

TUNISIAN CROCHET

With Jennifer Tan

Tunisian is loved by crocheters, knitters and beginners! It uses less yarn than traditional crochet, is much quicker than knitting, and it is easier on the hands and wrists than many forms of fiber arts.

History

Tunisian crochet has been present in Europe since medieval times. Some also believe that it was present in upper Africa and the Middle East much earlier. Is it a predecessor to knitting and crocheting, a newer form of crochet, or a poor shepherd's way to create a fabric out of yarn with just a spindle and handspun yarn from the sheep fluff, turned sideways? Some believe that very thin hooks and threads were used for Tunisian to create a strong, even, fabric that could be used for cross stitching. So...we do not truly know the ancient beginnings of Tunisian, but we can create stories about it and surmise based on the little bit of evidence that we have from Europe.



During this past century, Tunisian crochet has been seen throughout the world, and called by different names — Afghan crochet, princess stitch, tricot, shepherd's knitting, railroad stitch, and more. Since the 90's, the term "Tunisian crochet" has

been seen more consistently in patterns, books and reference materials. Today, Tunisian patterns may be found online, in crochet books, and popular crochet magazines.

Hook



Tunisian crochet is done on an extra-long crochet hook, usually between 13-18 inches in length. I recommend that you start to learn on a straight Tunisian hook...not the ones that you can sometimes find in the stores with cables on them. The cables are wonderful for larger projects, but can be frustrating to work with in the beginning. You can find sizes B-U, and they come in wood, plastic and metal. As always, I highly recommend wood! A size L or M is perfect when you are starting to learn Tunisian.

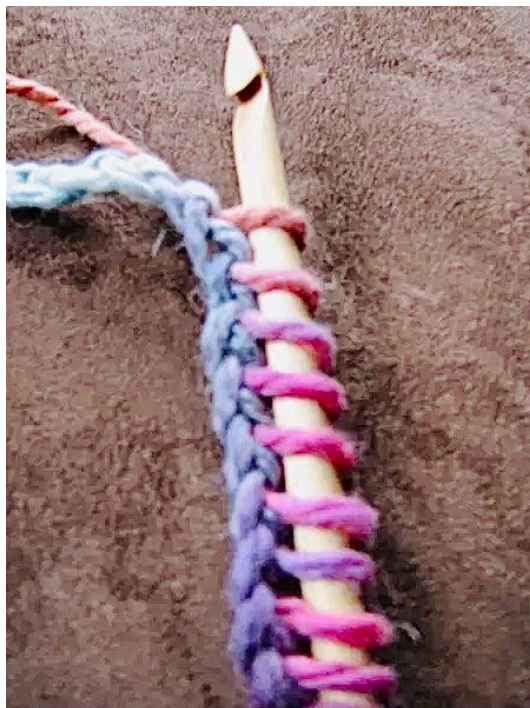
Hold

I recommend the knife grip, as you will see me do in the video. You are welcome to try the pencil grip. I find that the pencil grip will cause fatigue in the hand and wrist quickly with such a long hook, but it is up to you.

Stitches

Tunisian Simple Stitch

As you will see in the video, all Tunisian stitches have a front or forward pass (gathering of loops onto the hook), and a back or return pass (working the loops off of the hook). For tss, you will begin with a chain. Skip the first chain and then put your hook through the next stitch, yarn over, and come back through the chain. You will now have one more loop on your hook. Repeat this technique into each chain. Count your loops. This is how many loops you should have each time you do a forward pass.



The back pass will be, yo pull through one loop, yo pull through two loops. Continue to yo pull through two loops until you have only one loop left on the hook.

Now, you can continue to tss, only now you will be working into the vertical bars rather than chains. A vertical bar (looks like railroad tracks!) consists of two pieces of yarn, one that is in front of you, and one behind it. You need to split the vertical bar so that the piece in front of you is captured by your hook, keeping your hook in the front of the project (towards you). Then, yarn over and come back through the vertical bar. It is the same motion as your first row, only you are going through vertical bars instead of chains.



Tunisian Knit Stitch



“tks” is just like tss, except that you place the hook a bit differently. For the front pass, you will still split the vertical bar with your hook, but instead of keeping the hook in the front close to you, you will push it all of the way through your project to the backside, then yarn over and come back through. Back pass is worked the same as tss. This will provide you with a “knit look” that is just like stockinette stitch in knitting.

Project: Scarf



You may work your scarf by crocheting the width (approx. 15-40 stitches), or by crocheting the length (approx. 80-100 stitches).

1. Make your chain and count them as you go so that you know how many stitches you will have in each row.
2. Work your base or foundation row as you normally do with tss.
3. Either tss or tks each row. You can alternate for different looks. To make a “ribbed” look, tss 2 and tks 2 across.
4. Finish by cutting a tail, tying a knot, and weaving in ends with a yarn needle

Tips:



Tunisian loves to curl! To avoid this, crochet loosely, use a skinnier yarn or a larger hook. Or, do a traditional single crochet edge around your project. You may also “block” your work with steam or wetting the project and pinning to a board or laying under heavy books until dry.

