



HanJan 
CROCHET
Guide

Working with lightweight and luxurious yarn

presented by Hannah Cross of HanJan Crochet



Hi! I'm Hannah!

I have a confession to make. I used to hate working with lightweight and luxury yarns.

I was always afraid of how long the project would take because the yarn was so thin. And what about if I snagged that beautiful yarn? Would I ruin it?

I spent years avoiding using them because I just didn't think it was worth it. Then I tried it and I couldn't believe what I was missing out on!

is it worth it?

The only person that can answer whether it's worth it or not is you. Unless you try you'll never know but what I can tell you is that I have never regretted it.

Do I use luxury yarn for every project? Absolutely not. The key is finding the right yarn for the right project and knowing when is best to use those precious skeins.

tips and tricks

Over the years of designing with a huge range of different yarns I have picked up lots of tips and tricks for working with finer yarns and luxury fibres.

I wanted to share this knowledge with you so that you don't have to make all the same mistakes that I did when I was first starting!

So, let's talk about hooks, sore hands, the cost and more and get you working with and enjoying those yarns that you've always wanted to try!

ready? let's go!

lightweight yarn

by Hannah Cross

**Do you run a mile
when you see a
glorious crochet
pattern but then find
out it's in lightweight
yarn?**

I think we've all been there but
we're here to show you it's not
as scary (or time consuming) as
you might think!



Lightweight yarns - are they really worth the effort?

by Hannah Cross

I fell out of love with lightweight yarns the day that I got married.

Eight and a half years ago I was still awake at 1am on the morning of my wedding desperately trying to finish my bouquet of crocheted flowers in 4ply and fingering weight odds and ends from my stash. I'm pleased to report I did finish it in time but golly gosh, it wasn't fun!

I thought it would put me off working with lightweight yarns forever but it didn't. I've recently fallen back in love with them and I'm glad to tell you why.

When talking about these fine yarns I often hear people saying things like 'but it just takes forever', 'they really make my hands hurt', 'I just can't find the stitches!', 'I can't get my tension right!'.

Whilst I have *most definitely* said all of those things myself over the years, I've come to realise that I've said it about all sorts of other weights of yarns too!

What about that worsted weight blanket that took forever just because it's so big?

What about that super chunky yarn and massive hook that not only made your hands but your shoulders ache too?

Think back to that really dark yarn you used that you had no idea where the stitches were?

And, tension.....well that's a constant battle some might say!

I think for me my experience with fine yarn (I'm talking category 0, 1 and 2 weight) was a bit like over indulging on a certain tippie or food and not being able to face it for a while. In time, it feels ok again.

So, in the last few years, I've been challenging myself to work with it again and have surprised myself with how enjoyable it is!

I can't lie, it's not a quick win. It takes some practise to perfect, but the rewards are breathtaking when you get it right.

The drape you can achieve with these yarns is unparalleled - more from Sarah on that magic formula later. For now, let's have a look at some tips and tricks for you to fall in love with it too!

What is lightweight yarn?

First off, let's pull back a bit and figure out exactly what it is we're talking about. What classes as a 'lightweight yarn'?

Generally they are Category 0, 1 and 2 weight yarns and the Craft Yarn Council describe them like this:

Category 0 - LACE



Types of yarn:

Fingering 10-count
crochet thread

Category 1 - SUPER FINE



Types of yarn:

Sock, Fingering, 4ply,
Baby

Category 2 - FINE



Types of yarn:

Sport, Baby

Now because lace weight yarns (and indeed some super fine/fine) are often crocheted on larger hook sizes to create a lacy fabric it's really tricky to set a standard gauge for the yarn itself.

This is why it's so important to make sure that you meet the gauge set in the pattern. And yep, that means making a swatch I'm afraid!

Top tip

If you're using these weights of yarn for the very first time then I'd go for a really simple pattern. Even if you're really experienced sometimes it's nice to really focus on mastering the technique of using the yarn first.

Do I need special hooks?

The answer to this depends entirely on the pattern you're making as the beauty of these yarns is that as a designer you can really have fun playing around with using all sorts of sizes of hooks to create different fabrics.

I for one love bending (and perhaps even breaking!) the rules and have even been known to use an 8mm crochet hook for a lace Mohair design.....

The general rule of thumb though is that they can use anything from a 1mm to 6mm hook so if you're looking at the smaller end of the scale then you might want to get a set of steel small hooks. There are loads of options but I love the [Clover Steel Hook Set](#) as the handles are so comfy to hold.

