



MOSSY

the Little Turtle

Free Knitting Pattern



SKILL LEVEL
Confident beginner

METHOD
Knitted in the round

FINISHED LENGTH
Approx. 21 cm / 8.25 in

A softly stuffed turtle with a rounded head, four gentle flippers, a domed six-panel shell and a knitted I-cord rim.

About This Pattern

This pattern makes a softly rounded knitted turtle with a light sage head, body and flippers, topped with a deeper olive shell. The head, body, shell and flippers are worked in the round. The shell ribs are embroidered after knitting, and a narrow I-cord is sewn around the shell base for the raised rim.

The shaping uses simple increases and decreases. Careful pinning during assembly is the main finishing skill: the shell should sit level, the head should face straight ahead, and the four flippers should mirror one another from side to side.

Finished Size

Overall length	Approximately 20-22 cm / 8-8.75 in from nose to rear of body.
Overall width	Approximately 16-17 cm / 6.25-6.75 in across the front flippers.
Overall height	Approximately 9-10 cm / 3.5-4 in to the top of the shell.
Head	Approximately 7-8 cm / 2.75-3.25 in in diameter.
Upper shell	Approximately 10-11 cm / 4-4.25 in long, 10-11 cm / 4-4.25 in wide, and 6-7 cm / 2.25-2.75 in high.
Front flippers	Approximately 5-5.5 cm / 2-2.25 in long.
Hind flippers	Approximately 4-4.5 cm / 1.5-1.75 in long.

Finished size may vary depending on yarn, needle size, tension, stuffing and individual technique.

Materials and Tools

- DK / light worsted yarn in light sage green: approximately 95-110 g / 230-270 m.
- DK / light worsted yarn in olive green: approximately 55-70 g / 135-170 m.
- Black embroidery yarn or embroidery floss: approximately 1 m / 1 yd.
- 3.25 mm / US 3 needles suitable for small-circumference knitting: DPNs or a long circular needle for Magic Loop.
- Two 9 mm black safety eyes, or black yarn for embroidered eyes.
- Approximately 80-100 g polyester toy stuffing.
- Tapestry needle, removable locking stitch markers, sewing pins, scissors and measuring tape.

Safety note

Safety eyes and other small or rigid components may not be suitable for projects intended for children under three years. Embroidered eyes can be used instead.

Before You Begin

- Use the same needle size and similar yarn construction for both greens so the body and shell remain in proportion.
- Count shaping rounds carefully and move the BOR marker after each completed round.
- Use small pieces of stuffing rather than one large wad; this keeps the head and shell smooth.
- Pin paired parts together visually before sewing so the right and left flippers remain mirrored.

Gauge and Tension

22 sts x 30 rnds = 10 x 10 cm / 4 x 4 in in stockinette worked in the round with 3.25 mm / US 3 needles, measured after the fabric has relaxed.

Use a firm, dense fabric so stuffing does not show between stitches. If your fabric is loose, use a smaller needle. If it is very stiff and difficult to work, use the next larger needle while keeping the stuffing moderate.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
BO	bind off
BOR	beginning of round
CO	cast on
DK	double knitting yarn weight
DPN / DPNs	double-pointed needle / double-pointed needles
k	knit
k2tog	knit 2 stitches together; decreases 1 stitch
kfb	knit into the front and back of the same stitch; increases 1 stitch
rnd / rnds	round / rounds
st / sts	stitch / stitches

Method and Orientation

- All main pieces are knitted in the round with the right side facing outward. Do not turn the work.
- Place a BOR marker after joining each piece. The marker sits between the last stitch and the first stitch of every round and stays in that same fabric line as the work grows.
- Right and left are described from the finished turtle's point of view unless stated otherwise.
- For the head, the BOR is centre back and centre front is directly opposite it.
- For the body, the CO end is the front/neck end and the final gathered end is the rear. Keep the BOR on the underside centre line.
- For the shell, the BOR is the back midpoint of the shell. The point opposite the BOR at the BO edge is the front midpoint.
- For pieces that begin with CO 8, leave a 20 cm / 8 in cast-on tail. After Rnd 4, use that tail from the inside to pick up the cast-on edge loops, draw the opening completely closed, secure the tail and bury it inside the piece.

