



THE BASICS

(YES, REALLY)

TUTORIAL
FiberDoodles by K4TT



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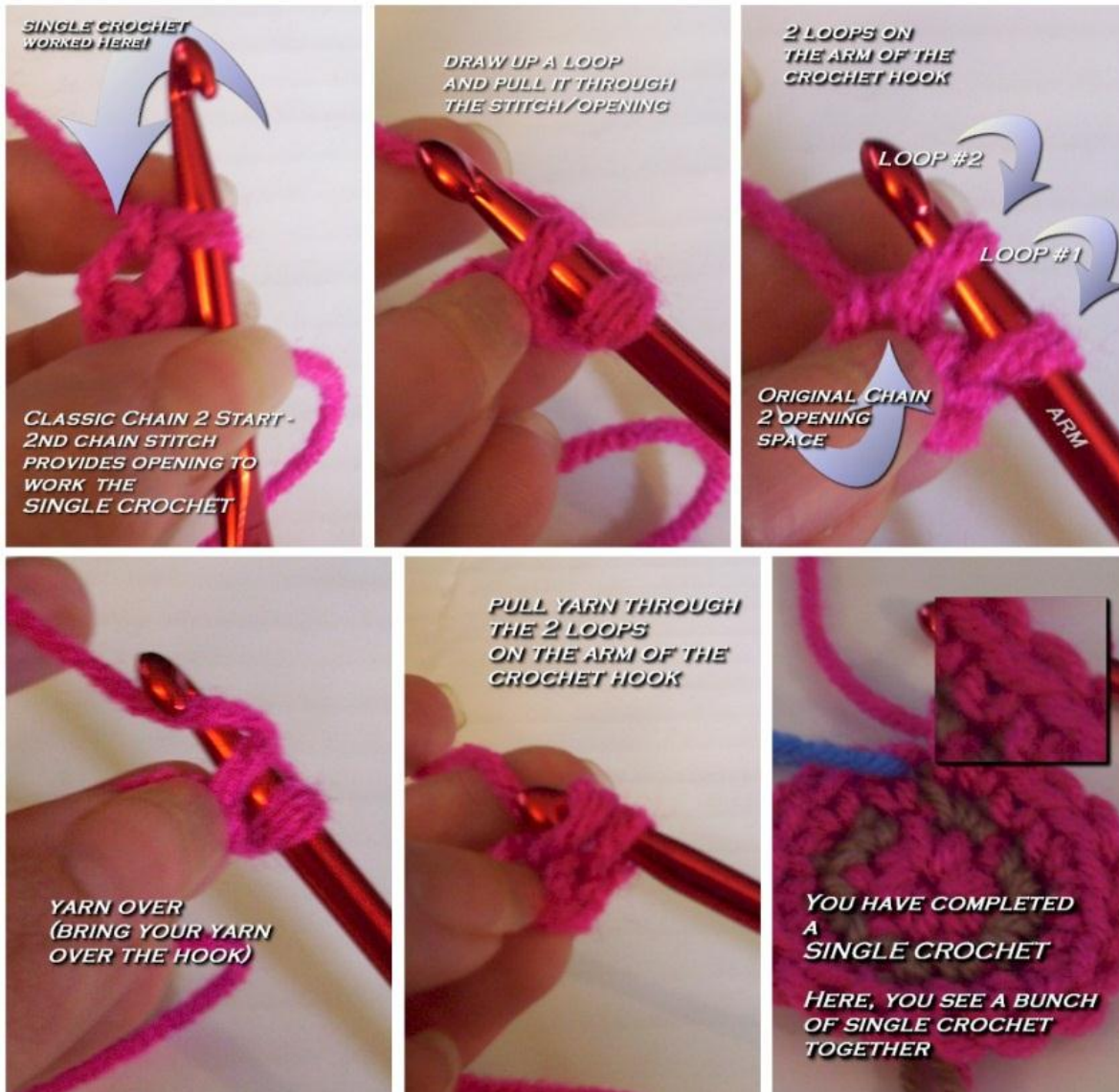
Single Crochet (SC): The single crochet (sc) is the most common stitch in any amigurumi project. Single Crochet is completed in a 3-step process.