Will it hurt my hands?

Maybe. Probably. It depends.

I hear lots of people saying that thinner yarns do make their hands hurt but for me I find that it's the other variables around the yarn that actually cause them to hurt and not the yarn itself.

For example - are you working with a hook that's comfortable to hold for any length of time? I would always recommend one with an ergonomic handle because the thinner the hook the trickier it is to hold.

The other things to think of are how you hold your yarn. With much thinner yarn I find it's tempting to wind it round my non-dominant hand more and that definitely doesn't help me. I feel my tension getting tighter and my hands certainly suffer because of it. So try and pretend it's bulky yarn and give it space to slide through your hand.



It's all subjective though and very different for everyone, so you just have to persevere and figure out what works for you I think.

I spent many years as a midwife and in a way it's similar to childbirth - stick with me on this one.....

Some people find it a breeze and don't know what all the fuss is about (not many I hasten to add!). Others (most!) find it painful but go about making it as comfortable as possible. The way to do that is to figure out your variables and then do something about them. Those variables will be different for everyone of course!

So with crochet and yarn, like childbirth, if you figure out your variables then there are often things you can do to help!

Does it take longer to make things?

Now this is a tricky one to answer too. In reality it can do but it very much depends on the type of pattern and type of stitch that is used.

Often with lighter yarns a designer will choose to use a much more open or lacy stitch so that means lots of chains and spaces which don't take as much time as taller stitches do.

As an example my Cynthia Dress (page 57) works up in a flash and took me less time than a hat or pair of mittens to make!

Of course the size of your project dictates how long it will take too but that's true in any weight of yarn and so while it's something to think about it, like you do for any new project, I certainly wouldn't let it put you off.

If you're worried about the time investment then perhaps just go for a short top or a shawl to start with that has a simple pattern repeat that you can finish wherever you'd like to.

Do I need more yarn and does it cost more?

The great thing about finer yarn is that it goes a long way!

You'll find that you probably don't need as much as you think and not only does the yardage in a ball help you but so does the lacy nature of the fabric too.

In terms of cost, like any project, it can pretty much cost you as much or as little as you like.

It's more the fibre content that you choose that determines the price of yarn rather than the category. I'm happy to say there are plenty of inexpensive lightweight yarns to choose from.

What other equipment do I need?

If you've been crocheting a while then you'll have pretty much everything you need like scissors, needles and stitch markers but I find that there are a few other bits and bobs that are handy.

I can't tell you how much my lace work improved when I invested in some blocking mats and proper lace pins. I know that blocking is the least favourite job for most of us but I promise it's worth it with these yarns. It will literally transform your work.

The other thing that might be useful is a good craft light and a magnifying glass (or check your glasses prescription!). This is true for any crochet work of course but especially when the subject is smaller than you're used to!

My 5 Top Tips for lightweight yarns -

- 1. Always work a gauge swatch*
- 2. Always block your work (it will look soooo much better!)*
- 3. Always measure part way through (it's easy to get off track and change your tension)*
- 4. Make sure you are happy with your tools (don't keep going if your hook isn't right and get yourself that winder!)*
- 5. Take care of your hands (make sure to have regular breaks and stretch those hands)*



So, have I convinced you yet? Will you join me in the love of lightweight yarns?

Don't get me wrong, I absolutely love chunky projects and quick wins but sometimes you need to have a go at those things you've been putting off. You never know, you might just find that you enjoy them more than you thought you would!

our favourites

With so many choices out there, I thought you'd like to see my favourites.



1

1 **Cotlin** (double knit weight)

70% Tanguis Cotton, 30% Linen,
123yds/50g

Great for sturdy summer wear.

Hawthorne (fingering weight) 2

80% Fine Superwash Highland Wool, 20%
Polyamide (Nylon), 357yds/326 m, 100 g

Great for wearables and socks.



2



3

3 **Andean Treasure** (sport weight)

100% Baby Alpaca
110 yds/ 50 g

Great for lightweight garments even
though it's wool!

Palette (fingering weight) 4

100% Peruvian Highland Wool,
211m/50g

Perfect for shawls and wraps



4



5

5 **Scheepjes Whirl** (fingering weight)

60% Cotton, 40% Acrylic
1094 yds/ 200 g

The ultimate for colour changing projects

Stroll (fingering weight) 6

75% Fine Superwash Merino Wool, 25%
Nylon, 231 yds/ 50 g


Great for socks and summer!



6

luxury yarn

by Hannah Cross



Have you ever wanted to venture into those glorious yarns that you're too afraid to use?

