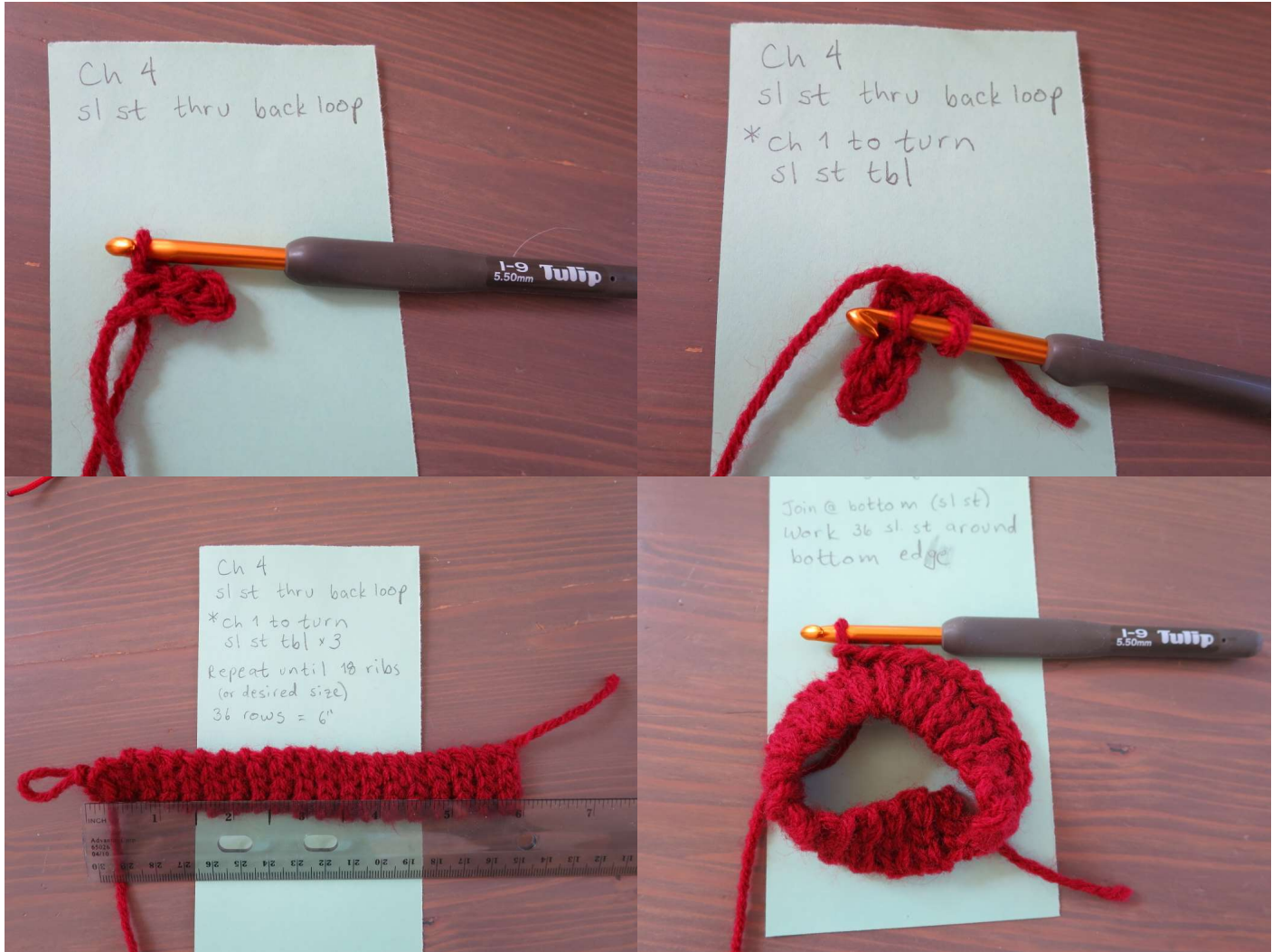
### What kind of cord do you need?

My favorite is called "rat tail cord" usually sold for decorative knotwork and jewelry making. It's durable, soft yet slippery, and flexible. Anything similar will work. Your cord needs to be able to easily slide around in the stitches, and should also be large enough that the stitches can't pull too tightly on it. Some things I've tried that **DON'T** work include worsted cotton yarn, carpet warp, and thicker acrylic yarn. Choose a color that contrasts well with your yarn, cut a piece **about a yard long**, and seal the edges with your preferred method so they don't fray. You will also need a second piece of cord, preferably in a different color from the first, when it comes time to divide for body and sleeves.



# Let's make a sweater!

I used Wool-ease yarn with a 5mm hook for the knit part and 5.5mm hook for ribbing. My gauge was 4sts/in on the colorwork knit part.



