

Selecting Yarn for the Master Hand Knitting Program

Yarn selection is a skill that is evaluated in all three levels. It is upon the participant to correctly choose swatch and project yarns to meet the requirements of the program. We do not pre-approve yarns for swatches. Special consideration is given to yarn and/or color choices for projects in Levels 2 and 3 only. If you have questions concerning these, please contact your previous Level Co-Chair or info@tkga.org.

Carefully Read the Instructions

The Instructions contain descriptions of the yarns acceptable for the swatches and project(s).

[“On Your Way to the Masters \(OYWTTM\): Choosing Yarn”](#) (Arenda Holladay) has good advice that will help you understand how to choose a good yarn. (Note that this article was written in 2005, and current requirements may be different). A more recent article [“OYWTTM: Choosing Yarn for the Master’s Program”](#) (Joyce Jones) has further advice on yarn selection. We hope you will carefully read both articles.

The program requires currently produced, commercial yarns. Avoid discontinued yarns as well as homespun and hand-dyed yarns. If you find that a yarn becomes discontinued after you have begun working on your Level, contact either your former Co-Chair or Leslie Gonzalez (lgonzalez@tkga.org) or info@tkga.org. Do not assume your work will be automatically rejected.

Single color swatches should be white, off-white, or pastel. Contrast colors should be light or bright. When choosing colors for projects, remember that the reviewers must be able to see every stitch. If that is not possible due to your yarn choice, you will be asked to resubmit that item.

What is White? What is Off-White? What is a Pastel? What is a Bright Color?

White is the complete absence of hue. Off-white is a shade of white that has either black or another hue added in such a way that it only differs slightly from pure white. Examples include eggshell, cream, ecru, and vanilla. Beiges have even more hue added and are no longer acceptable for the program, along with grays which also include the addition of black. It is often very difficult to tell if a gray or beige is heathered. Heathered yarns can disguise stitches and make it difficult for the committee to review tension, stitch composition, and techniques.

Pastels are colors that have high value but low saturation. This causes them to appear milky or washed out in appearance. Pastels typically make people think of baby colors, such as baby pink or blue, very light chick yellow, and mint green. These very light milky colors are also acceptable for single-color swatches.

Any other color is not acceptable and if used you run the risk of having to resubmit all or some of the swatches. **Reviewers must be able to see your work.** Choosing the correct color shows

an understanding of the principles of color theory and is built on as you progress through the program.

For swatches that require two or more colors, we ask you to use colors that stand out when placed next to each other. Bright colors are allowed for these swatches. Bright colors can be interspersed with white, off-white, and pastels. Bright colors are colors with high intensity. Natural colors without additives such as white, black, or another hue, tend to have high intensity. Brightness diminishes with the addition of white, black, and/or other hues. When choosing a bright color to use, be sure that the stitch work is visible.

When choosing a color always remember that if the reviewers can't see the work, you may be asked to resubmit the item.

Yarn Composition

Articles in *Cast On* concerning yarn can be found by searching for the series “Yarn 101” (Gretchen Hines). The first article in the series covers the terminology used in describing wool, its manufacture, and criteria for evaluation. Another article describes how ply affects the appearance and behavior of stitches.

In *Knitty* magazine, Michele Lock discusses how ply affects the appearance of stitches. We recommend using yarns that are conventionally plied as shown in the first example in this article. Using other types of yarns often has a negative effect on cable, yarn over, and special stitch patterns and may lead to a request for resubmission for some swatches.

We recommend 100% wool (not superwash) because this yarn blocks well and will show off your work the best. This does not mean you are limited to 100% wool. Allergies as well as availability will also affect your choice. It is upon you to demonstrate your knowledge of yarn selection.

If you choose to use an alternative to 100% wool, make sure to choose a yarn that can be adequately blocked. Swatches should have top and bottom edges that are straight and parallel. Sides should be straight, except for some cable and increase/decrease swatches. Sides should be mirrored, i.e., when folded in half vertically there is no overhang. Selvages should not roll to the wrong side. There should be no evidence of pinning.