1 - Insert hook into the instructed stitch (in most cases, the next stitch)

2 - draw up a loop and pull it through the stitch - placing the hook back on the side closest to you (2 loops on the arm of the crochet hook)

3 - yarn over (bring your yarn over the hook) and pull yarn through the 2 loops that are on the arm of the crochet hook.

You have just completed a "Single Crochet"



Working in the Round: Now that you understand the *Single Crochet* stitch, know how to best utilize it. True Amigurumi is going to be worked '*in the round*'.

This simply means that rounds are not going to be easily identified with the more familiar slip stitch/ch-1 method, it's going to be a sort of never-ending spiral that works from start to end -

with NO obvious breaks in the work. This makes keeping track of where you are, a little more challenging.

For pattern writers to keep track of where and when to increase, decrease, change colors or even for how long to continue single crocheting - instructions are broken down into "rounds" (rnds). Rnd 1: instructions, Rnd 2: instructions, etc.

When working in the round - it is really a good idea to utilize "Stitch Markers", especially when doing multiple rounds of the same size.

A stitch marker can be anything from a scrap of yarn, to a safety pin, to a piece of plastic that has been specifically designed to mark stitches purchased from your local craft store - anything that marks the first stitch of the round, is a stitch marker. Here is an example of the most common stitch-marker here - the scrap of Yarn :



It is NOT important what a stitch marker LOOKS like, it's function is the ONLY important factor!

****Note** - In FDbyK4TT written instructions, **M/M** refers to "Moving the Marker" - which simply means that your round is done, so you insert the Marker on the first stitch of the new round. *I only use this particular instruction when the stitches involved in any round extend past where the round should naturally end.* However, there are a few designers who use this (or like) term at the end of each round, to help remind their clients to make use of stitch markers in their work; so that it is easier to follow the instructions and keep their place.

For example, from FDbyK4TT Spencer the Sunflower :

___ Rnd 18: sc in ea of nxt 8 sts, Dec nxt 2 sts tog, sc in ea of nxt 5 sts, Dec nxt 2 sts tog M/M (14 sts)

This is most commonly done to place a decrease, increase, for shaping or in preparation for where stitches will need to be placed, in the round you are about to work. The above was

done to make sure that both of the decreases done on this round were positioned in the 'back area' of the doll - giving him a slight 'bump' on one side of the doll and not the other - unfortunately where Rnd 17 ended included 1 stitch of where the placement of the Dec had to be, to achieve the look I was aiming for. *(Okay for those doing the mental math in your head - that is a different lesson - yes, there are technically a 'total' of 15 sts made in the round - however, because you are using stitches already 'counted' - it doesn't count.. LOL - don't confuse yourself yet.. we'll get there!)*

Single Crochet Increase (INC) or (SC-INC): The single crochet increase (Inc) is completed by placing 2 single crochet stitches into the same stitch. Designers will utilize the single crochet increase when they want a round to grow larger. Each Increase adds 1 to the Round. So if you Increase 6 times on a round that already contains 12 stitches, you will end up with 18 stitches at the end of the round. $12 \text{ (original count)} + 6 \text{ (increases)} = 18 \text{ (total stitches)}$ *(Although you are making 2 stitches, remember that 1 stitch has already been counted in the round.)*

Single Crochet Increase is completed in 2, 3-step processes.

ONE:

- 1 - Insert hook into the instructed stitch (in most cases, the next stitch)
- 2 - draw up a loop and pull it through the stitch - placing the hook back on the side closest to you (2 loops on the arm of the crochet hook)
- 3 - yarn over (bring your yarn over the hook) and pull that piece through the 2 loops that are on the arm of the crochet hook.

