

# INTERVIEW WITH JUNE GILBANK

Specialy for the group Amigurumi Brasil!



**Marcia:** How would you introduce yourself and your work?

**June:** My name is June Gilbank and I'm a crochet designer. I've been designing amigurumi patterns and publishing them through my website, PlanetJune.com, since 2007.

**Marcia:** Why did you start crocheting? How did you learn?

**June:** In 2003, my husband and I moved from the UK to Canada for his work, and I had lots of time on my hands while I looked for a job. I tried teaching myself to knit, but didn't really enjoy it. Then I picked up a crochet hook and a learn-to-crochet book, and fell in love.

Learning from brief instructions in a book was quite challenging, especially as back then there were no YouTube videos or websites like Ravelry to go to for help, and it was a long time before I realised that you should insert your hook into both loops of the stitch below, and not just the back loop! This experience is partly why I decided to start making my own tutorials (and, eventually, books) to give clear instructions for crochet techniques so other people don't make the same mistakes I did when I was starting out.

**Marcia:** What are your favorite things to crochet? What inspires you?

**June:** I love animals and nature and most of my amigurumi designs are inspired by real-life animals and plants. I also enjoy crocheting accessories and a few useful items for the home, but amigurumi are my favourite things to make! I love to learn more about the natural world, by travelling to see animals in the wild, reading, watching documentaries, and watching the local wildlife



**June (cont.):** in my garden, and seeing what I'm inspired to make as a result.

**Marcia:** What do you think are the biggest benefits of crochet?

**June:** I love how versatile crochet is – all you need is a hook and some yarn and you can make anything, from a blanket, to a toy, to a garment. And it's also a very portable craft, so you can crochet anywhere!

When it comes to making amigurumi, crochet is ideal, because with just one simple stitch you can make a firm fabric that holds its shape, so it's perfect for making 3D shapes.



**Marcia:** How did you become a crochet designer? When did you start designing amigurumi and why?

**June:** Around 2006, craft blogs and online craft forums started popping up, and crafters now had a way to share what we were making with the rest of the world.

I heard about amigurumi but I didn't really like the style of any other amigurumi I'd seen, so I decided to try designing one of my own. When I posted photos online, people started asking for the pattern, so I published my first pattern (Fuzzy Bear) in January 2007. Then I designed another, and another, and people kept buying them, and things just grew from there!

It turned out I had a perfect combination of skills for writing crochet patterns as well as designing: my science/mathematical background helps me to figure out all the numbers for patterns, and my technical writing background helps me write clear, concise, accurate instructions. My love of animals guided my ideas, and my artistic hobby experience in pencil sketching and polymer clay sculpting helped me to observe the shapes and design realistic patterns.

**Marcia:** What do you like best about crocheting amigurumis?

**June:** It's like magic to me that you can make a 3D model of just about anything using just a hook and some yarn! I love animals and nature, and I enjoy the challenge of replicating my favourite animals and plants in crochet.



**Marcia:** How would you describe your amigurumi style?

**June:** I'd say my style is a balance of cute and realistic, with precise shaping and simple, clean lines.

**Marcia:** Tell us about your book and your research.

**June:** I've published two crochet books: "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Amigurumi" is the definitive reference guide for all things amigurumi, and "Idiot's Guides: Crochet" is the essential guide to learning crochet stitches and techniques, starting from the absolute basics. My amigurumi book is the only book designed to teach you everything you need to know to make amigurumi, from stitch tutorials and how to read an amigurumi pattern, to techniques for adding eyes and hair, jointing limbs, and more, and exclusive patterns to practice with.

I'm always looking for ways to improve my designs and for techniques that give the best results when you're making amigurumi. I like to experiment to discover the best way to do things. For example: is there a way to get rid of the colour jog at the end of the row when you're making stripes? After trying many different ways to make cleaner stripes, I ended up with my Perfect Stripes tutorial. I share all my tutorials on my blog (at [www.planetjune.com/help](http://www.planetjune.com/help)) so everyone can benefit from my discoveries!

**Marcia:** The internet has provided new ways for crocheters all over the world to connect. Has the online crochet community influenced you or your crochet in any way? How about Copyrights in this time?

**June:** I wouldn't have my career without the internet allowing me to meet crocheters all over the world! Without the encouragement of the crochet community when I was just starting out, I would probably have made a few amigurumi and then



**June (cont..):** moved onto a different crafty hobby. Thanks to the support of people buying my patterns online, I've been able to work full-time as a crochet designer since 2009, which allows me to take the time I need to keep experimenting and coming up with new ideas.

People who don't respect copyright are the biggest threat to my business. I make my living from selling my patterns, and each time someone shares a pattern with a friend instead of telling them where to buy their own copy, that's a few dollars less in my pocket. It takes a lot of pattern sales to make a full-time living as a pattern designer, so every sale helps! The money I earn from my patterns allows me to keep designing new patterns and to keep providing free tutorials for all amigurumi fans to enjoy. I'm very grateful to all my customers whose support allows me to continue doing what I love for a living.



**Marcia:** What would you like to do with crochet that you haven't done yet? What is your next project?

**June:** I have so many ideas for future projects - I keep a long list of different animals and plants that I'd like to recreate in crochet some day, and I keep thinking of more to add to the list! I also

plan to keep exploring new techniques and seeing what new possibilities that leads me to. I'm currently finishing an amigurumi pattern for Christmas, and then I'll start looking through my list to see what I'd like to design next! I'm also planning to film more crochet video tutorials for my website next year.

**Marcia:** Do you have any tips for those just starting to learn to make amigurumis?

**June:** Try to master the magic ring and invisible decrease techniques as soon as possible - although they can both be slightly tricky at first, they'll make a world of difference to the look of every amigurumi piece you make.

(A magic ring helps you avoid being left with a hole at the beginning of each piece, and using invisible decreases makes all your stitches look neat and even. You can find my tutorials for these at [www.planetjune.com/magicring](http://www.planetjune.com/magicring) and [www.planetjune.com/invdec](http://www.planetjune.com/invdec)).

**June (cont.):** I'd advise you stay away from patterns that include colour changes or fuzzy yarns at first, as those techniques are a little more advanced. Get comfortable with making single-coloured amigurumi first, until reading an amigurumi pattern, forming a magic ring and making an invisible decrease are easy for you; then you can add to your skills!



**Marcia:** Any advice for those that are thinking about design themselves?

**June:** Make a sketch (or just look at a picture) of the thing you'd like to make. Try to break the overall shape down into a combination of simple shapes such as circles, ovals, rectangles and triangles. You can build up your amigurumi by stitching these smaller shapes together.

Take notes of your stitches as you crochet - even if you don't plan to make more than one, you never know when you might want to make something similar again, and it'll save you lots of time if you have a record of exactly how you made the first one!

**Marcia:** Where can people see your work?

**June:** You can find me at [www.planetjune.com](http://www.planetjune.com) and on all social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc) as PlanetJune. You can find my amigurumi tutorials at [www.planetjune.com/help](http://www.planetjune.com/help) and, if you'd like to try some of my simpler patterns at no charge, you can find them at [www.planetjune.com/free](http://www.planetjune.com/free)

