

SOCK SYMPOSIUM – OCTOBER 2005
CANDY GRASTORF

TOOLS

THE KNITTERS HANDY GUIDE TO YARN REQUIREMENTS – YARN YARDAGE REQUIREMENTS FOR BASIC MITTENS, GLOVES, SCARVES, SOCKS, HATS, TAMS, VESTS & SWEATERS AT MULTIPLE SIZES AND MULTIPLE GAUGES BY ANN BUDD. Available at your local yarnshop or online. This is great to have in your purse or knitting bag when yarn shopping.

SOCK-IT TO ME TWO SIZE SOCK LENGTH CONVERSION GUIDE – INCLUDES US, EUROPEAN & MEXICAN SHOE SIZES, IN INCHES AND CENTIMETERS. Gives you men's, infants & children's sizes on a laminated guide.

Knitting Needles:

- Some knitters like the magic loop method for socks (using long circular needles): <http://www.az.com/~andrade/knit/mloop.html> or knitting with two circulars: <http://www.az.com/%7Eandrade/knit/twocirculars.html> .
- I like double-pointed needles, they're faster for me. I use 4 needles, some like to use 5 doublepoints. I usually prefer metal needles rather than wood (too flexible) but up to you!
- There are some 11 ½" long circulars but those are tough on your hands to use.

Stitchkeepers for double-points:

- For those who knit on double-points, WoolyWest.com or Patternworks.com (& elsewhere) have some great stitch keepers in 3 sizes (two little plastic cups with elastic in-between to keep your stitches on the needle & keep those needles from poking you through your knitting bag! - *I highly recommend these!*

KNITTING SOFTWARE: <http://socks.jimmietoney.com/software.html>

- Sole Solution helps you design your own sock pattern in 30 seconds or less (toe down or toe up). Various heel & toe options, circulars or double-points.
- Same website has Needle Trax software and the Knitters Desktop Companion.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

These books are available through our guild library or your favorite yarn shop/bookstore (local or online - try our link to Amazon.com!).

***Folk Socks* by Nancy Bush.**

I highly recommend this book. Contains a "classic sock pattern", 7 heel variations, 8 toe variations, 18 sock patterns and interesting historical information on knitting in Estonia. Her shop is The Wooly West, PO Box 58306, Salt Lake City, UT 84158. Order line is (888) 487-9665.

<http://www.woolywest.com>

***Folk Knitting in Estonia* by Nancy Bush.**

This one has 10 sock patterns, 16 glove & mitten patterns, Graphs for Estonian pattern motifs and more history.

***Ribbing - Plain & Fancy* by E.J. Slayton.**

Has a pattern for basic ribbed sock with French heel (on even number of stitches) and a mistake stitch rib sock (uneven number of stitches) plus 25 rib variations, 3 heel variations, 2 toe variations, a mini-sock for practice, directions for weaving a toe, nice table to plug into her sock instructions so you can vary yarn weight, foot size, etc.

Socks Socks Socks - 70 Winning Patterns from the Knitter's Magazine Contest edited by Elaine Rowley (XRX books). Includes six steps to sock success, a baby socks pattern to try for a

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first sock, good information on techniques & abbreviations, some cute slipper patterns. Chapters include: simple socks, kids socks, lace socks, color socks, texture socks, whimsical socks (including a pair knit from licorice!), and Icelandic socks.

Cool Socks, Warm Feet by Lucy Neatby. See the book review on our website.

WEBSITES

The socknitters site is great: [Socknitters.com](http://www.socknitters.com)

Check out the Museum of Odd Socks, very amusing! Lots of good info on this website.

Information on various yarns & needles (readers opinions) for sockknitting. Also

Cyberknitting classes: entrelac class, lace sock class, toe-up class, festive socks (including "clock" socks), argyle socks. Various sock swaps, including a Christmas stocking swap.

Look at their FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) page for lots of excellent advice & links to techniques. Member patterns. You don't have to get constant emails to look at this site, you can set up your profile to just look online.

Socks 101: <http://www.royea.net/sockdemo1.html>

Socks 101 has step-by-step photo how-tos.

