

# LURE OF THE NORTH

## Winter Mitten Making



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<http://lureofthenorth.com>

**Note 1-** This booklet is part of a series of DIY booklets published by Lure of the North. For all other publications in this series, please see our website at [lureofthenorth.com](http://lureofthenorth.com). Published instructional booklets can be found under "Info Hub" in the main navigation menu.

**Note 2 – Lure Mitten Making Kits:** These instructions are intended to be accompanied by our Mitten Making Kit, which is available through the “Store” section of our website at: <http://lureofthenorth.com/shop>. Of course, you can also gather all materials yourself and simply use these instructions as a guide, modifying to suit your requirements.

**Note 3 - Distribution:** Feel free to distribute these instructions to anyone you please, with the requirement that this package be distributed in its entirety with no modifications whatsoever. These instructions are also not to be used for any commercial purpose. Thank you!

**Note 4 – Feedback and Further Help:** Feedback is welcomed to improve clarity in future editions. For even more assistance you might consider taking a mitten making workshop with us. These workshops are run throughout Ontario, and include hands-on instructions and all materials. Go to [lureofthenorth.com/calendar](http://lureofthenorth.com/calendar) for an up to date schedule.

**Our Philosophy:** This booklet describes our understanding of a traditional craft – these skills and this knowledge has traditionally been handed down from person to person and now we are attempting to do the same. We are happy to have the opportunity to share this knowledge with you, however, if you use these instructions and find them helpful, please give credit where it is due. We have worked hard to produce this package and would appreciate any acknowledgments given. Thank you.

- The Lure Team, Kielyn & Dave Marrone

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## 0.0 What Makes Winter Mittens So Great?

Having comfortable and cozy extremities is essential to enjoying the frozen, sun thirsty season. Hands and feet are of the utmost importance when braving the elements. Using a combination of thick wool inner layers and a breathable buckskin outer is a sure step in the right direction. Tried, tested and true, these mitts have traveled with us for hundreds of nights in the northern frozen wilderness.



*Illustration 1: Winter Mittens made from a Lure of the North workshop*

## 0.1 DIY Benefits

Making mittens yourself gives you an opportunity to customize and personalize them to your heart's content. This can be elaborate ornamentation, including bead work, burning and the like, or simple elegance. The skills learned in making these mittens will give you the knowledge and confidence to repair them and other equipment in the field. And of course, this is an opportunity to connect with the heritage of our land and those that have traveled it before us.



*Illustration 2: Happy mitt-shop participants*

# 1.0 Getting Prepared

## 1.1 Kit Contents:



*Illustration 3: Everything included in “Mitten Making Kit”. Note: there are a variety of deerskin colours and decorative ribbons available.*

- ~ 5 square feet of deerskin for the outers (available in a variety of colours);
- ~5 square feet of wool for the inner mitt (10 sq ft for double liners)
- 2 x 1” x 1' decorative ribbons (available in a variety of styles);
- ~4 metres of yarn to reinforce stitching on inner mittens
- 1 darning needle
- Artificial sinew – enough for project, plus extra for repair kit;
- 2x “Glover's Needles” (Aka. “Triangular Needles” or “Leather Needles”);
- Extra deerskin scraps: enough to make a sewing thimble, and/ or use in repair kit;
- Lure of the North Patch;
- Paper patterns;
- These instructions

## 1.2 Items Not Provided



*Illustration 4: You need only supply a few standard household items.*

- scissors;
- pins;
- sewing machine (optional);
- measuring tape;

## 1.2 Prepare Your Pattern

The pattern you will receive with your kit coincides with the sizing chart provided. The mitten is constructed from three pieces: The largest piece, referred to as the “palm”, a skinny long piece, referred to as the, “vamp” and the smallest piece, referred to as the “thumb”. See illustration at right.

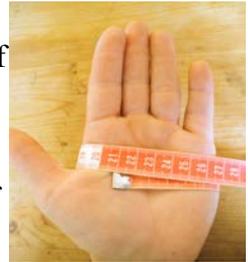


*Illustration 5: Pattern pieces from left to right: Thumb, Vamp, Palm*

### Finding Your Pattern Size

Using a flexible measuring tape, hold one hand out with your fingers straight and together with your thumb extended outwards. Measure around the widest portion of your hand, excluding the thumb.

