

Knitting Needle Materials (What to Choose!)

Everyone seems to have a preference when it comes to what 'the best' knitting needles and crochet hooks are... There is that "goldilocks" perfect feel in the hand that none of us agree on... Here's a list with my findings from my own personal preferences, plus some information about each type of needle that can hopefully help you to narrow down your search and find your perfect needles!

*There are other less common materials used to make knitting needles: bone, glass, ivory, etc. (not included)							
	<u>Bamboo</u>	<u>Wood</u>	<u>Stainless Steel</u>	<u>Nickel Plated</u>	<u>Aluminum</u>	<u>Carbon Fiber</u>	<u>Plastic</u>
<u>My Rating</u>	10 (out of 10) *My Favorite*	8 (out of 10) *My Second Choice*	6 (out of 10) *Best Option if you like metal*	2 (out of 10) *Often the coating flakes*	4 (out of 10) *Good basic needles, nothing fancy*	*I can't rate these because I don't use them*	2 (out of 10) *I don't like plastic*
<u>Speed</u> (how fast the stitches slip)	Slow/Medium The fibers in bamboo naturally run vertically and because of it's hard/natural finish, yarn tends to slip over it very nicely. Bamboo needles are generally smooth, but with a vertical textured grain so stitches will slide nicely, but should be less likely to slip off your needle at inopportune times.	Slow Due to the finish usually used on wooden needles, they often have a very slick yet almost 'sticky' feel to them... The stitches of most yarn will slide freely yet there can be a slight 'grippy' feeling when sliding one needle against the other. This can help to prevent stitches from sliding off when you want them to stay put,.	Fast The slick hard texture of metal makes it a much more slippery surface than any of the other options. The stitches and the needles slide with less resistance which can make for a faster knit time, however it can also lead to dropped stitches and less control overall.			Medium Depending on the brand some of these needles have more of a texture to them than others... like with wood and bamboo these will be "slower needles" however many of the new ones are coming out with metal tips and a much smoother surface, so they are getting faster.	Medium The plastic they use to make needles is usually fairly slick. They tend to knit similarly to wood and bamboo, but with a totally different feel.
<u>Weight</u>	Light Bamboo is a beautiful light material that is naturally very strong.	Medium Wood, is quite light, although generally a little heavier than bamboo.	Heavy Stainless is one of the heaviest options for needles... I don't use metal needles often, but when I do I actually like the weight.	Heavy Assuming they are solid construction and not hollow, they are generally similar to Stainless.	Medium Quite a bit lighter than the other two metal needles. Aluminum still has some weight to it, and it's a nice one if you want speed, but don't like weight.	Light Lighter than wood, this composite material seems to have a similar weight to bamboo or solid plastic needles.	Very Light Often hollow, these needles are generally very light.
<u>Flex & Strength</u>	Flexible and Tough While you might not notice the flex on the thicker needles, bamboo is incredibly strong and flexible and it is very noticeable when using smaller needles. They have a nice 'bounce' to them which is very pleasant to knit with!	Fairly Flexible Wood will flex like bamboo, but it doesn't have quite the resilience. The strength will depend heavily on the species you choose... birch and Walnut are often good choices (generally the tighter the grain the more resilient).	Slight spring Stainless Steel is strong and can flex a bit, but if bent too far it can be brittle and will actually snap.	Slight spring These needles tend to behave and feel similar to the stainless ones, but beware... the nickel plating can break down more readily if there is bending stress put into the needles because its just a coating on the outside.	Bendable *can be deformed* Aluminum is quite a soft metal, and these needles (especially the small ones) can be deformed quite easily... However aluminum has flex so it can usually be bent back into shape.	Flexible and Tough Carbon Fiber is very strong, and can even be used for extremely fine needles, similar to bamboo.	Can be brittle Plastic needles are not usually robust, and they can deform if left in excessive temperatures, and some of them can be brittle. They do often have a little give to them, but it depends on the resin used.
<u>Sound</u>	Very Quiet The only sound you tend to get from these needles is the slight 'swish' sound as they glide past one another, and the dull 'tap' when they click together.	Very Quiet These needles are also very quiet, similar to bamboo although some with thick shiny coatings can have almost a squeaky quality.	Noisy *for knitting All metal needles tend to have a similar 'click' and 'swish' sound... Different metals will give slightly different click sounds, but they are generally similar... It's not unpleasant, and often people like the rhythmic clicking... Out of all the needles, metal makes the most sound, and it sounds "tinny"... like metal on metal... However "Noisy" in knitting terms is still very quiet :).	Noisy *for knitting	Noisy *for knitting	Medium Quiet These can reportedly sound almost 'scratchy' when the needles rub against each other, but overall they are quite quiet.	Medium With plastic you hear the hollow 'tap' of the needles contacting each other and they tend to slide against each other without much resistance.

