

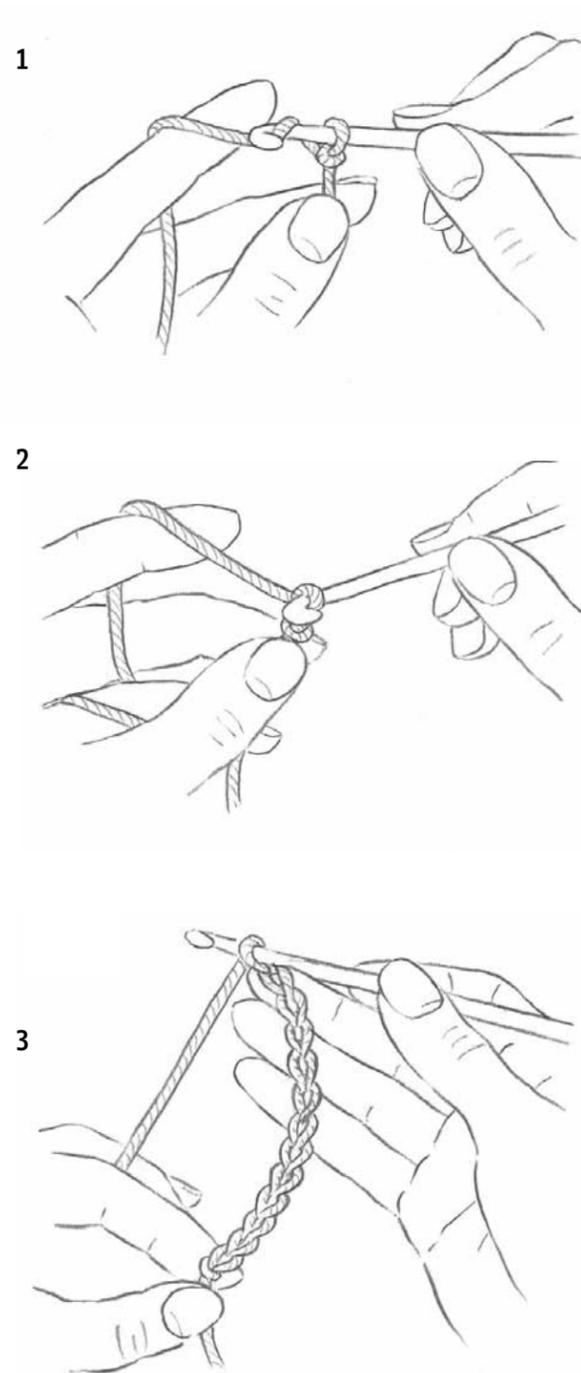
Making a foundation chain

Crochet most often starts with a series of chain stitches, which are used to make the first row: this is called the foundation chain. It needs to be worked loosely and evenly to ensure that the hook can enter each loop on the first row. You may find it tricky to keep an even yarn tension at first but, again, you may need to practice this several times.

1 Holding the slip knot with the left hand and keeping the yarn taut between the hook and your raised finger, push the hook forward and twist it toward you as you take it under, behind, and then over the yarn so that the yarn wraps around the hook and is caught in the slot. This is called yarn over hook (abbreviated yo).

2 Draw the yarn through the loop on the hook, keeping the yarn under an even tension. This forms a new loop on the hook and makes one chain stitch. The new loop should be loose enough to allow the next chain to be drawn through easily.

3 Holding the chain nearest the hook with the thumb and middle finger, repeat steps 1 and 2 until you have the required number of chains. Do not count the loop on the hook. All the chain stitches should be the same size.



Counting chains

When working from a pattern you will need to work a given number of chains to create the foundation row. It is therefore important that you can recognize the formation of each chain and thus count correctly.

The front of a chain

This front of the chain looks like a series of V shapes made by the yarn. Each V is a chain loop sitting between a chain loop above and a chain loop below. The first chain at the beginning will have the slip knot sitting directly underneath it. The surface of the chain is smooth on this side. Stitches should be counted from this side of the chain where possible.

The reverse of a chain

The reverse of the chains has a row of bumps that have been created by the yarn. These bumps sit behind the V and run in a vertical direction from the beginning of the chain up to the hook. The surface of the reverse of the chain is more textural than the front side.

Counting chains

When counting the chains you do not count the stitch that sits on the hook. This is because a loop will remain on the hook up until the moment you fasten off. To making counting easier when creating a large number of chains it may be a good idea to use stitch markers at a predetermined interval, say after every 10 or 20 stitches.

Working loose stitches

When making chain (or subsequent) stitches you must make sure that each stitch is taken up onto the thicker part of the hook (the shank) before starting the next one. If you work your stitches on the thinner part of the hook (the throat) they will become tight, and you will struggle to place your hook into them on subsequent rows.

