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The Etiquette and Guidelines of Knitters/Makers Working for Designers in Publishing and Commissions

The Designer should provide the following for you to carry out the work

- A rough working pattern,
- A sketch or photograph of the design
- A brief, i.e. instructions on how the work is to be completed.
- An agreed fee which is either the amount the publisher or designer has in their budget or the amount you quoted (based on hours or your minimum requirements)
- A deadline for completed work or a rough time framework
- A list of yarns or the actual yarns themselves
- An address to which completed work is to be sent.
- A contact telephone number of the publisher or designer to ask advice or liaise on issues arising.

The pattern will be provided by the designer and must be adhered to wherever possible. If there is a problem or anomaly, always refer this back to the designer who will redesign and find a solution. *Do not work off pattern* and do not provide any design elements where you have not been requested to do so. Remember, it is the designer's work which has been accepted for publication and photography of your version of the design must match the published pattern so that readers can make use of it.

Yarns should be provided by the publisher or designer and then forwarded to the maker along with the pattern. If you should run out of yarn, please refer this back to the designer and do not supply your own unless specifically requested to do so. Wherever possible, yarns and shades should match the pattern and multiple skeins of yarn in one shade should all be from the same dye lot.

Needles should be the sizes specified in the designer's pattern. However, do check your **gauge**. If you think that your gauge is going to be different from the designer, contact the designer to work out a solution. Published gauges should be attainable on needles specified but obviously can vary with the maker. *If you do not have the correct needle size then let the designer know. Under no circumstances knit to a different gauge due to lack of correctly sized needles without approval.*

Make notes as you are going along. Sometimes a designer will have worked out a concept, stitch patterns and swatches but you may be the first maker to complete the whole garment. If you needed to adjust, add or delete stitches to make something work after discussing this with the designer then do make a note of this on your copy of the pattern. Write down the gauge you have worked to or note if the gauge has matched the

designers own. **Take a note of the time it takes** to complete each piece as well because that will be useful to the designer's planning as well as your own. You can also get used to calculating how much time something will take and work out a standard fee you are willing to work for.

Do take a note of the **exact amount of yarn used**, either in whole balls/skeins e.g. 2 x 50g **OR** in part balls e.g. 1 x 34g. Sometimes the ball band will state 50g and measure 49g on the scales so to work out a part ball you can either weigh what is used or weigh what is left and make a deduction from the whole taken before use. It is also essential to keep track of amount used in yards and metres which can be calculated by equivalent metres to weight e.g.

1x50g ball actually weighs **55g**

Ball band states **105 metres/115yds per 50g**

I have **17g** of this particular ball left

Therefore I have used $55g - 17g = 38g$

To work out in metres I have used: $105m \div 55g = 1.90m/g \times 38g = \underline{\underline{72 \text{ metres}}}$

Or in yards: $115yds \div 55g = 2.3yds/g \times 38g = \underline{\underline{87.4 \text{ yards}}}$

Please return unused materials to the designer unless it is agreed that you will be paid in yarn as well as maker's fees. In fact, if you cannot work out the maths above of how much yarns are used you can return them along with your notes for the designer to work out.

Quality control is important at all stages, i.e. making sure that your stitches are neatly cast on and that no stitches are twisted or uneven. Remember that photography can be unkind to knitting or crochet and the designer will not always be there at the final photo shoot to make sure the photographer gets the best side. Try to make sure that you do not split the yarn, especially those yarns that have been loosely plied. If in doubt, pull it out.

Finishing is just as important, wherever possible leave a long tail to weave into the back of the work invisibly. **Do not** cut the yarn ends so short that they run back or cannot be threaded onto a needle. A good method of weaving in ends on stocking stitch is to thread the tail onto a darning needle and take the needle under a purl bump on the back of the work and then again into the next diagonal purl bump. Ask your designer to show you her preferred method.

Pressing and Blocking should be done very lightly if you are joining the seams. However, if you have been asked to do separate pieces and are sending them to be joined do not over press and block as this will only have to be repeated after they arrived creased in the post. Some designers prefer to hand wash their own garments in special products after the joining is complete. **Always take care** to follow the ball band instructions for temperature and methods.

Method of joining should be agreed with the designer e.g. mattress stitch for two stocking stitch edges **or** double crochet seams on a blanket.

Storing your finished pieces flat and in non marking ventilated bags (short term) or between wax free tissue paper is advisable. Try to keep your work away from smoke, cooking odours or pets.

Method of delivery is usually dictated by the budget or deadline e.g. Standard Royal Mail if there is time or special delivery next day if needed. Costs should be reimbursed if they are not given to you up front so do keep receipts.

The deadlines given should be adhered to. Never sit on a project and think you can squeeze it in only to find you've not left enough time. Always be honest and realistic. If you find that a crisis arises, you must let the designer or publishers know as soon as possible so that they can make alternative arrangements. It is very poor practice and you may not be asked to work again if you go past the deadline and cut off all contact with your employers. Unfortunately, a lot of work in publishing can be very rushed and last minute. You may even be asked to do work at extremely short notice because another maker has let the publisher down. It isn't a crime to turn work away if you can't fit it into your schedule, you can explain you are busy this time but would love to be given a chance for any future work. Taking on more than you can complete can be destructive to your making career.

Negotiating fees can be an embarrassing experience for everyone involved. You will hear over and over again that there is no money in textiles. Wherever possible you can set your own fees but be prepared to let work go if they can't be met. Usually a designer will be given a very small budget to cover materials, their own design work, postage or travel costs and to share with the makers. We always try to be fair but sometimes there just isn't enough to cover the minimum hourly wage and in these circumstances you may decide to turn down the work or do it because it is fun and may lead to other projects. You may also do it because you enjoy being creative and seeing your handiwork published. You may also feel that it gives you a taste of what it might be like to be a designer or pattern writer and branch off into projects of your own after making the contacts you need. Whatever the circumstances and however low the fees are try to negotiate a written credit to yourself as a maker and if you set up a website or blog, you may be able to negotiate a link to it which will lead to further exposure and more work.

Finally *do not make it up as you go along*. If you are unsure of what you are doing, feel that your methods are different from the ones specified then discuss this openly with the designers or publishers. If all of this feels too rigid then I would advise that you become a designer yourself and then you can abandon these guidelines and make your own rules although you will still find designing and submitting work of your own has it's own set of standards. Take a look at the online magazines *Magknits* and *Knitty*, each has their own submission guidelines for designers. Take a note of the fees that have to cover the materials, making and writing of patterns and you'll see why designers at this level will share such low fees for making garments.