



UK Terms

Crochet Along

by Stylecraft

Frida's Flowers Blanket

Introduction by Jane Crowfoot

Crochet Along*

Welcome to the Frida's Flowers Crochet Along designed by Jane Crowfoot. As we are quickly approaching the launch of the first patterns, we thought it would be a good idea to give you a bit of information about what you can do to prepare for the CAL so that you can start working on the project just as soon as you have downloaded the first set of patterns.

BLANKET MEASUREMENT

Approx. 90cm x 120cm

CHOOSING YOUR YARN

The patterns have been written for Stylecraft Classique Cotton DK. This is a DK weight of yarn that knits to a tension of 22sts and 28 rows on a 4mm knitting needle. If you have found a substitute yarn then check the ball band for the knitted tension information. Most yarns give the tension for knitting and not for crochet – you will find information on the crochet tension further down this document.

Stylecraft Classique Cotton DK comes in 50g balls and has a length of 100yds/92 meters. If you have chosen an alternative yarn please make sure that the length is as close to the Classique Cotton DK as possible. Yarns that have a different fibre content or a slightly different yarn twist can have varying lengths of yarn, even though they weigh the same.

If you are using Stylecraft Special DK/Life DK instead of Classique Cotton DK you will find a list of alternative amounts on a Shade List which is available to download from our website.

CROCHET HOOKS

I used a 3.5mm, 4mm & 4.5mm hook in the project. The 4mm hook is used for the majority of the project, but it is important that you do have all 3 sizes as using the incorrect hook size will affect the appearance of your piece.

OTHER ACCESSORIES

Along with the crochet hooks, you will need a few extra pieces of equipment when working through this project.

STITCH MARKERS

In order to help you through the making up process of the blanket I suggest you use stitch markers to denote certain stitches or help when you are joining your seams later on.

I tend to use small locking stitch markers – these look like little nappy pins and are really safe as the stitches cannot escape. Locking markers are especially good for holding crochet pieces together while you sew up seams. I tend to use a stitch marker to mark every corner stitch on the motifs. If you mark every motif you will need a lot of markers, so you could mark your stitches with spare pieces of yarn or small pins.

KNITTERS SEWING NEEDLE

You will have a lot of yarn ends to sew in as you work through the project. It is my suggestion that you sew in all your ends as you go along so that you don't end up with a massive making up job once you have completed all your

crochet. The blanket will be crocheted together using double crochet, but you will need a sewing needle to sew in all the loose ends.

OTHER BITS AND BOBS

You will need a sharp pair of scissors and a tape measure. You might also want to sort out a dedicated bag for your project. I like to make sure that I don't muddle up my yarns with other things or misplace any of them. Canvas bags or baskets are great for this.

STITCHES USED

This project is aimed at an intermediate level of crocheter. It is important that you know your stitches and have a good grasp of techniques. If you are planning to use this project as a learning tool then it is a good idea to make sure you know your basics before you start.

I have posted a table below with US stitch equivalents for the stitches used in the project:

UK		US	
chain	ch	chain	ch
slip stitch	ss	slip stitch	ss
double crochet	dc	single crochet	sc
half treble crochet	htr	half double crochet	hdc
treble crochet	tr	double crochet	dc
double treble crochet	dtr	treble crochet	tr

Instructions for each stage of the project will be available in UK, US and Dutch versions.

YARN USAGE

It is my advice that you keep hold of all your yarn until the end of the project – by this I mean all the pieces you might undo and any pieces that look a bit frayed. Don't be tempted to use any of the yarn for any other project until you have completed this one and make sure you keep everything in a safe place.

Below you will find the yarn amounts I had left over once the project was complete. I have **highlighted** the 3 shades that are tightest on yarn usage:

Classique Cotton DK: 100% Cotton – 50g 92m 100y

39g x 3093 Black (more black will be used if joining block 1 using black not plum)

12g x 3567 Plum

48g x 3669 Nocturne

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24g x 3665 Ivory
14g x 3672 Poppy
12g x 3666 Teal
40g x 3674 Shrimp
20g x 3097 Leaf
28g x 3662 Sunflower
22g x 3095 Greek Blue
44g x 3658 Mauve
36g x 3656 Toffee

TENSION

Crochet is by nature an organic and creative process – it is wonderful to pick up some yarn and a hook and create motifs and decorative pieces that eventually make up a larger project. Many crocheters are used to doing just this without thinking too much about how big their pieces come up and whether things are being worked to the correct tension. I am pretty sure that many crocheters have never checked their tension, but have happily crocheted lovely looking projects without any thought of how big (or small) things are coming out – after all, if a motif is too small one can simply make more of them to make a blanket to the size we want and visa versa can make fewer if they come out bigger than expected.

