

Frankie's Knitted Stuff

Puffballs

These crochet balls are fun to make and even more fun to play with.

Each one is about 5 cm / 2" in diameter and they make great toys for babies, cats, jugglers ... or you could add a cord and use them as baubles.



Yarn

The puffballs are made with DK weight yarn and a 3.5 mm crochet hook. You could use different weights of yarn as long as you aim for quite a tight tension so that the stuffing doesn't show too much. Obviously if you use thinner or thicker yarn, your puffballs will be a different size to mine.

For my puffballs I used seven rainbow shades of Stylecraft Special DK (295 m / 100 g). This meant that I felt compelled to make seven balls so that I could start each one with a different colour ... I know, a bit obsessive.

My colours were, in rainbow order:

Lipstick, Spice, Saffron, Kelly Green, Aster, Lobelia & Plum.

Each ball takes less than 10 g of yarn all together.

Puff Stitch

The balls are worked almost entirely in puff stitch which is what gives them that lovely texture. Once you've mastered it, this is an easy stitch to work; I found I got into the rhythm of the pattern quickly and the crochet raced along.

*Put the yarn over the hook, put the hook into the stitch or space and pull a loop of yarn through, repeat this four times, giving you nine loops on your hook. Now put the yarn over again and pull through eight loops, then yarn over once more and pull through the last two loops.

This is one of those stitches that's quicker to do than to describe but it really is easy. In the instructions below all that explanation will be abbreviated as 'puff'.

The Crochet

Each ball is worked in two parts and then sewn together. Begin with the bigger part, changing colour every round.

Round 1: Make 6 ch and join with a ss into a ring.

1 ch, (puff, 1 ch) 6 times, ss to first puff (6 sts).

Round 2: Join to any 1 ch space.

1ch, (puff, 1 ch, puff) in every 1ch space, ss to 1ch (12 sts).

Round 3: Join between any pair of puff stitches.

1 ch, *(puff, 1 ch, puff) in same place, puff in space before next puff, repeat from * to end, ss to 1 ch (18 sts).

Round 4: Join between any pair of puff stitches.

1 ch, puff in same place and before every puff (18 sts), ss to 1 ch and then the space between two puff stitches. Fasten off, leaving a long tail of yarn.

Note that you only make chains at the start of each round and then between pairs of puff stitches made into the same place.



This picture shows the crochet after each of the four rounds. As you can see, it naturally forms itself into a cupped shape so that the fourth colour is barely visible.



The second part of the ball consists of just the first three rounds and you don't need to leave a yarn tail. If you want to use your colours in a certain order as I did, remember to work backwards for this part. I have to confess I found this quite challenging.

Sewing the Ball Together

When you've crocheted both parts of the ball, you can use the long tail on the bigger part to sew them together.



The sewing up is strangely satisfying. It's based on mattress stitch, working behind the body of each puff stitch in turn. Start by putting your needle behind a puff stitch on the smaller part.



Then work behind the puff stitch on the bigger part in the same way and carry on, working behind each stitch in turn, alternating between the two pieces. This will pull the stitches together so that they lock in place like a zip.



When you've only got about six pairs of puffs to join, stuff the ball with a handful of toy stuffing and then close the ball.

And that's the puffball finished – bet you can't just make one.



Abbreviations

st / sts	stitch / stitches
ch	chain
ss	slip stitch



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