Bags of Fun Pattern

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The success of this pattern is dependent on the need to use two wools that felt in an identical way. This can be done by using two shades of wool from the same breed of sheep (eg Jacob, North Ronaldsay or Wensleydale) or by using two dyed version of the same type of wool. The photographed version uses two shades of dyed Wenselydale

To make this bag each of the four sides are knitted separately, one of which includes the button flap that gives the fastening to the bag. A pocket is then knitted and sewn to the front of the bag and an I-cord handle knitted and fed through eyelet holes at the top of the bag. The bag is then felted in your washing machine.

During the felting process the bag will shrink considerably and become much sturdier. The buttons and any other decorations must be added after this felting stage.

The exact size of your finished bag will depend on wool and felting temperatures used, but an indication is given below.

You will need:

- Approx 100 to 120g aran weight pure wool in shade A (not machine washable or superwash varieties)
- Approx 100 to 120g aran weight pure wool in shade B (not machine washable or superwash varieties)
- 2 buttons, for fastening
- 1 pair 5.5 mm straight needles
- 1 pair of 4.5 mm double ended needles
- wool needle to sew side seams, attach pocket and sew in ends of yarn

Approx finished size:

Before felting:	width 24 cm, height 21 cm, depth 10 cm
After felting:	width 16-19 cm, height 14-15 cm, depth 7-8 cm

Instructions:

Body of Bag:

Using the 5.5 mm straight needles and the aran wool in shade A, cast on 36 st. Work 28 rows in garter stitch (every row knit) to form the base of the bag. Change to shade B and work in stocking stitch (alternate rows of knit and purl) until the side measures 20 cm (approx 40 to 44 rows), ending with a purl row.

Eyelet row: k3, yon, k2tog, knit to last 4 stitches, yon, k2tog, k2.

Knit 2 rows to give a garter stitch edge, then cast off all stitches knit-wise. Break off yarn.

With right side facing, rejoin yarn B to the start of the adjacent short side of the base, pick up and knit 16 st evenly along the edge of the base. Work in stocking stitch on these stitches until the side measures 20 cm. Work the eyelet row as before, followed by two rows of garter stitch. Cast off all stitches knit-wise. Break off yarn.

Repeat for the second short side.

For the second long side, pick up and knit 36 st from the cast on edge, using yarn B, and work to match the first worked side of the bag until the last two rows have been knitted to give the garter stitch upper edge. Cast off 5 st and knit to the end of the row. Next row, cast off 5 st and knit to the end of the row.

Change to shade A. *Knit 1 row. Turn. K2, purl to last 2 st, k2**. Repeat * to ** 14 more times to make the button flap (total of 30 rows in shade A).

Buttonhole row: k4, cast off 2 st, knit to last 6 stitches, cast off 2 st and knit to end.

Next row, knit to the end casting on 2 st over those cast off in the previous row. Knit 2 more rows then cast off knit-wise.

Pocket:

Using shade A, cast on 26 stitches. Knit 2 rows. *Knit 1 row. Turn. K2, purl to last 2 st, k2**. Repeat * to ** 15 more times (total of 34 rows completed from cast on edge). Knit 3 more rows then cast off knit-wise.

Handle:

Using 4.5 mm double ended needles and shade A, cast on 5 st. Work in I-cord on these for 170 cm (knit, do not turn work and slide stitches to opposite end of needle. Repeat until you reach the desired length). Cast off. Remember that the handle will reduce in length to approximately two-thirds its original length once felted.

Finishing:
Slipstitch the four side seams and work in all ends of yarn. Place the pocket centrally on the front of the bag, lining up with the flap with the top of the pocket sitting just below the garter stitch band around the tip edge of the bag. Stitch in place along the two sides and the base of the pocket.

Thread the I-cord handle through the eyelet holes and knot the two ends together at a short side (centrally). Make a knot in the cord on the second short side to match the fastening knot on the other side of the bag, such that the two handles are the same length.

Felting:
Felt your bag in the washing machine by placing the knitted bag in a zippered mesh bag in your machine, with a couple of towels or pairs of jeans to give the necessary agitation. Add a small amount of washing powder, but no fabric conditioner. For the photographed bag, we used 2 washes on a 60° cycle with the time saving option and 500 spin cycle. A low level spin, if an available option on your machine, reduces the risk of crumpling your bag. When felted to the desired level, remove from your washing machine and place a plastic bag inside your felt bag. Stuff the plastic bag with crumpled newspaper, books or videos to give a good shape and leave somewhere warm to dry out completely. You may need to be quite vigorous to reopen the buttonholes in the fastening flap!

Fastening:
Sew the two buttons to the pocket, aligning with the buttonholes on the flap.

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