A BONUS FROM THE CROCHET PORTRAIT KIT

Step-by-Step Photo Guide



How to choose a photo, build a color-coded pattern, and stitch it row by row in single crochet.

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FOR PERSONAL USE WITH YOUR KIT ACCESS

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How to use this guide

This guide is the reference that sits next to the Photo to Pattern and Name to Pattern tools. It does not replace the tools, and it does not assume you already make portraits. It does assume you can work US single crochet.

Work through the chapters in order the first time. After that, use the troubleshooting pages and the printable worksheets whenever you start a new piece. A companion bonus, *Finishing & Framing*, covers blocking, borders, framing, pillows, and hangings. A third bonus, *Order-Ready Kit*, covers pricing and messages if you want to take custom work.

This guide uses **US crochet terms** throughout. The stitch for the portrait itself is US single crochet (the UK term is double crochet). When this guide says "pattern," it means the color-coded grid you generate from a photo or a name — one square, one stitch — not a written stitch-by-stitch script.

> A NOTE ON SPEED AND RESULTS
>
> A first portrait takes patience. Likeness depends on the photo, the number of colors, your gauge, and careful color changes. This guide will not claim that every photo works, or that a piece comes together in a few minutes.

The pages that follow are written for a working copy you can keep beside the hook: mark rows as you go, and write your own gauge numbers in the planner at the back.

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CHAPTER 1

What you need, and how to choose yarn

You do not need a specialist kit. You need yarn in the colors of your legend, a hook that makes a firm fabric, and a few ordinary finishing tools.

The short list

- Yarn in each color on the pattern legend, all in the same weight and, ideally, the same yarn line.
- A hook suited to that yarn — often one size smaller than the label, so the fabric is dense enough to hide carried yarn.
- A tapestry needle, sharp scissors, and stitch markers.
- A printed copy of the pattern, or a tablet, plus a way to mark finished rows (highlighter, sticky note, or row counter).
- Bobbins or clothespins if you plan to work large color blocks with separate yarn lengths.
- A notebook or the project planner at the back of this guide, for gauge, size, and dye-lot notes.

Yarn weight

Most people start a portrait in **worsted weight** (Craft Yarn Council category 4). The stitches are large enough to see clearly, the color range in shops is wide, and the finished piece is a comfortable size for a pillow or a small wall hanging. DK (category 3) gives a finer picture in the same stitch count, but it takes more time. Bulky or super bulky yarn makes a large hanging from a relatively small pattern, with less detail.

Stay inside one weight for the whole piece. Mixing a thinner yarn into a worsted portrait will leave dents; a thicker yarn will leave bumps. If you substitute brands, compare the wraps-per-inch and work a swatch in each color you plan to use together.

Fiber

Acrylic is widely available, easy to wash, and sold in many colors, which makes it a practical starting point. Cotton is matte and crisp, which can suit a framed piece, but it has less stretch and can be harder on the hands in a dense fabric. Wool and wool blends have bounce and often block beautifully; check care instructions if the piece needs to be washed. Whatever you choose, buy enough of the main colors from the same dye lot.

Hook size

Start with the hook size printed on the yarn label, then go down half a millimeter to a full millimeter if the fabric looks loose or if carried yarn peeks through the stitches. A firmer fabric makes a clearer picture. If the piece starts to cup or your hands tire, move back up a size and compare swatches rather than forcing a hook that hurts.

> A USEFUL TEST
>
> Crochet a small patch of single crochet, carry a contrasting color across the back of a few stitches, and hold the swatch up to a window. If you can see obvious dashes of the carried color from the front, go down a hook size or carry more loosely so the front stitches can close over it.

US terms used in this guide

US term	Abbreviation	UK name (if different)
Chain	ch	Chain
Slip stitch	sl st	Slip stitch
Single crochet	sc	Double crochet (dc)
Half double crochet	hdc	Half treble (htr)
Double crochet	dc	Treble (tr)
Yarn over	yo	Yarn over / yarn round hook
Back loop only	BLO	Back loop only
Right side / wrong side	RS / WS	Right side / wrong side

The turning chain at the start of a single-crochet row is usually a chain-1 and does **not** count as a stitch. Work the first single crochet into the first stitch of the row. Count your stitches at the end of every row until the count is automatic.

