46 Interesting Facts About . . .

Knitting

1. No one knows how old knitting really is, though it is generally thought to be older than handcrafts (rug hooking) but not as old as weaving.\(^d\)

2. Many ancient textile fragments thought to be knitting have turned out to be nålebinding (Danish for literally "binding with a needle"). An ancient form of needlecraft that is sometimes referred to as "single-needle knitting."\(^f\)

3. The history of knitting is not well known because fabrics used for knitting are made of wool, silk, and other fibers that decay rapidly. Additionally, knitting needles are hard to distinguish beyond a doubt from hair picks, skewers, spindles, or the other many uses of a sharpened stick.\(^h\)

4. Historians posit that knitting is a relatively recent invention because there are no ancient legends of knitting like there are legends of spinning and weaving, such as Arachne, Ixazaluoh, Nephthys, Amaterasu. There are no ancient gods or goddesses who knit.\(^i\)

5. Knitting is considered to have originated in the Arab world, and from there, spread with the Crusades into Spain. The term "to knit" wasn't added to English until the 1400s.\(^h\)

6. The earliest known types of knitting by nomadic people in the desert places of North Africa actually used circular or narrow, oblong wooden frames. The knitting action was similar to "bobbin work." Historians are unsure when the frames were dispensed with and knitting began to be directly on hooked knitting needles.\(^j\)

7. One of the earliest known examples of knitting (formed on two sticks by pulling loops through loops) were a pair of cotton socks found in Egypt from the first millennium A.D. Many of them have knit into them *khufic* (a decorative Arabic script) blessings, symbols to ward off evil, or both.\(^h\)
8. Knitting was initially a male-only occupation.\textsuperscript{d}

9. The first knitting trade guild was started in 1527 in Paris.\textsuperscript{1}

10. When the knitting machine was invented, hand knitting became useful but nonessential. Like quilting, spinning, and needlepoint, knitting has become a leisurely activity.\textsuperscript{1}

11. The world’s fastest knitter is Miriam Tegels of the Netherlands. She can hand knit 118 stitches in one minute.\textsuperscript{a}

12. Linda Benne has been the North American speed-knitting champ for the past 10 years. She can knit 253 stitches in 3 minutes.\textsuperscript{a}

13. The record for the most people knitting simultaneously happened September 2012 in Royal Albert Hall, London, when 3,083 people knitted together for 15 minutes.\textsuperscript{b}

14. Mega knitting is a recent term that refers to the use of knitting needles that are greater than or equal to half an inch in diameter. Mega knitting uses needles that have been carved at the tips into hooks. The hooks help prevent stitches from slipping off the needles. Mega knitting usually creates more chunky, bulky fabric or an open lacy weave.\textsuperscript{b}

15. The knitting machine was invented in 1589 (during the reign of Queen Elizabeth) by William Lee, a clergyman. After the invention of the knitting machine, knitting was gradually taken over by guild-organized cottage industries in the 17th and 18th centuries.\textsuperscript{d}

16. The full-fashioned knitting machine was invented in 1864 by William Cotton of Leicestershire, England.\textsuperscript{j}

17. Americans have sex an average of 6 minutes per sexual encounter. These six minutes burn about 21 calories. A person burns 55 calories by knitting for half an hour.\textsuperscript{e}

18. Early knitting needles were typically made from bone, ivory, or tortoise shell.\textsuperscript{h}

19. David Babcock entered the Guinness World Record when he finished the Kansas City marathon in 5 hours 48 minutes 27 seconds—all while knitting a scarf measuring 12 feet, 1¼ inches long. He eclipsed the previous Guinness World Record, held by Britain’s Susie Hewer. To be eligible, competitors must complete the marathon in less than six hours.\textsuperscript{k}

20. Live TV, a Norwegian public broadcasting network, plans to dedicate five hours of airtime in an attempt to break the knitting world record. The current nonstop record is held by Australia at 4 hours 50 minutes.\textsuperscript{l}

21. The longest French knitting is 16.36 miles (26.33 km) long by Edward Hannahford in Sittingbourne, UK. He has been working on the French knitting since 1989 and is working on it still.\textsuperscript{g}

22. Knitting first appeared in England during the 13th century in the form of felted caps
that were worn by soldiers and sailors. However, knitting did not become a popular method for creating other garments due to the difficulty of producing quality steel needles.\textsuperscript{d}

23. Queen Victoria was a prolific knitter until her death. In fact, the reign of Queen Victoria (1837–1901) saw an explosion of all sorts of handwork, including knitting, which coincided with the development of trade with the woolgrowers.\textsuperscript{h}

24. During WWII, vast quantities of knitted socks, scarves, mittens, and helmets were sent to the soldiers in France. Knitting gave emotional comfort to the women who were at home waiting for news from the front.\textsuperscript{h}

