



An Interview with **Jenny King**

We thought you would enjoy revisiting our interview with Jenny held in August last year

One of the most striking attributes that describe Crochet Guild Australia's Initiator and first president Jenny King is her encouraging attitude. From crochet beginners to veterans of the trade, there is always something new to learn and little gems to explore when Jenny is talking about crochet.

About Jenny

Jenny learned to crochet from her aunt when she was a little kid and never really stopped since then. She is the author of 13 self-published books, was a regular contributor to Annie's and the designer of over 600 patterns. Jenny has taught at 16 Crochet Guild of America conferences over the last

24 years, which may have contributed for her being known very well in America.

Among garment lovers, she is well known for her program "Get Squared", where she shares a simple yet effective formula how to crochet garments that fit, including five patterns to try it on. Since she created the course, she has extended the range of patterns that can be made using this formula as well as a variation of the stitches to work with. And as a means of completion, there is also "Kids Squared", where the crochet enthusiast gets the tools to create fitting garments for children.

Despite having designed all sorts of things like blankets, bags, dolls, accessories and even a book worth of flowers (Jenny's Bouquet - One dozen Australian Native Flowers), her favourite designs are - by far - wearables. Her style can be described as eclectic with a fondness for asymmetrical pieces and a definite love for colour. She has at least 40 projects on the go. Maybe that is the secret to releasing over 640 patterns? Great pattern testers can be a make or break for a designer. Jenny is lucky to have the eagle eyes of long-term pattern tester like Lyndall Reeve.

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Designing them comes natural to Jenny. When asked who taught her crochet, Jenny tells us this story: "My aunt taught me how to make chain stitches and a cousin on the other side of the family was making a granny square. This is where I learned the granny stitch, only to discover later that this was called a treble (UK terms). I picked up the granny stitch really quickly and in order to keep me occupied, the adults went to the store with me to buy me some yarn. I didn't want to make a blanket, so I worked it into a poncho. Then I didn't like the neckline, and because I wanted a funnel neck, I just put one on." This is typical for Jenny: she turns everything into a garment and she wants to wear it. Not surprising, she even crocheted her own wedding gown and when the time came, a dress for the 'Mother of the Bride', which is also available as a pattern.

Here is a great tip that Jenny shared with the zoom participants: if you work a lot with acrylics, it can be really hard on the hands. Jenny's cousin does a lot of work for charity, where acrylics is a preference. One day she said she could not do it anymore because of the pain in her hands. After she switched to using wool as Jenny recommended, she was back in the game. If for any reason, for example an allergy to wool, this is not an option for you, try using a bigger hook.

Speaking of yarn, Jenny is a natural girl who prefers wool, cotton, silk and linen. Besides her own range (JKD embellish and JKD Stonewashed - the manufacturing process being "a very exciting journey"), she loves Scheepjes Whirl (because it does not split) and Scheepjes Catona (available in a range of 113 colours!!), wool from Biggan Design (from a Swedish lady who is just as delightful as Jenny herself; she used this for example for Lili The Pink), Universal Yarns Universe11 (for a bit of bling), Koigu Wool and Noro yarns (who have featured her pattern in such a wonderful way that it made Jenny cry when she saw it). Fun fact: Although Jenny has a great relationship with Scheepjes, she has never been sponsored by a yarn company.



Here is another tip from Jenny, this time relating to yarn care: with the emergence of washable wools, it is easier than ever to care for your yarn, but Jenny herself always washes her woolly garments by hand with a wool washing liquid.

Jenny's Books

With 13 self-published books there are a lot of patterns to choose from. Fancy a blanket? Look no further than the Footy Rug book 1 and 2, the Tartan Rug Book, A Few More Tartans or USA and Canadian Plaid Afghans. Getting ready for summer? Try one of the Some'R Hot Bikinis or a garment from the Summer Collection. For a bit of bling, you can't go past Heirloom Beaded Bags and Jenny's Bouquet with a dozen of authentic Australian natives is a must for anyone who likes flowers. There is even a whole pattern book For The Boys!



Jenny tells us that at one stage she developed a real passion for beads. No bead shop was safe from her. She did not feed her children, eat or sleep, she was just beading all the time, using her 0.9mm crochet hook and a magnifying glass. Her Spangle Bangle design is one that was published in a magazine for Annie's. Her first design featured orange, black and lime, a very lively colour combination that the publishers did not like as much. They preferred more muted colours, so she was redesigned to fit the brief. Beaded Bags (available through the website) and Beaded Belles (a book for dolls that unfortunately is sold out) are two books that are the result from Jenny 'going nuts on beads', as was a Beaded Edges workshop in America.

Jenny is kind enough to consider girls with curves, for whom she has written her Plus Size Fashion book.

The Baker's Dozen builds on the Get Squared patterns and contains 13 new stitches that can be used with this system.

If you are lucky, you can find her book Learn To Do Bavarian Crochet as a used edition for \$99 or

get Noro magazine ...where she features a Bavarian crochet design. Bavarian On The Go is currently sold out, but maybe there will be a re-print? These books are the direct result of Jenny's inherent understanding of crochet and her determination to work things out. She saw the style in a garment at a Baptist Craft Group. The lady there was not willing to share the pattern, even though she communicated that she wanted the technique to be continued. So what do you do? If you are Jenny, you just figure it out for yourself and write two books about it!

A passion for teaching

Yet despite having published so many books and patterns, Jenny's real passion is actually the hands-on teaching of crochet. This is why she has spent so much time at the Crochet Conference in America and why she offers her signature workshop "Get Squared TM" not only online, but also in person throughout Australia.

