

Rainbow Gnomes

This parade of rainbow coloured gnomes is a fun addition to your Christmas decorations or you could just knit one for a quick gift.

The gnomes are knitted in the round using small amounts of DK weight yarn and stuffed with plastic pellets to help them stand up straight.

You will need ...

... a somewhat eclectic selection of materials. As well as the yarn and needles, this pattern calls for toy stuffing, plastic pellets, a pair of cheap tights, a jingle bell and a coin. Oh, and a pair of tweezers.

Yarn and Needles

I used Stylecraft Special DK (295 m / 100g) for my gnomes and knitted them in the round using one circular 3 mm needle (US size 2½) and the magic loop method. Tension is not that important but you do want a firm knitted fabric to stop the stuffing showing through. You will also need a pair of straight 3 mm needles to knit the beard, nose and the brim of the hat.

Each gnome is knitted in two shades of one colour, the darker shade for the body and the lighter for the hat. You will also need two more colours for the beards and noses. I used Stylecraft Special's Hint of Silver for the beards and Stone for the noses.



The colours I chose were:



| | <u>Red</u> | <u>Orange</u> | <u>Yellow</u> | <u>Green</u> | <u>Blue</u> | <u>Indigo</u> | <u>Violet</u> |
|--------------|------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|
| <u>Dark</u> | Claret | Spice | Gold | Green | Lapis | Emperor | Plum |
| <u>Light</u> | Lipstick | Clementine | Dandelion | Kelly Green | Aster | Proper Purple | Fuchsia Purple |

Other Bits & Pieces

The gnomes are first stuffed with a small bean bag, sitting on top of a coin for extra stability. I made my bean bags with 20g of plastic pellets knotted into a section of a pair of tights; you can get lots of bean bags out of one pair of tights.



The coins I used were 2p pieces which are about 2.5 cm in diameter (1") and the biggest ones I could find (well ... £2 coins are bigger but they would have turned out to be rather expensive gnomes if I'd used those).

The top of the gnome is stuffed with normal toy stuffing; the tweezers are handy for this when you get near to the top of the hat. A 12mm bell adds the finishing touch.

And now for the knitting ...

The Base

Using the darker colour and the long tail method, cast on eight stitches. You will be working in the round.

Start by knitting into the front and back of every stitch, giving you 16 stitches. Work the first kf&b with the cast on tail of yarn.

Round 1: Knit.

Round 2: (K1, kf&b) x 8 (24 sts).

Round 3: Knit.

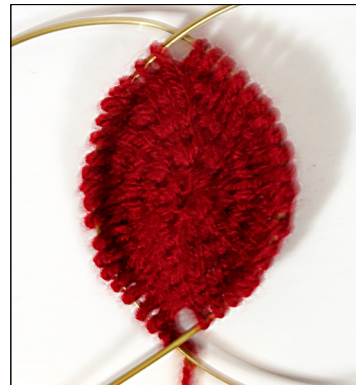
Round 4: (K2, kf&b) x 8 (32 sts).

Round 5: Knit.

Round 6: (K3, kf&b) x 8 (40 sts).

Darn in the cast on tail of yarn, closing the hole.

Your circle should measure roughly 5cm / 2" across although, as you can see, it won't look circular while it's on the needles.



The Body

Mark the start of the rounds with a safety pin now; a row counter is useful too.

Rounds 1 - 3: Knit.

Round 4: (K8, SSK, K2tog, K8) twice (36 sts).

Rounds 5 - 7: Knit.

Round 8: (K7, SSK, K2tog, K7) twice (32 sts).

Rounds 9 - 11: Knit.

Round 12: (K6, SSK, K2tog, K6) twice (28 sts).

Rounds 13 - 15: Knit.

Round 16: (K5, SSK, K2tog, K5) twice (24 sts).

That's the body finished so you can cut the yarn now.

Position the coin in the middle of the base and then add your bean bag, making sure that the knots in the tights are in the middle of the knitting where they will be covered by stuffing and the coin.

It's much easier to add stuffing if you slide both sets of stitches on to the cable of your needle.



The second half of the gnome - his hat - is knitted with the lighter shade of yarn. You shouldn't need to mark the start of rounds now as the 'jog' where the colours change serves as a marker. This will be on the front of the gnome and so will be hidden under his beard.

Rounds 17 - 19: Knit.

Round 20: (K4, SSK, K2tog, K4) twice (20 sts).

Rounds 21 - 23: Knit.

Round 24: (K3, SSK, K2tog, K3) twice (16sts).

Fold back the knitting and darn in the tails where you changed colour.

Now you can add the first bit of stuffing. Use small amounts at a time, shaping the gnome with your hand as you go. The finished gnome should be wider than he is fat; more of an oval than a round. Any lumps can be smoothed by a bit of poking with a knitting needle.