CHAPTER 2

Choosing and preparing a photo

The pattern can only work with the information in the picture. A sharp, simply lit photo of a face that fills the frame will always be easier than a dim group shot taken from across a room.

What helps a likeness

- Even light, ideally near a window or in open shade. Hard midday sun on one side of a face leaves a shadow the pattern may read as a new color.
- Sharp focus on the eyes. In a portrait, the eyes carry most of the recognition.
- A crop in which the subject fills most of the frame. Extra background becomes extra squares you have to stitch.
- A plain or quietly blurred background, or a crop tight enough that the background almost disappears.
- Enough contrast between hair, skin or fur, and the background, especially if you plan to use a smaller number of colors.

What usually gets in the way

Busy patterned shirts, heavy filters, and sunglasses can compete with the face. A photo that is already small or heavily compressed has less information for the tool to average, so edges go muddy. A profile can work, but a front or three-quarter view is usually easier to read at a modest stitch count. Group photos are difficult unless you crop to one face.

Pets follow the same rules: catch the eyes and the nose clearly. Fur often benefits from a slightly higher color count than a high-contrast human portrait, because many of the ‘colors’ in fur are close in value.

Preparing the file

Use the original photo when you can, not a screenshot of a screenshot. Crop loosely first on your phone or computer if you like, but leave the final crop for the Photo to Pattern tool so you can see how the pattern responds. You do not need a published pixel minimum. As a practical test, the cropped image should be clearly larger than the pattern you are about to stitch — an 80-stitch-wide piece should come from a crop that is at least several hundred pixels wide, not a tiny thumbnail.

Permission and copyright

Only use a photo you took, a photo you have permission to use, or a photo released for this kind of use. A picture found on social media is not automatically yours to stitch or to sell. If the photo shows another person, ask them first. If it shows a child, ask a parent or guardian. If you are making a piece as a gift or as a custom order, keep a short written note (an email is enough) that you have permission to use the photo.

> BEFORE YOU GENERATE A PATTERN
>
> If you are in doubt about a photo, stop and ask. It is easier to change the picture now than to unpick a finished piece, or to discover later that you cannot share or deliver it.

CHAPTER 3

Using the Photo to Pattern and Name to Pattern tools

The tools do the mapping from picture to squares. Your job is to make a few clear choices — crop, width, and number of colors — and then to read the legend before you buy yarn or chain the first stitch.

Photo to Pattern

The usual path looks like this. Button names may vary slightly; the steps do not.

- **Upload** the photo you prepared in the previous chapter.
- **Crop** to the area you want to stitch. A tight crop on the face or the pet's head is the usual starting point. Keep a little space above the head if you do not want the top of the pattern to cut off ears or hair.
- **Set the width** in stitches. This is the main size control. A narrower pattern is faster and more graphic; a wider pattern holds more detail and takes longer. Chapter 7 shows how to turn that stitch count into inches once you have a gauge swatch.
- **Set the number of colors.** Fewer colors (often in the range of six to ten for a first piece) make a bolder, more graphic portrait and fewer yarn changes. More colors add subtle shading and more ends to manage.
- **Generate** the pattern and look at it at a normal reading distance. Soften or tighten the crop, width, or color count and generate again until the face is recognizable *as a grid*, not only as the original photo beside it.
- **Read the legend.** Each color in the pattern maps to a yarn. Note how many colors you actually have, and whether two very similar colors could be combined by lowering the color count.
- **Print** the pattern, or keep it on a tablet. If you print, choose a size at which one row is easy to tick off. If you have to print in grayscale, make sure the legend still distinguishes the colors — by symbols, letters, or numbers, not by hue alone.

> DO THIS BEFORE YOU BUY A FULL BAG OF YARN
>
> Generate at least two versions — for example, one at a lower color count and one slightly wider — and compare them. The first generate is a draft, not a commitment.

Name to Pattern

Use Name to Pattern when you want a word, a name, or a short date as its own piece, or as a band under a portrait. Enter the text, choose how tall the letters should be in stitches, and generate the pattern. Read it the same way as a photo pattern: one square is one single crochet, and the legend (or the filled squares) tells you which yarn is the letter and which is the background.

