

Those Crafty Penguins (Solution)

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To solve this puzzle, we'll need to interpret the crochet stitches as letter transformations, and apply them in rounds to the previous round's string to produce new strings. Solvers are given two demos introducing the mechanics of most of the stitches, many of which are analogous to their actual meanings in crocheting. The only terminology used that wouldn't appear in a real crochet pattern is the "w" instruction. That, combined with the mention of "learning to crochet" in the flavor text, is a reference to The Woobles—a popular line of beginner-friendly crochet kits. Most Woobles kits include everything one needs to learn to crochet a cute creature, who has a canonical name—such as Pierre the Penguin or Darwin the Owl.

The crochet stitches can be interpreted as follows, when applied to one or more letters in the previous round:

sc (single crochet)	Preserve the letter at the current position.
dc (double crochet)	Double the A1Z26 value of the current letter.
tc (triple crochet)	Triple the A1Z26 value of the current letter.
esc (extended single crochet)	Replace with the next letter in the alphabet.
sl st (slip stitch)	Replace with the previous letter in the alphabet.
inc (increase)	Duplicate the current letter.
dec (decrease)	Combine the A1Z26 values of the current and next letters.
w (wooble)	Replace the name of a Woobles kit with its creature type.

(where all of these can be treated as wrapping around when necessary).

To crochet an ANSWER, here's what those rounds will look like:

- Round 1:** SCARFSCARFSCARF
- Round 2:** SCCARFFSCCBRRELCARRE
- Round 3:** VDARGSDCCBJELLCAJRE
- Round 4:** ZARFUSHFFBIELOKRE
- Round 5:** ZARAALBIEACE
 - (in fact, each of ZARA, ALBIE, and ACE is made from a single SCARF)
- Round 6:** GIRAFFEPhOENIXSQUIRREL
- Round 7:** UHBARFUHOFNNIQPUUAQEJ
- Round 8:** THBBABFTHOLNWYPPVQED
- Round 9:** THFCAFTHOLNQYPOVQED
- Round 10:** THFCAFTHOLNPP0VQED
- Round 11:** BIGBADEMI
- Round 12:** BIGBADWOLF

So our puzzle answer is **BIG BAD WOLF**.

Construction notes

This puzzle was not sponsored by The Woobles—we just both happen to have learned to crochet from their kits and videos in the last ~year. In fact, my first crochet project was a Pierre the Penguin, who seemed like a natural tie-in to the hunt's Antarctic theme.

We intentionally made the transformations indicated by each crochet instruction somewhat similar to their meanings in actual crocheting. We then got started by building the “all decreases” transformation that ended up as Round 11, as I was pretty set on having that be the penultimate step. I was actually pretty surprised by how few rounds it ended up taking to get from the three creature types to that stage, using a somewhat constrained set of operations.