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# Can knitting lead to better chemists?

Knitters have been found to have significantly better space perception than the average individual,<sup>1</sup> and now there is evidence of the benefits of knitting to first year chemistry students. In an April 2007 study, first year university students who are active knitters, scored significantly higher on a chemistry aptitude test than a control group of chemistry students.<sup>2</sup> Even when controlled for gender and age, knitters scored higher on questions relating to atomic structure, molecular modeling and geometric isomers. The researchers reasoned that knitters develop an increased ability of space perception and therefore transfer these skills to an understanding of three-dimensional structures. The lead researcher and avid knitter was Emily Litre. (See also page 8.)

Ironically, Litre is a descendant of Claude Émile Jean-Baptiste Litre, from whom the volume unit originates.<sup>3</sup> Litre also states since space perception is an essential skill in chemistry, chemical educators should consider developing knitting programs. Some universities have already started to incorporate a knitting component into their first year curriculum. These pilot programs have met with some success with students increasing their understanding in structural chemistry while also producing a pair of socks or mittens.

## References

1. K. Pearl, *Knitting and space perception*, April 2000.
  2. Emily Litre, *Journal of Knitting Education*, April 2007.
  3. K.A. Woolner, *Chem 13 News*, April 1978, pages 1-3. ■
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