Refer to the sizing chart and find the number that closest suits the circumference of your hand that you just measured. Scroll across to see the pattern number and that is your pattern! Eg. If your hand measures 23cm in circumference then you will cut a size 4 pattern for your inner mittens. If you are doing double-layer inner mittens, *both layers will be the same size.*



*Illustration 6: Measuring hand circumference*

**Note: if your hand isn't quite perfectly matching to one size, cut outside the lines of the pattern smaller or on the inside of the larger pattern, which ever one is closer.**

### Pattern Sizing for Outer Buckskin Layer

The buckskin outer mittens will stretch more than the wool inners. Appropriate sizing of the buckskin outers is as follows:

For single-layer inner mitts: Use the same size pattern for both inners and outers;

For double-layer inner mitts: The buckskin outer mittens should be one size larger than the wool inners.

## 2.0 Making a thimble (Aka. “The Basics”)

1. Grab your leather needle. Notice the needle has a triangular tip with blades on each edge. This needle is designed to cut through your leather, and will likewise cut you if you're not careful. We will begin by construction a small leather thimble (or two) for protection.
2. Thread the needle. Depending on the type of thread you are using, you may need to split it down in thickness. The sinew we use and supply with our kits, **does** need to be split into thirds before it can be used. Our sinew will easily and naturally split into thirds. If you are trying to force it, try again until you find the natural split. **If your thread is too thick for your needle, you will be struggling with every stitch.**
3. The thread should be hanging unevenly from the needle – that is, one half of the thread should be longer than the other. Put a knot at the end of the long half of thread.
4. From your scrap pieces of leather, cut a rectangle ~ 1 ½” wide and 5” long. Fold this in half width-wise to form a thimble ~ 2 ½” x 1 ½” wide with seams on either side.
  - a) Adjust this size according to your finger... it should snugly fold around the finger you intend to use your thimble on, and reach beyond your first knuckle.
5. You will sew the seams of the thimble using the “Whip Stitch”. This is the same stitch (with some small variations) that you will use for almost every seam on this project. The whip stitch is done as follows:
  - a) Holding the thimble in your left hand and the needle in your right, you will stitch from one open corner up into the fold you have made. Begin by opening the two halves of leather, and push the needle down through just the bottom piece of leather. Pull all the way through to the knot. This initial stitch is placed between your two pieces of leather to hide your knot inside your thimble.
  - b) Bring your needle back up, fold your two pieces of leather back together and push the needle down through both pieces of leather. This is your first full stitch.
  - c) Bring your needle back up and again stitch down through both pieces of leather ~ 1/8” (2 – 3 mm) over from your previous stitch.
  - d) This is the whip stitch. If done properly your thread will lay over the open edge of the thimble. **The key to doing the whip stitch properly is to put every stitch down through the same piece of leather first.** For example, in the thimble you have already started you will continue by always pushing the needle down through the upper piece of leather first (except for your initial ½ stitch which is done to hide your knot...). Stitches continue: down and out, down and out, down and out...



*Illustration 7:  
First stitch:  
"Hiding the  
Knot"*

### Note – Whip Stitch Details:



*Illustration 8: Appropriate stitch length and stitch depth.*

Your deerskin is very forgiving material in terms of how you sew it together. Because the skin does not fray when cut, you do not have to worry about finishing edges. Likewise, you can place your stitches fairly close to the edge of the material without worrying about them pulling through. I like to keep my stitch depth (distance from edge of material) at about 3mm (or 1/8"). The stitch length (distance between each stitch) should also be kept fairly tight (again ~ 3mm or 1/8"). This makes a very nice, professional finish. Finally, the key to a really nice looking finished mitten is consistency. If you can keep your stitch depth and stitch length consistent from one stitch to the next you will do a very fine job. **IMPORTANT:** There is no need to place your stitches tighter together or closer to the edge than 1/8". Unlike woven fabrics, when sewing deerskin you are *cutting holes* in the material with each stitch. Place your stitches too close together and risk weakening your material.

