

Tiny Birds Organic Merino Soaker Pattern (partially felted for night-time use)



This pattern includes instructions for size **small (medium, large)** soakers. You may want to go through the pattern first and highlight the stitch/row count for whichever size you choose. Size small is for age 0-6 months (approx 10-15lbs), size medium for 6-15 months (approx 15-23lbs), and size large from 15-30 months (approx 23-30+lbs).

Materials Needed:

#5 standard knitting needles (I prefer bamboo needles, but any are fine), or needle size needed to achieve gauge wool yarn: 2 skeins organic merino wool from Treliske Organic. If you decide to dye part of the yarn for the main body section of the soaker (as pictured above), weigh out about 0.7 ounces of yarn to save for the natural trim. Size large will use almost exactly the full 2 skeins if you choose the super-ruffly leg edge option. If you run out of yarn, please just send me an e-mail at Jenny@TinyBirds.com and I'll send a little extra of the natural color.

optional: ¼" soft stretchy organic elastic (cotton/rubber) 13" long from www.NearSeaNaturals.com (if you want an elastic waist instead of a waist tie)

Gauge: 22 stitches per 4 inches, and 29 rows per 4 inches

Tip: For a stretchier cast-on, if you have larger knitting needles handy, you can cast on with size 9 needles and then switch to the size 5 needles as you work on row 1 below.

If you would prefer a soaker without a tapered fit as shown in the photo below (this style is a little easier to pull on and off over a bulky diaper) and without ribbing for the waist, skip this first section and begin with the optional instructions shown in red on page 4. Complete only the red and black colored instructions for the remainder of the pattern.

Option without a tapered fit (no waist ribbing):



Tapered Waist Option:



For a tapered waist as shown in the photo of the purple soaker above, complete all instructions shown in purple and black:

Cast on 39 (45, 45) sts (double tail method) with trim-color (natural color shown in photo above)

Row 1. knit 2, purl 1, knit 2, purl 1, repeat to end of row

Row 2. knit 1, purl 2, knit 1, purl 2, repeat to end of row

Repeat rows 1 and 2 until you have completed the 10th row

Here is what it should look like so far (this will eventually be the top front of the soaker, which will stretch out to show the ribbing when it's worn)



Now switch to the main color for the body of the soaker (or continue with natural color if you prefer)

Row 11. knit entire row

Row 12. purl entire row

Row 13. knit entire row, then cast on one additional stitch by just making a loop of yarn with your thumb and putting the needle through (or use whatever method you prefer for adding one stitch to the row - I just learned the easy loop method when I was a little girl and still use it since the edges will be sewn up with the side-seams anyway)

Row 14. purl entire row, then cast on one additional stitch (or use whatever method you prefer for adding one stitch to the row)

Repeat rows 11 through 14 until you have 49 (53, 55) stitches total

This is a picture of what it will look like after adding a few increase rows:



Optional instructions for untapered waist:

Cast on 49 (53, 55) stitches and use stockinette (alternate knit/purl rows) for the first 14 rows of the pattern. This will give a wider waist without the tapered fit shown above.

Continue in stockinette (for both tapered or untapered waist options), alternating knit and purl rows, until you have 35 (44, 48) rows total (no increases/decreases though, so you'll still have 49 (53, 55) stitches on each row)

Beginning with row 36 (45, 49), decrease 1 stitch each row (knit or purl two stitches together at beginning of each row, continuing in stockinette) until you have 23 (27, 27) stitches remaining (this is the front leg shaping)

After decreasing, it should have a shape similar to this (with the untapered waist option, the piece would be straight on the sides at the bottom and then tapered toward the needles only):



Then continue 2 (3, 4) more rows in stockinette without decreasing or increasing.

Then begin to increase 1 stitch per row until you have 51 (55, 57) stitches (this is the back of leg shaping)

After that it should look like the photo at the top of the next page (ignore my finger, I was just holding the corner to flatten the edge-curl for the photo)



I then add a little piece of yarn to mark the last row, so I can count the future rows more easily.