One of Jenny's trade secrets is to always wear the garment she is teaching in class. This gives the participants a visual and an understanding of what they are doing, which makes the class so much more fun too. To top it off, Jenny says "Accessorize with your garment, wear matching earpieces, for example." People notice this and it is always a good point of conversation with the people she meets at the conferences. As a matter of fact, she can still remember the first lady she has spoken to at her first conference!

A Crochet Guild for Australia

You can meet Jenny at the CGA conference in Sydney 2023 and see for yourself what a refreshing, sparkling lady she is. This is thanks to an inspired conversation with crochet colleagues at a crochet retreat, where they got talking on how great it would be to have an Australian Crochet Guild. And because there is nothing that can stop a bunch of determined ladies, they came together for their first official meeting on the 7th of October 2018 to make this vision a reality. With a lot of dedication, including

monthly meetings, tons of research and a huge amount of behind-the-scenes work, the Crochet Guild of Australia was launched a year later, 3 months before the first covid lock downs.



Having stepped down in August 2022 as President of the Guild, Jenny will continue as an active member and teacher of the Teacher Certificate Training, combining the teaching skills from her first paid career with her passion for crochet.

(Pictured here with graduate Barbara Webber, a foundation member of the Guild receiving her accredited Teacher Training Certificate in 2022)

Little things, big impact

Sometimes we underestimate the impact of something small, the joy and satisfaction that comes from starting a project and finishing it in a relatively short time. We also don't always know or recognise the impact and the value of something that is little. Take a pansy, for example. Quick to make, adjustable in size and colour and a pretty little add on to a present or a card.

When offering a flower workshop for making pansies, Jenny met a lady who had just come back from Iraq. Every time they had some sort of sadness, she would make a flower and leave it there, honouring those that are now missed. During her time there she made lots of flowers. We don't know what kind of impact the flowers had on those who found them, but for the lady it was a way of coping with the sadness. Naturally, she had to come to the flower workshop. This time not only to cope with sadness, of course, but to embrace the sheer pleasure of making something, even or maybe especially if it is made from scrap yarn.

What is the hardest thing in teaching crochet? According to Jenny, it is understanding how tricky it is for a beginner to get two hands to work together in a way they have not worked before, getting the left and right hand to work together to control tension and movement at the same time. Jenny has taught lots of beginners over the years and the main difficulties can always be traced back to the same issue: hand coordination.



Here are a few more tips, tricks and insights for crocheters beyond beginners to improve their skills:

Hook size - band vs designer

Don't pay any attention to the hook on the ball band. If the pattern says what the hook size is meant to be, use it!!

Jenny designed a garment that was very lacey, made from thin yarn, but with a big hook size. A lady approached her and showed her project, which was tiny and not wearable at all. After inquiring on Jenny's side she admitted that she used the hook that was recommended on the ball band instead of the size Jenny told her to use.

So again and in a nutshell: go with what the designer says in a pattern. It is really important. The designer does these things for a reason!

Secure your work.

Jenny learned about this at a conference in America from a man called Bill (William) Elmore.

If you have to leave your project for a while, make 4 ch, take the hook out, put the loop around the ch4/pull chains through the loop, strangling the chains,. This knot will never come undone until you want it to when you can simply slide the loop up again.

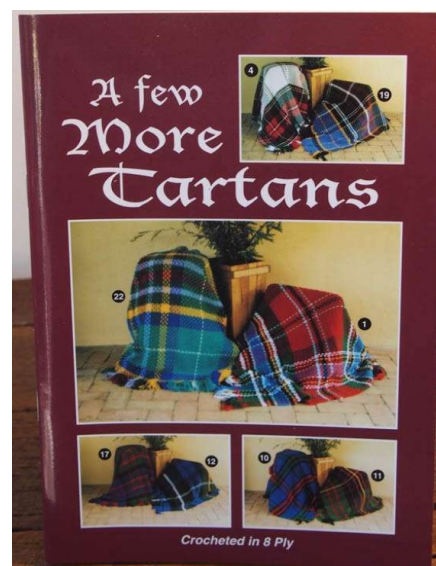
Beginning a treble row.

This tip goes way back to 1998, when Jenny attended her first teacher training.

Instead of working 3 chain for a treble (UK term, which is a dc in UK terms) at the beginning of a row, start with a double crochet (UK)/single crochet (US) and a chain. This will give you a stitch that is as tall and as wide as a treble/double crochet, but looks better than 3 ch. It works much better for decreases at the beginning of the row too.

Did you know that even though Jenny is described as one of the best designer of garments that fit, she does not have a professional training in garment design?

She did major in textiles though and attended a wardrobe and colour consultancy course when she was working for a skin cancer company to consult for ladies who are joining the work force again. What really helped in finding the right fit for each women was having a shop, where people of all shapes and sizes would come in and she made an effort to find a garment to suit them.





Jenny in the media

When you are as well-known as Jenny, it is not surprising that you can find her in the most interesting places. Jenny has a close connection to Annie's, which originated from her first Crochet Guild of America conference attendance, when someone was looking for a room mate. She is mentioned in Jean Leinhauser's book Crochet Master Class, where she shares her wonderful Princess of Wales Memorial Tartan pattern.

Jenny's Swirl jacket pattern is featured in theedition of Noro magazine.

You can even see her in an older episode of Knit and Crochet, which is now a TV show and to which she was invited by Lena Skvagerson. Jenny's designs have also been featured many times in Vogue Magazine.

<http://youtu.be/Zjfb0G05UNw>



As mentioned before, Jenny always has a multitude of designs on the hook. Currently we can look forward to the release of a loose weave top for summer with just a bit of shaping. There might be a range of tartan dog coats and more summer garments, including a little skirt and a draped top.

Thank you Jenny, for all your wonderful patterns, your amazing teaching workshops and for being an encourager of crocheters from beginners to designers.

(Picture new 'Claudia' design, pattern now available)

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