6. Continue sewing your thimble using the Whip Stitch until you reach the fold in the leather – you have completed one side, and now need to finish off your stitch.
7. Seams are finished as such:
  - a) After your final whip stitch, bring your needle back up, and stitch down through the exact same hole that you just made. This will lay a second whip stitch on top of your last one.
  - b) Bring the needle back up and make another stitch in the same hole – a 3<sup>rd</sup> stitch now lays on top of the first two.
  - c) Place a fourth stitch in the same hole, but do not pull tight. Pull the stitch most of the way through, leaving a small loop of thread. Pass the needle through this loop twice. Pull tight to knot.
8. Snip your thread close to your thimble to keep things neat and tidy.
9. Put another knot in the long end of your thread and sew up the second side of your thimble, following steps 5 – 8. Start at the open corner, hide your knot by starting with a ½ stitch (just through one piece of leather) initially, and then whip stitch up into the fold. When you reach the fold, stack four stitches in one hole, make a knot and pull tight to bind.

The thimble should fit very snugly on whatever digit you choose to use it on (force it on - it will stretch). Many people use it on their index finger and/ or thumb, while others find it most useful on the middle finger. This is a matter of personal preference. Make yourself a second or third thimble at this time if you feel you will want the extra protection (more thimbles are more cumbersome however!). Spice up your thimbles by drawing faces, cutting fringe or burning a design in them.

Hurrah, you are now ready to begin your mittens!!

## 3.0 Making the Inners

### 3.1 Trace and Cut

1. Place the pattern pieces on the wool, and carefully pin the patterns using sewing pins. Mark the tick that is located at the top of the vamp and the palm piece on the inside of the mitten pattern pieces with a pen or marker NOT scissors.
2. Make sure you cut one of each pattern piece. i.e. Cut one set of patterns with the marking (ex. pattern number 3) facing up and then flip the patterns around so the marking (pattern size number) is face down. This way you will have a left and a right mitten.
3. If you are making double-layer mittens, cut both sets now. The two layers will be sewn together and should be the same size.

### 3.2 For Double-Layer Mittens Only

While two independent layers would offer faster drying and some increased versatility, we much prefer to sew both layers of our mittens together. We find this reduces bunching of the bulky inner layers and makes for a more comfortable final product.

1. Tack two layers of the palm together in three separate locations in the middle of the palm. Stitch up and down through the wool as if sewing on a button 3 stitches in one spot. There should be three tacks in the centre of the pieces to prevent the most bunching.
2. Repeat for both the thumb and vamp pieces, though these smaller pieces only require 2 tacks each.
3. Repeat steps 1 & 2 for the other mitten.

### 3.3 Sew Thumb onto Palm

We sew the inner mitten right side out so we see the stitching so that we don't feel the stitching on the inside of the mitt. So start with the palm piece face down on the table with the marker visible. The thumb and vamp piece you will sew with the marker face down.

1. Place the thumb on top of the palm upside down as shown in the illustration on the right.
2. Hide your knot between the layers. Begin to whip stitch at the tip of the sharp edge on the thumb piece and continue towards the centre of the palm.
3. Stitch two reinforcing whip stitches at the corner.
4. Once you've reinforced the corner, swivel the thumb piece so that the thumb matches up with the palm. Reinforce the first stitch with the thumb and palm now lined up.



*Illustration 9: Thumb in reverse position ready to be sewed onto palm.*

5. Continue whip stitching around the thumb and down the wrist portion of the thumb piece.  
**Watch that the pieces are lining up at the bottom and stretch one (usually the palm) to fit if needed.** You can tack the two together at the wrist to make sure they line up.
6. When you reach the wrist, reinforce by doing two extra whip-stitches and then double back for 5 stitches to reinforce this high-stress area.
7. Finish the stitch in the same way as is done for the thimble.

### 3.4 Sew Vamp to the Palm and Thumb

1. Thread your needle with a fresh piece of sinew – approximately an arm-span and a half in length.
2. Line up the vamp piece with the swoop facing towards the thumb piece and with the marker facing down.
3. Align the tick marks at the top of vamp and palm.
4. Begin sewing at the tick mark, remembering to hide your knot.
5. Whip stitch towards the thumb piece. Reinforce where the thumb piece meets the vamp on both sides of the corner slit by adding double stitches there.
6. The pieces should all line up at the wrist. If they do not, stretch one piece as you work your way down to ensure they match at the end. You can tack the end of the two pieces at the wrist to make sure they line up.
7. Head back up the seam for five stitches to reinforce the stress point at the wrist.
8. Finish your stitch as usual.
9. Start back at the top of the vamp and whip stitch down the other half of the mitten to the other side of the wrist.
10. Double-back 5 stitches to reinforce the wrist.
11. Finish the stitch.