Construction Overview

Piece	Make and finish
Head	Make 1 in light sage. Insert eyes before the decrease section closes access. Stuff firmly and gather closed.
Body / undershell	Make 1 in light sage. Stuff moderately, keep the underside slightly flat, and gather the rear closed.
Upper shell cap	Make 1 in olive. Embroider the upper shell polygon and six outer ribs before attaching. Add only a thin layer of stuffing during assembly.
Front flippers	Make 2 in light sage. Lightly stuff, flatten the open ends and attach through both layers.
Hind flippers	Make 2 in light sage. Lightly stuff, flatten the open ends and attach through both layers.
I-cord rim	Make 1 in light sage. Leave unstuffed. Sew around the shell base after the shell is attached.
Piece order Knit all pieces first. Finish the head face and shell embroidery before assembly. Attach the flippers and head to the body, then sew on the shell cap, and finish with the I-cord rim.	

Head - Make 1 in Light Sage

CO 8 sts, leaving a 20 cm / 8 in tail. Divide the stitches evenly on DPNs or arrange for Magic Loop. Join to work in the round, taking care not to twist. Place the BOR marker at centre back. Close the cast-on opening after Rnd 4 as described in Method and Orientation.

Rnd / Row	Instruction	Count
1	Knit all 8 sts.	8
2	Kfb in every stitch around.	16
3	Knit all stitches.	16
4	*K1, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	24
5	Knit all stitches.	24
6	*K2, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	32
7	Knit all stitches.	32
8	*K3, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	40
9	Knit all stitches.	40
10	*K4, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	48
11	Knit all stitches.	48
12	Knit all stitches.	48
13	Knit all stitches.	48
14	Knit all stitches.	48
15	Knit all stitches.	48
16	Knit all stitches.	48
17	Knit all stitches.	48
18	Knit all stitches.	48
19	Knit all stitches.	48
20	Knit all stitches.	48
21	*K4, k2tog; repeat from * 8 times.	40
22	Knit all stitches.	40
23	*K3, k2tog; repeat from * 8 times.	32
24	Knit all stitches.	32
25	*K2, k2tog; repeat from * 8 times.	24
26	*K1, k2tog; repeat from * 8 times.	16
27	K2tog 8 times.	8

Eye Placement - Before Rnd 21

With 48 sts on the needles, identify centre front directly opposite the BOR. Insert the item-right eye in the gap after st 19 and the item-left eye in the gap after st 29, both between Rnds 15 and 16. Check from the front that both eyes are level before securing the washers.

If embroidering the eyes, wait until the head is stuffed and closed, then place the embroidered eye centres at the same positions.

Head Finishing

After Rnd 24, begin stuffing the head. Fill the crown and sides firmly without stretching the stitches. Keep adding small pieces of stuffing as the opening narrows. After Rnd 27, cut the yarn leaving a 25 cm / 10 in tail, thread it through the remaining 8 sts, remove the needles, draw the opening completely closed and secure the tail inside the head.

Using black yarn, embroider a shallow smile. Place the endpoints in the gaps after sts 20 and 28 at about Head Rnd 19, and let the centre of the smile dip to centre front around Rnd 21. Make two or three small backstitches so the line is smooth rather than bulky.

Body / Undershell - Make 1 in Light Sage

CO 8 sts, leaving a 20 cm / 8 in tail. Join to work in the round. Place the BOR marker on the underside centre line. The CO end is the front/neck end. Close the cast-on opening after Rnd 4 as described in Method and Orientation.

