



How to Turn a Knitting Hobby Into a Crafting Career

by Joy Fishburne Macdonell '89

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- 1. Follow your passion:** I have always had a passion for making things, especially my own clothes, and sewing and knitting have been a part of my life since childhood. There are many benefits to the knitting hobby beyond fashion and creativity. New research published by a U.K.-based knitting initiative, Knit for Peace, has confirmed that knitting has physical and mental health benefits that slow the onset of dementia, combat depression and distract from chronic pain.
- 2. Be a good student:** When I learned to knit, it was common to be a student of a grandmother, aunt or neighbor. Sitting side-by-side with a knitter or book was the only way to learn how to knit. Since the introduction of YouTube and Ravelry.com (an online resource for knitters), the secrets of the fiber arts have been unlocked for the curious. Knitters now have online access to knitting knowledge 24/7.
- 3. Find inspiration everywhere:** Attending the Maryland Sheep & Wool Show in May seems to always kick off my year of knitting. Inspiration can be found in the classroom by learning a new technique; with sheep breeders, spinners or dyers; or with an exciting new knitting pattern.
- 4. Get with a group:** I find a great deal of encouragement to keep knitting and finish projects though online friendships. By photographing the knitting progress and sharing it with friends, I receive positive reinforcement to knit late into the night or wake up early to get a few rows done before the workday begins. Checking in with online friends also allows me to see what others are doing with a pattern: From color combinations to pattern modifications, I can gather quite a bit of group-think that helps me make the project I envision.
- 5. Go social:** Social media has become a knitting game-changer. With the introduction of Pinterest and Instagram, small circles and guilds of knitters have become online tribes of fiber enthusiasts frequently led by bloggers who report and document the happenings of the knitting industry. Showing your process is key to taking part in a knitting community. Creating a piece from cast-on to finish is a journey that can take months to achieve, and showing the progress allows for curious followers to be part of the project.



Joy Fishburne Macdonell '89 graduated from Dickinson with a B.S. in psychology. She was a social worker and earned her master's degree four years later. After she developed her career for 10 years in the fields of addiction and child protection, a desire to share her creativity inspired her to open a scrapbook store in 1997 with her sister where she started teaching scrapbooking. Her platform grew into an online learning mecca that serviced small, independent retailers and big box craft stores. She has also taken her knitting to the streets, developing how-to videos for the 2017 Women's March on Washington and the 2018 March for Our Lives. After 20 years in the creative industry working with licenses like American Girl, Disney and Martha Stewart Crafts, she now offers her own brand of knitting classes at knitwithjoy.com. You can also follow her on Instagram (@joymacdonell) and YouTube (youtube.com/joymacdonell).