TWO:

- 1 - Insert hook into the same stitch you just worked.
 - 2 - draw up a loop and pull it through the stitch (2 loops on the arm of the crochet hook)
 - 3 - yarn over and pull that piece through the 2 loops that are on the arm of the crochet hook.
- You have just completed a "Single Crochet Increase"



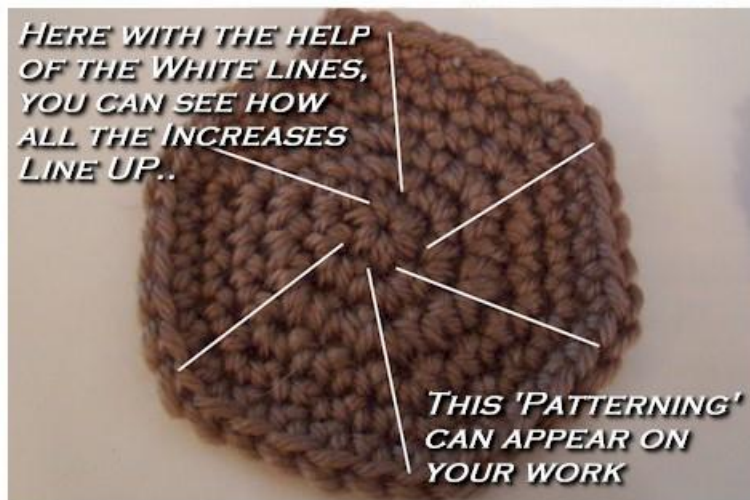
Now, more advanced crocheters like to "Hide" the Single Crochet Increases. This is not as complicated as it sounds, however, you will have to know :

a) if you can utilize the method without altering the project. *(Are the increases placed in a certain area to help create the shape? Are the increases uniformly spaced?)*

and b) simple Math.

To understand the Single Crochet Increase it is best for you to see the difference between the 'standard method' and the 'hidden method':

Standard Method:



AND HERE IS THE "STANDARD METHOD" OF INCREASES WITH THE INCREASES BEING DONE IN BLUE WITH THE SINGLE CROCHET STITCHES DONE IN THE PINK TO BETTER HIGHLIGHT THE 'PATTERN'.

MANY CROCHETERS DIDN'T LIKE THIS LINEY APPEARANCE ON THEIR FINISHED ITEMS- SO A METHOD WAS DEVELOPED TO CAMOUFLAGE THE INCREASES A BIT AND THE "INVISIBLE INCREASE" WAS BORN



Invisible Increase Method:



So Math?

Have you come across a pattern which tells you to "increase evenly 6 times" but doesn't tell you how many stitches you need to place between the Increases? (*Pet Peeve!! I hate when designers do that!! You are paying for instructions - not designing/math lessons!!*) None, the less, it happens. So, you need to employ a little mathematics.

Say you need to increase 6 times for a round, and the starting point is 12. Okay, so you are adding 6 to the 12 you already have, for a total of 18 stitches.

NOW, divide 18 by 6, which gives you 3. 2 stitches are going to be together (this accounts for the increase) so there is 1 left over. This means that you will single crochet one time, between each increase for your even spacing.

EXAMPLE: So if you are starting with 20 stitches and you are instructed to increase evenly 4 times. How would you do it?

$$20+4 = 24$$

Since you are adding 4 to the round, DIVIDE 24 by 4 which gives you 6 - remember that 2 stitches will be worked in the same stitch, so $6-2=4$.

4 stitches will be between each increase on the round.

Okay.. so what does that have to do with an "Invisible Increase"?

Invisible Increases rely on EVEN numbers mixed with ODD numbers.

Odd numbers plus an increase on a round - you simply follow the count - example had the question been $24+4$ giving you a total count of 28 you would divide 28 by 4 giving you 7 ($7 \times 4 = 28$) and $7-2$ (the increase) = 5 (5 stitches between ea increase) you would work 5 single crochet then your increase. in other words - [single crochet(1), single crochet(2), single crochet(3), single crochet(4), single crochet(5), increase (6&7)] would be done 4 times for an end total of 28 stitches

BUT.. because in **our original** example you have a total of 4 stitches between each Increase - $24=6 \times 4$ then $6-2=4$.. to work the Invisible Increase you would divide the even number in half, so that you have even (same) numbers on BOTH sides of the increase.

