



An HJS Studio Pattern: World War One Balaclavas



Introduction

During the First World War, the American Red Cross provided yarn and instructions to knitters all over the US, to encourage them to knit gloves, hats, vests, socks, etc, for the men in the military. These patterns are courtesy of Diane McHose, owlomen@mindspring.com, who sent me a scanned copy of the centerfold of the July 1917 Modern Priscilla Needlework magazine. The first pattern, next to each picture, is as originally printed. Below that, I've updated the instructions to modern terminology and knitting in rounds where possible. I haven't had time to test all these patterns, so they are merely my interpretation.

Helmet A

One and one-half hanks knitting worsted, 4 double-ended bone needles, No. 5.

This is the helmet model preferred by the Red Cross Society, but the stocking type of helmet (Models B and C) is also accepted. Although shaped to the head, Model A is done in straight knitting without increase, and is not so difficult to make as might appear from the illustration.

Cast on 100 stitches, using two needles, and knit 2, purl 2, for seven inches. Leave 26 on needles and knit 74 garter-stitch for six inches. Cast off 26 at each end and knit 22 for six inches. Sew up two sides and pick up all around 90 to 100 stitches on three needles. Knit 2, purl 2, for two inches. Cast off, not purling.



Modern Instructions for Helmet A

Materials: About 6 ounces / 170 grams knitting worsted weight yarn.

Equipment: One set of 4 or 5 double pointed size 5 (US) or 3 1/2-4 mm needles, tapestry needle, scissors.

Gauge: The gauge is flexible on this project. Suggested about 5 stitches to one inch, or 20 stitches to 10 cm.



Holly Shaltz
PO Box 136
Boyne City MI 49712
(231) 582 3206
fax (231) 582 0426
holly@hjsstudio.com

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Neck of helmet: Cast on 100 stitches, join in a circle, and knit in k2 p2 ribbing for 7 inches/18 cm.

Back and sides of helmet: Next row: knit 37 stitches plain, turn and knit back over 74 stitches. Continue, knitting 74 stitches each row (garter stitch), slipping each first stitch, for 6 inches/15 cm.

Top of helmet: Next row: Knit 26 stitches on to spare needle, knit to end of row, turn. Next row: Knit 26 stitches on to spare needle, knit remaining 22 stitches in garter stitch (knit every row) for about 6 inches/15 cm, forming top of helmet. At the end of each row, pick up and knit one edge stitch from helmet sides together with last stitch of 22.

Ribbing around face opening: Pick up 90-100 stitches around face opening, including the stitches still on the needle from the top of the helmet, and the stitches on the spare needle for the front of the neck ribbing. Knit in k2 p2 ribbing for 2 inches/5 cm. Cast off in pattern, loosely (use a larger needle if necessary for casting off). Sew in ends.



Helmet B

One hank knitting worsted, 4 double-ended bone needles, No. 3.

Cast on 96 stitches, 32 on each of three needles. Knit (k) 2, purl (p) 2, 5 1/2 inches. Bind off 24 stitches and on the remaining 72 stitches, rib, k 2, p 2 for 2 inches. Cast on 24 stitches, join to opposite side of opening and continue to k 2, p 2, around the entire 96 stitches for 3 inches from the opening.

Having 96 stitches on needles, k 2 sts together, k 11, k 2 sts together, p 1, k 2 sts together, k 11, k 2 sts together, p 1, and repeat on two remaining needles. Knit 13, p 1 to end of round, and repeat for three rounds. Then k 2 sts together, k 9, k 2 sts together, p 1, and repeat around. Continue in this way, narrowing on every fifth round until there are 3 sts on each needle, then k 2 sts together on each end of needle for two rows. Bind off, sew together. Now take up on one needle half of the 96 stitches first cast on directly under the opening in front, knit in garter-stitch for 5 inches, and bind off. This forms the shield in front. Repeat for back half.

Modern Instructions for Helmet B

Materials: About 100 grams knitting worsted weight yarn.

Equipment: One set of 4 or 5 double pointed size 3 (US) or 3 mm needles, tapestry needle, scissors.

Gauge: The gauge is flexible on this project. Suggested about 5 stitches to one inch, or 20 stitches to 10 cm.



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holly@hjsstudio.com

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Neck of helmet: Cast on 96 stitches, place 32 on each of 3 needles, join in a circle, and knit in k2 p2 ribbing for 5 1/2 inches / 14 cm.

Face opening: Next row: Bind off 24 stitches. Working back and forth, k2 p2 ribbing for 2 inches/5 cm. Cast on 24 stitches over bound off stitches, and continue in rounds in k2 p2 ribbing on 96 stitches for 3 inches / 8 cm from the opening.

Decrease top of helmet, Round 1: k 2 together, k 11, k 2 together, p 1, k 2 together, k 11, k 2 together, p 1, repeat on remaining needles until end of round.

Rnd 2-5: k 13, p 1 to end of round.

Rnd 6: k 2 together, k 9, k 2 together, p 1 to end of round.

Rnds 7-10: k 11, p 1 to end of round.

Continue in this way, decreasing each 5th row, until there are 3 stitches left on each needle, then k 2 together on each needle for 2 rows, draw up stitches on yarn and finish off.

Dickey: Pick up 48 stitches along bottom edge of helmet, centered on front. Knit in garter stitch (knit each row) for 5 inches / 13 cm, bind off. Repeat for back. Darn in ends.

Helmet C

One hank knitting worsted, 2 amber needles No. 8.

Cast on 6 stitches, knit 1 row plain; next row increase 1 stitch between every stitch, then two rows plain, next row increase one between each stitch, 2 rows plain, increase one between each stitch; continue this til there are 96 stitches on the needle. Now knit 2, purl 2, across the row, and continue this ribbing for 6 inches. Knit 12 stitches ribbing, bind off 24 stitches and take off the remaining stitches on to a cord. Knit the 12 stitches of ribbing for 2 inches, take off on cord, take up the stitches on opposite side of opening and knit in length to correspond with first side. Knit back and cast on 24 stitches, then take up the 12 stitches on cord and continue knitting the full 96 original ones in ribbing for 6 inches. Now take off half of these and knit for 3 inches, bind off. Take up the other stitches and knit 3 inches, bind off. Sew up on wrong side.

Modern Instructions for Helmet C

Materials: About 150 grams knitting worsted weight yarn.

Equipment: One set of 4 or 5 double pointed size 8 (US) or 5 mm needles, tapestry needle, scissors.

Gauge: The gauge is flexible on this project. Suggested about 5 stitches to one inch, or 20 stitches to 10 cm, measured over stockinette or garter stitch.



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Starting from top of helmet: Cast on 6 stitches, join in a circle, and knit one round plain.

Increase round: Increase 1 stitch after every stitch. Knit 2 rounds plain. Repeat these three rounds until there are 96 stitches on needles.

Ribbing: Begin knitting k 2 p 2 ribbing. Continue to 6 inches/15 cm from beginning.

Face opening: Bind off 24 stitches, and continue ribbing back and forth on 72 stitches for 2 inches/5 cm. Cast on 24 stitches over bound off stitches.

Neck: Continue in k2 p2 ribbing in rounds on 96 stitches to 6 inches/15 cm from face opening.

Dickey: Leaving 48 stitches at center back on spare needle, work 48 stitches of center front in garter stitch (knit each row) for 3 inches / 8 cm. Bind off and fasten end. Repeat for remaining 48 stitches.



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