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Welcoming Home Baby The Handcrafted Way: 20 Quick & Creative Knitted Hats, Wraps & Cozy Cocoons for Your Newborn

Tricia Drake
Sellers Publishing (March 2011)
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Perhaps the two biggest obstacles for novice knitters are the need to learn how to read knitting instructions and the length of time it can take to complete even a small project. Tricia Drake has tackled both problems in this joyously colorful book of knitted items for newborns.

Readers who might hesitate to invest time and materials in a garment that will soon be outgrown need only page through the variety of projects in *Welcoming Home Baby the Handcrafted Way* to find designs that can do double duty. The Hexagonal Hoodie Blanket can become a snuggling item for toddlers; the Big Zig blanket can become a superhero cape; and the Peek-a-Boo Pod can be the perfect setting for a newborn's first portraits. The cocoons in particular are attractive alternatives to blankets for hot summer days. Drake's color selections are both bold and muted but always complementary. Her use of ribbon in some projects is a refreshing change from the textural sameness of yarn.

The greatest innovation Drake makes in designs for babies is using thick, bulky yarns on large knitting needles. These yarns change not only the look and feel of the garments she's designed, but they also shorten the time it takes to knit them. There's no skimping on the cuteness factor in any of the projects: It will be impossible for any knitter to resist trying an Eskimo Kiss Hooded Cocoon or a Peek-a-Boo Pod.

For each project, Drake provides a materials list, gauge, sizes, required skills, and, for most projects, notes on specific techniques or options for different patterns or materials. Her instructions are clear and precise without being stuffy, and the traditional knitting glossary terms are only used when necessary. Drake's writing style is breezy and familiar, like a best friend demonstrating a knitting stitch.

All this would be moot without the elegant clarity of photographer Brooke Kelly's illustrations. The poses she used for the models (from babies to adults) are natural and warm in mood, while the photos of project elements such as finished stitch patterns, piecing techniques, and how to hold knitting needles for special stitches are easy to understand. Kelly's photos do what they're supposed to do: They make the reader want to grab up yarn and needles and get to work.

From beginner to expert, Drake details her delightful projects in an engaging and thoughtful manner. Any of her designs are more than suitable to give as gifts, or make for a new family member. In *Welcoming Home Baby the Handcrafted Way*, the author has given knitters another reason to get excited about the possibilities of yarn.
J. G. STINSON (April 28, 2011)

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