Crochet for Beginners: A Step-by-Step Guide to Your First Blanket

Learn every move on one practice square, then make your first blanket · US terms



The moss stitch baby blanket over a cream stroller on a winter porch: a stroller blanket is for supervised use. Preview picture, not a photo of crochet.

Yarn: Worsted weight (#4), smooth, one light color: about 40 yd for the practice square (estimated)

Hook: US I-9 (5.5 mm)

Gauge: 15 sts and 16 rows = 4 in in moss stitch (calculated, not swatched by a person)

The guide and the blanket were not crocheted and swatched by a person before publication.

Free guide online:
https://www.amgroyal.com/crochet-for-beginners/?utm_source=pdf&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=crochet-for-beginners

Materials, sizes and terms

Materials

worsted weight (#4) yarn, smooth, in one light color: about 40 yd for the practice square (an estimate, with a 20 % margin)
A US I-9 (5.5 mm) crochet hook
Scissors
A yarn needle to weave in the ends
A tape measure to check your gauge
2 stitch markers or safety pins: one for the right side, one for the first sc of each row
Skip for now: fuzzy, bumpy or very dark yarn, where the stitches are hard to see
Hook: US I-9 (5.5 mm)

Crochet Abbreviations You Will See (US Terms)

ch = chain
sc = single crochet
sl st = slip stitch
st, sts = stitch, stitches
sp = space
ch-1 sp = the little gap under the ch 1 of the row below
yo = yarn over: wrap the yarn over the hook
turning ch = the ch 1 at the start of a row; it is never a stitch
RS = right side, the face of the work that shows
WS = wrong side, the back of the work

Gauge

15 sts and 16 rows = 4 in in moss stitch (calculated, not swatched by a person)

Notes

- Your square is 23 stitches wide and 25 rows tall. When it is done, you measure it, and it tells you which hook to use for the blanket.
- Your square will differ: measure it before you start the blanket.
- Turning ch = ch 1: it does not count as a st and you never work into it.

Start Here: Slip Knot and How to Hold the Hook and Yarn

Every piece of crochet starts with a slip knot on the hook. Then you find a grip that lets the yarn slide, in your right hand or your left.

1. Make a slip knot

Make a loop near the end of the yarn, with the tail end lying behind the yarn that goes to the ball. Reach through the loop, pull up the ball yarn as a new loop and slide it onto your hook. Pull both ends to close the knot, so the loop sits on the hook without squeezing it. Leave a tail long enough to weave in later. The slip knot is not a stitch: never count it.

2. Hold the hook and the yarn (right-handed or left-handed)

Right-handed: hold the hook in your right hand like a pencil or like a knife, whichever feels steady. Run the yarn from the ball over your left index finger, and hold the work just below the hook with your left thumb and middle finger. The yarn should slide through your fingers when you pull: if the hook won't go into a stitch, loosen your grip. Left-handed: swap every hand. The hook goes in your left hand, the yarn over your right index finger, and your rows run from left to right. The row text stays the same, and the first rows have a mirrored chart for you, right under the right-handed chart.



Close up of a blanket corner: each sc sits in a ch-1 space of the row below, and the sc border runs around the edge. Preview picture, not a photo of crochet.

How to Chain and Count Your Chains

The foundation chain is the base of the square. Counting it right is your first checkpoint.

3. Chain 24 and count your chains

Yarn over: wrap the yarn over the hook from back to front. Pull it through the loop on the hook. That is one chain (ch). Make 24 ch. To count, start next to the hook and count each V, one by one. The loop on the hook is not a chain, and neither is the slip knot. Checkpoint: 24 Vs. Keep the chain loose, because Row 1 has to go into it. Foundation: Leaving a 6 in tail, make a slip knot, then ch 24. The slip knot and the loop on your hook are not counted: count the 24 V's.



The first project this guide leads to: a sage green moss stitch baby blanket with a single crochet border, folded on a white bed. Preview picture, not a photo of crochet.

Single Crochet Row 1 in the Back Bump

Row 1 goes into the bumps on the back of the chain, not into the V. The V stays free, and you use it for the border at the end.

4. Row 1: single crochet in the back bump

Turn the chain over: behind each V there is a little bump, the back bump. Skip the first ch next to the hook: it is the turning ch, not a stitch. Insert the hook into the back bump of the 2nd ch from the hook, yarn over and pull up a loop. You now have 2 loops on the hook. Yarn over again and pull through both loops on the hook: that is your first sc. Then work [ch 1, skip the next ch, sc in the back bump of the next ch] 11 times. Checkpoint: 23 sts, made of 12 sc and 11 ch-1 spaces. The V of every ch stays free for the border. Square brackets followed by "N times": work what is inside the brackets N times in all. The brackets at the very end of a row give the count to check; they are not something to work. Row 1 (WS): Sc in the back bump of the 2nd ch from the hook (the ch you skip is the turning ch, not a st). [Ch 1, skip the next ch, sc in the back bump of the next ch] 11 times. [23 sts: 12 sc, 11 ch-1 sp]

Moss Stitch Rows 2 and 3: The Turning Chain and the Ch-1 Space

Moss stitch is a sc, a ch 1 and a skipped stitch, over and over. Rows 2 and 3 are the only two rows to learn: the rest of the square repeats them.