Letter height is a size decision, just like photo width. Taller letters are easier to read from across a room and use more yarn. If you plan to join a name band to a portrait, use the same yarn, hook, and stitch, and make the name band the same width in stitches as the portrait, or plan a border that bridges the difference.

Alphabet and numbers

The Alphabet & Numbers page is a reference if you want to add a letter or a date by hand, or check a character before you generate a full name pattern. Copy the squares carefully; a single missed column will lean the next letter into the last one.

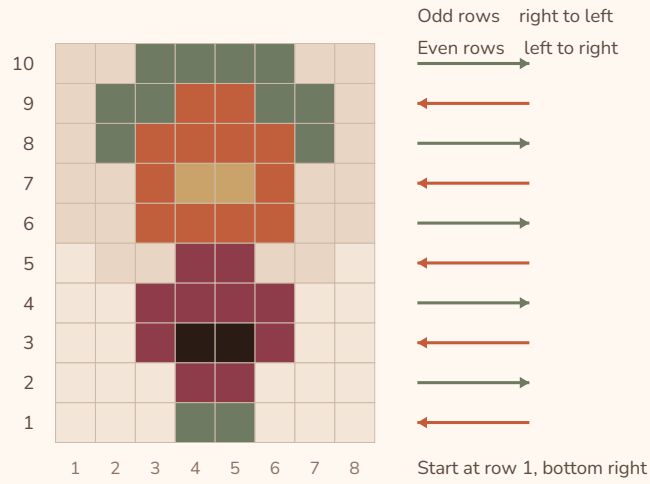
> IF SOMETHING IN THE TOOL IS UNCLEAR
>
> Use the help page that comes with your kit access. This printed guide describes the steps in general terms on purpose, so it stays useful even if the on-screen layout is updated.

CHAPTER 4

Reading the pattern

The pattern is a grid. Once you trust the way rows are numbered and the direction of each row, the rest is counting and changing color on time.

ONE SQUARE = ONE US SINGLE CROCHET



The basic rules

- Each square is one US single crochet.
- The color (or symbol) in the square is the yarn for that stitch.
- Row 1 is usually at the **bottom** of the pattern. Confirm this on the copy you are about to use; if your print numbers rows from the top, follow the numbers, not this sentence.
- For a right-handed crocheter working back and forth in rows, **odd-numbered rows are read right to left** and **even-numbered rows are read left to right**. That matches the way the hook travels after you turn the work.
- Start row 1 in the bottom-right square if you are following that convention.

Left-handed stitching

A left-handed crocheter often works odd rows from left to right. You can follow the pattern as drawn and reverse the directions, or flip the pattern horizontally before you print so the usual ‘odd rows right to left’ reminder still holds. Pick one method and stay with it for the whole piece.

Marking your place

Mark each finished row as soon as you complete it. A highlighter, a sliding sticky note, or a row-counter app all work. The row tracker at the back of this guide is there for the same reason. When a row has many color changes, you can also tick off groups of stitches (for example, every ten) as you go, so a knock at the door does not cost you a whole row.

> COUNT EARLY AND OFTEN
>
> The most common ‘the face looks shifted’ problem is a missed or extra stitch in an early row. Count at the end of every row for at least the first twenty rows, and again whenever you have just worked a long run of one color.

CHAPTER 5

Working the piece, row by row

Execution is mostly ordinary single crochet, done with a firm, even hand, and with the pattern in view.

The starting chain

Chain as many stitches as the pattern is wide. Some people add a single turning chain (chain the width plus one, then skip the extra chain when they begin row 1). Working the first row into the back bumps of the chain gives a tidier bottom edge, which helps if that edge will stay visible. If the chain twists, let it hang and settle before you work into it.

Row 1 and every row after

Work row 1 in single crochet, following the colors from the starting corner of the pattern. At the end of the row, chain 1, turn, and work back. The chain 1 does not count as a stitch. Insert the hook under both loops of each stitch unless a later finishing chapter asks you for a ribbed or textured border in the back loop only.