Why is tension so important for the CAL?

Before you start work on your crochet along project I urge you to check that you make sure you are working to the correct tension, that is the number of stitches and rows measured over 10cm (4in).

If you achieve a tension tighter or looser than the suggested tension you will find that your project will differ in size to mine, that you will use a different amount of yarn and possibly that your pieces will not fit together properly in the making up stages.

The look of the crochet stitches can also differ – a looser tension is not as neat as the standard tension, whilst a tight tension can make your work stiff or cardboard like.

How to achieve the correct tension

Many crocheters simply assume that they will achieve the correct tension. This is a totally logical conclusion to make; after all, the information on the ball band or within the pattern is based on what the ‘standard’ tension is. In practice, however, many crocheters do not attain the correct tension naturally and therefore do not achieve a tension that sits within the ‘standard’.

Working a tension piece

If you already have your yarn and the correct hooks then you are ready to work your tension pieces.

Spending an hour or 2 to work these blocks can seem like a waste of time, but it is REALLY important that you are sure you are working to the same tension as the tension the patterns are written for. A failure to work to the correct tension will mean that your project will come out a different size and that you will use a different amount of yarn.

If you are using Classique Cotton DK, Special DK or Life DK and have full 50g or 100g balls you will have enough yarn in almost all of the shades to work your tension pieces and still have enough to complete your CAL project, but my suggestion is that you work one piece using Mauve and another using Toffee.

When working a tension piece it is a good idea to work on more stitches and rows than the suggested tension. I used 26 stitches for both samples.

Double Crochet – dc (US single crochet – sc)

Using 4mm hook make 27ch,

Foundation Row: skip 1ch, 1dc into each ch to end, turn (26sts)

Row 1: 1ch (does not count as a st) 1dc into each st to end, turn (26sts)

Repeat last row until a total of 28 rows have been worked (including foundation row)

Lay your sample on a flat surface. Using a tape measure place pins 10cm (4in) apart along a central row (horizontally) and count the stitches between the pins

Stitch Tension = 19 sts

Using a tape measure place pins 10cm (4in) apart along the central point of the swatch vertically and count the rows between the pins

Row Tension = 21/21.5 rows

Treble Crochet – tr (US double crochet – dc)

Using 3.5mm hook make 29ch,

Foundation Row: skip 3ch (counts as 1tr) 1tr into each ch to end, turn

Row 1: 3ch (counts as a 1tr) skip st at base of 3ch, 1tr into each st to end, working final st into 3rd ch of 3ch made at beginning of last row (tch), turn (26sts)

Repeat last row until a total of 12 rows have been worked (including foundation row)

Lay your sample on a flat surface. Using a tape measure place pins 10cm (4in) apart along a central row and count the stitches between the pins

Stitch Tension = 19 sts

Using a tape measure place pins 10cm (4in) apart along the central point of the swatch vertically and count the rows between the pins

Row Tension = 9.5 rows

Please note the hook sizes above – a smaller hook is used to achieve the treble crochet (US double crochet) tension

The tension is taken from unblocked swatches – I stuck mine down to the work surface with double sided tape (being careful not to stretch them) so that they were less curly and easy to measure.

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Pre Blocked and Blocked Tension

When designing the project I worked to a hexagon motif template that measured 20cm across the widest point.

In reality not all of the pieces have exactly the same measurement once they are complete. Some of the pieces are closer to 19.5cm, but because the crochet pieces will stretch a little when you put everything together this will not be noticeable at any point.

The measurements given in the pattern are for pre blocked sizes throughout. Measuring to a pre blocked size rather than a blocked size is more accurate as crocheters could over stretch their work to achieve the blocked tension.

Factors that can affect your tension

Many things can make a difference to the tension you achieve; I have listed 5 of the most common below:

- 1. Your level of expertise:** If you are a newcomer to the craft of crochet you may well find that your crochet tension will change as your ability improves. When launching into a project like this it is worth making sure you have put in enough ground work to ensure that you are working in the right way and that you have the ability to work consistently. Whilst the CAL project is aimed at those looking to improve their skills, it is not aimed at complete beginners.
- 2. Your mood or situation:** If you are a bit stressed or have had a bit of a tough day you may find that this will have an effect on your crochet tension. Equally, having a few glasses of wine or watching a funny or enthralling movie whilst crocheting can also cause your tension to differ. As a general rule try to crochet in the same kind of situation whenever possible to ensure that everything stays as it should.
- 3. Hook Sizes:** Make sure you are using the correct size hook. For the most part of the project you will be asked to use a 4mm hook. Please check that you have not mistakenly used a UK 4 (imperial size) or a US 4 or 4/E
- 4. Number of stitches:** It is quite common to achieve the correct tension on a swatch only to find that it is not correct over a larger piece. This is because tension can change as we relax into the rhythm of a repetitive crochet action.
Make sure that you measure your tension at all the places I ask you to within the pattern just to be sure you are continuing to work with the correct tension
- 5. Measuring your tension swatch too soon:** It is really important that you measure your tension to at least 10cm – if in doubt measure over a larger piece, say 15cm or even 20cm just to be sure. Putting the ground work in at this stage can save you a lot of unpicking later on.

