

"Maggie Belize" Knitting Patterns

The Better Catnip Mouse

My goal in designing this pattern was to come up with a "better" catnip mouse: one that was quick and easy to knit up, but that wouldn't come apart, or leak catnip all over the house!

The majority of pre-fab patterns that I looked at were either tail-less, or had a skinny yarn tail that a cat could pull off and swallow ... *not* a good thing for cat digestion.



So I designed my own catnip mouse with a knitted-on tail, felted to keep its stuffing inside. It's a great little stash-buster, and a fun toy for your cat!

If you choose to knit up my **Better Catnip Mouse**, I'd love to hear your comments, suggestions or critiques ... and I'm happy to answer any questions you might have. And if you'd like to share a photo of *your* finished item, that'd be great! Just drop me an email at Margaret@LocalGringos.com, or, find me as **MaggieBelize** on Ravelry.

MOUSE-MAKING MATERIALS

- Scrap 100% wool or other felt-able yarn, worsted weight, about **2 yards**. In my project, I used an anonymous bit of lavender wool.
- Scrap [Lion Brand Fun Fur](#) or other novelty fur yarn in complementary color, **about 2 yards**. In my project, I used Violet (Color #191).
- Straight knitting needles, US size 8 or whatever size works best with your yarn.
- Scrap yarn, black or brown, to embroider nose & eyes, about 12 - 14 inches.
- A handful of stuffing material. I like washable polyfill, but you can also use cotton balls or nylon stockings or whatever you have on hand.
- A pinch or two of dried catnip.
- Darning needle for sewing up seams & stitching face.



PATTERN STITCH

Garter (knit all rows)

GAUGE

Doesn't matter! Isn't that great? Bigger yarn & needles will give you a bigger mouse, smaller yarn & needles will give you a smaller mouse. (But you knew that.)

STEP 1. Knitting the Mouse

If you like, **refer to the attached chart** while following these simple instructions. Please note that I count the cast-on row as Row 1.

- **Row 1:** Using your favorite cast-on method and leaving an 8-inch tail for later seaming, CO 5 stitches with the worsted wool yarn. Join the Fun Fur yarn by twisting it around the worsted yarn, leaving a short tail to be woven in later, and continue to CO 15 more stitches. When finished, you should have a total of 20 stitches on your needle.
- **Row 2:** K15 continuing to hold the worsted & Fun Fur yarns together. Then drop the Fun Fur yarn, and K5 using the worsted alone.
- **Row 3:** K5 using the worsted alone, then pick up and join the Fun Fur to knit the remaining stitches (K15).
- **Rows 4 & 5:** Repeat rows 2 and 3.

You now have completed a square "bare face" for the mouse using the wool alone, measuring 5 stitches wide by 5 rows deep. All remaining rows of the mouse body are knit holding the wool yarn and the Fun Fur yarn together, as indicated in the chart.

- **Rows 6 - 18:** K20 with both yarns.
- **Row 19:** K20 with both yarns, then CO 15 with both yarns for the tail. You should now have 35 stitches on your needle.
- **Row 20:** BO using both yarns. Clip yarns, leaving an 8-inch tail of worsted for seaming, and a shorter Fun Fur tail to weave in later.

STEP 2: Seaming the Mouse

You now have a flattened mouse shape, as shown *right*.

Mine measured about 5 inches square. The face and tail are at two diagonally opposite corners of the square, and the other two opposing corners are plain.



- Thread the casting-on tail into a darning needle.
- Pull the two plain corners together, and whipstitch the 2 edges together, as shown, starting at the nose and ending at the folded-in corners.



Your mouse is now an open cone shape.

- Now flatten the open rear end of the mouse cone so that the mouse tail falls in the middle.
- Use the bound-off tail and darning needle to stitch this seam shut as shown, skipping a few stitches in the middle of the seam under the tail.

This leaves a small opening through which you can insert the stuffing after the mouse is felted.



- After stuffing, weave in any yarn ends.

STEP 3: Felting the Mouse

Since this is such a small project, you can felt it by hand in a bowl of hot sudsy water, or felt it in your washing machine if you prefer, along with other felting projects and a pair of jeans for added agitation. I felted my mouse in the washer.