Then continue in stockinette for 22 (29, 33) rows - this is the back of the soaker, so if you want to add a design, this is the place to do it (you'll be starting with the bottom of your design and working upward toward the top of the soaker in the back)



Now you can begin to see the soaker take shape when you fold it like this:



Optional instructions for untapered waist (skip these red-colored instructions and go to the next section if you started the pattern with the tapered waist instructions):

Continue in stockinette until you have 46 (49, 57) rows total from the marker (piece of yarn) placed earlier. Then switch colors back to the waist color and add 10 more rows in stockinette.

For the standard tapered waist: Begin decreasing two stitches every 4th row for the waist shaping, until you have 39 (45, 45) stitches left. There should be approximately 46 (49, 57) rows total now counted from the marker (piece of yarn).

Then starting on what would have been a knit row, begin the ribbing as for the front top of the soaker (knit 2, purl 1) - basically repeat rows 1 through 10 above. (switch colors first if your waist-trim color is different than the main body color).

For both methods: Cast off using a stretchy cast off as shown below. First cut the yarn leaving a tail about 3 feet long and thread the yarn into a tapestry needle.

Step one (stretchy cast-off) see photo below: Insert needle from right to left into two stitches on left needle, then pull through but **do not remove stitches** from knitting needle yet.



Step two (stretchy cast-off) see photo below: Insert needle from left to right into the first stitch on the knitting needle. Pull through and this time **remove this single stitch** from the knitting needle.



Step three: This is just a photo to show what it looks like after the stitch in step two has been removed from the knitting needle. You have now removed one stitch from the knitting needle.



Repeat steps one through three above until all stitches are cast off. If the stitches are cast-off too loosely with this method, it will look a little sloppy at the bottom, so pull a little more tightly if necessary as you go through the steps above.

Then use a large needle and yarn to sew up the side seams. When I sew up the side seams, I use a special method of seaming that holds the knit together more closely (standard seaming creates a sort of gap that tends to open up when the soaker is stretched during wear, after partial felting).

When seaming the sides, start at the top of the waist and work down, making sure to leave the leg openings extra large because the felting process will shrink the leg openings significantly. A rough estimate for how far to seam the sides if you want the scalloped edge leg openings is about 30 rows down in the front (corresponding to 40 rows in the back due to the 2:1 seaming every other row below the waist). For the ruffle crochet leg openings you can continue seaming down the leg a little further if you want, as shown in the photo below (to where the decreases start on the front side), because adding the ruffle edge stretches out the leg opening naturally. You'll notice for either style that the decreases for the front side of the leg will begin up higher than the back side of the leg even after seaming part of the sides, and don't worry because this is how it is supposed to be (so it will look more like underwear with more coverage in the rear for the big diaper).

After seaming the waistband, then start creating more bulk in the back of the soaker by seaming 2 rows of the back together with 1 of the front rows. This creates a 2:1 seam with the back being "bunched up" - or the equivalent of adding a short row (or an extra row) in the back. Alternate a 1:1 (back/front) seam with a 2:1 (back/front) seam for approximately 20 rows total (counted in the front). You'll leave the leg openings really big because they will shrink with the felting, and you'll add edging and leg ties to accommodate various thigh sizes. Even though this seaming might seem confusing, it's really easier for most beginners than the short row turns and stitches, and also avoids the problem of working so long on a soaker only to find out it doesn't fit the baby's thighs.

For the 2:1 seaming in the first picture below, you put the needle through a stitch on the front and then through a matching stitch on the back, and pull the yarn through.

Then for the 2nd picture, you put the needle through the next stitch down on the back (toward the seam) and then continue through the same stitch you started on for the front.



Let me know if this is confusing (Jenny@TinyBirds.com) and I'll try to explain some more. It's really so much easier to show in person, so I wish we had that convenience!

After seaming the sides (but before adding leg crochet or ruffles), I partially felt/shrink the soaker to make it more waterproof for night-time.

