

PURL ABOUT TOWN

Laura 'Purl Princess' Parkinson fumes and then simmers over whether knitting in company could ever be considered rude



A friend sent me a link to a discussion on Mumsnet recently. For those that don't know, this is a website which was intended to give parents a community to share tips and the frustrations of parenting. I usually steer well clear of it, as you can find you're one click away from being told you're feeding your child the wrong thing, being accused of not playing with them enough or psychologically damaging them in some way.

The discussion I was sent went one step further – it offended my knitting! It was entitled “Knitting in company”, and the author explained that she had invited a group of her friends over for a night in together. During the evening one had taken out her knitting and proceeded to stitch away, while continuing to drink and chat with the group. The author asked what people thought of this. Was it rude, or simply something that the new generation of knitters did these days? In her opinion the older generation would never have taken out their knitting in polite company.

I naturally jumped to the defence of the knitter. Of course you can knit and function in a social setting at the same time – how do you think knitting groups work? We aren't all sitting there in silence, only talking between rows. OK, maybe some of us are if we're working on something really complicated...

When I first started knitting I was fresh out of university, young and carefree. I took every available opportunity to knit and would do so during drinking sessions at the pub, at raucous parties and even during gigs. It never even occurred to me that it might be rude to do so. But at this point I was so in love with my craft that I probably wouldn't have cared if someone thought it was. Now I am a more advanced knitter, I am increasingly able to work on a variety of projects without shutting down the part of my brain that listens and talks. From my perspective there is no reason why you shouldn't knit during social gatherings.

However, after a little more thinking I started

to see another side to the lady's grumble. If someone were using their smartphone during a conversation I would assume that their full attention wasn't on the chat at hand. Knitting certainly isn't the same as using a smartphone – it's more like driving a car, as you can listen and talk perfectly well while doing it automatically. But non-knitters don't know that. They assume that your full attention is on your needles, just as it would be on a phone, and that therefore you are not being attentive to them. Here is where the difficulty lies.

Now, I'm not saying that we shouldn't be knitting in non-knitting company. I think that it depends who you are with and what you are doing. In my opinion, if the situation and conversation is informal and laid back, as it sounded like the Mumsnet lady's case was, then knitting shouldn't really be an issue, especially if you're joining in just as much as anyone else at the gathering. But if someone is trying to confide in you, or tell you something that is important to them, then it might be that as a friend, they need you to put the needles down, get some eye contact and give them your undivided attention.

Is knitting in company wrong? No. Is maintaining your friendships and relationships more important than knitting? Yes, absolutely. And not much else trumps knitting in my world, so that's pretty important.

MUST CLICK:

At Fibre-East this year I discovered Third Vault yarns and fell in love with its sci-fi and fantasy-inspired colourways. Third Vault's quarterly yarn club has so far included *Hunger Games*, *Star Wars* and *Discworld* themes. Geek out at [facebook.com/ThirdVaultYarns](https://www.facebook.com/ThirdVaultYarns).

MUST HAVE:

Interchangeable needles have always had one drawback: they don't go down to the tiny sizes. Thankfully the lovely Chiaogoo has sorted us out with its Twist Mini interchangeable set, which comes with size 1.5mm to 2.5mm tips. Get yours from [purlescence.co.uk](https://www.purlescence.co.uk).

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