Rnd / Row	Instruction	Count
1	Knit all 8 sts.	8
2	Kfb in every stitch around.	16
3	Knit all stitches.	16
4	*K1, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	24
5	Knit all stitches.	24
6	*K2, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	32
7	Knit all stitches.	32
8	*K3, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	40
9	Knit all stitches.	40
10	*K4, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	48
11	Knit all stitches.	48
12	*K5, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	56
13	Knit all stitches.	56
14	*K6, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	64
15	Knit all stitches.	64
16	*K7, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	72
17	Knit all stitches.	72
18	Knit all stitches.	72
19	Knit all stitches.	72
20	Knit all stitches.	72
21	Knit all stitches.	72
22	Knit all stitches.	72
23	Knit all stitches.	72
24	Knit all stitches.	72
25	*K7, k2tog; repeat from * 8 times.	64
26	Knit all stitches.	64
27	*K6, k2tog; repeat from * 8 times.	56
28	Knit all stitches.	56
29	*K5, k2tog; repeat from * 8 times.	48
30	Knit all stitches.	48
31	*K4, k2tog; repeat from * 8 times.	40
32	Knit all stitches.	40
33	*K3, k2tog; repeat from * 8 times.	32
34	Knit all stitches.	32
35	*K2, k2tog; repeat from * 8 times.	24
36	Knit all stitches.	24
37	*K1, k2tog; repeat from * 8 times.	16
38	Knit all stitches.	16
39	K2tog 8 times.	8

Body Orientation Marks

At Body Rnd 16, clip a removable marker through the fabric at the BOR. Add a second removable marker at the BOR on Body Rnd 28. These marks preserve the underside centre line after the needles are removed. Leave them in place until the flippers and shell have been positioned.

Body Finishing

Begin stuffing after Rnd 31. Stuff the centre of the body moderately firmly, but keep the underside slightly flatter than the top. Add smaller amounts near both ends so the body stays softly oval rather than pointed. After Rnd 39, cut the yarn leaving a 25 cm / 10 in tail, thread through the remaining 8 sts, draw the rear opening completely closed and secure the tail inside.

Upper Shell Cap - Make 1 in Olive Green

CO 8 sts, leaving a 20 cm / 8 in tail. Join to work in the round. Place the BOR marker at the back midpoint of the shell. Close the cast-on opening after Rnd 4 as described in Method and Orientation.

Rnd / Row	Instruction	Count
1	Knit all 8 sts.	8
2	Kfb in every stitch around.	16
3	Knit all stitches.	16
4	*K1, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	24
5	Knit all stitches.	24
6	*K2, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	32
7	Knit all stitches.	32
8	*K3, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	40
9	Knit all stitches.	40
10	*K4, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	48
11	Knit all stitches.	48
12	*K5, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	56
13	Knit all stitches.	56
14	*K6, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	64
15	Knit all stitches.	64
16	*K7, kfb; repeat from * 8 times.	72
17	Knit all stitches.	72
18	Knit all stitches.	72
19	Knit all stitches.	72
20	Knit all stitches.	72
21	Knit all stitches.	72
22	Knit all stitches.	72
23	Knit all stitches.	72
24	Knit all stitches.	72

Shell Edge and Markers

Before binding off, place a locking marker through the fabric at the BOR on Rnd 24. The point opposite it is the front midpoint. BO all 72 sts loosely, keeping the edge flexible. Leave a 60 cm / 24 in sewing tail.

At the BO edge, mark six approximate outer-rib base anchors: sts 6, 18, 30, 42, 54 and 66. These anchors keep the six visible shell panels balanced, leaving a broad panel centred on both the back/BOR axis and the centre-front axis.

Shell Surface Detailing

Work the shell embroidery before attaching the cap to the body. Use olive yarn and a tapestry needle. Keep every surface stitch relaxed so the knitted dome remains smooth.

Embroidered Chain Stitch

Bring the needle from the wrong side to the right side at the start point. Insert the needle back into the same hole and bring it out about one knitted stitch ahead. Keep the working yarn under the needle tip, then pull through to form a chain loop. Repeat, following the stitch column or round. Secure the yarn on the wrong side without pulling the fabric inward.