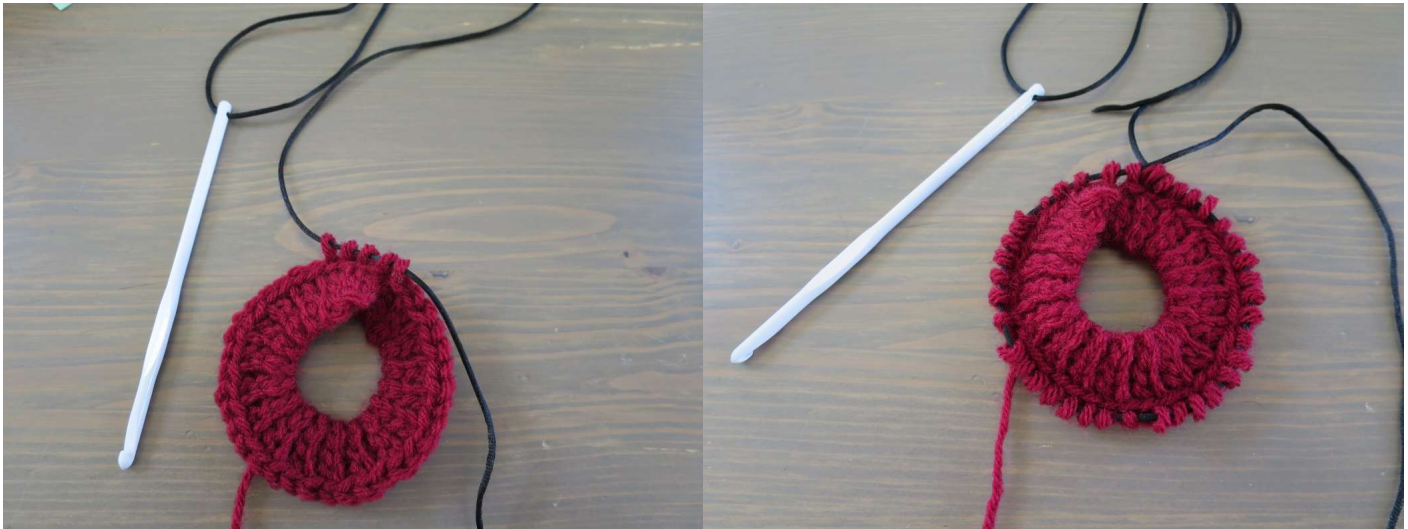
We'll start by crocheting the neckband – note that we are **slipstitching through the back loop**, not sc for a more knitted look. For this part, you're using a **regular crochet hook in whatever size is appropriate for your yarn**.

Also note in the pics, the **36 is wrong**, I miscounted and actually did **38 to get about 6"**. Join at the bottom. You will be steeking later, so you may not want to join the neckband all the way up, and this also will easily mark the back of the sweater. It's fine to join all the way if you prefer, especially if this is for a doll with a smaller head that can put the sweater on without a back opening. Work a row of slipstitches all the way around.

## Time to knit!



You can work into the whole slipstitch, or just the back loop, depending if you'd like a line to show or not. Switch to your **smaller** hook with a hole and cord, and insert in the first loop. Wrap yarn around, pull up a stitch and leave it on the hook, exactly like you might do with a first row of Tunisian crochet. After you get a few stitches on the hook (about 5 right now) it will start to feel a bit tight to do the movements, and that's when you...



Pull the cord through those sts, leaving a tail of about 6". Continue pulling up loops all around until it looks like the pic on the right. If your neck is joined all the way, put a stitch marker at the center back.

## Let's read the colorwork chart

Starting at the top, we have 3 rows of rib stitches, marked “r” a row of slip stitches, marked “s” and a row of red loops that I marked with “x” because I’m used to crocheting and sc gets an x or +. Where there is a V that means do an **increase stitch**. There are only two rows where you’ll have to increase!

	1	r	r			r	r			r	r			r	r					
	2	r	r			r	r			r	r			r	r					
	3	r	r			r	r			r	r			r	r					
	4	s	s			s	s			s	s			s	s					
	5	x	x			x	x			x	x			x	x					
	6	v	x			v	x			v	x			v	x					
	7	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x				
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Note that if you don't want longer floats over 5sts, you can use red to add the sts between the motifs marked in burgundy as shown on the right side of the chart

The first colorwork row is #6: Double reds, single grays



## Time to Increase!

When you do increases in crochet, it's very simple - just put two or more stitches into one below. Unfortunately, that won't work exactly the same here. If you also knit, you probably know that one way to increase is to knit into the front and back of one stitch, and what we need to do now is more similar to that.