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<u>Finish</u>	<p>None or very little</p> <p>Bamboo is naturally hard and the grain runs vertically, which makes a beautifully smooth and strong finish. Often there appears to be a thin coat of something on them, but not much.</p>	<p>Lacquer, wax, or other</p> <p>Due to the uneven texture of wood, and it's ability to splinter, wooden needles are usually coated with something (which is what causes the slight "sticky" feeling when the needles rub together).</p>	<p>Generally no coating</p> <p>Usually a shiny stainless finish.. Just be aware that often the stainless used in things like knitting needles is a lower grade unless specified, so if for any reason they get wet, dry them right away or you can get rust spots!</p>	<p>Nickel Plating</p> <p>Shiny bright finish... looks good, but often flakes tiny nickel particles onto your hands and work (seems to wash off easily enough, just irritating).</p>	<p>Often acrylic</p> <p>Aluminum is not as smooth as stainless so often it seems to have a thin coating on it... it appears to be some kind of acrylic maybe?</p>	<p>Sanded (sometimes waxed)</p> <p>The carbon fiber composite is naturally fairly smooth once sanded, so there is no need to finish. (although I have heard that some like to rub them with waxed paper if they are rough to help break them in.</p>	<p>None</p> <p>Generally no coating, although some seem to have a plastic shrink-wrap coating (likely to smooth out any imperfections?).</p>
<u>Warmth & Feel</u>	<p>Warm, Slight Texture</p> <p>Bamboo gives a warm feel, and the natural texture is pleasant, and gives good grip. I like the fact that they don't feel cold when you pick them up like the metal ones do, and in hot weather they don't get hot.</p>	<p>Warm, Slick or textured</p> <p>The feel of these varies greatly between manufacturers and wood species and depending on coatings... Most of the wooden needles I have tried feel silky smooth, and like bamboo there is a warm natural feeling to them.</p>	<p>Cold, Slippery</p> <p>These needles feel cold when you first pick them up. I like the extra weight they have to them and they actually feel quite nice.</p>	<p>Cold, Slippery</p> <p>These feel similar to the stainless needles.</p>	<p>Cold, Slippery</p> <p>Again similar to the stainless needles, but these are much lighter than the stainless, and they tend to have a thin coating which makes them feel a little different.</p>	<p>Warm, Slight texture</p> <p>The slight fiberglass texture can be unpleasant in my opinion (for this reason I never use Carbon Composites), however they seem to be getting better at creating nicer textures with it, so there will likely be better ones coming in the future.</p>	<p>Cool, smooth</p> <p>They feel like plastic... what more can I say?!</p>
<u>Look</u>	<p>Natural</p> <p>These are generally the most natural looking needles in my opinion, and I love the natural blond bamboo tone.</p>	<p>Beautiful</p> <p>Due to the permeability of wood, many companies are adding dye to create various bright and dark colored designs. I personally prefer the plain wood tones, but the rainbows are pretty too!</p>	<p>Slick, Modern</p> <p>These needles are beautiful and seem to hold their shine well.</p>	<p>Bright and Shiny</p> <p>Nickel is a very bright white, so the shine is nice (if only the nickel would stay put and not flake off on your hands!).</p>	<p>Basic, Standard</p> <p>These needles tend to be gray, and very basic, but there's nothing wrong with them, they just don't look fancy like some of the others!</p>	<p>Modern</p> <p>The look is usually simple, they are generally dark colors, either dark brown or black... some have metal tips, many are just solid Carbon Composite.</p>	<p>Cheap, but functional</p> <p>Plastic needles generally feel and look cheaper than the other options, but they work, so it just depends what you prefer</p>
<u>Cost</u>	<p>Cost = \$ to \$\$\$</p> <p>Some brands are definitely pricey, but there are many cheaper options out there... Bamboo is still far cheaper than carbon fiber and often cheaper than wood and stainless too.</p>	<p>Cost = \$\$ to \$\$\$</p> <p>Generally wooden needles fall in the middle as far as cost goes, although depending on what brand you choose the prices can vary greatly!</p>	<p>Cost = \$\$</p> <p>These are often not terribly expensive, but beware of knockoffs which will call their product "Stainless Steel", even when clearly it is just a random silver unnamed metal...</p>	<p>Cost = \$\$</p> <p>These are often quite cheap, and tend to be a go-to for many knitters, but there are drawbacks to plated metal rather than solid!</p>	<p>Cost = \$</p> <p>These are usually the cheapest needles, often even cheaper than plastic... So if money is an object (and let's be honest it is for most of us), I recommended these as a good start!</p>	<p>Cost = \$\$\$ to \$\$\$\$</p> <p>These needles are coming down in price a little from where they started, however they are still much more expensive than most of the other options on this list.</p>	<p>Cost = \$</p> <p>These are generally cheap, and you can tell by how they feel... In my opinion spend the extra dollar or two and get something slightly nicer (the lower end bamboo, or aluminum would be my picks)!</p>

