



Today's entry is brought to you by Barbara Gregory, designer of many wonderful Twist patterns, including these other whimsical mittens- [Perianth](#) and [Ringo & Elwood](#). She shares where she got her inspiration for [Horatio and Oren](#), adorable owly mittens for hands of all ages. She also gives you a sneak peek at just how she got those owls to look so darn cute. Keep up with Barbara on her [website](#).



The idea for this design came to me one night in a moment of wakefulness about 4:30 a.m.

I don't remember if I was dreaming of mittens, but I woke up, thought "Hm, [mittens with owl ears?](#)" and went back to sleep.

I think this might have been inspired by a Ravelry forum thread discussing preferred mitten-top shapes: round, pointed or oval. And I had heard a knitter speak of 'ears' to describe the little bumps of untidiness that can occur when grafting the top of a mitten. I liked the idea of turning those 'ears' to advantage.

Some time the following day I remembered this thought and doodled on a little scrap of paper to stick in my back pocket. The ear tufts were too big, but the sketch served to pin down the idea so it wouldn't float away and be forgotten.



The next morning was a day when I was at home, alone and with no pressing chores or appointments. I opened up my grid program and started to sketch.

Looking back at my initial tries, I see some clumsy first attempts and a couple that might have been usable with a little work. But these first owls didn't look cute enough; the unibrow look can be slightly intimidating and it's hard to put a smile on an owl!



The turning point was realizing that I could show the whole owl: by adding little wings, skinny legs and feet, suddenly my owl was a baby with body language. I refined the details, tweaking and adjusting. The first attempt at feet looked more chicken than owl. The body and the background had to be broken up with some contrast stitches, and that took some experimenting. Once the front was solved, the back fell into place. By the end of that day I was bleary-eyed from the computer screen, but happy with the chart for my little owlet.





For fun I've made a short animation using some of the charts I saved as I went along. It shows how the mitten front evolved from the first baby owl to the final version.



After all that went into the design of the horned owl, the snowy owl came about as an afterthought. Knowing that there will always be knitters who prefer to switch the dark and light colors, I tried recoloring the chart. It almost worked, but I didn't like the eyes as well when they became pale circles instead of dark ones. A few tweaks made the pupils dark again and there was my snowy owlet.



In the end the owls had become the focal point and the ears were just a cute little detail—which is as it should be. Now I'm enjoying seeing Horatio and Oren appear in many lovely and imaginative color combinations, with or without ears.