25. Changes in fashion in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as well as the huge influx of cheap imported knitwear, led to decreased interest in knitting. The cost of buying yarn compared unfavorably to buying ready-made clothes.\textsuperscript{h}

26. While knitting has gone in and out of fashion for the last 200 years, the early 21st century has seen new interest in knitting with an influx of new fibers, with yarns made from bamboo, soy, hemp, alpaca, camel, and microfiber, and more. Additionally, there are hand-painted and hand-dyed yarns, pure cashmere, and other exotic blends. There are also beautiful needles made from bamboo, rosewood, and ebony.\textsuperscript{h}

27. There are three basic types of knitting needles: standard “pin” style, double pointed, and circular.\textsuperscript{d}

28. The word “knit” is derived from the Old English cnýtjan, which means “to knot.”\textsuperscript{h}

29. Between 2002 and 2004, the number of women knitters in the U.S. ages 25–35 increased nearly 150%.\textsuperscript{f}

30. During 1940s, interest in continental knitting (or knitting with the yarn in one’s left hand) decreased because of its origins in Germany, while English knitting (or knitting with the yarn in the right hand) rose in popularity. Its reintroduction into the United States is most often associated with Elizabeth Zimmerman.\textsuperscript{h}

31. While both continental and English knitting are used in the U.S. and England, Japanese knitters usually prefer the continental style and Chinese knitters prefer the English style. Many other countries typically use the continental style, such as Peru, Turkey, Bolivia, Greece, and Portugal.\textsuperscript{d}

32. “Ravelry” is a social networking site for those who knit, crochet, spin, and weave. As of 2013, the site has over 3 million members worldwide.\textsuperscript{l}

33. The U.S. Olympic Committee sent a cease-and-desist letter to the knitting website Ravelry.com stating that their “Ravelympics” infringes on their copyright. The letter states that Ravelry’s afghan marathon, scarf hockey, and sweater triathlon “denigrate” the Games.\textsuperscript{l}

34. Famous people who knit include Julia Roberts, Vanna White, Cameron Diaz, Sarah Jessica Parker, Julianna Margulies, and many others.\textsuperscript{f}
35. Some women in the past have attempted self-abortions with knitting needles. However, a woman’s uterus is almost always tilted forwards or backwards, and inserting a rigid instrument into the abdominal wall, such as knitting needle, can easily puncture its wall. A large number of women have either died or experienced serious complications from self-abortions with knitting needles.\(^b\)

36. It is important to knit a sock with “negative ease,” which means the circumference of the sock is smaller than the circumference of a leg and foot to keep the sock from slouching or shifting.\(^d\)

37. Knitting can create a relaxation response, which can decrease blood pressure and heart rate and help prevent illness.\(^b\)

38. For the first four or five hundred years of knitting’s history, the most common knitting materials were cotton and silk, not wool.\(^h\)

39. Some scholars argue that further proof that knitting was invented in the Middle East is found in the way knitters work their stitches: even though English speakers write from left to right, knitters work the stitches from right to left.\(^h\)

40. In the 1350s, “knitting Madonna’s” began to appear in Europe, depicting the Virgin Mary knitting. These include Our Lady Knitting (c. 1325–1375) and Visit of the Angel (1400–1410). These paintings are important markers that indicate when knitting entered Europe and how knitting was done.\(^h\)

41. Tucheuse is French for “knitting woman.” During the French Revolution, a group of knitting women would sit beside the guillotine and knit through the executions. The Commune of Paris organized and paid these women to attend beheadings and tribunals “to greet death, to insult the victims, and to glut their eyes with blood.” They would jeer and shriek and knit as the upper class were led to the guillotine.\(^h\)

42. In 1566, King Eric of Sweden owned 27 pairs of knitted silk stockings imported from Spain. Each knitted pair cost the same as his valet’s yearly salary.\(^h\)

43. There were shepherds in the Landes swamps in France known as tchangues (“big legs”) who would knit on stilts while they watched their flocks. The need for stilt walking and shepherds were obliterated by the early 20th century when the government planted a forest of maritime pines over the swamps.\(^h\)

44. The first knitting pattern book of any kind at all was the 16th-century Modelbuch, which was a printed pattern collection specifically for embroidery and lace. By the mid-17th century, patterns specifically for knitting were emerging within some pages of pattern books. In 1761, Susanna Dorothea Kriegl published an early pattern book devoted exclusively to knitting, the Strikkemøstere (Knitting Patterns).\(^h\)

45. The term “Stitch-n-Bitch” has been used at least since WWII to refer to social knitting groups. It is also the title of a 2003 knitter’s handbook. Scholars note that these social groups often act as a form of resistance to major political, social, and technological change in Western societies.\(^d\)

46. The countries of East Asia have no native history of hand knitting. Though hand and machine knitting now are popular there, knitting has come to them mostly through the modernization process in the 19th and 20th centuries.\(^l\)
References