5. The turning chain: ch 1, turn

At the end of a row, ch 1, then turn the work over so the other side faces you. This ch 1 brings the yarn up to the height of the new row. It does NOT count as a stitch, and you never work into it, at either end of the row.

6. Row 2: sc into the ch-1 spaces

Before you start Row 2: clip a stitch marker to the side facing you. That is the right side (RS). Ch 1 and turn. Work a sc in the first sc (the last sc you made, right next to your hook), then a sc in the next ch-1 sp: insert the hook into the gap under the ch 1 of the row below, not into the ch itself. Now repeat [ch 1, skip the next sc, sc in the next ch-1 sp] 10 times. Each ch 1 you make sits over the sc you skipped. End with a sc in the last sc, and leave the turning ch alone. Checkpoint: 23 sts, 13 sc and 10 ch-1 spaces. Row 2 (RS): Ch 1 (does not count as a st), turn. Sc in the first sc, sc in the next ch-1 sp. [Ch 1, skip the next sc, sc in the next ch-1 sp] 10 times. Sc in the last sc. Do not work in the turning ch. [23 sts: 13 sc, 10 ch-1 sp]

7. Row 3: the second half of the repeat

Turn with a ch 1 again. Sc in the first sc. Work the same bracket as in Row 2, [ch 1, skip the next sc, sc in the next ch-1 sp], 10 times. Then ch 1, skip the next sc, and finish with a sc in the last sc. Count: 23 sts, this time 12 sc and 11 ch-1 spaces. A Row 3 has a ch-1 space next to the edge sc at both ends; a Row 2 has two sc side by side at both ends. Row 3 (WS): Ch 1 (does not count as a st), turn. Sc in the first sc. [Ch 1, skip the next sc, sc in the next ch-1 sp] 10 times. Ch 1, skip the next sc, sc in the last sc. Do not work in the turning ch. [23 sts: 12 sc, 11 ch-1 sp]

Rows 4 to 25: Count Every Row So Your Edges Stay Straight

Every row has 23 sts. If you count after each row, a missing or extra stitch shows up right away, before the edge starts to lean.

8. Rows 4 to 25: repeat Rows 2 and 3, and count each row

Even-numbered rows are worked like Row 2, odd-numbered rows like Row 3. The last row, Row 25, is a Row 3 type row. After each row, count: each sc and each ch-1 sp is one stitch. Even rows give 13 sc and 10 spaces, odd rows 12 sc and 11 spaces, and both add up to 23. Put a second marker in the first sc of each row: on the way back, it shows you where the last sc is. Rows 4 to 25: repeat Rows 2-3 (even rows = Row 2, RS; odd rows = Row 3, WS). Row 25 is a Row 3 type row (WS).

Does Your Square Match the Blanket Gauge?

Gauge is how many stitches and rows fit in 4 in. The blanket's sizes depend on it, so measure your square before you add the border.

9. Measure your gauge (15 sts and 16 rows over 4 in)

Before the border, lay the square flat without stretching it. It should be about 6 1/4 x 6 1/4 in. In the center, away from the edges, measure 4 in across and count the sts, every sc and every space. Then measure 4 in up and count the rows. The blanket gauge is 15 sts and 16 rows = 4 in, an estimate taken from the blanket pattern. More than 15 sts: your stitches are small, so try a bigger hook for the blanket. Fewer: try a smaller hook.



What you need, seen from above: a ball of sage green yarn, an aluminum crochet hook, scissors, a yarn needle and a tape measure. Preview picture of the supplies.

Fasten Off, Crochet the Border and Weave In Ends

The border is one round of sc all the way around the square, the same round as the blanket's border. You join with a sl st, work 3 sc in each corner, and sc into the row ends and the free loops of the chain.

10. Fasten off

After Row 25, cut the yarn and leave a tail long enough to thread on the yarn needle. Yarn over and pull the tail all the way through the loop on the hook. Pull gently to close the knot. You join the yarn again at the next step, as on the blanket, so you practice the join you will need there.