... so each 'grouping' would look like this - single crochet(1), single crochet(2), increase(3&4), single crochet(5), single crochet(6).

Now, when you are working the round, the only difference will be at the beginning and the end of the round.

For this example, you single crochet in each of the next 2 stitches of the previous round, then increase.

Now for the next "3 groupings" (making it a total of 4 times that you add the increases), it will be "4 single crochets" between each increase - **however** after the 4th increase you will only need 2 single crochets to complete the round.

Now before you say.. OMG that is too confusing - it's really not. It's only written differently than you are used to seeing it - in practice, it will be perfectly clear.. (in many cases designers will not 'tell you' to work your rounds like this - it's one of those "if you know it, you know it" things. The instructions will most often be written in their simplest form. Go a head and try it!

ODD rnds will be in blue to help you concentrate on only the Invisible Increase Rounds -

start with 6 single crochet however you would normally begin a crochet round.

___ Rnd 2: increase in each stitch around for a total of 12 stitches

___ Rnd 3: [single crochet in the next stitch, increase in the next stitch] 6 times for a total of 18 stitches

___ Rnd 4: [single crochet in each of the next 2 stitches, increase in the next stitch] 6 times, but use the INVISIBLE INCREASE METHOD = (sc, inc, 2sc, inc, 2sc, inc, 2sc, inc, 2sc, inc, sc) for a total of 24 stitches

___ Rnd 5: [single crochet in each of the next 3 stitches, increase in the next stitch] 6 times, for a total of 30 stitches

___ Rnd 6: [single crochet in each of the next 4 stitches, increase in the next stitch] 6 times, using the Invisible Increase Method (2sc, inc, 4sc, inc, 4sc, inc, 4sc, inc, 4sc, inc, 2sc) for a total of 36 stitches.

See that wasn't hard.. was it?

TODAY'S THOUGHT:

It is absolutely near impossible to exactly replicate another person's handmade work. No matter how well the pattern/instructions are written - the finished items are not coming off an assembly line or 'template' and therefore things can and will change.

The way YOU hold your hook, the yarns YOU choose, the tension within YOUR grasp are just a few of the reasons that creating a carbon copy is not a realistic goal.

You are an individual, and thus, your work will be a one of a kind piece. Sure, it may look close to the original - but most designers will even have slight variations in their own replications of their own works. *(My attorney makes me submit multiples of my work for copyright applications. While they look nearly identical - there are always slight variations that, perhaps, only I notice.)*

NEVER consider your work "less than" or "not as good" simply because you have not made a mirror copy of a pattern you have purchased.

I have seen many of my own doodles - where the client has thought theirs was not as good as the model, simply because a color change made it look different or perhaps they did not contain as much stuffing as the model. And the truth be told *(although I have already told them)* many times, I think the variations LOOK BETTER THAN THE MODEL!

Handmade is about individuality - it's about the love that goes into completing a project and the pride in what you've created. If each project looked exactly the same, then it wouldn't be handmade!

So, now that we understand how to make a single crochet, how to increase with one and the importance of Stitch Markers when working in rounds - and before you get into any sort of stitch variations, it's important to learn decreasing of single crochets.

After all, what goes up, eventually will need to come back down.. right?

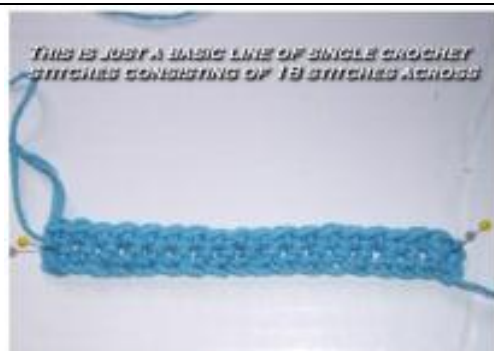
Well, yeah, sure - you could always make 2 halves and sew them together - but as one who detests sewing ANYTHING - I'd rather toss in a few decreases and make life simpler.