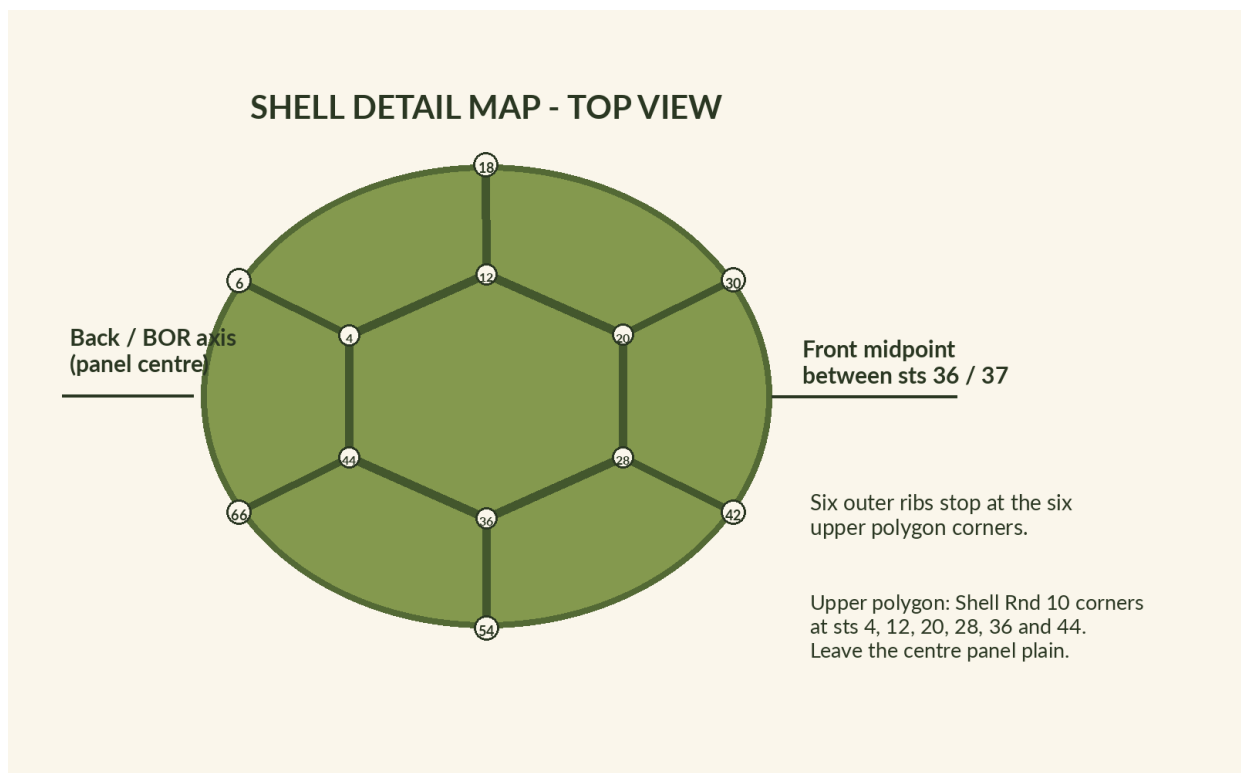
Upper Shell Polygon and Six Outer Ribs

On Shell Rnd 10, mark six approximately equally spaced upper corner points at sts 4, 12, 20, 28, 36 and 44. These six points form the corners of the upper shell panel.

Using olive yarn and embroidered chain stitch, join each upper corner to the next to form a softly six-sided loop around the crown. Keep the segments relaxed and allow them to travel slightly above or below Rnd 10 as needed so the outline reads as a gentle polygon rather than a smooth circular ring. Leave the centre of this upper panel completely unembroidered.

Next work six outer ribs. Starting at the six shell-base anchors, embroider one relaxed chain-stitch line to the corresponding upper corner: base st 6 to upper st 4; base st 18 to upper st 12; base st 30 to upper st 20; base st 42 to upper st 28; base st 54 to upper st 36; base st 66 to upper st 44.

Stop each rib when it reaches the upper polygon. Pass the final stitch neatly into the polygon corner so the lines appear joined. Do not continue any rib across the upper centre panel or toward the crown.



I-cord Shell Rim - Make 1 in Light Sage

CO 3 sts. Do not turn the work. *K3, slide the 3 sts to the opposite end of the DPN or circular needle, pull the working yarn firmly across the back; repeat from * for each I-cord row.

Work 104 I-cord rows, then measure the cord around the shell base without stretching it. Continue one row at a time if needed until the cord fits the full shell circumference with its ends meeting neatly. The finished length is usually about 32-34 cm / 12.5-13.5 in.