11. Crochet the border (100 sc)

Turn the square so the side with the RS marker faces you and Row 25 is at the top: the last sc of Row 25 is now in the top right corner. Join and first corner: Make a slip knot on the hook, leaving a 6 in tail. Insert the hook in that corner st, yarn over and pull the loop through the st and through the loop on the hook in one move: that is a slip stitch (sl st). Ch 1 (it does not count as a st), then work 3 sc in the same st. Top edge: Sc in each of the next 21 sts, in every sc and in every ch-1 sp. Then 3 sc in the next st, for the second corner. Left side: Work 1 sc in the end of each of the next 23 rows. The top and bottom rows are not part of this count: they hold the corner sts. Bottom edge: The ch you skipped at the start of Row 1 stays empty. In the ch under the first sc of Row 1, work 3 sc in its free loop, the V you kept free in Row 1. Sc in the free loop of each of the next 21 ch, then 3 sc in the free loop of the ch under the last sc of Row 1. Right side and join: Work 1 sc in the end of each of the next 23 rows. Join with a sl st in the first sc and fasten off. Checkpoint: 100 sc around the square. Left-handed: everything mirrors. Join in the top left corner st (the last sc of the last row, looking at the right side), work along the top to the right, down the right side, along the bottom, then up the left side. Border (1 round): Fasten off after the last row. Hold the square with the right side (the side with the RS marker) facing you and the last row at the top. Join the yarn with a sl st in the top right corner st (the last sc of the last row, looking at the right side), leaving a 6 in tail. Ch 1 (does not count as a st), 3 sc in the same st (corner). Sc in each of the next 21 sts along the top (in each sc and in each ch-1 sp). 3 sc in the next st (corner). Down the left side, 1 sc in the end of each of the next 23 rows, the top and bottom rows not included (they are the corner sts). Bottom edge: the ch you skipped at the start of Row 1 stays unworked at this corner. Work the corner in the ch under the first sc of Row 1: 3 sc in the free loop (the V) of that ch (corner), then sc in the free loop (the V) of each of the next 21 ch, then 3 sc in the free loop (the V) of the ch under the last sc of Row 1 (corner). Up the right side, 1 sc in the end of each of the next 23 rows. Join with a sl st in the first sc. Fasten off. [100 sc]

12. Weave in the ends

Thread a tail on the yarn needle. Run it through the backs of the stitches on the wrong side, change direction once so it holds, then cut the rest close to the work. Do the same with every tail. Weave in all tails.

Why Is My Crochet Getting Smaller? Beginner Fixes

Each line starts with what you see on your square. Find yours, then read the cause and the fix.

The hook won't go into the stitches.

You hold the yarn too tight, or the chain is too tight. Let the yarn slide over your index finger. Pull each new loop up onto the wide part of the hook, not the tip, so it stays loose.

My row has fewer than 23 sts, and the edge moves in.

The last sc of the row was missed (it hides next to the turning ch), or the first one was. Put your second marker in the first sc of each row. Work into the first and the last sc of every row, and count before you turn.

My row has more than 23 sts, and the edge moves out.

A sc went into the turning ch, or into a sc that should have been skipped. Never work into the ch 1 you made to turn. Between the first and the last sc of a row, every sc goes into a ch-1 space.

I can't find the back bump, or my chain twists.

The chain is turned, so the V side and the bump side swap along it. Lay the chain flat with every V facing you, then flip it over. The line of bumps on the back is where Row 1 goes.

My square curls, or the bottom edge pulls in.

The foundation chain is tighter than the rows above it. Make the chain again, looser. Do not pull each ch tight around the hook.

I lost track: is my next row a Row 2 or a Row 3?

The two rows look almost the same. Count the sc in the row you just made. 13 sc: it was a Row 2 type, so work a Row 3 next. 12 sc: it was a Row 3 type, so work a Row 2 next.

My border count is not 100 sc.

A row end or a corner sc was missed, or worked twice. Count side by side: 21 sc between the corners on the top and on the bottom, 23 row ends down each side, and 3 sc in each corner.

My square is bigger or smaller than about 6 1/4 in.

Your stitches are bigger or smaller than the blanket gauge. Count the sts over 4 in, in the center. More than 15: switch to a bigger hook. Fewer: switch to a smaller one. Then make the swatch again.