If you have achieved a different tension to the tension in the pattern

If you have done your tension pieces and achieved more stitches and rows to 10cm this means you are working too tight. Rather than trying to change your crochet method (by consciously crocheting looser) simply change up to a

size larger hook. If you are still too tight then try another size larger. Make a note of how many sizes you have had to change by so that you are sure to make the swap for each of the 3 sizes.

If you have done your tension pieces and achieved fewer stitches and rows to 10cm this means you are working too loose. Rather than trying to change your crochet method (by consciously crocheting tighter) simply change down to a size smaller hook. If you are still too loose then try another size smaller. As above, make a note of how many sizes you have had to change by so that you are sure to make the swap for each of the 3 sizes.

Make sure you work tension swatches over double crochet (US single) and treble crochet (US double) noting the change in hook size between the two – double crochet tension piece should be worked on a 4mm hook and treble crochet tension pieces should be worked on a 3.5mm.

Having trouble with your tension over treble crochet (US double crochet)?

Look at the way you work the stitch

Because of the nature of a treble crochet (US double crochet) it is common to find variances in stitch length and width even if the correct hook has been used in relation to the one used to achieve the correct tension over double crochet (US single crochet)

When we make a treble crochet (US double crochet) we wrap our yarn around the hook first and then work 3 movements drawing yarn loops through others to create the stitch. The tension achieved over each of these movements and the angle at which we hold our hook can have an impact on the tension of each step of the stitch.

There is a video link to Youtube here that explains yanking, riding & lifting:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAvvsbdNxWU>

Why you need to change hook size when you are told to

The reason you will need to change hook size is to do with the tension achieved over different stitches. To try and explain this I have written an example below:

Imagine that you want to make a fabric using double crochet (US single) over a decided number of stitches, let's say for easiness that this is 22sts. You have done a tension square already and know that your tension is correct so your piece should measure 10cm (4in) wide when you use a 4mm hook.

After working double crochet (US single) for a while and finding that indeed your piece is coming up as 10cm (4in) wide you decide to change to treble crochet (US double) continuing on the same hook and sticking with 22sts.

After a few rows of treble crochet (US double) you notice that your fabric has become wider and is measuring closer to 21/22cm wide even though your number of stitches has remained the same.

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The reason for this is because when you make a fabric using a dense stitch like double crochet (US single) you have very little room between the posts of your stitches, whereas when you work with stitches that have a longer post, such as treble crochet (US double) the space between the posts of the stitches gets bigger.

I recommend the use of a 4mm hook for the majority of the crochet within this project, but there are places where you will need to swap down to a 3.5mm or up to a 4.5mm. As a general rule, look out for hook changes when working treble crochet (US double crochet) and slip stitch. Hook sizes are marked in bold within the written patterns.

Changing hook sizes can be a bit of a pain, but it is made easier if you have colour coded hooks – even a dab of different shades of nail polish on your crochet hook handles can make the process of identifying hooks easier.

If you are using a substitute yarn you will still need to check your tension

Most yarns on the market fall into set categories according to their weight. In the UK we have the following standard weights: 1, 2, 3 & 4ply, DK (double knitting), Aran and Chunky. The yarns used within the CAL design (Classique

Cotton DK, Special DK or Life DK if you have substituted) are standard DK weights.

Yarns within each weight category should conform to the same standards, one of which is the suggested knitted or crocheted tension. Most ball bands will show you the suggested tension – on Stylecraft yarns this tension is for knitting and in is the standard tension for DK, which is 22sts and 28-30 rows to measure over 10cm.

Yarns sit within the categories to make it easier to ensure that things come up the right size. This is especially handy when substituting yarn, as, in theory, a DK weight yarn should achieve the same tension regardless of brand or yarn content.

The ball band on the yarn will give you the suggested tension and also a needle or hook size that this tension is to be achieved on. For a standard weight DK this is usually a 4mm knitting needle or crochet hook.

If you are substituting yarn it is important that you find one that achieves the correct tension and has enough meters of yarn on the ball – don't assume that every 50g ball of yarn has the same length.



We have had so much fun planning this fabulous new project for you and we hope you have just as much fun creating it!

Happy Crocheting!

The Stylecraft Team