Keep the hook, the yarn, and the printed pattern on the same side of your body so you are not twisting to look. If you work from a tablet, lock the screen rotation and keep the brightness high enough to tell close colors apart.

Tension while you stitch

Aim for stitches that stand next to each other without gaps, and without a tight ridge at each color change. If your hands tighten when you concentrate on the pattern, pause at the end of the row, put the work down, and pick it up with the same ease you use on a plain swatch. A portrait that is stitched much tighter than its swatch will come out smaller than the size you calculated.

Resting the work

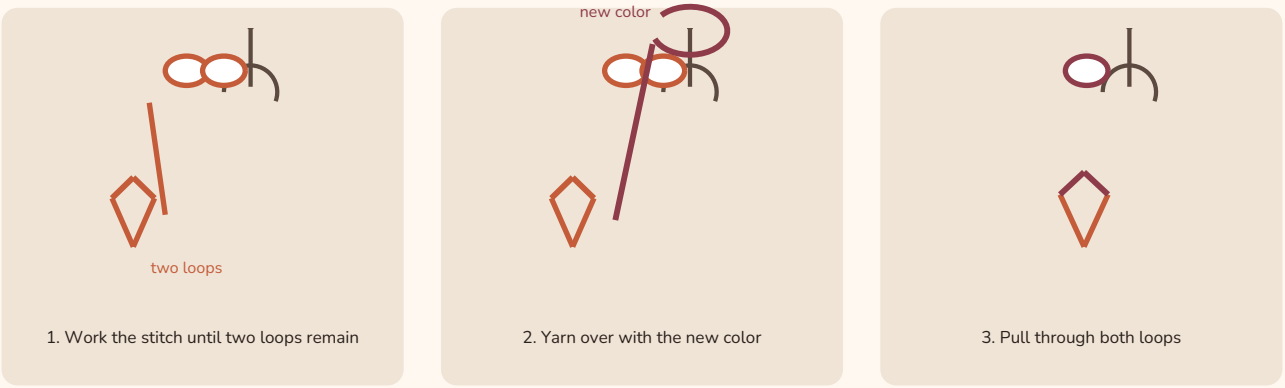
A mid-size portrait is a long project. End a sitting at the end of a row, not mid-row, and leave a stitch marker in the last stitch. Wind leftover bobbins so they do not unwind in the project bag. Write the last finished row number in the tracker before you switch off the light.

CHAPTER 6

Tapestry color changes

The clean edge between two colors is made on the stitch *before* the new color, not on the stitch that shows it.

CHANGE COLOR ON THE LAST YARN OVER

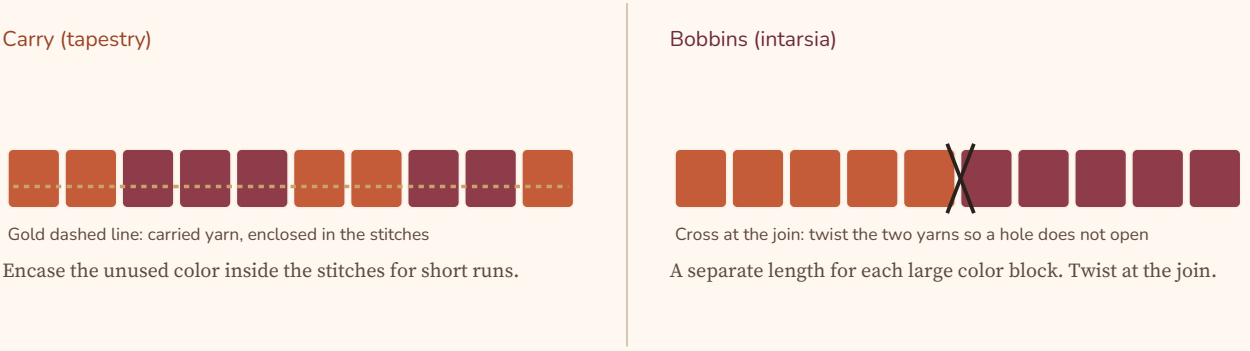


Change on the last yarn over

When the next stitch should be a new color, work the current stitch until two loops remain on the hook. Yarn over with the **new** color and pull through both loops. The top 'V' of that stitch is now in the new color, so the first stitch of the new color sits on a matching top. If you wait until the new stitch to switch, a little of the old color will show at the edge.