So with that in mind - there are at least 3 ways to decrease single crochet stitches. There's the standard method, the "invisible method" and the ... hmm.. "invisible (invisible) method"? Let's begin with the Standard or Basic Method (since you need to understand that before you can even attempt one of the invisible versions)

Single Crochet (SC-DEC): The single crochet (Dec) is the 2nd most common stitch in any amigurumi project. Single Crochet Decrease is completed in a 5-step process.

- 1 - Insert hook into the instructed stitch (in most cases, the next stitch)
- 2 - draw up a loop and pull it through the stitch - placing the hook back on the side closest to you (2 loops on the arm of the crochet hook)
- 3 - Insert hook into the next stitch (to the left of the one you just finished working in)
- 4 - draw up a loop and pull it through the stitch - placing the hook back on the side closest to you (3 loops on the arm of the crochet hook)
- 5 - yarn over (bring your yarn over the hook) and pull yarn through the 3 loops that are on the arm of the crochet hook.

You have just completed a "Single Crochet Decrease"



*** The photographs in this tutorial are worked on flat stitches, however, decreases are made with the same steps - mattering not if the object is 3 dimensional or flat.*

Now, I did say there were 3 ways to decrease a single crochet didn't I?

Hmm.. they are more like "variations" based on the "Basic/Standard" method of decreasing - the **1st**. So before attempting the variations, make sure you understand the basic (it is very easy of miscount a decrease using methods 2 & 3, simply because the decrease stitch will be 'pulled').

The **2nd**, the "**Invisible Decrease**", is to only insert your hook into the FRONT LOOPS of the both (all) stitches to be decreased (*instead of the entire stitch that you are decreasing*), without drawing up a loop until the last stitch is added, and finishing from there just as you would normally to decrease a stitch.



This creates "less bulk" and therefore seems to make the decrease less 'visible' or even 'invisible'.

and **The 3rd**, is utilizing the 2nd method joined with the same techniques I shared with you for the "*Invisible Increase*" in Part I of this tutorial - spacing out those Decreases so that they do not line up and create the 'decrease seam'.

All very easy.. yes?

and certainly not to be confused with the "skipping" of a stitch to 'decrease' in an area.

Stuffing



Stuffing depends on availability, more so than desire sometimes. Here in the states, I have 2 brands of fill that I use: Morning Glory fill and Polyfil fill.

Morning Glory is a cotton ball-y like textured fill that works GREAT for feet and small items which need to be firm and supportive for the overall functionality of the project.

The Poly-fil, is more like stuffing with air.. light and fluffy, which makes for squishy bodies and hugable friends.

No matter what type of fill you use.. always, **ALWAYS**.. separate it/fluff it, before just cramming a big wad into your piece. Take the time to adequately prepare your fill - or it will show in your finished work as 'rolls' or 'lumps'; producing a finished item that you will be less than satisfied with.

Stuffing is **NOT** about speed - it's about adequately filling your piece to **IT'S** potential.

Now, I do not care what anyone says... when it comes to stuffing a project, it is a matter of 'personal' tastes as well as style. Many of my clients are amazed at just how heavy my amigurumi is compared to others they have purchased.

I tend to stuff my pieces very firmly (over-all) because I have a very tight hand (*gauge*) while crocheting (*which means that the stitches are very tight together and I can really get a lot of*

fill in without it showing through the stitches). This comes from years of working with thread. So feet and body are often weighty on several of my dolls which are more for show than play, such as Maximus and Lu .

Others, have a very loose hand (*gauge*) and therefore, the stitches have more spacing between them, so they cannot use as much fill without it peeking out between their stitches.

