

The Chunky Fit Meets The Clunky Knit

by Maddy Cranley

Chunky means short, thick or broad. Clunky defines a clumsiness in style, form or execution. Chunky describes the look of this season's favorite sweater. Clunky explains what it is like to knit one. Headlines such as "The Super Chunkies" and "Chunky Chic" lead to knitted creations featuring very large stitches and thick textures. Designer John Galliano shows a chunky sweater of the largest proportions but just in case it didn't look quite chunky enough, he added a few popcorn stitches the size of snowballs. Ralph Lauren's chunky contribution looks positively tame with large cables and a turtleneck. Donna Karan obviously feeling a bit more timid, saved her chunky knitting for a tote bag.

The good news is that chunky can be synonymous with "quick". These sweaters can be knit in a minimum amount of time just due to their gigantic gauge and trimmed- down silhouette while still allowing you to put a fashion foot forward. The bad news is that though the knitting may be quick, it may not be what you are used to as you wield large size needles called "brooms", so named I believe due to their resemblance to broom handles. These gargantuan needles are held in the fist not the fingers and knitting can be slow and deliberate. It helps if you keep reminding yourself that the motions, though more laborious, will be fewer in number than those for the average gauge sweater. The true chunky look also requires that the yarn be of a chunky consistency or may require multi strands of yarn to create that heavy texture.

Another question that comes to mind is where do people wear these sweaters? Considering northern climates in the thick of winter, even a chunky sweater would not be warm enough for outdoor wear and the thought of wearing one inside with central heating brings on hot flashes of mammoth proportions. It only seems likely that they would be out of the question in southern or temperate zones as well. The where aside, the how to wear chunky knitting poses another dilemma. There's no way around it - if you are chunky, chunky knitting will make you look chunkier. So what's a knitter to do? The solution could be to try one of these big needle sweaters knit with a lightweight yarn such as mohair. You can obtain a big stitch effect, thus remaining trendy, minus the bulk. A simple style knit in stocking or garter stitch can make for a great look to sling over a body-hugging top and a long skirt. This fashion statement can help hide, not emphasize, while eliminating the climate problems as a sweater like this could be worn indoors. Interesting effects can also be achieved by alternating large needles of two different sizes, switching back and forth every two rows or by adding a thin strand of shiny silk or rayon yarn for contrast. The knitting is easier on the hands with simple finishing limited to joining sleeve and side seams.

So get "chunky" on your terms and eliminate the "clunky". There's still lots of time to knit one or two big needle knits for the holidays. Wishing you the very best of the season!

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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