BO 3 sts and leave a 45 cm / 18 in sewing tail. The I-cord remains unstuffed.

Front Flippers - Make 2 in Light Sage

CO 8 sts, leaving a 20 cm / 8 in tail. Join to work in the round. Close the cast-on opening after Rnd 4 as described in Method and Orientation.

Rnd / Row	Instruction	Count
1	Knit all 8 sts.	8
2	Kfb in every stitch around.	16
3	Knit all stitches.	16
4	*K3, kfb; repeat from * 4 times.	20
5	Knit all stitches.	20
6	Knit all stitches.	20
7	Knit all stitches.	20
8	Knit all stitches.	20
9	Knit all stitches.	20
10	Knit all stitches.	20
11	Knit all stitches.	20
12	*K3, k2tog; repeat from * 4 times.	16
13	Knit all stitches.	16
14	Knit all stitches.	16
15	Knit all stitches.	16
16	Knit all stitches.	16

Front Flipper Finishing

BO all 16 sts, leaving a 40 cm / 16 in sewing tail. Add a small amount of stuffing through the open end, concentrating it in the rounded tip. Keep the top 1.5 cm / 0.5 in almost flat. Flatten the bound-off opening so the front and back layers lie together; the 16 bound-off edge stitches align as 8 paired attachment points.

Hind Flippers - Make 2 in Light Sage

CO 8 sts, leaving a 20 cm / 8 in tail. Join to work in the round. Close the cast-on opening after Rnd 4 as described in Method and Orientation.

Rnd / Row	Instruction	Count
1	Knit all 8 sts.	8
2	Kfb in every stitch around.	16
3	Knit all stitches.	16
4	*K3, kfb; repeat from * 4 times.	20
5	Knit all stitches.	20
6	Knit all stitches.	20
7	Knit all stitches.	20
8	Knit all stitches.	20
9	*K3, k2tog; repeat from * 4 times.	16
10	Knit all stitches.	16
11	Knit all stitches.	16
12	Knit all stitches.	16

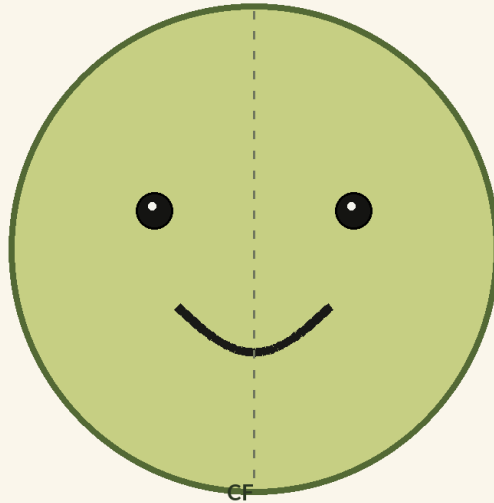
Hind Flipper Finishing

BO all 16 sts, leaving a 40 cm / 16 in sewing tail. Lightly stuff the rounded end and keep the top 1.5 cm / 0.5 in nearly flat. Flatten the opening into 8 paired attachment points.

Placement Maps

Use the diagrams together with the written placement instructions. Pin every part before sewing, then check the turtle from the front, both sides, the top and the underside. Small shifts of one stitch or one round are fine when needed to keep the finished shape balanced.

