



# Monmouth Cap



Monmouth caps were worn by soldiers, sailors, and other men doing outdoor work from the 15<sup>th</sup> through the late 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. They were included in a list of clothing suggested for settlers at Jamestown, bought for laborers in the Massachusetts Bay colony, and ordered by George Washington for his slaves. The knitted knob or 'button' at the top of the cap may have originally been used to fasten the cap inside a helmet; later knitted caps either have a small loop or tail at the crown instead, or are simply bound off.

The cap in this pattern is based on the cap in Richard Rutt's "A History of Hand Knitting." The directions have been altered for the yarn used in this pattern. The cap in Rutt dates from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, but a similar cap dating to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century was found in a dig in New York City; it probably belonged to a sailor, as it

was coated with tar. These two caps are knitted in a very large gauge – Rutt’s has a gauge of 1 stitch/cm, which would be about 2.5 stitches/inch. Some other surviving caps from the late 17th through the late 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were knitted in smaller gauges. The term “Monmouth cap” seems to have applied generically to knitted caps of the type worn by sailors and workmen, regardless of gauge.

The most common colors for the Rutt-style Monmouth caps seem to have been brown or red. By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century finer-gauge striped caps were being knitted; the three depictions I’ve seen show these caps in stripes of red, blue, and white yarn.

More notes on Monmouth caps can be found at <http://www.marariley.net/knitting/caps.htm>

**Size:**

This hat will fit an average size man’s head (22”).

**Needles:**

1 set of four size 10 double-pointed needles, or as needed to get gauge.

1 16” long size 10 circular needle

Optional button -- 1 one-inch circular ring (available at sewing stores) (Note: the button may have been used to fasten the cap to the inside of a helmet. Other caps from this period either have no button at the crown, or have a loop.)

**Yarn:**

175 yds (about 1 1/3 skein) Brown Sheep Bulky yarn or equivalent

**Gauge:**

before felting = 15 1/2 sts/4”, 21 r/4”

after felting = 16 sts/4”, 25 r/4”

**Knitting:**

*Brim:*

Cast 86 sts onto needles 1 size larger than size needed to get gauge; knit back onto circular needle in size needed for gauge and join. Divide stitches into 3 sections (28, 28, & 30 sts each). If using dpns, either use three needles and divide sts evenly, or use four needles and use stitch markers to divide sections.

R 1 – 3: Knit. (Cast-on row counts as Row 1 if you used a long-tail cast-on.

R 4: Inc. 1 st after each marker (3 sts—89 sts total).

R 5 – 7: Knit.

R 8: Purl.

R 9 – 11: Knit.

R 12: Dec. 1 st after each marker (3 sts—86 sts total).

R 13 – 15: Knit.

R 16: Double over the knitting at the purl row (wrong sides together) to form the brim. With each stitch, pick up and knit one of the stitches from the cast-on edge together with a stitch on the left-hand needle.

Knit 29 rnds from edge of brim.

From now on, count the row where you've joined the brim as Row 1.

R 30: K2tog after each marker.

R 35: K13 sts after each marker, k2tog, knit to end.

R 40: K2tog after each marker.

R 45: K12 sts after each marker, k2tog, knit to end.

R 46: Knit.

R 47: K4, k2tog; repeat to end of round.

R 48: Knit.

R 49, 51, 53: K3, k2tog; repeat to end of round.

R 50, 52, 54: K2, k2tog; repeat to end of round.

R55 – all other rows: K2, k2tog, repeat; repeat to end of round.

Decrease until there are 8 sts left; break yarn, leaving about 2 feet, draw end through remaining sts, and bind off (if using button at top of cap).

*Dorset button (used if not using loop at crown):*

Using buttonhole stitch, cover a 1" plastic or metal ring with stitches, hiding the loose end of the yarn under the stitches as you go. Make sure the stitches cover the ring completely.

Run the yarn across the ring, sewing it into the opposite side of the ring to make a "spoke". Turn the ring slightly and make more "spokes" – about 8 times. Fill in the center of the button by weaving the yarn in and out of the spokes. Sew the button onto the cap by making an "X" over the center of the button where the spokes cross.

If using loop at top of cap instead of button, crochet about 2" of chain stitches. Pull tail through last stitch of chain and bind off inside cap.

*Loop at brim:*

Tie about 2 feet of yarn to edge of brim, hiding tail inside brim. Crochet a chain of stitches about 2 1/2" long. Pull tail through last stitch and tie off to brim next to start of chain, again hiding tail inside brim.

*Felting:*

You can either make a swatch and felt it on a hot-cold cycle with blue jeans (not towels or other soft, fuzzy fibers -- they leave lint on your swatch) to see if your swatch will match the one specified, or you can felt the hat gradually, stopping the wash load every 15 minutes to make sure it hasn't felted too much. If you want to felt the cap by hand, there are a number of online resources and books on the subject.

**References:**

[Buckland, Kirstie](#). *The Monmouth Cap*. 1978, Costume Society, Costume 13 (1979), 1-16.

Buckland, Kirstie. *Monmouth Caps in America*. 1997, *Ars Textrina* 27, pp. 5-14.

**Support:**

If you believe you have found an error in this pattern, please email the author at [mara.riley@yahoo.com](mailto:mara.riley@yahoo.com). Changes or updates to patterns will be posted at [www.marariley.net/errata.htm](http://www.marariley.net/errata.htm).