Nancy Bush's website: <http://www.woolywest.com> She has sock and shawl kits, stitch-keepers, knitter's jewelry, shawl broaches, etc.

TIPS AND TRICKS

Casting on:

- It is very important to cast on loosely, be very aware when you cast on. A tight cast on will wear out quickly & always annoy you or the wearer when putting on the sock.
- Some knitters cast on over two needles with long-tail cast-on.
- Try the German Twisted Cast-on – <http://knitting.about.com/library/bltqcaston.htm>

Gauge:

- Keep your gauge firm for & use sock yarn or tightly spun yarn for hardwearing socks. If you fear a small needle size would knit too tightly it is better to cast on more stitches than go up in needle size. I usually use a 0 or 1 for sockweight yarn or a 3 on elastic yarn or DK yarn.
- Knit cotton socks always on smaller needles than you knit your wool socks. Gerda W. suggests you knit the cuffs together with "Woolly Nylon" (serger thread sold in fabric stores) so they keep their nice shape wash after wash.

Self-patterning yarns:

- There are lots of fun self-patterning yarns that make stripes, fair-isle patterns, etc. Simple socks come out beautifully.
- Look at Lucy Neatby's *Cool Socks, Warm Feet* for suggestions on using self-patterning yarns to great effect!
- Gerda W. recommends if you want a self-patterning sock pair to look alike, pay close attention to how the pattern runs. Make the slip knot for the cast on between 2 color changes of the yarn and remember this. Then knit the sock until you see the pattern repeat again that you started the sock with. This should be at the foot close to the toe. Then cut the yarn and now can cast on the second sock on at the right spot in the pattern and knit this sock completely. Then come back and finish the first sock matching just what is left to be knitted.

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On following the directions exactly:

- As Elizabeth Zimmerman said: You are the master of your knitting. Make your socks to please you! You don't always have to be a "blind follower" and stick to a pattern exactly.
- Don't be afraid to adjust the number of stitches for your socks to custom-fit your foot (or giftee's foot)! You can have more stitches for the leg/ankle and then reduce down (either by decreasing two every inch or so down the back or the leg or all at once after ribbing).
- You also don't have to use the same needle size for the ankle & the foot. You could have a larger needle for the leg/ankle and reduce a size for the heel/foot (I wouldn't do the reverse though!).
- You can also reduce stitches in the foot by just continuing to decrease at the gusset a few extra times (I sometimes reduce 4 more stitches in the gusset)

On Second Sock Syndrome:

- I knit my socks one at a time. I like to use the finished sock to measure against for the second sock.
- Some knitters like to knit both socks at once, if you have a problem being bored easily and never finishing a second sock this technique may be for you. Your tension will and the socks will come out the same. <http://www.sockknitters.com/2circs/index.htm> Shows how to knit two socks at once on two circular needles. I prefer to get one finished quick & try it on!
- Timothy Hunt received some great advice from another guild member – knit the second sock first!

Toe-up or Top-Down Socks:

- I usually do top-down socks. On occasions where I worried about having enough yarn I've done invisible cast-on above the heel, knit down then taken out the cast-on and knit up the ribbing.
- Timothy Hunt likes Wendy Johnson's toe-up pattern, he used the short-row heel from <http://www.wendyjohnson.net/blog/sockpattern.htm> but likes the toe shaping on Judy Gibson's "You're Putting Me On" socks <http://tiajudy.com/soxform.htm> . Anita Hellstrom prefers this pattern also.

Emergency surgery:

- I've had times where I've actually cut a sock off at the cuff (or at a part that came unraveled) and knit back up to the top.
- For example, once a hole appeared on the cuff of a sock where I hadn't joined the new yarn properly, I cut it off and knit back up.
- Another time, I'd made a sock with a short cuff for my mother and decided the foot was too small around. Since it was on size zero needles I didn't want to unravel the whole sock. Instead I decided my stepdaughter would get them but she likes long cuffs so I cut off the cuff where rib meets stockinette & knit up. To match the second sock I did an invisible cast-on, knit the foot then undid cast-on, picked up stitches & knit upwards to top of cuff! That way the cast off at top matched on both socks!