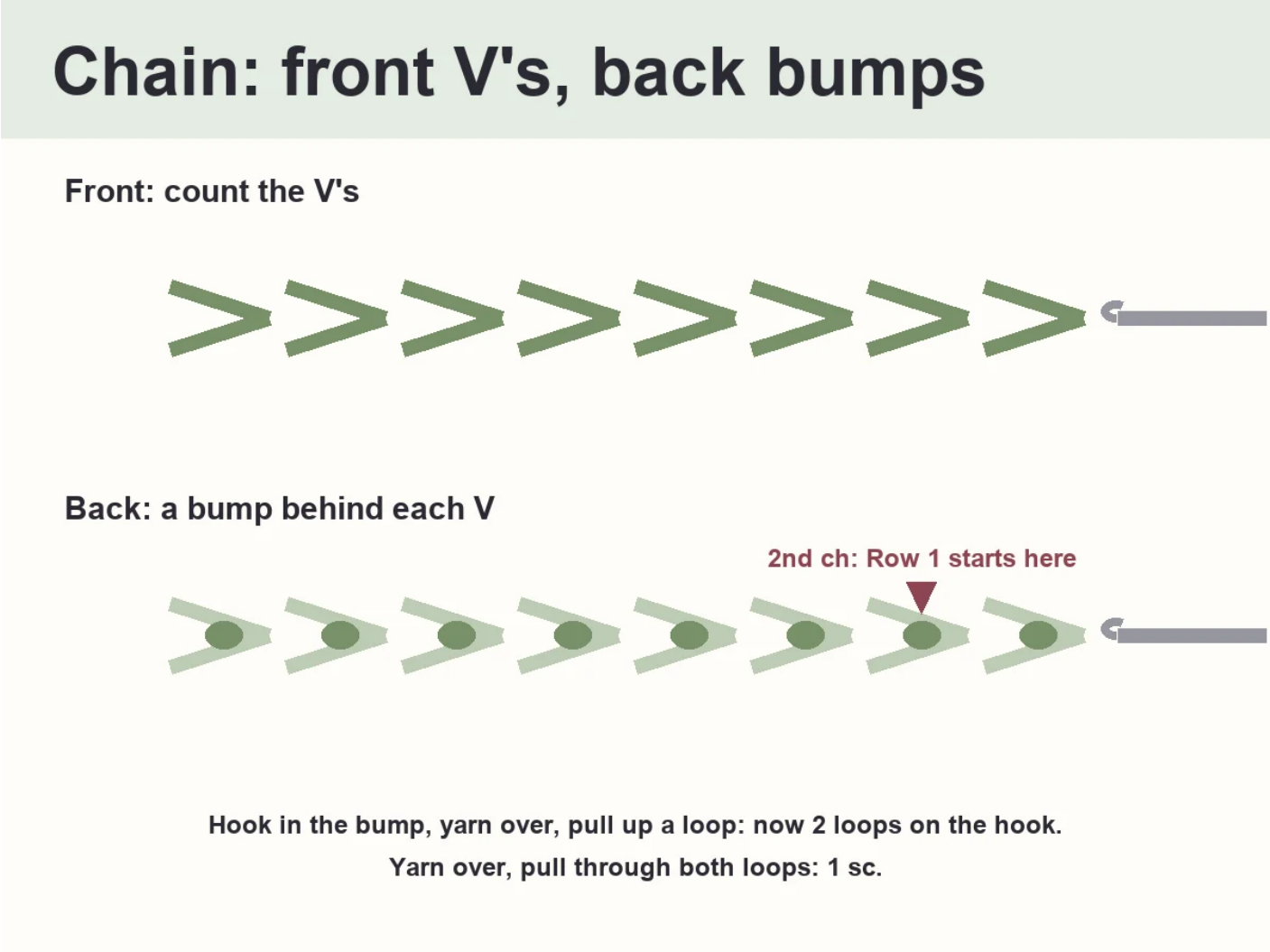
Your First Project: The Moss Stitch Baby Blanket

The blanket uses the same stitch, the same yarn weight and the same hook as your square, in two sizes. Its full pattern and its free PDF are on its own page.

Now make the blanket

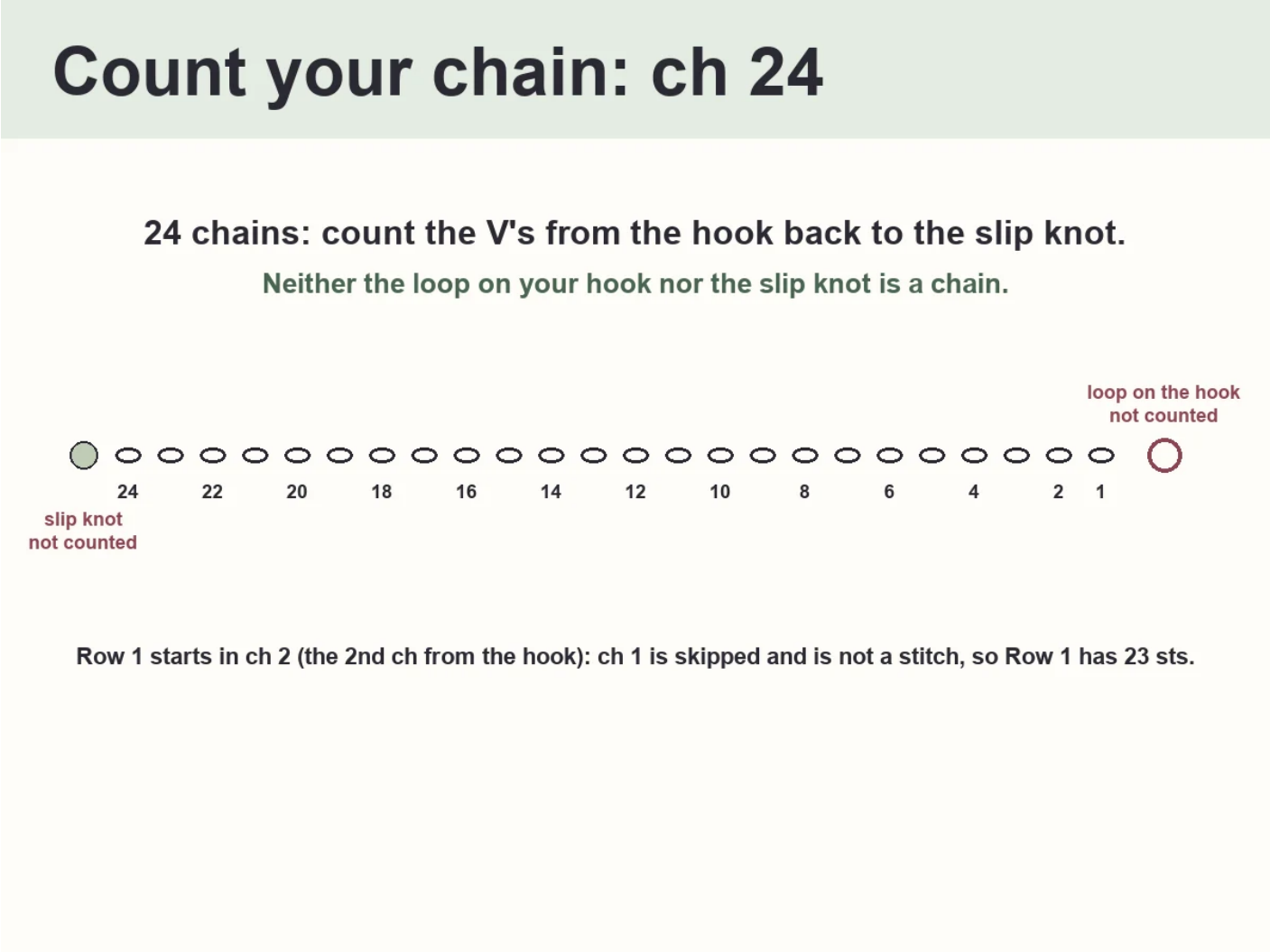
Your square used the same moves as the blanket: the chain row in the back bumps, the moss stitch rows, a count after every row and the border. Stroller: about 30 x 36 in, ch 112, 111 sts x 141 rows, about 810 yd, about 17 hours (estimated). Large: about 36 x 46 in, ch 134, 133 sts x 181 rows, about 1,220 yd, about 25 hours (estimated). Keep your square: it is your gauge check for the blanket. Look at the yards on your yarn label to know how many balls to buy. This blanket is for supervised use (stroller, play, cuddling). Do not leave it in a crib or bassinet with a sleeping baby: safe-sleep guidance says no loose blankets for babies under 12 months. Not a toy.

