Learn-to-knit Neck Warmer
by Will Granger

       A few weeks ago I taught one of my coworkers to knit. I wanted to give her a project to work on right away. From my early knitting experiments I knew that if I wanted her to be excited about knitting and not hate it, the pattern needed to be something super basic, fast and wearable. Scarves take too long for a beginner in my opinion. I didn't want her to give up before she was able to finish a project. A simple garter stitch neck warmer with buttons is the perfect project to learn casting on, knitting, binding off, and some finishing. Best of all it is cute and wearable.

Materials:
One skein bulky weight yarn: ~50 yards, plus extra for mistakes, differences in gauge, etc
      Sample used Elann Peruvian Highland Chunky, but a readily available alternative would be Lion Brand Wool-Ease Chunky
US 10 or 10.5 needles: Use what you have. It works great with both and gauge is unimportant for this. If it's important to you, swatch with both and see which fabric you like better.
3 buttons: purchase after you have finished knitting to make sure you get the right size
Thread or embroidery floss to match yarn color
3 pieces of scarp fabric or stabilizer approx 1"x1" or larger

Directions:

Cast on 25 Stitches on size US10- US10.5 needles.

I find knitting-on the easiest cast on to learn because you don't have to remember anything but the knit stitch.

Knit in Garter stitch until the piece is the desired length to wrap comfortably around the neck end to far-side (see pictures).

The button holes are made by binding off the stitches for the button holes on one row and then casting them back on on the following row. I used the knitting on method to cast them back on. Backwards loop would also work but I find it harder to knit from and not as neat looking.

first button-hole row: K4, (BO3, K4) 3 times.
second button-hole row: K4, (CO3, K4) 3 times.
Knit 5 more rows and bind off.

If you are going to wash and/or block, do it here, before you buy buttons. Your buttons holes my stretch in the process of washing/blocking and you want to make sure they are a good fit. I recommend taking the scarf with you to buy the buttons. The buttons should go through the button holes snugly but easily.

Fold the neck warmer as shown in the photos so you can see where the button holes hit the opposite side of the neck warmer. Use locking stitch markers or safety pins to mark where the buttons should go and unfold the neck warmer so you can sew the buttons on.

Sandwich the neck warmer between the button and a small piece of stabilizer or sturdy fabric. Using embroidery thread, sew the button on through both the knit fabric of the neck warmer and the stabilizing fabric. This will give you a more stable fabric to sew the button to and help prevent the thread from cutting through the yarn with wear.

Remove whatever you used to mark the spot for the buttons as you go. They aren't part of the finished piece ;)

Wear with pride!

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However, please note that this is the exception to the rule. It is specifically granted for this pattern only (not that I've written any other patterns, but you know, other designers, trying to make a living and all that).

Happy knitting!