On Heels & Toes:

- I normally buy sock yarn that is 75/25% wool/nylon or 80/20% wool/nylon so the socks will wear well so I don't use reinforcement thread with that type of sock yarn.
- Some 100% wool yarns (such as Blauband) come with a small card of matching reinforcement yarn in a lighter weight. You can also buy small cards of this reinforcement yarn in various colors.

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- You may also buy "woolly nylon" (at fabric stores) in many shades to blend with your yarn if you'd like to reinforce key areas (like the heel and toe). Some knitters are concerned that the thread may cut into the wool.
- I usually like to use the "heel stitch", it is pretty and somewhat thicker due to the slipped stitches, no need for reinforcement with slip stitch heel patterns.
- Gerda W. suggests this variation on heel stitch: Slip every other stitch in the first row and then on the 3rd row you knit the stitches you slipped in the first row and slip the stitches you knit in the first row. 5th row repeats the 1st row and 7th row repeats the 3rd row, etc. This gives a very cushioning grid pattern.
- Try a garter stitch heel – works great to keep patterned yarn from pooling. Here is an article by Lucy Neatby from INKnitters 2001 issue:
<http://www.inknitters.com/Issue1/lucy.pdf>
- I sometimes knit the toe in the next size smaller needles for a firmer fabric.
- There are directions for various heels and toe variations in sock books. If you have problems with heels wearing out you may want to try a heel that you can rip out & replace easily.
- Elizabeth Zimmermann's book Knitting Around has a moccasin sock that you can rip out the entire sole & reknit when it gets worn out.
- <http://www.lanagrossa.com/service/stricktips/index.html> Click on instructions for socks with a "JoJo" heel (a short row heel). In the instructions for the heel for the 2nd row it should read...."position yarn thread at front of work" instead of position heel at front of work.

If you're bored with K2P2 ribbing:

- Try the rib variations in E.J. Slayton's booklet.
- I often do K3P2 rib, less purling and I like to see more of the knit stitch.
- I've also been known to do K4P2 rib when the yarn/needles are fine.
- Just do about an inch of ribbing then go to stockinette to the heel.
- Skip ribbing entirely & just start knitting for a rolled top (another color for the rolled top would be cute too!). If you're worried about them staying up either be sure the circumference of the sock fits your ankles or knit the top in a smaller size needle (or possibly 10% fewer stitches?) - or just say they're slouch socks! I made a few pair of these for my stepdaughter and they worked fine with no adjustments.

On grafting toes:

- Grafting (Kitchener stitch) is a great technique to know how to do but you don't have to know how to graft to make socks.
- I actually prefer other toe styles that don't require grafting, the shape of the toe is more like your foot (not wedgy). I usually use the star toe (multiple of 4 stitches) or round toe (multiple of 8 stitches) - both are in Folk Socks.
- When doing a star or round toe, I like to do the very last row on a size smaller needle, then when you thread the last eight stitches together it is a little neater. I do this on glove fingers & mitten tops too.
- Also see the "You're Putting Me On" toe up socks link above.

What do I do with the leftover yarn?

- Use your leftovers as stripes to a solid background sock or use in fair-isle patterns.
- Save some in case you need to repair the sock later.
- Make baby hats, mittens & socks. Baby socks also can be recycled as Christmas ornament mementos.

KEEP NOTES ON THE SOCKS YOU ARE MAKING

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What yarn/colors did you use? What gauge did you get on what size needles?
How many stitches for cast on? How many stitches did you pick up on the gusset?
How many stitches did you use for the foot? How long did you make the ribbing, leg, etc.?
When did you start the toe? What was total length of foot? What stitches did you use?
Who was the sock for? What kind of toe did you use? If you used a pattern, what
book/magazine was it in?

I like to keep this info in a small notebook in my knitting bag to refer back to. Our "Knitters' Journey" notebooks the guild has for sale would be nice for this use.

Also: keep measurements for your favorite sock giftees, how long do they like their socks, etc?