We've got news for you - they're not just for squishing! Here's our top tips for choosing, working with and caring for luxury yarns .



Working with those luxury yarns - is it really worth the investment?

by Hannah Cross

Until about six years ago you wouldn't ever catch me using anything but the cheapest yarn I could find.

I mean, I have to say that the 100% acrylic yarn choice that is out there has improved dramatically even in just that short time, but I think you know the kind of yarn I mean. The kind that squeaks on your hook, has billions of knots in it, and just feels a bit stiff when you've made it into something!

I clearly remember the first really luxurious yarn that I worked with and it was an absolute game changer. It was King Cole Alpaca Silk and not only did it produce one of my most popular designs (hello Christmas Gnomes!), but it also taught me that I needn't be afraid of using what I thought were 'fancy yarns'.

Since then I've come to realise that working with these yarns is something that lots of people worry about. Why should I spend all that money? What happens if I go wrong? How do I frog it? How do I care for it? Is it worth it?

All questions that I had in my mind a while ago and so I'm here to help as best I can with my top tips for working with that beautiful yarn you have stashed away!

What this isn't though, is me saying that you should only ever use

expensive yarn and never consider anything else - quite the opposite in fact.

There's no point in spending a small fortune on yarn for a project if it's just not suited to the task. Like a dishcloth made of cashmere, that's never going to work. Or a play mat made of silk (unless the children you know are much cleaner and tidier than mine!).

Apart from crochet I also love gardening and there is a well know phrase used - 'right plant, right place' and I think the same applies for crochet and yarn (if we switch the words out of course).

'Right yarn, right project'

This should be something you think about with everything you make, but especially when investing a good amount of money into the yarn.

How do I choose the right yarn?

Choosing the right yarn for a project (whether it's a luxury yarn or not) can be a tricky thing.

The best place to start is with a recommended yarn from the designer. This will be the yarn that was used for the project and so you'll see how it works with the stitches, shape, and most importantly, drape of the piece.

Now, if you're making something that needs to be strong and sturdy, like a bag, rug, kitchenware, and so on, then skip ahead to your sturdy

Top tip

If you're planning on making larger project, like a garment, then try out the yarn on a smaller project like mitts or a hat first. This will help to make sure you're certain of your choice before investing lots on a sweater's worth of yarn!

yarn of choice. The kind of projects I'm thinking about are the wearables to treat yourself and loved ones to - garments, wraps, cowls, hats, mittens, pretty much anything wearable!

Once you've chosen your project and taken a look at the recommended yarn, have a think about the following things:

1. Who am I making it for and will the yarn suit them?
2. Will the yarn stand up to the job?
3. Is it a good match and fibre content for the design?
4. What alternatives are there?
5. How much will I need and is that within my budget?
6. What colours does it come in?!
7. Is it/will it be on sale?

These might seem like quite obvious and perhaps silly questions (especially the one about the colours!), but they are really important to think about. Let me give you a few reasons why.

If you're making for yourself and you know you're not sensitive to any of the fibres, then perfect - easy job! But, if you're making for someone else, especially a gift for a baby, for example, then think carefully about your yarn. Lots of people find that their skin is sensitive to some yarns and the last thing you want is to pour countless hours into making something that they can't wear!

Another thing you need to know is, will the yarn stand up to the task in hand? I tend to make scarves and wraps out of delicate yarns because they have the least amount of wear, but things like sweaters and cardigans really do get 'worn', so it's very much something to think about.

If you're veering away from the recommended yarn then you also need to think about the fibre content as it might make your project completely different if you don't check!

For example, the Wonderfluff that I used for my Feather Cowl and Mittens is a bulky weight yarn, but it's so light and soft because of it's fibre composition that simply substituting with another bulky weight yarn probably won't work.

A great way to compare yarn composition is to look something up on yarnsub.com - it's a great tool that will help show you matches for pretty much any yarn!

Once you're happy with all of the above, the next thing I'd think about is budget - how much will it cost to make the project? Investing in enough yarn for a longline cardigan is a whole different ball game to a scarf, but if it's going to be your wardrobe staple for years to come and you're ready to invest, then go for it!



Lastly, it's so important to be happy with the colour you choose. Thankfully there is so much more choice out there now, but I say from bitter experience - don't ever settle for a colour that you think is 'ok' - you need to be in love with it!

Top tip

If you choose to go for a more luxurious yarn for a larger project like a garment, then be really careful about keeping your scraps - you'd be surprised how far they go. I made a pair of ankle socks out of a bag of scraps once!

