

Martini Cowl

By Miranda Jollie

Any yarn... any length...any size!

Think of it less as a knitting pattern and more as a cocktail. Like a Martini, which can be anything from a dry-as-a-bone Gibson, dressed with a pickled onion, to a sweet chocolaty confection, it gives you a basic recipe that you can make your own. It works with any yarn, from a feathery laceweight to a cosy chunky, and it's so versatile, you can make a cowl from almost any reasonable amount. A simple nine-stitch repeat means you start at the beginning and just keep knitting until you've got enough. Because you can just keep on knitting until you run out of yarn, it's perfect for that stray skein or festival purchase where you're not sure how much you've got. You could find yourself with a swirling smokering or a snug collar; the choice is yours.

I've provided specific instructions for a sock/fingering weight cowl on 60cm/24" circular needles and a long aran-weight version on 100cm/40" circulars; but once you've got the idea, you can then use the adaptation instructions to make it your own.

Materials:

Sock/fingering weight version, 65cm/26" circumference x 30/12"cm wide: 216m/236yds sock/fingering weight yarn. I used Shearer Girl Lustrous Sock Weight in Antique Rose.

4mm (US 6) circular needles, 60cm/24" long, or needles to meet tension.

Aran version, 110/44" cm circumference by 20/8"cm wide: 224m/245 yds aran weight yarn. I used Wendy Aran with Wool in Navy.

5mm (US 8) circular needles, 100cm/40" long, or needles to meet tension.



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Tension:

18 sts and 32 rnds to 10 cm/4" over lace pattern (sock/fingering weight version)

14 sts and 24 rnds to 10 cm//4" over lace pattern (aran weight version).

You may find it tricky to get an entirely accurate tension measurement due to the stretchy diagonal nature of the fabric so these should be regarded as approximate measurements.

**Abbreviations:**

K – Knit

K2tog – knit 2 together

Rnd – round

Sts - stitches

Yo – yarn over needle

Special techniques:

You can use any cast on method you prefer, but you may find the cable cast on easiest for casting on large numbers of stitches, especially if you are knitting the adaptation method where you may not know in advance how many stitches you are casting on. If you are unfamiliar with this method there is a good tutorial with photos at http://knitting.about.com/od/learntoknit/ss/cable_cast_on.htm

Hints and tips:

If you prefer a more definite straight edge to your cowl, or find it difficult to work the yarn overs directly from the cast on edge, you can add a round (or rounds) of plain knit or purl at the beginning and end of your cowl.

Although there is no need to mark the end of the round (as it will shift around the cowl as you knit, and you can end at any point), some knitters may find it helpful to place markers between each pattern repeat, especially for the first few rounds.

Method:

Instructions are for sock/fingering weight version with aran version in (parentheses).

Cast on 118 (154) sts.

Join to work in the rnd, being careful not to twist stitches. There is no need to mark the end of the rnd.

PATTERN

*K2tog, k2, yo, k2tog, k1, yo, k2tog, yo; rep from * until cowl measures 30 cm/12" (20 cm/8") from cast on edge.

Cast off using stretchy cast off as follows: k2, *slip 2 sts just knit back to left hand needle, k2tog, k1; continue until all sts are cast off.

Break yarn & weave in ends. Wash and block/press according to instructions on ball band.

How to adapt to your preferred yarn and size

1. Work out how big you want your cowl. As a guide to circumferences:
 - a. A close fitting neck warmer - 45cm/18"
 - b. A slightly baggier smothering size, not enough for 2 loops – 65cm/26"
 - c. A longer cowl which will loop twice around your neck for a cosy fit – 85cm/34"
 - d. A longer "infinity scarf" type cowl which will loop twice for a looser fit – 110cm/40"
 - e. A Doctor-Who length, three loop cowl – 130cm/52"
2. Choose your needle size. I would usually recommend knitting with a needle 0.5mm or 1 US size bigger than the recommended size for your yarn – but feel free to experiment!
3. Find a circular needle with a slightly smaller circumference than your desired cowl.
4. Work out how many stitches to cast on. Ideally – knit a tension square with your proposed yarn, work out the tension and calculate how many stitches you need for your required circumference, then if necessary increase that number until it is a multiple of 9+1. Or, if you're feeling lazy or in need of instant gratification, take your chosen circular needles and start casting on using the cable method and keep going until your needles are full and the stitches not stretched. Then cast on extra stitches if necessary until you have a multiple of 9+1. The number of sts cast on should always be a multiple of 9+1.
5. Start knitting using the pattern above.
6. Keep going until you have enough!
7. Cast off & finish as above.



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