

debbie bliss
the baby knits
book



the ultimate collection of
knitwear designs for 0-3 year olds

For my very special friend
Patsy and her mother Isabel

First published in Great Britain in 2002

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contents

Introduction	4
Basic Information	6
Abbreviations	7
Types of Yarn	8
SIMPLE	10
Coathanger	12
Moss Stitch Hat, Scarf and Throw	14
Tank Top	18
Double-Breasted Jacket and Leggings	22
Garter Stitch Jacket and Hat	26
Kimono and Trousers	30
Pompon Slippers	35
Raglan Sweater	36
Two-Colour Shoes	38
Classic Cardigan	39
COSY	42
Donkey Jacket and Shoes	44
Hooded Blanket	50
Cable and Rib Sweater with Hood	52
Circular Yoked Sweater	56
Zipped Jacket with Contrasting Edges and Hat	60
Cable and Moss Stitch Jacket	64
Hat with Topknot and Socks	69
Striped Sweater	72
Bear in Lamb Sleep Suit	75
Dressing Gown	80
SPECIAL	84
Beaded Fair Isle Cardigan	86
Beaded Fair Isle Shoes	90
Dress with Lace Edging	92
Embroidered Jacket	96
Baby's Kaftan	102
Sheep Dress and Shoes	106
Cardigan with Frilled Sleeves	111
Fair Isle Bag	114
Embroidered Shoes	116
Alphabet Blanket	118
The Finishing Touch	124
Yarn Stockists and Acknowledgements	128



introduction

There is always something very special about knitting for babies and children – nothing can compare to the message and unique quality that hand-knitted garments hold.

The Baby Knits Book is divided into Simple, Cosy and Special. The Simple chapter includes easy knits for the beginner and for those, like new mothers, who do not have much time on their hands. The designs here are worked in basic stitches and classic styles – a soft cashmere-mix jacket and top, a throw, luxurious and gentle enough to wrap against a baby's skin, a kimono and a tank top. The Cosy chapter has generous sweaters to snuggle into, outdoor sporty knits for active children, and a bear in a lamb suit to cuddle up to. In the Special section jackets and shoes are embellished with embroidery and beads, perfect for gifts, and there is an heirloom alphabet blanket to be cherished for years.

All the designs have been knitted in my own range of yarns which have been especially selected not only for their baby-friendly handle but for their easy wash and wear as well. The collection has also been put together to reflect the range of knitting skills, from the basic to the more advanced.

designing for children

There are certain points I always try to keep in mind when I am designing for babies and children. I tend to produce cardigans rather than sweaters for small babies as they dislike having garments pulled over their heads, and it can be difficult to dress them when they are too small to sit up. If I am working on a sweater design for this age I will introduce a shoulder fastening, an envelope neck, or a front or back neck opening. Another practical style is a ballerina, cross-over style which avoids buttons, as they can be uncomfortable when babies roll on to their tummies. I will only use yarn that I know is soft and kind to babies' skin.

Older children can be more of a challenge. I believe that we often have to use all our powers of persuasion to encourage them to wear hand knits. They have been brought up in a world of fleeces, sweatshirts and man-made fibres, and they are used to wearing fabrics that move with them and are light, soft and comfortable. With this thought in uppermost, I allow plenty of ease in the garments, especially at the underarm, and particularly if they are worked in a very textured pattern such as an Aran which produces a denser and less elastic fabric.

I always quote the actual measurements of the garments and the age of the wearer rather than the chest measurement. This is because from personal experience although I could always remember the age of my children, I floundered when it came to knowing the chest size! The chest size can also be rather a red herring – all designs, unless they are very tightly fitting fashion garments for an adult, have ease. Ease is the extra measurement allowed for comfort and movement, and also to create a particular style such as a generous outerwear cabled sweater. Some readers have queried the quoted measurements on my children's designs because they are comparing adult's chest measurements with the actual measurements of a child's garment. I usually ask them to measure an existing garment that the child they are knitting for wears, and they are usually surprised to find that they match up closely to the measurements in the pattern. I also like to think that the time and money, not to mention love, that has been invested into knitting the design should be rewarded by having a knit that will see the child through at least a couple of years, even if a rather larger than is strictly needed garment is produced originally. However, if the reader is not happy with my measurements I will always suggest that they knit a smaller or larger size.

Try to involve the child in the design you are knitting for them rather than just produce one in the colours or style you like! It is a wonderful opportunity to teach them from an early age that not all their clothes just appear by magic in shops, that they can be lovingly made especially for them. It is also a great way to introduce them to the craft and to looking at colours and textures. Even choosing buttons can be fun.

Debbie Bliss

