

Caroline's Dog Sweater

A Knitted Legacy

My dear friend Caroline Arden died suddenly last August. She was making the last in a long series of dog sweaters, this one for her beloved Cairn terrier, Gemma. She had started a tradition of taking Cairns to the annual Scottish Christmas Walk in Alexandria, Virginia, and they all wore these darling sweaters. There was no written pattern to be found, so I figured out the pattern from the one she was working on, a few sketchy notes and the finished sweater she'd made for Gemma's son Edmund. This is my last gift to Caroline, a gift to her knitting friends and my gift to the Knitlist, Christmas, 1999.

This is sleeveless argyle sweater (Caroline was of the generation who made argyle socks for fathers, brothers and boyfriends and once claimed that was the only kind of knitting she could do well, because it was so easy!) but if you don't know how to do intarsia, please consult your knitting reference books for the basic techniques.

The sweater is basically a knitted rectangle with ribbing on both narrow ends and a ribbed gusset knitted separately and sewn to the rectangle. The directions below make a sweater of a suitable size for a smallish dog, but you could easily alter it to fit your Fido. See comments at the end of directions for how.

Materials:

100 grams of worsted weight wool in each of 3 pleasing colors, one main color and 2 contrasting (this is probably enough to make 2 complete sweaters, varying the main color) Caroline was using Patons Rustic Wool, a nice rugged yarn for these rugged little dogs.

Edmund's sweater is a dark heathery green with clear red and yellow contrasts, and Gemma's is heather blue with red and grey.

Needles US sizes 5 and 7, or as needed to get gauge
10 bobbins (or make your own yarn butterflies)

Gauge:

5 stitches = 1 inch, but don't worry yourself silly over it because the sweater is stretchy and likely the dog won't complain.

Argyle note: The argyle pattern consists of diamonds which increase or decrease one stitch on each side until the points meet, then decrease or increase in the opposite direction until the points touch again. Since this pattern uses a main color and two contrasting ones, there will be a row which is all main color at one end of the diamonds and a row with no main color where the two contrasting colors touch. This pattern is based on diamonds of 16 stitches and 15 rows. Take a piece of graph paper or even plain paper and draw out the pattern. You'll be making a piece 4 diamonds across and 4 full diamonds long with half diamonds filling in the spaces.

Make 3 bobbins of each contrasting color and 5 of the main color.

Pattern:

Using smaller needles and main color, cast on 64 stitches and work in K2, P2 rib for 3¼ inches or

desired length of turtleneck collar.

Change to larger needles and work set-up row of argyle pattern which is all main color, using 4 bobbins thus: with MC, K16 stitches with each bobbin, picking up new strand from under old to avoid holes.

Row 1: Adding in bobbins, P1 CC#1, P14 MC, P2 CC#2, P14 MC, P2 CC#1, P14 MC, P2 CC#2, P14 MC, P1 CC#1. This is a lot harder to understand in words than on a chart! If you draw out the first repeat you'll instantly grasp the concept and it will be easy once you see it.

Continue as established in stockinette stitch, increasing the contrasting colors one stitch on each side every row until the CCs touch on row 8. On row 9, begin decreasing CC one stitch on each side every row until row 15 which is all MC (the MC diamonds touch).

Row 16: SWITCH the locations of CC#1 and CC#2 and continue pattern as established. Alternate CC diamonds until you have 4 complete CC diamonds (60 rows), ending with a row of solid MC.

Change to smaller needles and work 2¼ inches of K2 P2 ribbing in MC, or to desired length. Bind off loosely in rib. My rectangular piece measures about 14 inches long including ribbing, and 12 inches wide.

Gusset: Using MC and smaller needles, cast on 31 stitches (about half the number of body stitches). Work in K1, P1 rib for 4¾ inches.

Decrease one stitch at the beginning of each row until 3 stitches remain. It will look nicer if you decrease one stitch in from the edge using K2 tog and SSK. Bind off 3 sts.

My gusset was 9 inches long.

Assembly:

Sew the edges of the longer ribbing together to make the turtleneck. Pin the pointy end of the gusset into the end of this seam and sew each side of the gusset to the rectangle for 2½ inches. Leave seam open for 3½ inches (this goes past the spot where you began decreasing the gusset). Sew final 3 inches of gusset to rectangle.

Gusset will end about 1¼ inches from the bottom ribbing. Firmly fasten all ends and block as appropriate to your yarn. Catch dog and try it on him. Be sure to tell him how handsome he looks.

Other Considerations:

To alter to fit your dog: Measure the dog, neck to base of tail. This will be the length of your rectangle. Measure the circumference of the dog's neck just above the shoulders. This is the width of the rectangle. Calculate the number of argyle diamonds you'll need to make a rectangle this size (you're going to have to make a gauge swatch here). You can make minor adjustments to the length of the ribbing if the diamonds do not come out right. You could adjust the width of the gusset to accommodate a large ribcage or tummy.

To determine the length of the gusset, measure the underside of the dog from the neck circumference to the bottom of the rib cage, or wherever you want the coverage to stop. This may vary depending on the (ahem) sex of the dog. Cast on about half the number of rectangle stitches for the gusset (you want an odd number). Because the gusset is ribbing, the sweater is quite stretchy and the measurements do not have to be precise. This is a dog sweater, after all!

If you've got a very big or very small dog, you might want to make the size of the diamonds larger or smaller for a more flattering design. You can also vary the proportions of the diamonds and make them

long and skinny, recalling that vertical lines are said to be slenderizing. You may want to adjust the depth of the turtleneck and bottom ribbing too.

This could be a good stash reducer if you made the diamonds in a variety of compatible colors. You could make the sweater using just one color and define the diamonds with texture. How about a plain stockinette sweater with the dog's name in duplicate stitch? The possibilities are endless with this basic shape.

One Warning: Siamese cats do not make very willing models! But they look cute in these sweaters too.

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[Return to pattern list](#)