*Illustration 10: Vamp lined up on the palm*

### 3.5 Cross-Stitch the Innings

At this point your inner mittens look complete, but they still require an over-stitch with the heavy yarn. This over-stitch is decorative, but more importantly it strengthens and reinforces the seam so that the thin sinew does not tear through the soft wool.

Before you can begin the over-stitch you must decide whether you will leave the seam on your mittens facing out, or whether you will turn the mittens inside-out so that the seam faces in. Either way works, but we prefer to leave our inner mittens with the seam facing out and turn the outer (buckskin) mittens so that the seam faces in.

**Note:** The wool yarn is not as strong as the sinew. Care should be taken to pull the yarn gently through the wool. Clean up tangles rather than trying to force them through the wool. If the yarn breaks, start a new piece. This new piece should cover two previous stitches to lock the broken yarn into place.

1. Cut an arm's length and a half of the yarn and thread it into the darning needle;
2. Tie a knot in the end of the yarn;
3. Begin where the thumb seam meets the wrist and hide the knot on the inside;
4. Proceed up the seam creating a visible criss-cross stitch when viewed from the outside of the mitten (note: the inside of the mitten will not be a criss-cross pattern, this is normal).  
There are a variety of stitch patterns that can produce this visible criss-cross stitch. One example is shown in the diagram below.
5. Continue criss-cross stitching until the point where the thumb seam meets the back seam. Finish your stitch here in the same manner as usual.
6. Begin again at the wrist, this time at the “back” seam. Stitch up and around so that the mitten is cross-stitched at every seam, but not at the wrist.

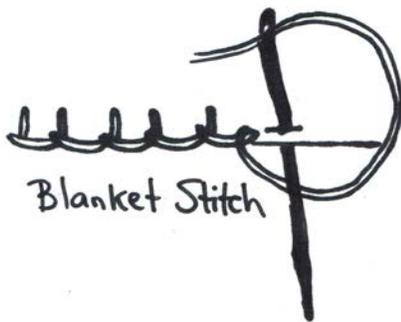


*Illustration 11:  
Cross-stitch  
pattern.*

### 3.5 Blanket Stitch Around the Cuff for a Finished Edge

Finally, your mitten should get a blanket stitch at the wrist. This step is optional but recommended for single-layer mittens. For double-layer mittens it is necessary to sew the two layers together and create one clean wrist opening.

1. A blanket stitch is similar to the whip stitch with one difference. Start your stitch as for the whip stitch. This creates a loop of thread. Before pulling tight, pass your needle through that loop of thread. See diagram below.
2. When done correctly, this will lay the thread across the wrist opening. See photo below  
**Note:** Don't pull too tight to ensure a nice flat lined cuff!



*Illustration 12: Blanket Stitch*



*Illustration 13: A finished, blanket-stitched wrist.*

## 3.6 Create a Second Mitten

1. Repeat the steps above to create your second inner mitten. Be sure that your pieces are all mirror images of the pieces used for your previous mitt to ensure you don't end up with two left mitts!



*Illustration 14: Rock on! You're halfway there!*

## 4.0 Making the Outers

### 4.1 Inspect your hide and select a tracing location

[Note: The inside (fuzzy or 'suede' side) of the hide is known as the “flesh” side, the smooth side is known as the “grain” side and is the side of the hide that had the hair.]

For mittens we recommend using the flesh side (fuzzy) of the hide facing in and the grain side out. We find that the flesh side grips the inner layers quite nicely and reduces mitten slippage.

Inspect your hide for any thin spots, holes, or brands that you may want to avoid. If in doubt, run your hands over the hide, push and pull on any spots you are nervous about.

### 4.2 Trace and Cut

**Important Reminder!** Remember, your outer mitten will most likely be a larger pattern size than the one used for your inner mitten (unless using a single layer of thin wool). See Section 1.2 “Prepare Your Pattern” for more information.

1. Place the pattern pieces on the 'wrong' side of the deerskin (i.e. The side of the deerskin you intend to be the inside), and carefully trace the patterns using a regular pen or marker. Mark the tick that is located at the top of the vamp and the palm piece on the inside of the mitten pattern pieces with pen NOT scissors.
2. Make sure you cut one of each pattern piece with the markings facing up AND facing down so you have a left and a right mitten!
3. Cut the patterns using a sharp pair of scissors.