This will be the most challenging row, because we're doing increases AND starting colorwork all at once. However, doing the increase/color change at the same time actually makes it easier to keep track of what happens next. If you're doing red, you're increasing, and if you're doing gray, it's just a single stitch.

Here's how to do an increase:

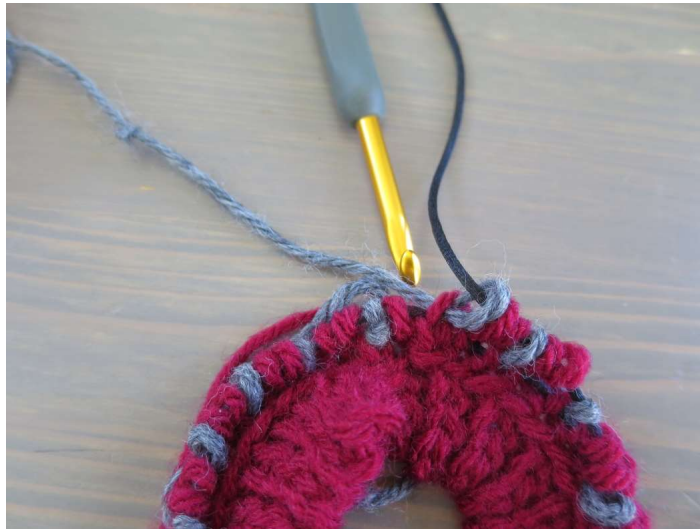


Insert the hook into the loop **from the back**, wrap yarn around and pull through the loop. Insert hook again in the front (as normal or like purling), wrap yarn around and pull up another loop.





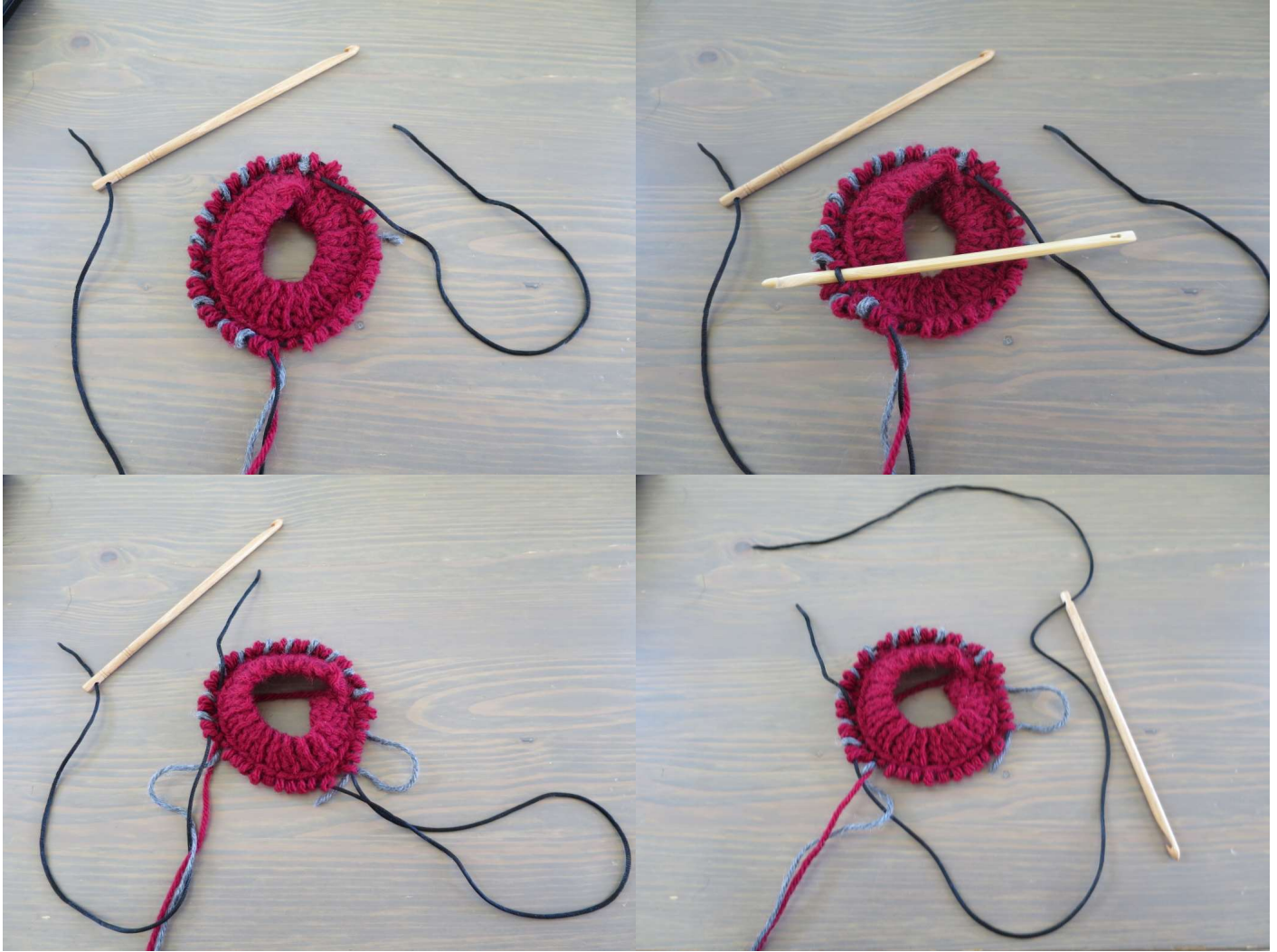
Pull up your first gray loop in the next stitch, and temporarily anchor the tail to a stitch marker/safety pin/etc. At the end, you'll tie off and weave in all the tails. For the rest of the way around the circle, continue alternating increases with contrasting color.



