

KNITTING NEEDLES

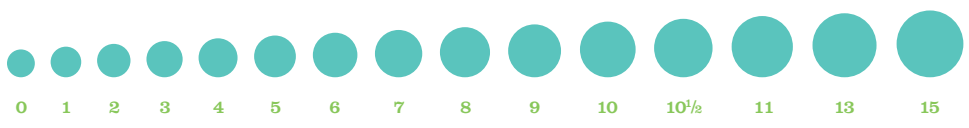
Combine needles with yarn and you don't need much else, which is why knitting is ultimately such a simple art. Using the correct needles for your projects is key to achieving delightful results. Needles come in many materials, lengths, and sizes. They also may be straight, circular, or double-pointed. You have a lot to choose from, and the more you knit, the more particular you will become about the needles you work with.

Different types of needles work better for different projects. For baby caps, I find that circular needles and double-pointed needles work best. Although circular needles are designed for knitting in the round, in order to form a seamless tube, I use them not only for knitting in the round but for knitting back and forth as well. In fact, I don't use straight needles at all. Learning to knit on circular needles is a benefit because you are immediately comfortable with using them. The advantages are many. You can put an enormous number of stitches on longer circular needles, and since the stitches rest on the cable, they are not as cumbersome to maneuver when you are knitting. You can knit in compact spaces with circular needles because your knitting is held directly in front of you or on your lap. This also creates less stress on your arms and hands. My favorite lengths for circular needles are 16 inches for hats and 24 inches for just about any other project.

For finishing a project like the top of a hat, you will need double-pointed needles. My preference is 7-inch needles made of wood. The pattern you are using will tell you how many you will need.

In general, beginners may prefer wood or bamboo straight needles because they aren't as slippery and are conducive to slower knitting. Faster knitters—or knitters who want to become faster—should use metal needles because of their smooth, slippery surface. The stitches move quickly, and you won't have to push and pull as you knit.

My current favorites are Skacel Addi Turbo circular needles and Lantern Moon ebony double-pointed needles in the 7-inch length.



NEEDLE GAUGE

To find the size of your needles, you can use a needle gauge, which looks like this. Simply put the point of the needle into a hole: The hole that exactly fits is the correct size.