

Row Maps

by Maddy Cranley

Although it may not appear to be so, judging by current weather conditions, summer will be coming. This often means summer holiday plans are being made or at least discussed among potential travel companions. Perhaps even travel brochures have been picked up and perused or some online surfing has gathered information on suitable destinations. Maps often play a part. They will assist in defining the path from Point A to Point B, unless it is a road well-traveled and needing no clarification of directions. If venturing out into new territory, you will need some kind of guide to aide and enhance your journey. Legends on the map inform us as to the size and type of roads, designate the locations of rest stops and campgrounds, and mark tourist attractions and historical monuments. With internationally-recognized symbols and even a mileage count placed along the colored lines, a map can be a snapshot preview of what the trip will entail.

At the beginning of a craft project, this stage is much the same. We have an idea of what we would like to make. Perhaps not a brochure, but a spectacular sunset or pretty color combination in a bank teller's sweater will set us on a journey. We begin to plan. We almost always have a pattern or instruction sheet in hand unless we have become well-traveled in the craft and instinctively know our way. These instructions will become our "maps" as we embark upon our creative journey. We have our destination picked out. We have envisioned and dreamed. Now it is time to get into our chosen mode of transportation and with map in hand, start our journey.

As we likely do before getting into the car and heading onto the highway, we look at maps and study our bearings. Perhaps we envision ourselves where we are located on the huge paper map and see ourselves crawling along that blue or red line to our destination. In preparation for a knitting journey, we might envision how we will look in that sweater that is displayed on the front of the pattern leaflet. By taking a good long look at the photo, one sizes up the shape of the neck, the depth of the ribbing, the pattern stitch sequences and how the color balance plays out. Beginning to read through the pattern, notes are made as to what finished size is best to offer an optimum comfortable fit. Materials will have to be assembled. Making sure a suitcase is of adequate size to match the length of stay is as important as choosing a needle size that will result in the appropriate match of required stitch gauge. Double checking to ensure the correct stitch gauge can be achieved is similar to having your passport ready before beginning an extended trip, as it will allow for easier access to uncharted territory.

Read the road signs of the pattern stitch sequences carefully, noting the multiples of the stitches and the number of rows in each repeat. Read each section before you start in order to get an idea of where you might end up that night. Read a section over again, if it does not seem clear. Better to take longer to get it right than to take a wrong turn and spend hours retracing your journey or ripping out rows. Double check the signposts and the highlighted pattern headings to see where turns and shapings should occur. Speedometers and row counters will keep you numerically informed.

Even with expert planning, you may run into difficult patterns stitches or unexpected construction. The journey may take longer than you had anticipated. So remember to take frequent rest breaks, always carry emergency gas, and buy that extra ball of yarn.

Maddy Cranley is a professional knitwear designer, who has created exclusive designs for knitting and craft magazines, authored and published three books on the subject of creating felt garments and projects from handknitting, and produces an ever-growing line of maddy laine handknitting patterns. For additional information, see <http://www.maddycraft.com>

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