The leg ties will be used later to make the leg openings tight enough even if they still appear too big after felting. The rise will also shrink, but the width won't change much. Don't add the waist tie or leg trim/ties until after you partially felt it, since the ties will get stuck during the felting process and the leg edging won't look as nice if felted.

To partially felt:

- 1) hand-wash/soak for 10 minutes in Eucalan or any other wool-wash with lanolin
- 2) after hand-washing, squeeze the water out a little so it's not dripping too much and put the wool item in the dryer (on hot temperature) for a few minutes (I put it in with a dry clean cotton bed-sheet to give the wool something to rub against in the dryer)
- 3) Check on it every 5 minutes or so in the dryer and measure the dimensions with a ruler until it's the size you want it. I usually aim for 7.5 to 8" tall for size small, 8.5 to 9" for size medium, and 9.5-10" for size large (the front will be a little shorter than the back if you sewed up more rows in the back than the front while doing the seams. The total felting process usually takes about 10-15 minutes total in my dryer. By checking on it pretty often though, you'll be sure it's not too small. The wool gets soft and fluffy looking during the felting process:



For a boy's soaker, you can add a simple crochet edge for the leg openings, or for a girls soaker, leg ruffles can be made by either adding simple shells around the openings (video at http://www.stitchguide.com/stitches/crochet/stitch_pages/cro_shell.html is one example of a shell, though I usually start with a single crochet at the top of the leg opening, then skip about 2-3 rows and do a shell of 5 double crochet stitches on the edge-stitch of the next row, and then repeat: (skip about 2-3 rows and do a single crochet, then another 5 double crochet shell after skipping another 2-3 rows, etc) See the photo below to see how this gives a scalloped edge appearance.

Then you can add simple leg ties (similar to the way you would lace a shoe) at the top of each leg opening (see photos below for how to lace the leg-ties).



For an even more ruffly look, crocheting 3 [double crochets](#) for every row of knitting as you go around the leg edge.



Then to add the leg ties, begin with a crochet chain roughly 24” long, and thread it through at the top of the leg opening like this (12” will be on each side):



To prevent the baby from pulling the leg tie out, I also sew the tie to the soaker at this point on the inside, using a small piece of string. Supervision of the baby is always recommended anyway though, with any garment containing strings.

Now begin threading the tie down the leg opening similar to the way a shoe is laced:



Keep checking the leg opening size as you go down. Before tightening, it looks something like this:



Then pull on each side to tighten it, and tie the ends into a bow:



You can now either add a waist tie (option A), or an elastic waist (option B).

Option A: You can add a waist tie about half way down the waist ribbing. To make a fast and strong waist tie, measure out two pieces of yarn about as long as a jump-rope for yourself. Tie the two pieces together at each end, and then tape one of the ends to a piece of furniture (like a desktop). Walk across the room with the other end and then begin twisting/rotating the yarn until it seems pretty tightly wound throughout the length. Then

Printed on 100% Recycled Paper

put the end you've been twisting in your left hand, walk back toward the desk and push the mid-section of the yarn away from the desk with your right hand while you grab the desk-end of the yarn in your left hand too. Then let the yarn twist up on itself and retie a knot over all four pieces of yarn in your left hand, cutting off the original two knots. Thread the other side onto a large tapestry needle and use it to put the waist tie on the soaker. This type of waist tie is very strong because it is four separate pieces of yarn wound together. If you prefer, you could crochet the waist tie as well. After inserting the waist tie using a large needle, I sew the tie in at the back middle of the soaker with another small piece of yarn, which will prevent the baby from pulling the waist tie out. Supervision of the baby is always recommended though, with any garment containing strings.

Option B: To add the ¼" cotton/rubber elastic, measure a piece 13" long and stitch the ends together to form a continuous loop of elastic. Then lay it on the lower part of the inside of the waistband near the side-seam of the soaker, and fold the top of the waistband down over the elastic. Using a tapestry needle and a piece of yarn, whip-stitch the top of the waistband to the bottom of the waistband encasing the elastic as you go, without pulling the stitches any more than necessary (leave them loose so the waistband is still stretchy as you go). Eventually as you go around, the elastic will be fully encased.