How do I crochet with fancy yarn?

So you've gone for it and ordered that beautiful yarn, it's arrived and you're in love with it, but when it comes to actually crocheting - you get stage fright (This has actually happened to me a number of times and still does!).

What's the best thing to do? Firstly, make sure to work a gauge swatch. For any kind of project you need to do one, but especially with precious yarn like this. If you just go for it and realise a couple of balls in that your measurements are all wonky then you could be in real trouble - often yarn like this doesn't take kindly to being frogged!

So as tempting as it might be to skip the swatch, you really ought to do one. Working it will not only make sure your tension is good, but it will get you familiar with the stitch and the yarn too. I often find that I have to play about with different hook styles for different weights of yarn and the same is true for different fibres too. If it doesn't feel right then switch your hook (and maybe even your hold) until it feels better.



The most important thing to remember once you make a mistake (if you're anything like me then you definitely will!) is not to panic!

If you try and pull the stitches as you would with a cotton or acrylic yarn then they just won't like it. Slow and steady is the key - no matter how frustrated you are at it (I speak from experience...).

Be as gentle as you can with the yarn because it will distort and really change your tension if you're not careful. So when you rework that particular piece of yarn it won't look quite the same as the rest.

In reality though, this is how we ought to care for all of our yarn and so working with fancier or different yarn shouldn't feel any more tricky than anything else - the most important thing is to enjoy it!

How do I care for my luxury yarn?

Once you've made your stunning project in that beautiful yarn, you'll need to think about how to care for it. It might sound obvious again, but make sure to check the label.



Depending on the fibre content, it might tell you to hand wash only, dry flat, and all that jazz. If it tells me that, then even when I'm blocking, I'm super careful at not getting it too wet. A great option for blocking delicate yarn is just to steam it instead or at the very most use a gentle water spray.

The other important key is storage. If you spent the equivalent money in a store on a garment then I bet you'd have that in it's own hanging pouch or tissue wrap? These items are even more valuable and precious because their cost in your time and love creating them is priceless.

My general rule of thumb for storage is that most things are kept flat. The nature of the yarn fibre will mean that if it's hung up then over time it will stretch. Depending on the design and stitches you might also find that different parts of the item stretch too.

Top tip

If you need to frog your yarn then don't do it in a hurry or late at night - I once ruined an entire dress because I got so cross with frogging at midnight! Step away and come back to it another day.

So, is it worth it? Is working with more luxurious yarn the way to go? Only you can know the answer to that, but in my book - absolutely!

You don't have to spend a fortune on. Plan ahead and make a wish list of yarn for projects so that when you see a great sale pop up you can snag it straight away.

My best advice is to have a go and make something for yourself to start with. You definitely deserve it!

our favourites

With so many choices out there, I thought you'd like to see my favourites from WeCrochet.



1

1 **Kindred** (double knit weight)

68% Baby Alpaca, 32% Peruvian Pima Cotton,
115 yds/ 50 g

Great for light weight summer wear.

Wonderfluff (bulky weight) 2

70% Baby Alpaca, 7% Merino Wool, 23%
Nylon, 142 yds/ 50 g

Great for cosy accessories.



2



3

3 **Andean Treasure** (sport weight)

100% Baby Alpaca
110 yds/ 50 g

Great for delicate garments.

City Tweed (double knit weight) 4

55% Merino wool, 25% Superfine alpaca, 20%
Donegal tweed, 123 yds/ 50 g

Great for textured stitches.



4



5

5 **Swish** (worsted weight yarn)

100% Superwash Wool
110 yds/ 50 g

Great for children's items.

Stroll (fingering weight) 6

75% Fine Superwash Merino Wool, 25%
Nylon, 231 yds/ 50 g

Great for socks and summer!



6



Crochet Guides

WITH
HANJAN CROCHET



Thank you!

It's been an absolute joy to bring this guide to you!

I've loved sharing my knowledge and thoughts on lightweight and luxury yarns so am delighted that you have joined me!

Hopefully you are ready to tackle your next project with confidence and excitement too. I can't wait to see what you choose to make!

If you have any questions about the guide, would like to discover more or would like to share your progress then we would love to hear from you!

The best place is the **HanJan Crochet Community** where we can share images and chat all about crochet:)

I can't wait to see what you create and share.

Don't forget you can find me in all the places you'd expect me to be - just click on the little icons above to discover where I am on each channel.

See you again soon for more crochet!



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