HEAD PLACEMENT MAP - FRONT VIEW

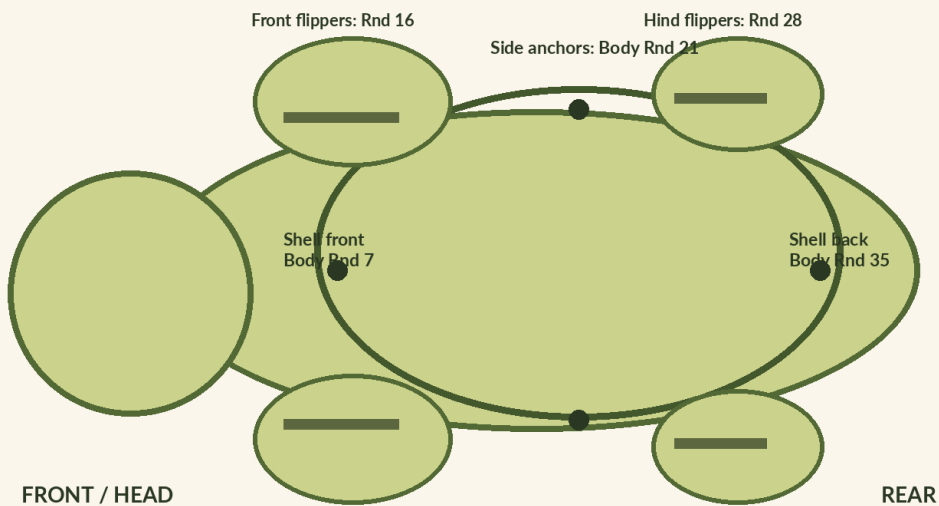


Eyes: between Head Rnds 15 and 16
Item-right: gap after st 19
Item-left: gap after st 29

Smile
Endpoints: gaps after sts 20 and 28 at Rnd 19
Centre dip: CF around Rnd 21

CF is opposite the BOR.
Right and left are from the turtle's point of view.

BODY ATTACHMENT MAP - TOP VIEW



BOR runs along the underside centre line.
Mirror right and left flipper placement.

Detailed Placement

Front Flippers

Place one front flipper on each lower side of the body, centred at Body Rnd 16. The flattened 8-pair edge should follow a short line around the body, roughly parallel with the stitches of Rnd 16. Angle the flipper tips forward toward the head and outward from the body. Mirror the two sides.

Hind Flippers

Place one hind flipper on each lower side, centred at Body Rnd 28. Keep the attachment line roughly parallel with the stitches of Rnd 28. Angle the tips slightly backward and outward. The hind flippers should sit a little closer to the body than the front pair.

Head

Centre the back of the head on the front end of the body. The body CO tip should meet the back-centre of the head around Head Rnds 17-19. Pin an oval attachment area approximately 3.5-4 cm / 1.5 in high and 3 cm / 1.25 in wide. From the front, the eyes must remain level and the smile centred. From the side, the head should sit slightly lower than the shell crown rather than tipping upward.

Shell Cap

Place the shell on the top of the body with the shell BOR at the rear and the front midpoint between Shell base sts 36 and 37. Pin four anchors first: front midpoint to the top of the body around Body Rnd 7; back midpoint to the top around Body Rnd 35; one shell quarter point to each body side around Body Rnd 21. Distribute the remaining BO edge evenly around the oval path between the four anchors.

The shell should overhang the light sage body slightly on both sides. It must not cover the eyes or force the head downward. If the edge ripples, redistribute the pins rather than stretching one section.

Assembly

1. Prepare all pieces. Confirm that every CO opening is fully closed, the head and body are stuffed, both body BOR fabric markers are still visible, and the shell embroidery is complete. Bury any tails that will not be used for sewing.
2. Pin the front flippers. Place their flattened edges at Body Rnd 16 on the lower sides, mirrored left to right. Check from the front that both tips point forward at the same angle. Using each flipper sewing tail, whip stitch the flattened edge to the body. Every sewing stitch must pass through both flipper layers before entering the body. Do not pull so tightly that the flipper pivots upward.
3. Pin and sew the hind flippers at Body Rnd 28 in the same way. Keep the pair mirrored, with the tips angled slightly backward. Check the underside to make sure the four flippers form a stable, balanced base.
4. Attach the head. Pin the oval neck area securely. Using light sage yarn, work small ladder stitches between the head and body, taking shallow horizontal bites from each surface. Sew around the full oval, add a little extra stuffing behind the head if the neck area looks hollow, then close the final gap. Secure and bury the yarn inside the body.