Carrying yarn, or using bobbins

CARRYING YARN VS BOBBINS



Carrying (tapestry method) means you lay the unused yarn along the top of the previous row and stitch over it, enclosing it inside the single crochets. This is the usual method when colors change often, as they do in a face. Do not pull the carried yarn tight — that is the main cause of puckering. Do not leave it so loose that it loops on the back and catches.

Bobbins (intarsia method) means each large color area has its own length of yarn. At the color join, twist the two yarns once so a hole does not open, then continue. Use bobbins when a color travels across a long stretch you would otherwise have to carry — for example, a wide background on one side of the head. Many portraits use both methods in the same piece: carry across a few stitches, bobbin a big block.

Managing tails

Leave a tail of about six inches when you start or end a color. You can work over a tail for a short run if the fabric is dense, then trim it close after a later row has locked it in. For a color you will need again in two or three stitches, carry it rather than cutting. For a color you will not need for a long stretch, cut and restart, or switch to a bobbin, rather than carrying a dark yarn under a light area where it may shadow through.

Keeping the back tidy as you go

A tidy back is easier if you do a little at a time. Weave in tails at the end of a sitting, or when a color is clearly finished, instead of leaving fifty ends for the last evening. Carry yarns at a consistent height on the wrong side. Do not weave a dark tail under a pale cheek or a white highlight. The finishing bonus shows how to neaten the back for a frame, a pillow, or a hanging; the habit starts here.

> A SMALL DRILL
>
> Before you start the portrait, work a 20-stitch swatch that changes color every two or three stitches. Practice the last yarn over, a short carry, and one bobbin join. That short strip will tell you more than a long description.

CHAPTER 7

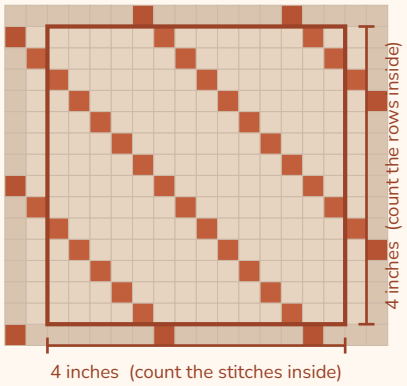
Gauge, sizing, and yarn amount

The pattern gives you stitches and rows. Your swatch turns those numbers into inches, and then into a yarn estimate. Always use your own swatch, not someone else's number.

How to swatch

Using the same yarn, hook, and single crochet you will use for the piece, make a swatch at least five or six inches square. Include a few color carries if the portrait will carry yarn, because carrying can tighten the fabric. If you plan to block the finished piece, block the swatch the same way and let it dry completely before you measure.

MEASURE THE CENTER OF THE SWATCH



How to read it

Ignore the first and last stitches and the edge rows — they often distort. Count only inside the marked window, with the swatch lying flat (block it first if you will block the finished piece).

Write down:
stitches in 4 inches
and rows in 4 inches.

Lay the swatch flat. Mark a 4-inch (10 cm) window in the **center**, away from the edges, and count the stitches and the rows inside that window. Write both numbers down. Those two figures are the whole of your gauge.

Turning gauge into a finished size

The formulas are simple:

- Stitches per inch = stitches in 4 inches ÷ 4.
- Rows per inch = rows in 4 inches ÷ 4.
- Finished width = pattern width in stitches ÷ stitches per inch.
- Finished height = pattern height in rows ÷ rows per inch.

EXAMPLE — LABELED SAMPLE NUMBERS, NOT A STANDARD SIZE

These numbers are an example so you can see the arithmetic. They are not a recommended size, and they are not an average.