Diagram



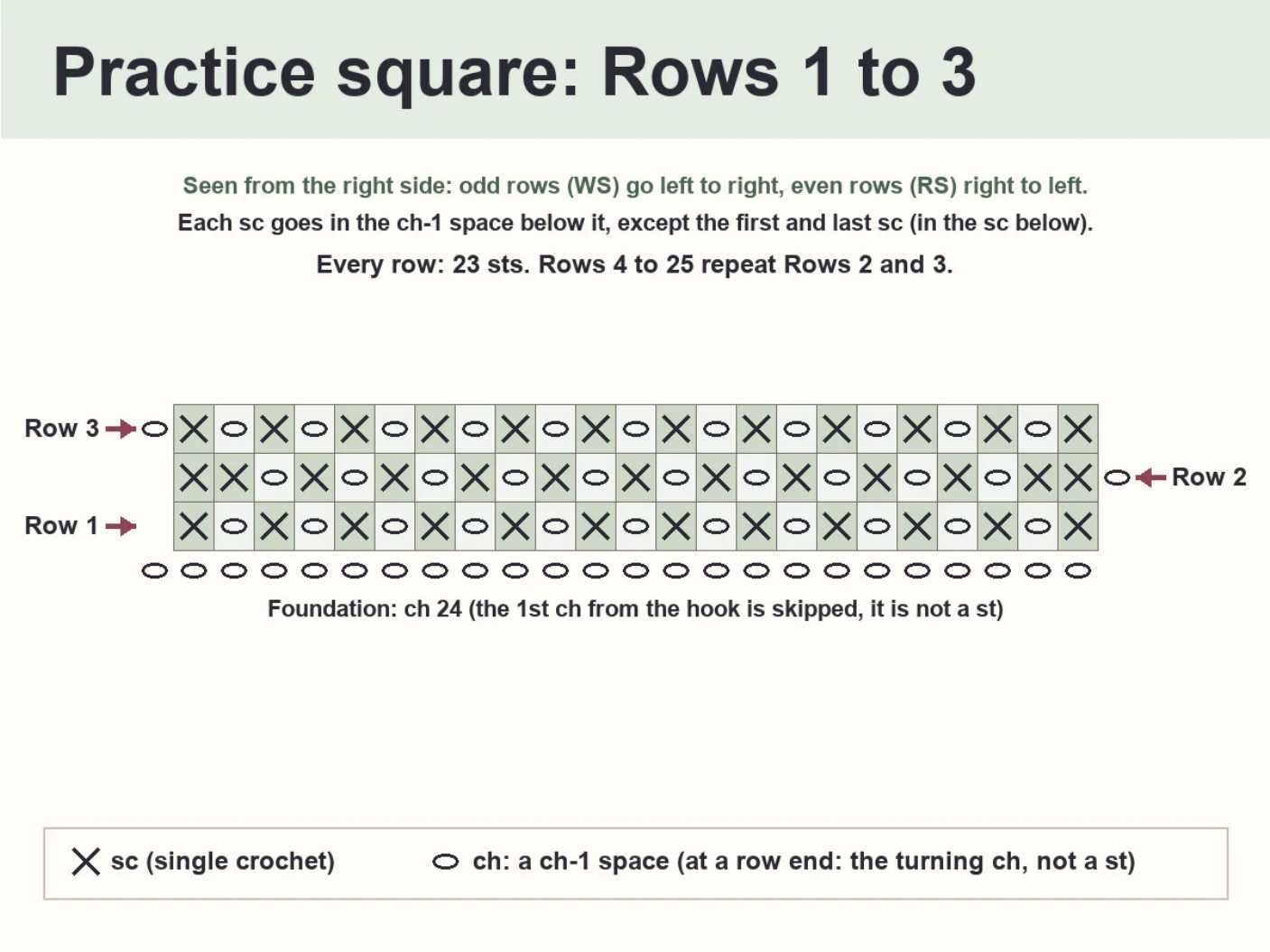
The front of the chain shows the V's; the back shows one bump behind each V. Row 1 starts in the bump of the 2nd ch from the hook. A computer drawing.

