



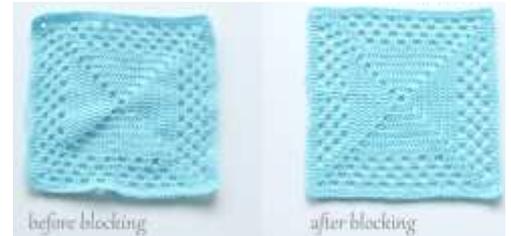
Tip of the Month - August 2017



To block or not to block?

To block or not to block? Knitters and crocheters often have strong opinions on the subject. But what is it and why do some swear by it? I myself had never blocked any of my work until a few years ago and now I block most of what I do.

In essence, blocking is a method of shaping and molding your finished pieces to match the measurements and shapes on the schematics (or pattern). When you are making a garment, it's best to block the individual pieces to get them to the right size and shape before sewing them together.



There are two main categories of blocking: wet and steam. The use of each being dependent on the fibre content and the type of project. Whilst most fibres can be wet blocked, caution is needed before steam blocking as heat can affect fibres differently. This is where the care instructions on the yarn labels come in handy. The following is a general guide to the type of blocking with common fibres;

Angora Wet block by spraying

Cotton Wet block or warm/hot steam press

Linen Wet block or warm/hot steam press

Lurex Do not block

Wool blends Wet block by spraying; do not press unless pretested first

Mohair Wet block by spraying

Novelties Do not block, unless there are specific blocking directions

Synthetics Carefully follow instructions on ball band—usually wet block by spraying, do not press

Wool and all wool-like fibers- (alpaca, camel hair, cashmere) Wet block by spraying or warm steam press

Wool blends Wet block by spraying; do not press unless pretested first

If you are going to block, some essential tools are: a flat, covered, padded surface large enough to hold one piece of crochet and thick enough to insert and hold pins (such as a carpet or mattress covered with plastic and a towel*); rustproof pins (blocking or t-pins are great for this); tape measure; sink for immersion or a spray bottle and towels.

There are two ways to wetblock your crocheted pieces. Both techniques work equally well, so choose the one that appeals to you most. The first is to immerse the pieces in cool water, then squeeze out the water, taking care not to wring or twist your items. Working one at a time, place the pieces on your prepared surface (or a blocking board), then stretch and mold the piece into the same size and shape shown on the schematic and pin. Leave to dry.

The second method is to pin the pieces first (following the schematics), then wet them down using a spray bottle filled with cool water. And leave them be until they are dry.

To steamblock, pin the pieces on a flat surface following the measurements on the schematics. Use an Iron on the lowest setting that will still produce steam, or a handheld steamer. Once you have a good steam going, hold the iron or steamer close to the fabric, then work in a circular motion over the entire piece until every inch is evenly dampened. DO NOT touch the iron to the fabric! If you find that you must lightly press the piece, cover it with a colorfast towel or a pressing cloth to protect the fabric from the hot metal plate. Allow to dry thoroughly before unpinning it. Drying after steaming takes a lot less time than wet blocking, but you still must allow the pieces to dry thoroughly before unpinning.

The problem with steam blocking is that it has to be done bit by bit, area by area, whereas wet or damp blocking allows you to work on the entire project at the same time. The steam method is great for touching up trims and removing the “fold line” from previously blocked garments. Drying after steaming also takes a lot less time than wet blocking.



*Alternatively you can invest in a blocking board, which is easier to use and more convenient (although a little pricey). Interlocking play mats can also be used or you can make your own.