Step	Example number	How it is used
Pattern width	70 stitches	From the Photo to Pattern tool
Pattern height	80 rows	From the Photo to Pattern tool
Swatch, stitches in 4 in.	14 sc	Counted in the center of the swatch
Swatch, rows in 4 in.	16 rows	Counted in the center of the swatch
Stitches per inch	14 ÷ 4 = 3.5	70 ÷ 3.5 = 20.0 inches wide
Rows per inch	16 ÷ 4 = 4.0	80 ÷ 4.0 = 20.0 inches tall
Example finished size	20.0 × 20.0 in.	Before any border

When the stitch is not square

In the example above, 14 stitches and 16 rows both fit in 4 inches, so a 70-by-80 pattern happens to come out square. Many people get a single crochet that is wider than it is tall. If your swatch were 14 stitches and 16 rows in 4 inches and your pattern were 70 by 70, the piece would be 20 inches wide and 17.5 inches tall — a little shorter than the photo's proportions.

You can accept that, change hook or tension and swatch again, or choose a slightly taller crop in the tool so the finished piece looks proportional. Some tools also let you account for a non-square stitch. What you should not do is skip the swatch and hope the fabric will be square.

Estimating yarn

The most reliable home method is to weigh or measure the yarn used in the swatch, then scale by area. If you cannot weigh the swatch, measure a known length (for example, two yards), stitch until it is used up, count the stitches, and scale from there. There is no single yardage that fits every portrait, so this guide does not invent one.

EXAMPLE — LABELED SAMPLE NUMBERS, NOT A YARN REQUIREMENT

Example swatch: 4 × 4 inches, and it used 14 yards. Example piece: 20 × 20 inches, which is 400 square inches. The swatch is 16 square inches. Yarn for the piece is about 14 × (400 ÷ 16) = 350 yards in total, all colors together. If one color covers about 40 percent of the squares, that color needs about 0.40 × 350 = 140 yards, plus a buffer. Buy an extra skein of the two colors that appear most, and stay in the same dye lot.

If the tool or the legend gives a square count for each color, use that to split the total. If it does not, estimate from the pattern by eye, and err toward more yarn for the background and the face tones. Running out of a dye lot in the middle of a cheek is a hard problem to hide.

CHAPTER 8

Troubleshooting

Most problems in a photo portrait come from tension, a missed stitch, or a color change made one step late. The fixes are ordinary, and they are easier if you catch them early.

Puckering

The fabric draws in, usually along a line of color changes, and will not lie flat. The usual cause is a carried yarn pulled too tight, or a color-change stitch worked more tightly than the stitches around it. Let the carried yarn sit at the same width as the stitches that cover it — you should be able to slide the fabric along the carry a little before the next stitch locks it. If the whole piece is tight, try a larger hook on a new swatch. Blocking (see *Finishing & Framing*) can ease mild puckering; it will not fully hide a carry that has gathered the row.

Slanted stitches or a leaning fabric

Single crochet can drift, especially if the first or last stitch of the row is skipped or worked twice, or if the turning chain is treated inconsistently. Count the stitches at the end of the row. Make the first stitch of each row into the first stitch, not into the chain space unless that is a choice you have already made for the whole piece. If the fabric leans even when the count is right, check that you are not working more loosely at the beginning of a row than at the end. Blocking will square a mild lean. A growing slant usually means a repeating counting error — unpick to the row where the count last matched the pattern, and go on from there.

Color showing through, or a muddy edge

A sliver of the old color at the edge of a new shape usually means the color was not changed on the last yarn over of the previous stitch. A shadow of a dark carry under a light area means the carry is showing through a loose fabric, or a dark yarn was carried under a highlight. Go down a hook size for a denser fabric, carry dark colors only under dark or mid tones, and use a bobbin for a large light area instead of carrying a dark yarn all the way across. If two colors in the legend are so close that you cannot tell them apart under your working light, mark the printed pattern with letters or symbols, or consider generating again with fewer colors.

The likeness feels off

Stop and look at the work from a few feet away, not only under your hands. A portrait often reads better at viewing distance than it does stitch by stitch. If the face still feels wrong after several rows of the features, compare the work to the pattern, not only to the photo: the question is whether the squares match. If they do, and the likeness is still weak, the place to adjust is the crop, the width, or the color count in the tool — on the next piece, or by restarting if you are still early. Do not add ‘improving’ stitches that are not in the pattern; they usually show.

A short checklist

- Does this row have the same number of stitches as the pattern is wide?
- Did I change color on the last yarn over of the previous stitch?
- Is the carried yarn sitting flat, not gathering the row?
- Am I still on the row I think I am on?
- Have I marked the row I just finished?