Diagram



Count from the hook: the loop on the hook and the slip knot do not count, so you stop at 24. On the drawing, each oval is one chain: on your yarn, it looks like a sideways V. A computer drawing.

Chart



Rows 1 to 3 of the practice square, 23 sts in every row, for right-handed crocheters. A computer drawing.

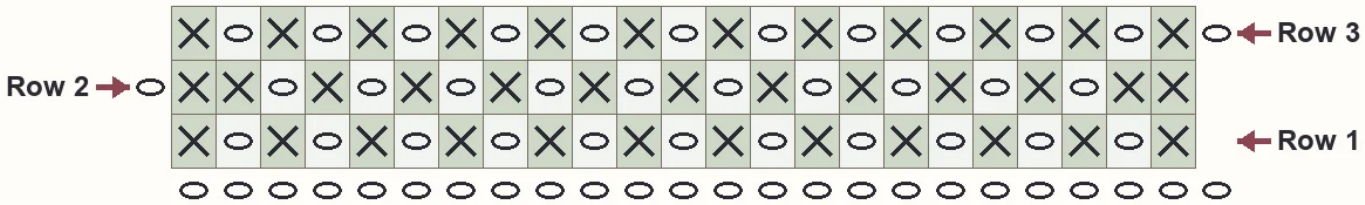
Chart

Left-handed: Rows 1 to 3

Left-handed, seen from the right side: odd rows (WS) go right to left, even rows (RS) left to right.

Each sc goes in the ch-1 space below it, except the first and last sc (in the sc below).

Every row: 23 sts. Rows 4 to 25 repeat Rows 2 and 3.