Your row finishes at the back opening or stitch marker.

## Moving the cord

Crochet is easy to rip out to the point where you've made a mistake, but knitting is less so. Yet another wonderful thing about this technique is that you have a safety/ravel cord always built in! If you make a mistake, you can unravel all the way up to the cord without dropping any stitches! This does mean that the working side of the cord will eventually get too short to be usable and you'll need to slide it around.



It's a good idea to move the cord at the halfway point, and again at the end of every row. If you've been working the sts purl-wise, your cord will be more visible on the right side, and if you've been working through the loops like Tunisian knit st, it will be more visible on the wrong side, and that will be the easiest place to pick up a loop of cord. After moving the cord, you should have a row of working loops on your cord, with a few (maybe 5-8) sts of overlap where it looks like 2 rows of cord on top of each other. Use a crochet hook to pull up a loop about 5-8 sts before the end and keep pulling on the cord from the row underneath until it looks like the 3<sup>rd</sup> pic above.

Rearrange the cord, pulling on the end that goes into your hook so you again have a long working end, a tail of maybe 4-6" inches, and bit of an overlap. It might feel scary the first time, but soon becomes second nature and you'll do it without thinking.

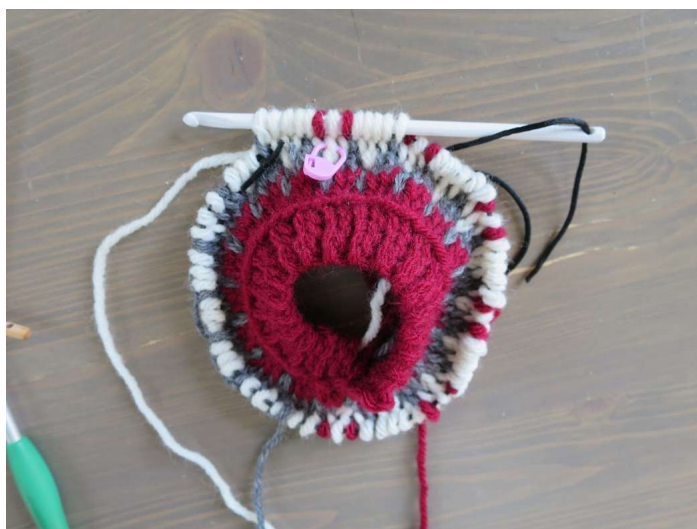
Yay! The hardest row is all done! Work a plain gray row all the way around.



The next row only has increases every 3<sup>rd</sup> stitch AND it's the last time we need to increase! This time we do \*gray-white-double gray\* all the way around. **Make sure the white stitch falls below the first gray stitch you did in the first increase row.**







I also wanted to point out that there will be times when the sts don't line up at the back end where you're going to steek because I changed the stitch count after designing the motif. That's fine, because it will be covered up. However, you probably DO want a snowflake/star centered at the front. Plan for that by finding the center point opposite of the back opening and putting a stitch marker where the red sts will need to be centered under the gray zigzags. Count backwards to the beginning of the row to decide where to start your snowflakes, and maybe consider putting a stitch marker under every zigzag that will have red sts – it should be every other one.

It's a good idea at this point to make a habit to do certain pattern repeats and check them before pulling the cord through as I'm doing above. Yes, it's easy to rip out mistakes, but even better if you don't have to!

**Follow the chart to finish the yoke and check back next week for the continuation!**



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I assume you have basic sewing/crochet knowledge and the explanation should suffice, but if you need help please email me!