

Editor's Note



January is known as National Hobby Month in the United States. That means that public libraries, community centers, various clubs (and probably many bloggers) are all encouraging people to discover a new hobby or spend time enjoying their current favorite leisure activity. *English Teaching Forum* is focusing on hobbies for not just a month, but this entire year, by taking a look at a different hobby in each issue.

We begin with knitting—an old craft that is experiencing new life. Young people are taking up knitting needles in great numbers, and yarn shops are popping up in places they've never been before. Knitters, new and experienced, are finding creative new (and sometimes eco-friendly) ways to practice their craft.

Knitting is something that I have never had the patience to learn, although my grandmother did try to teach me when I was young. (I never got beyond knitting the world's tiniest scarf!) So for me, knitting has become a sort of "spectator sport."

Watching people knit, I admire their dexterous fingers and expert use of their wrists. I am amazed by knitters so accomplished that they can knit without looking at their hands. (This is not unlike my admiration for hockey players who can stickhandle expertly without looking at the puck.) But my appreciation goes beyond the physical actions of knitters. I am drawn to the beautiful colors and textures of the yarns knitters use. I imagine the pleasure knitters must feel watching their stitches increase row after row and the satisfaction they must have when they finish their projects, whether they're knitting a simple scarf, a cap, or a complicated sweater. And I think it must be gratifying to give a gift, as many knitters do, of something you have made yourself.

Last year my sister-in-law gave me a lovely scarf she knitted. An original one-of-a-kind design, it is a blend of various colors and kinds of yarn, primarily blue but with bold flecks of red and gold. That scarf is my favorite thing to wear in the cold, winter months.

My wardrobe got an upgrade because I'm related to someone who knits. But knitting benefits not only recipients of gifts but the knitters themselves. According to the well-known and prolific knitter (and writer of knitting books) Elizabeth Zimmerman, "Properly practiced, knitting soothes the troubled spirit, and it doesn't hurt the untroubled spirit, either."

Some of our readers probably have firsthand knowledge of the effects of knitting. Others can learn about this craft by reading the feature article. Following that, we offer a set of "Classroom Activities" related to knitting. This section is a departure from the carefully plotted lesson plans we have published for the past several years. Now teachers can simply select the activity, or activities, that will be of greatest interest to their students, and they can use the activities in any order. We hope our readers will enjoy this new approach.

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