You want to stuff a project completely - meaning, you want the belly or head or arm/leg to look full and not con-caved, bumpy or limp. The most important items on your amigurumi are going to be your focal points - usually the HEAD and the FEET! You can sort of .. fudge the body because arms, dresses and even colors.. can deflect attention from it, and still allow you to have a not perfect, but fully stuffed base, without throwing off the overall look of your project. However, an incorrectly stuffed head or foot is going to stick out like a soar thumb! Take your time when stuffing these areas especially!

When stuffing feet, that are going to be the foundation for most amigurumi projects and needed to help your amigurumi stand unassisted - **ALWAYS** use a hard surface such as a tabletop or floor. You will need the bottoms of those feet to be entirely flat and stuffed firmly - therefore you are going to need something that is **NOT** going to give into you pushing against it, while inserting your fill.

If you stuff too lightly, your piece will not have the support it needs and therefore, you will have a finished item that may/may not be able to stand alone or function as intended.

When you are stuffing your head, use small amounts of fill at a time. A smaller head can be 'molded' in the palm of your hand while you are working to help keep it 'round' or even oval.

Don't be afraid to do some 'shaping'.. it's only fiber and filling.. it's not going to bite you. Depending on what type of 'fiber' you've used, some slight help in the shape department might be absolutely necessary.

Stuffing is a skill which will come with **practice, patience and TIME.**

There is no perfect measurement that can be given to adding stuffing. It's not some mathematical formula which can be written down to calculate exactly how much you will need for each piece. Your first amigurumi is not going to be (*most likely*) a perfectly stuffed piece - it takes time to get the feel, the *right* feel and overall look, that you will want to have for YOUR pieces. There are times, when even the 'experts' - take it out, re-fluff it up and re-insert their fill... persistence and patience are the key.

Chain 2 V.s. Magic Circle

I was asked if I planned on working the "Magic Circle/Adjustable Ring" (more specifically the "Double Magic Circle") Start for amigurumi projects into this "Basics Tutorial".

No, I am not getting into the whole 'magic loop' Vs Ch-2 start. I was taught to use the ch-2 start when applicable, and I do not have "holes" in the beginning of my work - so I've had little interest in retraining myself in this method. The magic circle is not comfortable for me and therefore, I do not feel educated enough to write about it. However, there are many wonderful tutorials written online and even videos which you can watch if this is the method you'd like to pursue.

When I write out my patterns, I always make sure to include those who prefer to use the 'Magic Circle' methods by stating: "*Using either the [ch 2, begin work in 2nd st from hook] or [magic circle] method to begin project...*" It is simply a personal preference.

Now.. let's put all this into practice with a little 'exercise' yes? Utilize the information you have gained from this tutorial to make a bang! *(If all this is old news to you, well you can just make a free project, if you'd like!)* Either way, a little holiday fun for you from FiberDoodles by K4TT.

On to the workout...

For this exercise, I used a Size G/6 - 4.25 Crochet Hook (US) and Red Heart Worsted Weight Yarns in Red, Black and White

STUFF AS YOU WORK - I DO NOT USE 'STUFF HERE' INDICATORS.

BODY (MAKE 1):

with Red,

___ Rnd 1: Using either the [ch 2, begin work in 2nd st from hook] or [magic circle] method to begin project, 6 sc (6 sts)