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My Comments	Bamboo is my #1 favorite material for needles, I like the natural feel and the fact that the stitches slide nicely, but still tend to grip enough to stay where you put them! Wonderful for beginners and those with shaky hands as bamboo gives the best control in my opinion! Also bamboo is a great renewable resource.	As you can likely tell, I prefer bamboo to wooden needles... Mainly because I do a lot with the thinner needles and bamboo is just stronger when it comes to the thin needles. However I do love the look of wooden needles, and the bright colors and patterns are beautiful! *Like Bamboo these make awesome beginner needles.	If you like metal needles then these are awesome... The issue with metal is that due to the weight and how slick it is, it can be more likely to slip out and drop a whole row of stitches. However there are perks to metal too, and the speed alone can be enough to convince a lot of people!... When I do use metal needles and hooks, stainless is the metal I choose!	I don't like these at all (can you tell!)... they are fairly cheap, but aluminum is cheaper and these flake nickel all over my hands which I don't enjoy... the "flakes" are super tiny and look more like microscopic sparkles which some people don't seem to mind, but for me I find it incredibly annoying.	A good basic needle option, these aren't my favorite, but they are by no means my least favorite! They are a good cheap option which feels as good to knit with. I much prefer Aluminum to plastic or nickel plated, even carbon fiber is lower on my list then good ol' reliable aluminum!	Generally made out of some kind of plastic/epoxy reinforced with carbon fiber, these are likely not the most environmentally responsible... They are also one of the most expensive options, and I don't personally like the way they feel. However they are strong and can be made into the smaller needle sizes...	In my opinion if you have a stash of old plastic needles laying around, then by all means use them, but there are so many better options out there, that I would highly recommend buying basically anything else! Preferably something that's a little less damaging to the planet! :)
Brands *these are just a few options	<u>Clover</u> - A great high quality Brand that I highly recommend for bamboo, their needles are my favorites!	<u>Knit Picks</u> - Beautiful colors, and good quality, plus they offer a wide array of needle types including short and longer interchangeable needles	<u>ChiaoGoo</u> - These are made of surgical grade stainless steel and are the best I have found for the price to quality balance. Plus they are 100% recyclable!	<u>Knit Picks</u> - These nickel plated needles look nice, but they do have a tendency to flake badly	<u>Unique</u> - These are the standard aluminum needles I remember from my mom's craft cupboard as a kid!.. Good, standard, simple, cheap... what more can you ask for!	<u>Prym</u> - The ends have a little bump on them which appears to be a pro for some and a con for others... I don't personally have experience with them, so I can't comment.	<u>Unique</u> - These are probably the most recognizable standard plastic needles out there... simple gray, but they do the trick
	<u>Kiki Amibari</u> – these are also beautiful needles, and they have some wonderful interchangeable circular needles in the smaller sizes that clover doesn't do.	<u>Knitters Pride</u> – Bright as well as neutral colors, and nice texture, these are another nice wooden choice to try	<u>HiyaHiya</u> - These are hollow needles, but they seem to be good quality and the fact that they are hollow makes them lighter.	<u>Knitters Pride</u> - These guys have some plated needles, but they are apparently plated with chrome. I haven't used them, but they seem to be rated well... I'm not sure how I feel about chrome though as it can be carcinogenic...	<u>Knitters Pride - SmartSticks</u> are their aluminum needles and they are laser marked at 1" intervals so that they can be used as a measuring stick as well (which I think is brilliant), but they are much more expensive.	<u>Knitters Pride</u> – I haven't personally used these, but I trust other products by knitters Pride and I have heard good things... These do have nickel tips though so don't use if you are allergic to Nickel.	<u>Susan Bates</u> - Various colors, simple plastic needles
	<u>ChiaoGoo</u> - I haven't actually tried these ones because I only just came across them, but next time I need new needles I may just give them a try!	<u>Lykke</u> - These needles are not cheap, but they are beautiful and handmade out of re-claimed driftwood... One day I will get myself a set to try!		<u>addi</u> - They make a version which is plated with "white bronze" which is apparently nickel free and they seem quite proud of it... if I was going to use plated needles these would be the ones I would try!			<u>Knitters Pride - Trendz</u> is their acrylic line, and they look quite decent for plastic needles.

*To buy knitting needles, patterns, yarn & other crafting supplies, check out my other company **BeeGreen Sustainable Choices**, where I sell things that I believe in to make my living and support my knitting habit!

My other Website, BeeGreen Sustainable Choices: www.2beegreen.ca