

The Batten Down

Written for Nikki's Knots

Yarn: Oh! 2 skeins

Needle size: US 10

Gauge: After blocking, 4 sts per inch. Gauge is not as important for this project as much as having a nice dense fabric is, so swatch for a nice, dense stockinette if you're going to swatch. Other notions: Removable stitch markers, tapestry needle, cable needle, buttons (at least two), sewing thread, double pointed needle (optional)

Stitch key

K-knit

P-purl

Sts-stitches

RS-right side

WS-wrong side

SL2WYIF-Slip 2 sts as if to purl with your working yarn brought to the front of the work.

LT-left twist: Slip two sts as if to knit, return the two sts to the left hand needle, knit the second sts from the left hand needle through the back loop but do not remove it from the needle, knit both sts together through the back loop and remove both sts from the left hand needle.

RT-right twist: Knit two sts together but do not remove them from the left hand needle, knit again into the first stitch, remove both sts from the left hand needle.

C4F-cable 4 front: Slip two sts onto a cable needle and hold to the front, knit two sts, knit two sts from your cable needle.

C4B-cable 4 back: slip two sts to your cable needle and hold to the back, knit two sts, knit two sts from your cable needle.

This button cowl knits up quick and is a great option for using up any large, beautiful buttons you've been hiding away for a special occasion and the absence of a button band gives you the freedom to use as many or as little of those buttons as you like. The slipped stitch i-cord edge gives a finished and professional edge to the piece, but does take a few rows to really show up, so have faith and just keep knitting! The cables add great texture for very little effort, but can just as easily be left out if you prefer, though I highly recommend you go ahead and give them a try even if you're just a beginner. (I promise they're easier than they look and that while quite wordy to explain, right and left twists are quick to execute in real time and that cables are a great way to really impress your non-knitting friends for very minimal effort. A total win/win in my book!) I

find Michelle Hunter's videos at knitpurlhunter.com to be a great resource for learning stitches you don't know or for brushing up on a rusty bind off if you're feeling less than confident that day.

To begin, I've added a ribbed placket section to set the cowl up so that even if you get a bit of gapping around your buttons, you'll still be toasty warm. Draft free bonus! I would recommend using a more stretchy cast on for the cowl so that it can more easily maintain its shape. I have used a German Twisted Cast On, but use and stretchy cast on you prefer. I recommend attaching a removable marker to the right side of your work to help you keep track as you go (remember to move it up as the piece grows!) as it is important for future success to be able to tell the front of the cowl from the back.

Cast on 49 sts, begin working ribbed placket section as follows:

Row 1: (RS) K7, {P2, K2, P1, K2, P2, K4} Repeat the section in brackets to the last three sts, K1, SL2WYIF

Row 2 and all wrong sided rows: (WS) K2, P1 {P4, K2, P2, K1, P2, K2} Repeat the section in brackets to the last seven sts, P5, SL2WYIF

Repeat rows 1 and 2 until your work measures three inches from the cast on, ending on a WRONG SIDED row. Begin the main body.

The main body section alternates a twisted rib section and a cable section to create the pattern. Feel free to continue however you please, or even improvise if you are so inclined. I find following a pattern to the letter to be quite restricting myself, so if you'd like to go off here and make your own version, by all means, use this as your jump off point. Omit the cables, omit the twist, cable the whole dang thing! (Just understand that any improvisation you choose will affect your yardage.) If, however, you want a cowl just like the sample, complete the pattern as follows:

Beginning on a RIGHT SIDED row:

Twisted Rib Section

Row 1: K7 {P2, RT, P1, LT, P2, K4} Repeat the section in brackets to the last three sts, K1, SL2WYIF

Row 2: K2, P1 {P4, K2, P2, K1, P2, K2} Repeat the section in brackets to the last seven sts, P5, SL2WYIF

Repeat rows 1 and 2 nine times ending after Row 2.

Cable Section

Row 1: K3, C4F {P2, RT, P1, LT, P2, C4B} Repeat the section in brackets to the last three sts, K1, SL2WYIF

Row 2 (and every WS row): K2, P1 {P4, K2, P2, K1, P2, K2} Repeat the section in brackets to the last seven sts, P5, SL2WYIF

Row 3: K7 {P2, RT, P1, LT, P2, K4} Repeat the section in brackets to the last three sts, K1, SL2WYIF

Row 4: Same as Row 2

Repeat rows 1-4 three times, ending after Row 4.

Continue alternating the Twisted Rib Section and the Cable Section until your cowl reaches your desired length or until your yardage runs out, ending on a RS row. **Please ensure that you have at least two-three yards left to complete the I-cord bind off and to form I-cord button loops.**

To finish the cowl, bind off in an I-cord to bring it all together on the WRONG SIDE of your work to really make it look finished and sharp. Again, I suggest looking up a video tutorial if you are unfamiliar with this cast on, or if it's just been awhile. I will explain it here, but a picture really is worth a thousand words.

I-cord Bind off

Using a knitted cast on, cast on two new sts to the left hand needle.

Step 1: Without changing the position of the working yarn, K1, K2TOGTBL.

Step 2: Return the two sts on your right hand needle to the left hand needle.

Repeat steps 1 and 2 until only two sts remain, bind these off as normal, or experts (or confident beginners) can graft these last two sts in to the I-cord edge of the cowl for a seamless look. (I promise the difference is minimal and folks will be far too stunned by your fabulous, warm cowl and fancy buttons to notice if you decide not to graft your stitches in. Nobody is going to turn you in to the Knitting Police for deciding to stick with something more comfortable, but consider not having any witnesses to dispose of either. It's messy business and I certainly won't tell if you won't. If anyone is close enough to tell you didn't graft in an i-cord, they are TOO CLOSE in my opinion!)

Since this cowl is cabled, I do recommend very lightly blocking it once you're finished, but the I-cord edge should leave laying plenty flat even without it. If you do block it, simply soak and lay flat. DO NOT pull on your stitches while blocking or all that texture you knitted in will be for

nothing! Do make sure to block your **work before sewing on any buttons!** I know it's very tempting now that it's finished, but the cowl will lay more nicely and the buttons will sew on more evenly if you block it first.

Sew the buttons of your choice (very large or shank-style buttons will work best) onto the ribbed placket of the cowl and attach your I-cord loops wherever you desire them to hold your cowl closed. For durability, use sewing thread in a similar color to sew on your buttons and loops. Yarn won't do as good a job holding buttons on over time in a high tension area.

To form an I-cord loop, simply cast on two sts any which way onto a circular needle or a double pointed needle and knit them. **WITHOUT TURNING YOUR WORK**, simply slide the two sts to the left side once more and knit again. Continue in this manner until your loop is large enough to slide over your chosen button.

If your yarn is quite soft like mine, or if you find that any gap in your cowl is unlivable, a few sew-on snaps will work a treat and keep your cowl buttonable without sewing your ends together.