

Neck Warmer or Wimple

Are you a scarf person? I'm not! I don't like the way they wrap like a boa around my neck, getting tighter every minute or how the ends trail all over the place and seem to end up in whatever I'm eating. And they are just not safe for kids on the playground, either.

My solution? A knitted tube that fits over the head and nestles quietly on the shoulders, shielding the neck from cold drafts and staying right where I want it to. A flared base will keep it firmly under your coat.



The model on the left was knit with about 4 oz of handspun. The gauge is about 5 stitches per inch. It's 28" around at the top, 40" around at the bottom, and 16" long. The wimple on the right is my favorite bicycle accessory - for those chilly morning rides, it can't be beat! It's a little more loosely knit than the brown one at 2.5 stitches per inch. I like to wear this up over my nose and mouth at the beginning of the ride, letting it pool around my neck as I get warmed up. It's 21" around at the top, 34" around at the bottom, and 17" long.

As with most of my patterns, you can use any yarn that you like. They are especially lovely when knit with handspun yarns. Don't be afraid to use those small early skeins (even if you think they're disasters) – you might be surprised at how great they look knit up, so pull them out of the Stash Drawer and get cracking!

First do a gauge swatch. I know, it is tedious, but how else are you going to make sure it fits properly? You could do a circular swatch and assume that it will become the beginning of a hat and that you will eventually meet someone whose head it will fit - it's not "wasting" any time...

Now, take a tape measure and measure around your head - under your chin straight up over the top – this is your ideal measurement. Your neck warmer should be about this big at the top - my measurement is 23", so the brown Neck Warmer fits loosely and drapes around my neck in soft folds, and the green-ish one fits quite snug and keeps the wind out. You need to decide how tight is comfortable for you and how you'll be using the finished neck warmer.

Cast on enough stitches to match your ideal measurement (+ 1" for a snug neckwarmer or + 5" or even more for a looser fit as in the photo below) onto a circular needle, join in the round (don't twist...) and start knitting. Very easy, very soothing.

When you get to about 14" +/-, it's time to increase so that it flares out at the bottom and will sit on your shoulders and stay under a coat or sweater. It's simply a matter of increasing evenly around, so divide your stitches by 8 or 10 and increase at those points by Make One or Yarn Over if you want to show off the increases with holes, every other round until it's as big as you like. I went about 3" and both of these neck warmers stay put nicely. Cast-off loosely and you're done.



There are many ways to make this design personal. Add color patterns, or lace, or cables (remember that cables will tend to "draw in") or make it all in rib for a very snug neck warmer.

Ribbed version - Cast enough stitches onto a circular needle to fit snugly around your neck, but still slip over your head. It's just a turtle neck without the sweater - work in rib until it's long enough (folded over, or not) and then knit a few rounds plain and begin to increase evenly around until it will sit comfortably on the shoulders under a coat. This is especially useful for children who are forever getting their scarves caught up in things - an accident waiting to happen...

A Wimple is simply a very long neck warmer that slips over the head, puddling around the neck and shoulders but still keeping the head warm. The start is the same as the neck warmer - cast on enough stitches to fit around your face + about an inch for a snug fit, or as many a 5" for a loose, drapy fit.

Measure your head from the front of your hairline, over the top of your head to the nape of your neck. This is how long a Wimple needs to be before increasing for the shoulder flare. Increase as above, cast off loosely, and you're done! The Wimple works great for those with long hair - it keeps all your hair inside, and doesn't flatten it out like a hat does. I like the way my ears and the back of my neck stay warm, and I have no scarf ends blowing all over the place in the wind...

The variations are endless! Make a dozen - you'll find a reason to wear them, trust me 😊

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