

Fingerless Gloves for Harpists

Original pattern by Martha Dahlen

Last winter, my harp teacher mentioned that he had received a pair of fingerless gloves; they enabled him to play outdoors, but he said he used them only as a last resort because they were so cumbersome. I saw the problem: the bulk of yarn on the palm side would interfere with finger movement. And I took it as a design challenge: How to make a pair of gloves that were warm yet allowed the fingers to move freely? My first thought was mohair, which is really light... but it's not really warm. My second thought was, what about regular yarn for the back of the gloves, but mohair on the inner, palm side?

I knit up a pair just that, and sent them to my harp teacher. He reports that they are "fantastic," allowing free finger movement, just as I envisaged! With that endorsement, I would like to share the pattern here, in case there are other knitting harpists (or indeed, any musicians!) in cold regions who might like a pair of such gloves.



PATTERN

For these gloves you need two types of yarn: one which is warm (e.g., wool, wool/alpaca blend); and one that is very thin, very lightweight---ideally, I think, mohair. The strategy is to start the gloves with the wool. After binding off the thumb stitches, add in the mohair and use it only for the palm—with double strand knitting for a few stitches to anchor it to the back of the glove.

Difficulty level: These gloves do not have individual fingers, and the thumb is simply an increase of stitches that are bound off. You need to be able to increase, add stitches, bind off and sew a side seam to use the pattern.

YARN: Base yarn: DK weight; I used Berroco Ultra Alpaca Light (50% wool, 50% alpaca)

Palm: Very lightweight, such as mohair or fingering. I used Valley Yarns "Southampton" (72% mohair/28% mulberry silk).

Needles: No. 5

Approximate gauge: 5.75 sts = 1" on US 5

Size: The finished glove, before sewing the side seam, measures 6" from cuff to fingers, and 5 ½" (stretchable to 9-10") in width. I have made only one size. Because much of the glove is stretchy ribbing, it fits a variety of hand sizes. To make it smaller, I would eliminate "K2" on both sides. To make it larger, you could use larger needles, or add 2 stitches on both ends of the row. When adding or subtracting stitches, I recommend multiples of 4 (2 on each end). In this way, when you sew up the side seam, you will use one stitch from each side, the remaining single stitches will make a pair—and the sewn glove will look seamless.



Directions:

1. Using the base yarn alone, cast on 54 stitches. On Row 1:
 For the LH (left hand glove): [K2 P2]x 5; K6; [P2 K2]x 7
 For the RH (right glove): [K2 P2] x 7; K6; [P2 K2]x5
(Note: In summary, you have K2 P2 ribbing, plus a center band of all knit (future thumb). The shorter "20 st" side will be the palm; the longer "28 st" will be the back of the gloves.)
2. Proceed in ribbing (i.e., knit the knits, purl the purls)—for about 2", ending with a WS (wrong side) row. *(Note: I usually do about 18 rows. If you want more or less, I suggest you do that—but then, in order to use the rest of this pattern without confusion --set your counter to read "18" after finishing this row.)*
3. Row 19 (both LH, RH): Work in ribbing. When you get to the center "K6" stitches, increase 1 in the first of the 6 and 1 stitch in the last of the 6 stitches, which then gives you 8 stitches for the thumb.
4. Work 3 rows in pattern.
5. On the 4th row, again, increase 1 stitch each side of the thumb (10 stitches)
6. Work 3 rows; on the 4th row increase as before, making 12 stitches for the thumb.
(In other words, you increase the thumb on Rows 19, 23, and 27.)

LH GLOVE:

7. Work 3 rows in pattern.
8. Row 31/RS: Add the mohair. With double strands, work the first 20 stitches in pattern; when you get to the thumb stitches bind off 11, leaving 1 knit stitch next to the "28" group. With double strands, P2. Drop the mohair; using the yarn only continue in ribbing to the end.
9. Row 32/WS: With yarn only, work in ribbing up to the three "double-strand stitches". Again, do them with both strands (this will be "K2, P1"). Drop the yarn. Using only mohair, where the thumb stitches were bound off, add 4 new stitches. (You make a new stitch by making a loop in the yarn with your right hand, twisting it, and putting the loop on the right needle. Do this 4 times.) The loops should be firm—neither loose nor tight. Continue with mohair only, purling the remaining 20 stitches. Note: From this point on the mohair palm will be worked in stockinette stitch, which means knit the stitches on the RS, purl them on the WS.
10. Row 33 /RS: Coming back, using the mohair work across the 20 palm stitches plus the 4 new thumb stitches. Then pick up the yarn (which should be waiting for you, right there), and, using two strands, K1 P2. Drop the mohair; finish the row in ribbing with the yarn only.

Continue like this, using yarn only for the back of the glove, two strands for the 3 stitches before the palm, and mohair only for the 24 stitches that go across the palm.

The number of rows is up to you. I usually do about 10, or 1 1/2", so that the whole glove is 6" long, and then bind off on Row 45 or 47. In any case, keep a COUNT of how many rows you do so you will know how many rows to do for the right glove—assuming you want them to match. Cut a tail a little less than twice the length of the glove, and use this to sew the side seam. Done!

RH GLOVE:

7. Work 2 rows in pattern.

8. Row 30 / WS: Add the mohair. With 2 strands, work the first 20 stitches in ribbing. When you get to the thumb stitches bind off 11, leaving 1 knit stitch next to the "28" group. P2. Drop the mohair. With yarn only, continue in ribbing to the end.

9. Row 31 / RS: With yarn only, work in ribbing up to the three double-strand stitches (the last three stitches before the thumb). Again, work them with two strands. Drop the yarn. Working with only the mohair, add 4 stitches, as you did for the LH glove. You do this by making a loop, and putting the loop on the right needle; do this four times. Purl the remaining 20 stitches. The mohair palm will be worked in stockinette stitch, which means knit the stitches on the RS, purl them on the WS.

10. Row 32 / WS: Coming back, using the mohair work across the 20 palm stitches plus the 4 new thumb stitches, then pick up the yarn, work three stitches with two strands (this should be "P1 K2"). Then drop the mohair, and finish the row with the yarn only, in ribbing.

Continue like this, using yarn only for the back of the glove, two strands for the 3 stitches before the palm, and mohair only for the 24 stitches that go across the palm.

Work the same number of rows as for the LH glove. Bind off. Sew the side seam. Done!

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

1. **Decoration.** For experienced knitters, you may like to put a design on the back of the gloves. The easiest way to do this is to create a panel in the middle of the "28 stitches" of the back of the glove, as follows:

K2, P2, K2, P3, **K12**, P3, K2, P2

With the "K12" center cable panel. You can do, for example;

>> 2 cables of 3 stitches each, making the classic "Y" cable.

>>"K1, 2x2 Cable with 4 sts, K2, 2x2 Cable with 4st, K1".

>> "honeycomb" pattern

2. **Yarn.** I believe you could substitute any DK weight yarn for the Berroco. For the Southampton, I'm not sure. This yarn consists of a strong central strand (silk) with fuzz (mohair). Knitting it with the relatively large needles used here makes a "net" which is both strong and slightly warm. It is sold by WEBS (www.yarn.com). The idea is to use something fine that won't interfere with finger movement, and that won't add too much bulk to the rest of the glove.

3. **Two strands throughout:** Instead of using mohair only for the palm, you could knit most of the glove with two strands, and then just drop the yarn for the palm. This makes larger, warmer, bulkier gloves.