Assembly - Continued

5. Attach the shell cap. Pin the four shell anchors first, then add pins evenly around the full edge. Using the long olive sewing tail, work small ladder stitches around the shell BO edge, catching one edge loop from the shell and a shallow bite from the body. Sew about three quarters of the way around, then slide a thin, even layer of stuffing beneath the shell. The shell should be domed but not hard. Finish the seam and secure the yarn inside.
6. Add the I-cord rim. Place the I-cord directly over the shell-to-body seam, with the join at centre back. Using the long light sage tail, whip stitch through the underside of the I-cord and into the shell/body edge every 1-2 I-cord rows. Keep the cord rounded and visible; do not flatten it. Join the ends with two or three neat stitches and bury the tail.
7. Remove the body orientation markers. Shape the turtle gently with your hands: flatten the underside slightly, round the shell dome, smooth the head, and spread the flippers so the body rests evenly. Check the face from straight ahead and make any final small stuffing adjustments through a seam only if necessary, then close that seam securely.

Sewing Method Notes

Join	How to work it
Flattened two-layer attachment	For flippers. Pass the needle through both flattened layers at each paired edge point before entering the body. This locks the tube closed and anchors the limb in one seam.
Ladder stitch	For head and shell joins. Take small horizontal bites from alternating sides of the seam. Pull the yarn just enough to bring the surfaces together without creating a ridge.
Whip stitch	For the I-cord rim. Catch only the underside of the cord and a small amount of shell/body fabric so the visible top of the cord stays clean and rounded.

Final Visual Checklist

- Head faces straight forward and does not lean to either side.
- Eyes are level and balanced around centre front; smile is centred.
- Front flippers mirror each other and angle forward/outward.
- Hind flippers mirror each other and angle slightly back/outward.
- Shell is centred over the body, with front and back midpoints aligned.
- The six outer shell ribs meet the six corners of the upper polygon cleanly; the centre panel remains plain and the polygon is not puckered.
- I-cord rim sits evenly around the shell base with its join at centre back.
- Underside is stable enough for the turtle to rest without rolling sharply to one side.
- No stuffing is visible through stitches or seams.
- All cast-on and gathered openings are fully closed.
- All sewing tails are secured and buried; no removable markers remain.

Troubleshooting

Problem	Practical correction
Stuffing shows between stitches	Use less stuffing in that area and redistribute it. For future pieces, use a smaller needle or firmer tension.
Head leans or droops	Open a small section of the neck seam, add a compact pad of stuffing behind or beneath the head, then resew the oval attachment firmly.
Shell looks flat	Before the shell seam is fully closed, add a thin layer of stuffing across the centre and crown. Keep the edge lightly filled so the rim remains low.
Shell edge ripples	Remove several pins and redistribute the BO edge around the body. Do not stretch the body to match one section of shell.
Shell embroidery puckers	Ease the chain stitches with the tapestry needle and gently stretch the knitted fabric back to shape. Surface embroidery should lie on the fabric, not cinch it.
One flipper points upward	The flattened edge may be sewn too vertically or too tightly. Reopen the seam and reattach it along a short line following the body round, capturing both flipper layers.
Flippers are uneven	Repin the higher or lower flipper by comparing the matching body round on both sides. Check from the underside before resewing.
Turtle rolls to one side	Redistribute body stuffing away from the heavier side and flatten the underside with your palms. Confirm the four flipper attachment angles mirror correctly.
I-cord is too short	Add more I-cord rows before binding off. Fit it around the shell without stretching.
I-cord is too long	Remove enough I-cord rows for the ends to meet naturally at centre back; avoid gathering the shell edge to absorb extra length.
Finished turtle is larger or smaller	Compare your stockinette gauge with 22 sts x 30 rnds per 10 cm / 4 in. A looser gauge makes every structural piece larger; a tighter gauge makes it smaller.

Quick Piece Check

Piece	Finished state
Head	1 light sage; 48 sts at widest point; stuffed; eyes and smile complete.
Body	1 light sage; 72 sts at widest point; stuffed; rear gathered closed.
Upper shell	1 olive; 72 sts at BO edge; six outer ribs plus upper polygon; lightly stuffed during assembly.
Front flippers	2 light sage; 16 sts at BO edge; lightly stuffed and flattened.
Hind flippers	2 light sage; 16 sts at BO edge; lightly stuffed and flattened.
I-cord rim	1 light sage; 3 sts wide; fitted around entire shell base; unstuffed.
All done Give the turtle one final shape with your hands, smoothing the shell and spreading the flippers evenly. The finished plush should feel softly firm, with a level face, a rounded dome and a stable resting position.	