

# Chart Reading 101.

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*Written by TuesdayFortnite*

I've been asked to put together a 'step-by-step' taking the fear out of crochet charts, so here's instalment part 1 and I hope you'll join me in this journey of discovery.

Reading crochet charts can be intimidating if you haven't yet been inducted into the secret language, but really, honestly, genuinely it's not difficult. Being an English speaker, I'm now going to make a broad sweeping statement (sorry) and group people into two camps – those who see charts a little like something written in French or Spanish – sort of familiar but you don't know what it means (the letters are recognisable, the words are not) and those who see charts as being written in Japanese, Cyrillic or hieroglyphs – something completely alien.

Much like learning to read in English, reading a chart is simply a matter of learning a bit of vocab and a couple of reading 'rules'.

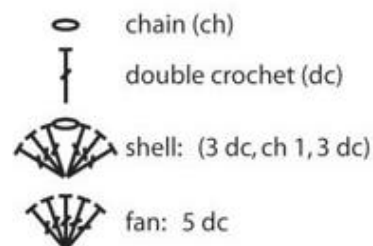
During these sessions we'll be building two small samplers (one square and one circular) so you get the ideas being shown. You need to be able to chain and do a Double Crochet (DC) and I'll be using US terminology throughout (despite being English!) So grab some scrap yarn and a hook and settle down class, we're ready to start!


## Vocabulary

First up we need our vocabulary. The vast majority of charts come with a key or legend that lets you know what symbol is being used to represent what stitch.


An example of a legend or key is to the right. This one is particularly well written.

There are international standards of symbols that *most* people use now and. You can find a good list of them, including a video showing how to do that stitch on the Hass Design pages

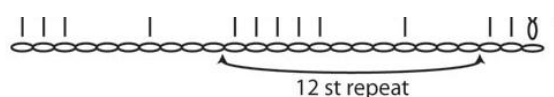


Handily the symbol represents a type of *stitch* regardless of what is called, so the double crochet symbol:  is also the same symbol for the UK treble crochet symbol. Before you panic though, an easy way to think about these icons is the little bar through the T shape is the number of times you wrap the yarn *before* you start your stitch. When reading charts I rarely think about what the stitch is called – just that it's asking me to wrap 'once' or more. I think a lot less using charts than I do with written patterns as I'm always having to remember if it's a US or UK pattern and what they mean by a 'double crochet'!

These symbols are our vocab – our alphabet if you like and our short hand way of showing a particular stitch. The most obvious of these is our starting point!

 is a single chain. If you do a few chain and have a look at the front you'll see it's like a little tear drop shape or an oval. This symbol is a drawing of that shape. It's a bit literal and pretty obvious. So if we see a line of these things on a chart, we know it's a number of chain. The Russians and Japanese are pretty good about putting a number next to a group of chains to let you know how many are in that chain – but older patterns, UK and US patterns are not so good!

Here's an example...



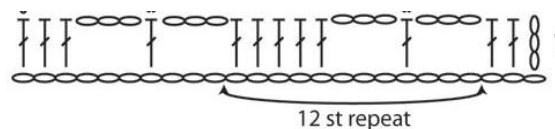
Handily, the designer of this pattern has included a bracket telling us how many chain there are to a pattern repeat if we wanted to make it wider – often that piece of information is missing!

Ok, so what are we looking at? We are looking at a row of chain, we know that – but what do we do with it? If we count across that row we find there are 25 individual chains. So we know our first action is to chain 25 stitches. Done that? Good.

Often a pattern will tell you the number of starting chain, but if not, it's an easy job (if a bit of a faff) to count across. If a pattern is a stitch pattern rather than a finished object pattern, there will never be a stitch count – but there maybe something that tells you the number of stitches to a repeat – such as above, or some words saying something like 'Chain a number divisible by 14 + 5' This means there is a 14 stitch repeat pattern.