___ Rnd 2: [Inc in nxt st] 6 times (12 sts)

___ Rnd 3: [sc in nxt st, Inc in nxt st] 6 times (18 sts)

___ Rnd 4: [sc in ea of nxt 2 sts, Inc in nxt st] 6 times (24 sts)

___ Rnd 5: [sc in ea of nxt 3 sts, Inc in nxt st] 6 times (30 sts)

___ Rnd 6: in BLO, sc in ea st around (30 sts)

___ Rnds 7-8: sc in ea st around (30 sts/ea rnd)

___ Rnd 9: [sc in ea of nxt 8 sts, Dec nxt 2 sts tog] 3 times (27 sts)

___ Rnds 10-11: sc in ea st around (27 sts/ea rnd)

___ Rnd 12: [sc in ea of nxt 7 sts, Dec nxt 2 sts tog] 3 times (24 sts)

___ Rnds 13-24: sc in ea st around (24 sts/ea rnd)

___ Rnd 25: [sc in ea of nxt 7 sts, Inc in nxt st] 3 times (27 sts)

___ Rnds 26-27: sc in ea st around (27 sts/ea rnd)

___ Rnd 28: [sc in ea of nxt 8 sts, Inc in nxt st] 3 times (30 sts)

___ Rnds 29-30: sc in ea st around (30 sts/ea rnd)

___ Rnd 31: in FLO, sc in ea st around (30 sts)

___ Rnd 32: [sc in ea of nxt 3 sts, Dec nxt 2 sts tog] 6 times (24 sts)

___ Rnd 33: [sc in ea of nxt 2 sts, Dec nxt 2 sts tog] 6 times (18 sts)

___ Rnd 34: [sc in nxt st, Dec nxt 2 sts tog] 6 times (12 sts)

___ Rnd 35: [Dec nxt 2 sts tog] 6 times (6 sts)

Finish off, weave tail into FLO of Rnd 35 to close opening and hide tail.

EYES (MAKE 1):

with White,

Chain 4,

___ Rnd 1: Inc in 2nd ch from hook, sc in nxt st, 4 sc in end ch st - turn piece to allow you to work up the other side of original beg chain (as if a flat round), sc in nxt st, Inc in last st. (10 sts)

___ Rnd 2: sc in nxt st, 3 sc in nxt st, slst in ea of nxt 2 sts, 3 sc in nxt st, sc in ea of nxt 2 sts, Inc in ea of nxt 2 sts, sc in nxt st.

Finish off, leaving sufficient tail remaining to secure eye base to body.

Using black, outline and split the 'eye base' to create 2 separate eyeballs.

Add a pupil with either a small bead or black yarn.

ARM (MAKE 2): **MODEL'S ARMS ARE NOT STUFFED AT ALL*

with White,

___ Rnd 1: Using either the [ch 2, begin work in 2nd st from hook] or [magic circle] method to begin project, 6 sc (6 sts)

___ Rnd 2: [Inc in nxt st] 6 times (12 sts)

___ Rnds 3-5: sc in ea st around (12 sts/ea rnd)

___ Rnd 6: [sc in ea of nxt 2 sts, Dec nxt 2 sts tog] 3 times (9 sts)

___ Rnd 7: [sc in nxt st, Dec nxt 2 sts tog] 3 times, changing to Black on last st (6 sts)

with Black,

___ Rnds 8-14: sc in ea st around (6 sts/ea rnd)

Finish Off, leaving sufficient tail remaining to secure Arm to Body.

You can add finishing touches by sc around color change to create the appearance of a glove cuff and/or creating a 'bobble' stitch thumb.

FOOT (MAKE 2):

with White,

Chain 3,

___ Rnd 1: Inc in 2nd ch from hook, 4 sc in end ch st - turn piece to allow you to work up the other side of original beg chain (as if a flat round), Inc in last st. (8 sts)

___ Rnd 2: [Inc in nxt st, sc in ea of nxt 2 sts, Inc in nxt st] twice (12 sts)

___ Rnd 3: [sc in nxt st, Inc in nxt st] 6 times (18 sts)

___ Rnds 4-6: sc in ea st around (18 sts/ea rnd)

___ Rnd 7: sc in ea of nxt 3 sts, (Dec nxt 2 sts tog) 3 times, sc in ea of nxt 9 sts (15 sts)

___ Rnd 8: sc in ea of nxt 2 sts, (Dec nxt 2 sts tog) 3 times, sc in ea of nxt 7 sts (12 sts)

___ Rnd 9: sc in ea st around (12 sts)

Finish off, leaving sufficient tail remaining to secure foot to lower front of body.

FUSE: with Black, Chain 18, slst in 2nd chain from hook and in ea ch remaining.

Secure to center top of Body.

You can add another 'Bobble' or 'Popcorn' Stitch, to create a nose. Add any other special features to create your own Amigurumi Friend.



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