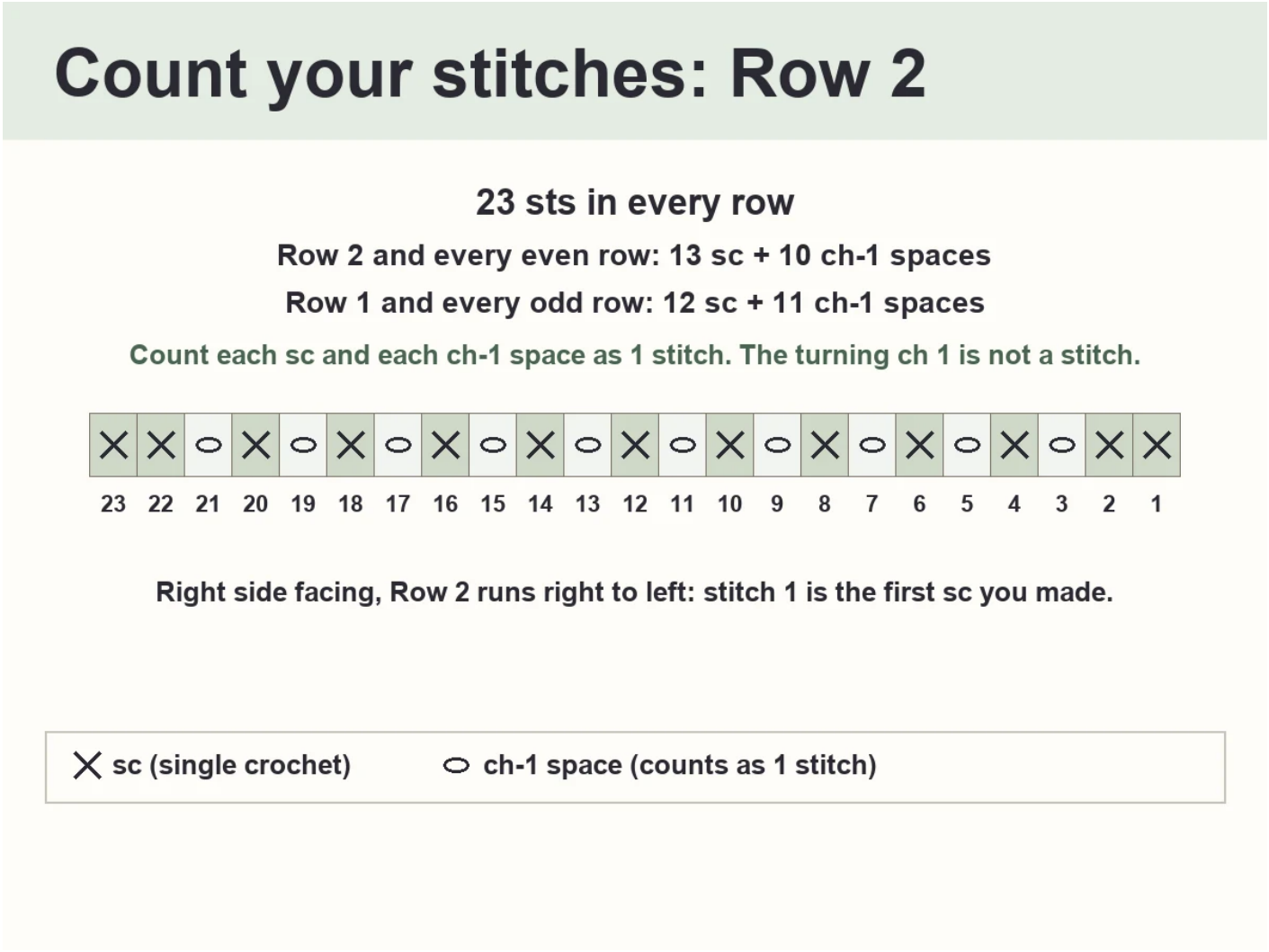


Foundation: ch 24 (the 1st ch from the hook is skipped, it is not a st)

× sc (single crochet) ○ ch: a ch-1 space (at a row end: the turning ch, not a st)

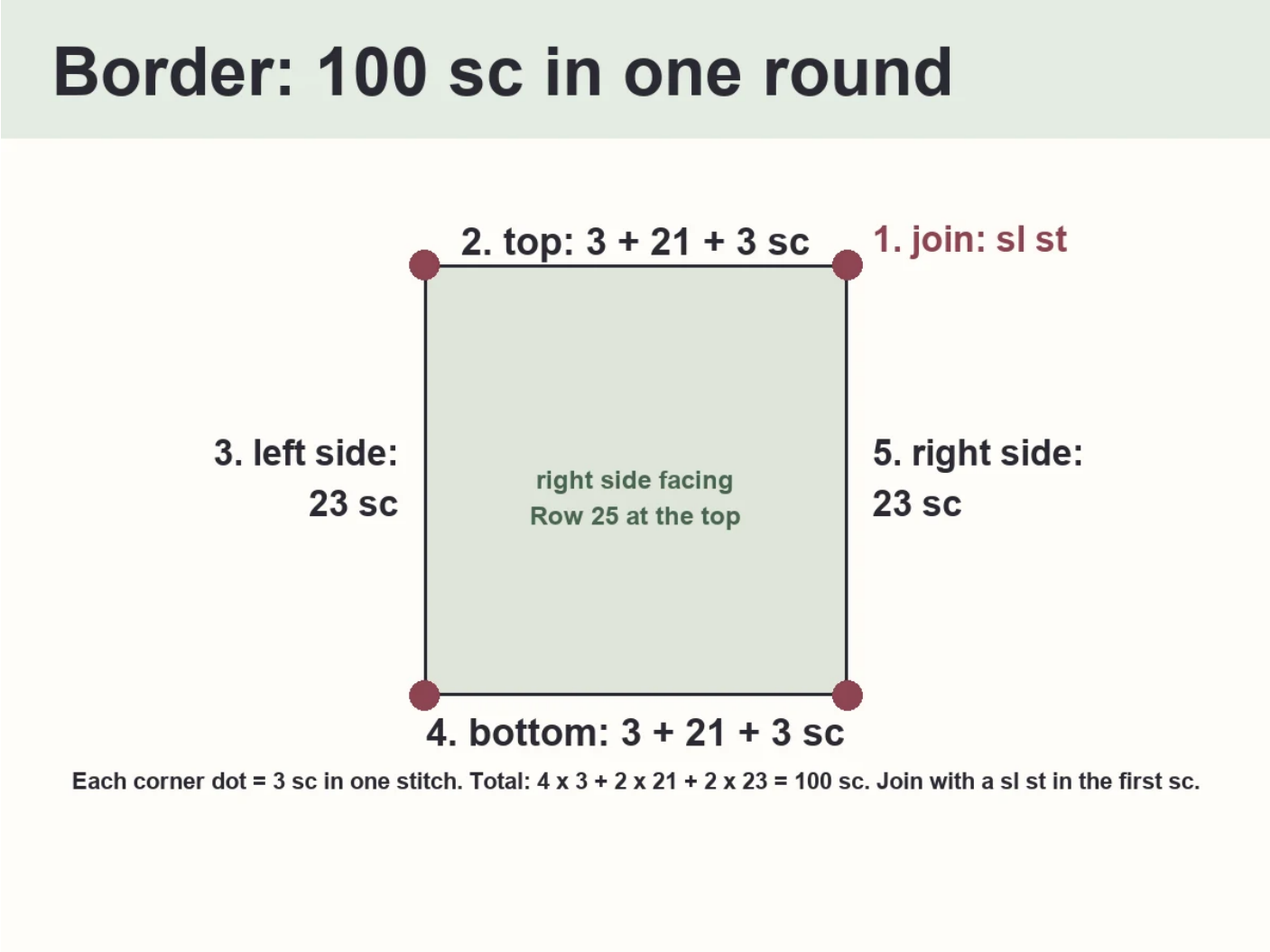
The same Rows 1 to 3, drawn in mirror for left-handed crocheters. A computer drawing.

