Flippable

by Lee Meredith - leethalknits.com

A buttoning cowl, in a squishy reversible stitch pattern which plays very nicely with variegated yarns, and makes striping look like stranded colorwork!

Perfect for an adventurous beginner knitter, wanting to make something that may look harder than it really is, and maybe learn a couple of new things, this project is no more difficult than 1x1 ribbing. The trickiest part is the one-row buttonhole (it isn't really hard, but may be a step above beginner level), which you can skip if you'd like, and close the cowl with a shawl pin or brooch instead (like the yellow and grey sample).

Flippable can be made in any weight yarn, and the fabric will be almost the thickness of two pieces of stockinette stitch fabric (in that yarn) held together, or about the same as squishy unstretched 1x1 ribbed fabric, making for a warm winter accessory. Because it's identical on both sides, you can wear the piece tons of different ways, folding it, twisting it, flipping it, however you like it best.

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You need

‣ enough yarn in any weight, 1 ball or multiple for striping
-- bulky: 100-160 yards / 90-145 meters
-- worsted: 120-220 yards / 110-200 meters
-- sport: 200-300 yards / 180-275 meters
-- fingering: 300-450 yards / 275-410 meters
‣ needles sized to match yarn (see gauge notes below) - a circular needle will be easiest for holding the stitches
‣ a ruler/measuring tape, and/or gauge checking tool
‣ 5 buttons (around 1 inch / 2.5 cm wide)

The samples

(1) Black Trillium *Moryx* worsted variegated (Aqua & Gold); US 10 1/2 needles; medium width, 8 inches / 20 cm tall

(2) Dream in Color *Groovy* bulky handpainted (Strange Harvest and Purple Rain); US 10 1/2 needles; small width, 8.5 inches / 22 cm tall

(3) Knit Picks *Chroma* worsted self-striping (Mesa); US 10 1/2 needles; medium width, 8.5 inches / 22 cm tall

(4) Imperial Yarn *Columbia* worsted (Pearl Gray and Wheat Heather), with *Chroma* (Mesa); US 9 needles; large width, 8 inches / 20 cm tall

(5) Knit Picks *Chroma* worsted self-striping (Mix Tape and Natural); US 9 needles; extra small (large swatch)

(6) Black Trillium *Merilon Sock* light fingering variegated (Hazel); US 2 needles; small swatch to show colors
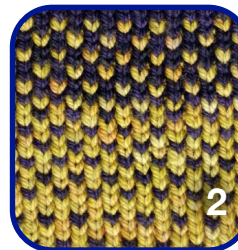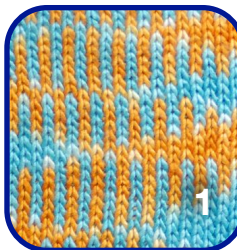
Gauge

This pattern is for any gauge. Because the fabric is so thick, you may like to work with larger needles than you'd normally use, to prevent the fabric from getting too stiff. A larger gauge will make for a looser, more flexible fabric. A tighter fabric will be a bit warmer, but may not be wearable in as many styles.

Sizing

The exact size of your piece will depend on your spacing between buttonholes, and also on how accurately you measure your gauge.

The pattern gives a range for how much length to work between buttonholes - for a tall cowl (around 9 inches / 23 cm tall), aim for the longest measurement; for a shorter piece (around 7.75 inches / 19 cm tall) use the shorter measurement. For an even taller or shorter piece, adjust as you want, adding or subtracting height.

Measuring gauge on your swatch is important and tricky - this stitch pattern is like a 1x1 ribbed fabric squished together, so there are 2 stitches for every 1 stitch you see on one side of the fabric.

For the most accurate gauge measurement possible, follow these guidelines:

‣ Measure a 4 inch / 10 cm piece of washed swatch, then divide by 4 / 5 to get your gauge per 1 inch / 2 cm.
‣ Measure it lying flat and completely unstretched - the fabric you're measuring should look like stockinette stitch, not stretched at all.
‣ Count each half of each stitch "V" as 1 stitch - this is the easiest and most accurate way to count both front and back stitches.
‣ Round up - if the end of your 4 inches lands in the middle of a half-V, count it as a whole stitch.

The width is given for sizes small{medium, large}, which are around 16 inches / 40 cm{17 inches / 43 cm, 18 inches / 46 cm}. You may want to consider the stretchiness of your fabric when choosing your size, as well as your style preference. Small size hugs the neck more, and is good for extra stretchy fabrics, knit in a loose gauge; large is more roomy around the neck, maybe better for tightly knit fabrics, or if you want a looser cowl; medium is a good in-between.

Techniques

Slip-stitches

Slipping a stitch is simply passing it from the left-hand needle to the right-hand needle without knitting (or purling) into it. Unless noted otherwise, always slip stitches with the needle going into the stitch as if you're about to purl, so that the stitch moves from one needle to the other without getting twisted. Stitches may be slipped with the working yarn strand in front (as if to purl) or in back (as if to knit).

Cable cast-on

* Insert needle between first and second live stitches, and knit a stitch, pulling the yarn between the two stitches, but don't drop the any stitches off the left-hand needle; slip the new stitch onto the left-hand needle without twisting it. Repeat from *, inserting the needle between the new stitch you've just made and the next stitch. Continue doing this for as many new stitches as you need.

Working with colors

Variegated yarns can make for very cool results in this stitch pattern (samples 1, 3, and 6 on the front) - normal pooling will often turn into vertical striping. Sample 6 shows how a many-colored yarn, too busy for many stitch patterns, can work excellently with this pattern.

By using more than one yarn, you can make a piece that has the appearance of stranded colorwork, but that's as easy as striping. These designs will work fine with yarns of slightly different weights.

When switching between yarns and starting a new row, do not twist strands, but rather let the yarn you've just finished working with stay hanging to the left, and the yarn you're switching to come up beside it to the right, to begin working. This will keep the strands completely hidden within the edge of the stitch pattern for a perfectly clean edge, as pictured in the dotted sample above.

Two by two stripes between two colors will make for choppy stripes (A). Work first color back and forth, then switch to the second color, as normal stripes of two rows each, carrying yarn strands up along one edge.

For a dotted design, you'll need two balls of your background color yarn (white in example B). In the following patterns, the background color will be called MC for main color, and the contrasting color CC. MC1 and MC2 are the two balls of that same background color - using the two balls will allow for all strands to be carried neatly up the edges, with no extra ends to weave in.