What about the +5? Well, I'm glad you asked. The +5 refers to any stitches needed to get your first stitch (we can't do a treble straight from a Chain, we need a few to 'bend around the corner' first – in a treble crochet case we need 4) plus any stitches allowed for in the pattern – there might be a 1 chain gap before you start for example or there might be shaping involved.

Let's have a look at our sample square again, and study Row 1.

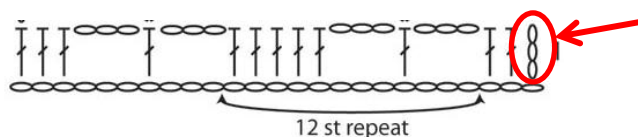


First up crochet charts 'read' in a slightly strange way. Most charts are written by right handed people, for right handed crocheters. The charts 'read' the way you are working, assuming the right side is facing you. The first row will go from RIGHT to LEFT, the second row from LEFT to RIGHT and so on. We also read from the bottom UP, like this....

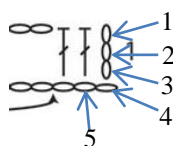


By the way, I'm left handed and don't have a problem reading charts at all – it's just a practice thing, and I know I'm working the 'wrong' way when I check against my charts (for my right side facing, I WORK row 1 left to right and row 2 right to left, but I READ as the chart is written).

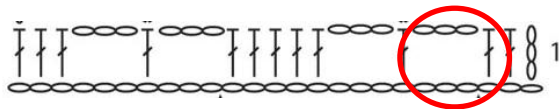
So, going back to our 'Row 1'. We can see that there is 3 turning chain included in the base chain – so we need to add those on. Giving us a chain of 28 (25 +3). These 3 turning chain allow the row to bend enough so that it is the same height as the double crochet we are going to work next.



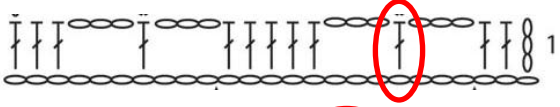
So we have our 28 chain, and we are reading the chart in the correct direction. Now our symbol changes! But it's ok, we know from our legend (and common practice if you don't have a legend) that  $\{$  means double crochet. We can also see on our drawing that the bottom of that DC sits on top of a chain. It's the 5<sup>th</sup> chain counting back from the hook, so we work a DC into the 5<sup>th</sup> chain.



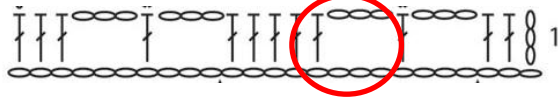
We should now be able to see that there's:



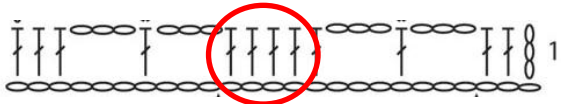
another DC into the next chain, and then 3 chain.



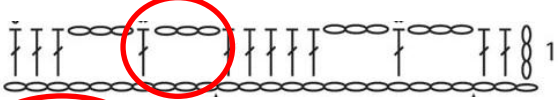
We then do a DC into the FOURTH chain along,



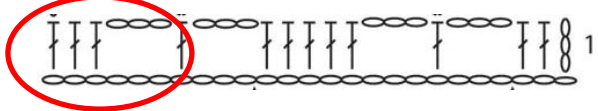
We do it again - Chain 3 and skip 3 foundation chain to put a DC into the 4<sup>th</sup> chain along, but now it changes



we do another 4 DC (each into it's own little chain) to have a little group of 5 DC.

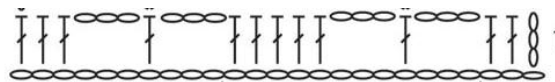


3 Chain and skip 3 to put a single DC into the 4<sup>th</sup> chain,



Chain 3 and skip 3 and finish with 3 DC into the last 3 chain.

You've now got a symmetrical piece of work with 3 DC at either end (ok, one end is 2DC and 3chain pretending it's a DC), then a standalone DC in a gap, and a block of 5DC in the middle. In other words it looks like the drawing!



Let me know what you think, and I'll starting working on Row 2!