Always remember to go into that last stitch in each row, otherwise you will lose a stitch and end up with a triangle! It doesn't look like a vertical bar, but you still need to go into it.

Keep tension a bit tight when you do your first stitch of each row to keep the edges consistent.

If you lose or gain 1-2, you are OK. If you lose 3 or more, add a stitch at the end of your front pass by hooking into one of the loops that you can find. If you have too many, yarn over and go through 2 right away when doing your back pass to lose a stitch.

Did you notice that we are not turning our work at the end of each row and adding a chain like we did in traditional single crochet? Also notice that there is a definite front and backside to Tunisian stitches. If you really love Tunisian, another technique to learn is cro-hooking which is done on a double-ended Tunisian hook and creates a reversible fabric.

A note to left-handed crocheters: Many lefties enjoy Tunisian crocheting with the hook in either their right or left hand. I have found that this technique really uses both hands and side of the body, and lefties seem to take to both hands well. Choose the hook hand of your choice that feels the most comfortable to you.

Here is a picture of a **headband** that I made out of a swatch of Tunisian Double Crochet. Always keep your swatches! You can make all sorts of wonderful little projects from your swatches, including belts, dollhouse rugs and blankets, and more.



Tunisian Verses

Tunisian Simple Stitch (Forward Pass)

Split the post

Jump around

Back through the post

Now you are done

Tunisian Simple Stitch (Back Pass)

Jump around, pull through one

Jump around, pull through two

And two, and two, and two....



New Tunisian Stitches

Tunisian Double Crochet (also called Tunisian Double Stitch): tdc



ch one at the beginning of each tdc row. yo, go through the vertical bar as you do in tss, yo and come back through the vertical bar, yo and pull through 2 loops (see video). Back pass is the same as usual. These lacier stitches are lovely in shawls, ponchlettes, and scarves that you can wear year-round.

Tunisian Double Post Stitch: tdps



This is done just like the tdc, except that you place the hook entirely around the vertical bar (“post”). This will create a ridge on one side of your project, depending on which direction you grab the post with your hook. You can create a ribbed look by making 2 tdps with the hook entering around the front of the posts, and 2 entering around the back of the post (repeat). (see video)

Abbreviations

yo = yarn over

tss = Tunisian simple stitch

tkc = Tunisian knit stitch

tdc = Tunisian double crochet

tdps = Tunisian double post stitch

Project: Ball



A ball is made by creating a rectangle with either tss or tkc. These smaller, denser stitches are perfect for a ball that you will want to stuff. Start with a chain and make it long enough to be half of the circumference of your ball, plus a few stitches more. For the sake of practicing, try a ball that is 8-10 stitches. If you want to change colors, do so when you complete a back pass row. Leave tails and weave them in at the end.



When you are done with the rectangle, leave a 20 inch-long tail and tie a knot. With a yarn needle, sew the short ends together, inside out (whip stitch is fine). Weave along the top edge and pull to cinch the top of the ball, sew through the cinched part a few times for strength. Turn right-side-out and stuff with organic wool roving, beans, or other items. Carry the yarn through the ball to end up on the open side. Weave along the open edge, cinch, knot, and stitch through the cinched part a few times. Trim all ends that have been woven in.

Challenge Project: Tunisian Hat



Chain the circumference of the head that you are making the hat for, plus 3 stitches. tks or tss (or alternate every 2 for a ribbed look) across until you have a 5-in. tall rectangle (for an adult, smaller if this is for a child). Start decreasing (see video) one on each end to create a pointed gnome hat. Decreasing is done by grabbing 2 vertical bars with your hook on the forward pass.



When it is down to the last stitch or two, knot, and sew together, inside-out. For a rounded skull cap, decrease more often and stop when you have about 3-4 inches left. Weave the last stitches and cinch and sew the hat inside-out. To keep the edge from rolling, add 1-3 rows of single crochet with your traditional crochet hook. This makes a nice finished edge around the hat. You may also crochet flowers or add a pom or tassel to the hat.



About Jennifer Tan



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Jennifer is a professional fiber artist, flutist, aromatherapist, wedding planner/officiant, and educator. She has been a school teacher, gifted and talented facilitator, principal and organizational leader. Jennifer has homeschooled her own four children both privately and through a charter school in a Waldorf-inspired environment with her husband Rick. She consults in the areas of Waldorf curriculum, homeschooling, handwork and music. Jennifer has been featured in Belle Armoire Magazine, and on the HGTV show Uncommon Threads. She has taught handwork for [Wholistic Learning Resources](#), [The BEarth Institute](#), [Little Acorn Learning](#), [Griffin Dyeworks Dye & Fiber Retreat](#), [Alliance for Waldorf Public Education](#), [Syrendell Summer Camp & Retreats](#), and at a variety of yarn shops, community groups, libraries, and schools throughout California, Georgia, and Washington. Jennifer may be reached at www.syrendell.com or info@syrendell.com.

Photo: [Nicole Sepulveda-Smith](#)

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