Round 24

Rounds 25 - 27: Knit.

Round 28: (K2, SSK, K2tog, K2) twice (12 sts).

Add some more stuffing now.

Rounds 29 - 31: Knit.

Round 32: (K1, SSK, K2tog, K1) twice (8 sts).

For the next lot of stuffing I'd recommend using tweezers to push small amounts in at a time, using a twisting action.



Round 32

Nearly there now.

Knit one more round and then cut the yarn, leaving a longish tail. Thread the yarn through the remaining eight stitches but don't pull them closed until you've added one last little bit of stuffing with the tweezers.



At this point, you might like to check the side seams for signs of the stuffing showing through.



The easiest way to deal with ladders like these is to darn over those little lines to double them. Just thread your yarn back and forth along the stretched part; you don't need to pull it tight.



You may or may not be able to see how much better that side seam looks after a bit of darning.

Now to add the little bits that turn a pear shaped piece of knitting into a gnome. I found it easier to knit these on straight needles.

The Beard

Cast on one stitch.

- Row 1: kf&b (2 sts).
Row 2: kf&b, K1 (3 sts).
Row 3: kf&b, pso, K2.
Row 4: kf&b, pso, P1, K1.

Row 5: kf&b, K2 (4sts).
Row 6: kf&b, P2, K1 (5 sts).
Row 7: kf&b, pso, K4.
Row 8: kf&b, pso, (P1, K1) twice.

Row 9: kf&b, K4 (6 sts).
Row 10: kf&b, P4, K1 (7 sts).
Row 11: kf&b, pso, K6.
Row 12: kf&b, pso, (P1, K1) x 3.

Row 13: kf&b, K6 (8 sts).
Row 14: kf&b, P6, K1 (9 sts).
Row 15: kf&b, pso, K8.
Row 16: kf&b, pso, (P1, K1) x 4.

Row 17: kf&b, K8 (10 sts).
Row 18: kf&b, P8, K1 (11 sts).



Cast off knitwise, leaving a long tail.

Pin the beard to the front of the gnome, lining up the cast off edge with the bottom of the hat. The side of the knitting that is mostly smooth is the right side.

Sew the beard to the body, along the top edge and then down one side of the beard and up the other. If you make your stitches between the bumps on the sides they will keep their uneven edges.

The Nose

Using the long tail method, cast on three stitches.

Row 1: (and every odd numbered row) Purl.
Row 2: K1, (m1, K1) twice (5 sts).
Row 4: K1, m1, K3, m1, K1 (7 sts).
Row 6: K1, m1, K5, m1, K1 (9 sts).
Row 8: Knit.

Row 9: Purl.
Row 10: SSK, K to last 2 sts, K2tog.

Repeat Rows 9 and 10 until you have three stitches on your needle again and then cast off purlwise, leaving a long tail.

Darn in the cast on tail and then use the long tail to sew a line of short running stitches round the edge of the knitting and gather it into a circle. If you then gather the new edge of the shape it will tighten the circle a bit more and tidy it up.

Position the nose in the middle of the gnome's front so that about a third of it is above the top of the beard and two thirds below.

Sew the nose firmly down, working round it several times.



The Hat Brim

Funnily enough, this is what really turns him into a gnome.

Using the lighter shade of yarn and the long tail method, cast on 30 stitches. Work three rows in stocking stitch, starting with a purl row and cast off knitwise, leaving a long tail.

Use the cast on tail to join the short edges, working in mattress stitch. The purl side is the right side.

Now put the brim on the gnome with the short seam in the middle of the back and pin it in place at the two sides. Position it centrally over the line between the body and the hat; you will have to uncurl it a bit to persuade it to lie flat (or nearly flat, anyway).

Start by sewing down the top edge of the brim and then go round again, pulling the bottom edge down a bit and sewing that down too. The rolled brim of the hat should sit nicely above his nose.

Last of all, sew a 12 mm / $\frac{3}{4}$ " jingle bell to the top of the gnome's hat. Don't pull the yarn too tightly; you want the bell to hang down, towards the front of the hat.

If he won't stand up straight, give him a squidge to settle the plastic pellets and that'll sort him out. Now you can make some more to keep him company - anyone for a game of gnome bowls?



Abbreviations

| | |
|----------|---|
| st / sts | stitch / stitches |
| K | knit |
| P | purl |
| kf&b | knit into the front and back of the stitch |
| SSK | <u>slip, slip, knit</u> : slip two stitches knitwise (or knitwise followed by purlwise) one at a time, insert tip of left needle into stitches from above, put yarn round right needle and knit both stitches together. |
| K2tog | knit two stitches together |
| pso | pass stitch over |
| m1 | make 1 by lifting the thread before the next stitch and knitting into the back of it |

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