PRINTABLE WORKSHEET

Project planner

Fill this in before you chain the first stitch. Use your own measurements, not the example numbers from Chapter 7.

Project name _____

Date started _____ Date finished _____

Photo file / subject _____

Pattern width (stitches) _____ Pattern height (rows) _____

Number of colors _____ Hook size _____

Yarn (name, weight, fiber) _____

GAUGE (CENTER 4 INCHES OF THE BLOCKED SWATCH, IF YOU WILL BLOCK)

Stitches in 4 in. _____ Rows in 4 in. _____

Stitches per inch _____ Rows per inch _____

Finished width (before border) _____ Finished height (before border) _____

YARN NOTES AND DYE LOTS

Color, yarn, dye lot, estimated yards, skeins on hand

INTENDED FINISH

- ☐ Framed piece
- ☐ Pillow
- ☐ Gift, no finish yet
- ☐ Wall hanging
- ☐ Blanket or throw
- ☐ Other (notes below)

Notes (crop decisions, color-count tests, questions for the finishing guide)

Permission to use the photo? Y / N _____ If not my photo, permission from _____

PRINTABLE WORKSHEET

Row tracker

Tick each row as you finish it. If your pattern is taller than 100 rows, print a second copy and relabel the start number.

Project _____ Starting row number (if not 1) _____

Rows 1–25	Rows 26–50	Rows 51–75	Rows 76–100
1 ☐	26 ☐	51 ☐	76 ☐
2 ☐	27 ☐	52 ☐	77 ☐
3 ☐	28 ☐	53 ☐	78 ☐
4 ☐	29 ☐	54 ☐	79 ☐
5 ☐	30 ☐	55 ☐	80 ☐
6 ☐	31 ☐	56 ☐	81 ☐
7 ☐	32 ☐	57 ☐	82 ☐
8 ☐	33 ☐	58 ☐	83 ☐
9 ☐	34 ☐	59 ☐	84 ☐
10 ☐	35 ☐	60 ☐	85 ☐
11 ☐	36 ☐	61 ☐	86 ☐
12 ☐	37 ☐	62 ☐	87 ☐
13 ☐	38 ☐	63 ☐	88 ☐
14 ☐	39 ☐	64 ☐	89 ☐
15 ☐	40 ☐	65 ☐	90 ☐
16 ☐	41 ☐	66 ☐	91 ☐
17 ☐	42 ☐	67 ☐	92 ☐
18 ☐	43 ☐	68 ☐	93 ☐
19 ☐	44 ☐	69 ☐	94 ☐
20 ☐	45 ☐	70 ☐	95 ☐
21 ☐	46 ☐	71 ☐	96 ☐
22 ☐	47 ☐	72 ☐	97 ☐
23 ☐	48 ☐	73 ☐	98 ☐
24 ☐	49 ☐	74 ☐	99 ☐
25 ☐	50 ☐	75 ☐	100 ☐

Handoff notes (last color in play, bobbins to rewind, anything mid-change)

KEEP THIS PAGE IN VIEW

Quick reference

While you stitch

- One square = one US single crochet.
- Confirm where row 1 sits on your print, then follow the row numbers.
- Right-handed default: odd rows right to left, even rows left to right, starting at the bottom right.
- Change color on the last yarn over of the previous stitch.
- Carry for short runs; use a bobbin for a large block. Do not pull a carry tight.
- Count the stitches at the end of the row. Mark the row before you put the work down.

Size and yarn

- Width in inches = stitches ÷ stitches per inch.
- Height in inches = rows ÷ rows per inch.
- Yarn ≈ (yards in the swatch) × (piece area ÷ swatch area), then split by color and add a buffer.

The other bonuses

Finishing & Framing covers a clean back, blocking, borders, frames, pillows, baby blankets, wall hangings, and decorations. *Order-Ready Kit* covers pricing, what to ask a customer, and message templates if you want to take custom orders. This guide stays with the photo, the pattern, and the stitching.

Crochet Portrait Kit · Step-by-Step Photo Guide · For use with your kit access. Please do not resell or share the digital files.