### 4.3 Adding the Lure Logo

Now is a great time to add that snazzy Lure of the North logo included with your kit! It should go on the back of one mitten (the “vamp” piece). It is much easier to sew it on now rather than to wait for the completed mitten. Note: If you are planning to add decorative ribbon, then be sure to leave enough room for that below the logo.

- The logo can be added by hand, using the by-now-familiar whip stitch;
- Or can be added with a sewing machine. It is important to set a very long stitch length (“stretch stitch”) on a sewing machine though. Watch the material and make sure it is feeding properly through the machine. Help it a bit if need be. If the material is not feeding properly your machine might put too many holes in the deerskin!

### 4.4 Sewing the Outers

After completing your inners, the outers are very simple and more of the same awesome stitching. You don't even need to worry about hiding your knots when you start your stitches as your mittens will be **sewn inside-out** and flipped right side-out after completion.

1. Complete all the steps in Section 3.3 “Sew Thumb onto Palm” and Section 3.4 “Sew Vamp to the Palm and Thumb”.
2. The major difference is that you will do all stitching with your mittens inside-out, that is with your pieces placed “right side” to “right side”. The pen markings of the palm piece should be face down on the table and the thumb and vamp piece should be face up.

### 4.5 Attaching decorative ribbon

If you choose to add decorative ribbon it is easiest to use the sewing machine with the island removed so you can place the mitten onto the bar and rotate the mitten as you're sewing. (Please see note about “stretch stitching” in Section 4.3). If you do not have a removable island this step can be tricky so be careful you don't accidentally sew the two layers of hide together!

1. Line up the ribbon onto the mitten in the position you would like it;



*Illustration 15: One outer mitten done with ribbon attached.*

2. Pin the ribbon, tucking the two ends under themselves to create a finished edge;
3. Extend the stitch length on your machine to at least 2.5;
4. Carefully stitch the ribbon on both sides.

That's it! You should now hold in your hot little hands a beautiful, functional pair of traditional winter mittens that we hope you use for many years to come!



*Illustration 16: Les Deux!*

# Congratulations!

## Appendix 1: Attaching Fur

1. Measure the width of the fur and make a mark with chalk or another removable marker this distance in from the wrist of the mitten. This mark should be on the outside of the mitten;
2. Pin fur on the mitten 1/8" in towards the wrist from the mark made in Step 1. The fur should be skin side up and upside down so that the strip is hanging towards the palm of the mitten. See photo below.
3. Test your fur orientation and position: if you flip the fur around the pins there should be a hidden seam, the fur should reach the wrist of the mitten, and the direction of hairs should point towards the wrist. Adjust if necessary. See photo below.
4. Sew the fur on using a sewing machine (straight stitch) or hand sew using a whip stitch;
5. Flip the fur and pull so that the edge of the fur lines up with the edge of the mitten;
6. Whip stitch the edge of the fur and the edge of the mitten together. When sewing fur, your needle should travel OUT through the fur. That is, your needle should pass through the deerskin mitten, then through the skin of the fur-strip, and finally should pass the hairs before starting another stitch the same way. If you do this in reverse (passing IN through the fur), you will pull fur into your stitches and have a messy final product.



## Appendix 2: Printing Instructions for Patterns

1. There is a separate multi-page .pdf file that include all pieces and sizes for the mittens. Because these are designed for ledger paper, they are not included in this booklet, but are available on our website for free.
2. Go online to [lureofthenorth.com](http://lureofthenorth.com) and find the **Info Hub** where you will find Mitten Instructions and Patterns ([lureofthenorth.com/instructional-booklets/](http://lureofthenorth.com/instructional-booklets/)).
3. Print all pages and select the page size: ledger.  
Printing with ledger paper should maintain proper proportions.

## Appendix 3 Sizing Chart

### Mitten Sizing Chart

Circumference of Palm	Pattern Size
17.00 cm	00
18.00 cm	0
19.50 cm	1
21.00 cm	2
22.50 cm	3
24.00 cm	4
25.50 cm	5



**Thank you so much and Happy  
Crafting!!!**

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