Diagram



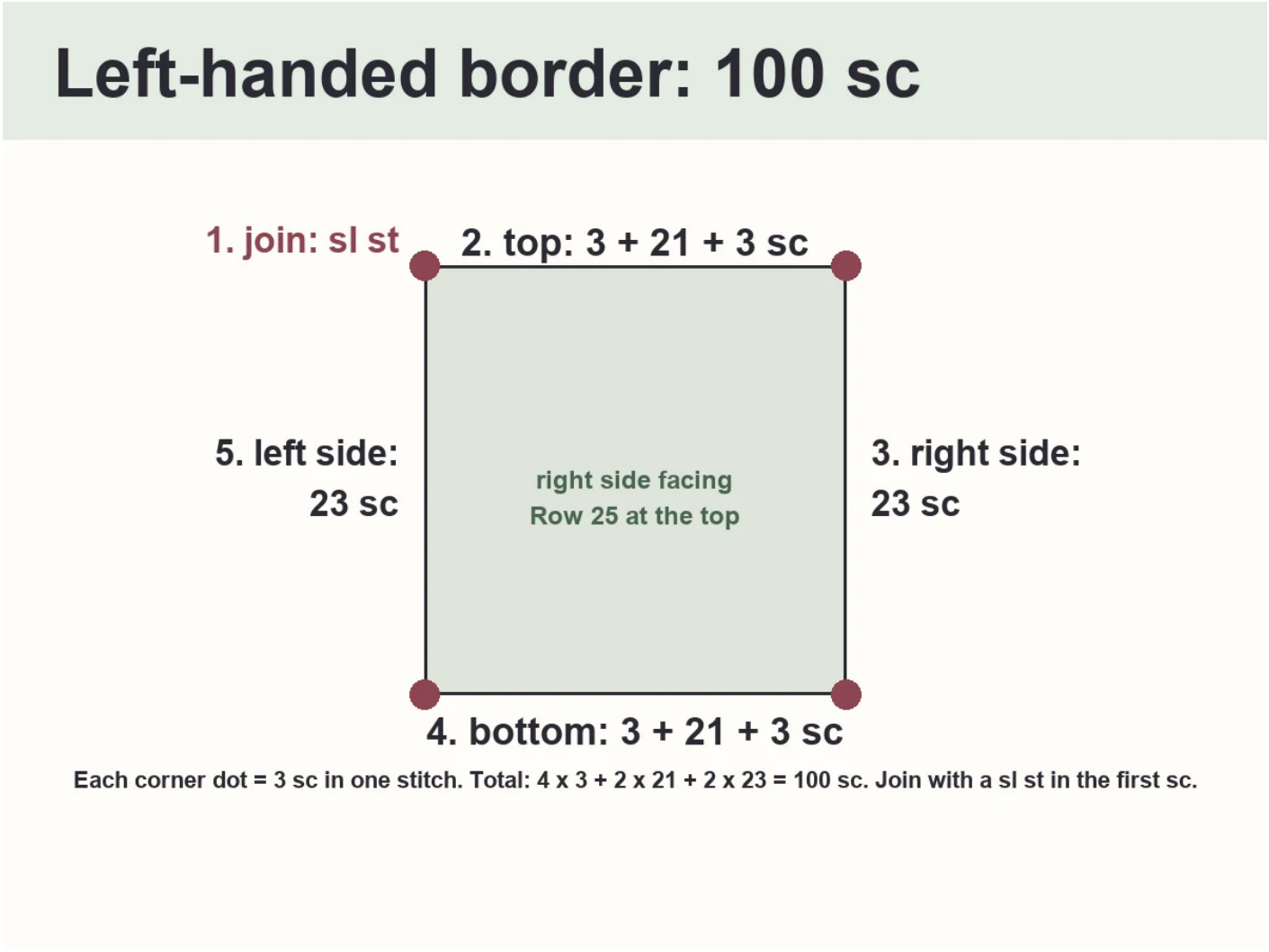
Row 2 counted from 1 to 23: 13 sc and 10 ch-1 spaces, and each one is a stitch. A computer drawing.

Diagram



The border round, from the top right corner all the way around to the join: 100 sc in all. A computer drawing.

Diagram



The border round for left-handed crocheters, from the top left corner all the way around to the join: 100 sc in all. A computer drawing.



The moss stitch baby blanket rolled and tied with twine, ready to give. Preview picture, not a photo of crochet.

Finishing

The free PDF holds the whole lesson on paper: every step with its count, the row text, the 7 diagrams and the beginner fixes, in US Letter and A4.

Thank you!

This guide online (photos, FAQ):
https://www.amgroyal.com/crochet-for-beginners/?utm_source=pdf&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=crochet-for-beginners

More free patterns: amgroyal.com

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