- If you like, place your knitted mouse into a zippered pillow case or lingerie bag to capture the fuzz that it will shed during felting. (I admit, I don't always bother with this: my washing machine hasn't complained, and the mouse felts faster if it is loose in the tub.)
- Set your washer to its lowest water level, with the most vigorous agitation, on a HOT wash COLD rinse cycle.
- Start the water and add 2 tablespoons of *Ivory dishwashing liquid* or shampoo. Drop the bag containing your project into the hot sudsy water along with a pair of old blue jeans for added friction (no fuzzy sweatshirts or towels, as the lint from these will stick to your felted mouse).
- Close the lid and let the washing machine do its magic.

I like to check my felting projects every 5 minutes or so during the wash agitation cycle: stop the machine, pull out the bag and check your project to see how it's progressing. Use tongs if it's too hot to handle.

If the machine reaches the end of the wash portion of the cycle and your mouse is not yet as felted as you'd like, restart the wash cycle.

When your project is as felted as you want it to be, you can pull it out to hand-rinse in cold water, or allow the machine to complete the rinse and spin cycles.

Remove the now-felted mouse from the machine, squeeze out excess water, and shape it with your fingers. You can pull and tug pretty hard to shape the mouse, as the felted fabric is quite sturdy. Clip any dangling yarn ends. Allow to air dry completely before finishing.

STEP 4: Stuffing the Mouse

You now have a hollow felted mouse, dry and ready for stuffing. Use your knitting needle to poke stuffing into the hole you left beneath the tail, taking care to push the stuffing all the way into the point of the nose.

When the mouse is about half full of stuffing, you can optionally sprinkle in a couple of pinches of dried catnip. Then finish stuffing the mouse.

STEP 5: Finishing the Mouse

In the final finishing steps, you'll want to be careful not to leave any loose embroidery yarn ends that your cat could pull out. For this reason, my finishing method includes "burying" yarn ends within the body of the mouse.

1. To stitch the stuffing hole shut, thread the darning needle with the same worsted wool used to knit the mouse.
2. Knot the end, and bring the needle up from inside the mouse, leaving the knotted end inside.
3. Whipstitch the hole closed, knot the yarn, then run the needle through the body of the mouse.
4. Pull firmly out the opposite side, then clip the yarn, allowing the yarn end to sink back into the stuffed body.

Now you're ready to embroider the nose and eyes!

1. Thread the darning needle with the dark accent yarn and knot the end.
2. Pierce the end of the nose, leaving the knot on the surface of the nose's tip.
3. Satin-stitch a few stitches to cover the knot and form the nose.
4. Now run the darning needle into and through the nose, and bring it out where you want the first mouse eye. Satin-stitch a few stitches to form the eye.
5. Run the darning needle through the head, coming out wherever you want the second eye. Satin-stitch a few stitches to form the second eye.
6. Knot the yarn, then run the needle back into the body of the mouse. Pull firmly out the opposite side, then clip the yarn, allowing the yarn end to sink back into the body.

And your Better Catnip Mouse is complete!

Variations on the "Better Catnip Mouse"

Instant Catnip Mouse: Next time you have to knit a gauge swatch for felting, just knit a tail onto it as I describe here. When you've finished felting & measuring for your project, recycle the gauge swatch into an instant catnip mouse toy!

Prefer a Porcupine? The Better Catnip Mouse does bear a strong resemblance to a porcupine, doesn't he? You can easily convert him: in Row 19, instead of casting on 15 stitches for the tail, CO only 7 stitches for a proportionally shorter porcupine tail. Fun Fur in the *Lava* ("iron gray") or *Night Sky* ("stripes of black, iron gray and dark gray") colorways would be great felted with solid black wool for a porcupine.

How About a Hedgehog! Likewise, the Better Catnip Mouse would make an excellent hedgehog. Don't cast on any extra stitches at all in Row 19, as I believe hedgehogs are pretty much tail-less. If "realistic" is your goal, Fun Fur yarn colors like *Chocolate* or *Copper* would look wonderful combined with brown felting wool.

This is a "Maggie Belize" Knitting Pattern © 2008, designed by Margaret Briggs. You are welcome to download and print this pattern for personal use, or to link to this pattern from your website or blog:

<http://localgringos.com/KnittingPatterns/CatnipMouseKnittingPattern.htm>

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