

19 March 2011 Eden Valley Guild
Workshop - Knitting with Energised Singles

1. **Contrasting coloured wool tops**

Spin two yarns of similar gauge, one **S** and one **Z**, using a semi-worsted technique. Using 3.25 mm needles¹, cast on about 20 stitches with one of the yarns and work four rows of garter stitch (K every row). Then work a number (eight, say) of rows of stocking stitch (K and P alternate rows). Change to the other yarn and work the same number of rows. Repeat if you've any yarn left! Finish with four rows of garter stitch and cast off.

2. **Wool and silk, matching or contrasting**

Spin two yarns of similar gauge, one **S** and one **Z**; spinning from the fold works nicely. Make this as fine as you like. Using much larger needles (5 mm¹, say), cast on a couple of dozen stitches, holding both of the yarns together. Knit as many rows as you like of garter stitch (knit every row), always holding both of the yarns together; then cast off. That's it, I said it was easy! Kathryn describes this as "like chain mail"; I think of it as "poor man's lace". It's a kind of "collapse" knitting.

3. **Contrasting coloured wool tops**

Spin two yarns of similar gauge, one **S** and one **Z**. Using 3.25 mm¹ needles, cast on a multiple of eight stitches (24, say) with one of the yarns (A). Then K 4 with A, P 4 with the other (B), to the end of the row, **carrying the floats loosely across the back to avoid inhibiting the yarn's energy**. On the return row, (K 4 B, P 4 A) three times, so you are building up little blocks of four stitches. Repeat these rows twice, for a total of six rows. Now, switch colours and stitches, so that you **knit B** above knit and **purl A** above purl. **Except that**, on the first row, where you're changing colours, you **knit** them all, so the "purl bumps" on the right side don't spoil the effect. **Keep those floats loose!** Do this for a second group of six rows. Go back to the first group and repeat if you've any yarn left! Cast off.

With grateful thanks and acknowledgements to Kathryn Alexander.

¹ These needle sizes are only a guide and depend on your yarn's thickness!

S or Z?

Habitually, people spin with Z or clockwise twist and ply in an anticlockwise (S) direction. There's no reason of which I am aware why this should not be the other way round. Some crocheters prefer the latter. Ed Franquemont told me that the Inca people consider S-spun yarn to be mystical or even magical!

Some of us have difficulty telling them apart. We can easily tell that our spinning wheel or spindle is turning clockwise and therefore imparting clockwise twist. Is that S or Z spun? I think of moving my finger round the rim of my wheel as though starting to write a letter **Z**. The wheel will move clockwise. Conversely, if I trace an **S** the wheel will move anticlockwise.

On the other hand, how do you tell which way a yarn is spun? If it's thick enough, or multi-coloured, you may be able to see the diagonal lines formed by the twist. Here, I think of the centre "bar" of the letter **Z** (clockwise) or **S** (anticlockwise). If you can't see the twist, allow the yarn to ply back on itself. Remembering that a Z-spun yarn will ply S, and vice versa, an S-plied yarn will have been spun Z and a Z-plied yarn will have been spun S.

If you don't find that any of this helps, just ignore it!

Pete Leonard
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