

Free Pattern of the Month

May 2002

A Holiday Stocking

This month's free pattern is an easy Holiday stocking. It's perfect for beginners, or a fast gift for a speedier knitter. I do assume that you know how to knit and purl and that you are familiar with circular needles. Use this basic design as a jumping-off point for your own Holiday traditions.

As always, e-mail me with any questions or comments that you might have.



This stocking design starts with a band knit from side-to-side with a 16" circular needle. The band is then joined into a circle and stitches are picked up along one edge and knit down to an "After-thought" heel and then down to a traditional toe. Applied I-cord finishes the top and makes a loop for hanging.

Gauge: Use your favorite needle and yarn to make a fabric that you like. This will determine size - from miniature to way too huge to fill. My gauge with worsted weight wool and a #7 needle, knit fairly tight is about 4 stitches per inch. Your gauge may be different, but for a first effort it's not really important.

Start by casting on 30 stitches using your favorite method. If you want to graft the ends together, make the cast on with a scrap yarn and knit a row or two - the scrap yarn will be taken out later and the two ends will be joined with kitchner stitch. If you prefer to sew the ends together, simply cast on and begin.

Slip the first stitch of all rows to create a chain edge.

Purl one row.



Start the pattern -

Row 1: Turn, Slip the first stitch, Knit 3, Purl 2, Knit 3, Purl 3, Cable, Purl 3, Knit 3, Purl 2, Knit 4.

Cable? Dont panic. A cable is just a series of knit stitches that are knit in the wrong order - a 3 over 3 cable is simply six stitches that are knit out of the usual sequence. It goes like this - when you get to the cable part, slip three stitches onto a cable needle or a toothpick, and put them down towards the front of the work (the side closest to you). Then, knit the next three stitches. Knit the three stitches on the holder (or put them back onto the left needle if you prefer) and you're done! That's all there is to it. You'll be surprised at how very easy it is.

Row 2: Knit and purl the stitches as they appear: Slip one, Purl 3, Knit 2, Purl 3, Knit 3, Purl 6, Knit 3, Purl 3, Knit 2, Purl 4. This is the reverse of Row 1.

Row 3: Turn, Slip the first stitch, Knit 3, Purl 2, Knit 3, Purl 3, Knit 6, Purl 3, Knit 3, Purl 2, Knit 4.

Row 4: As row 2.

Row 5: As row 3.

Row 6: As row 1.

As you can see, you will cable every six rows, and the rest is simple knit and purl.

Work in this pattern for 17" - 20" whatever looks good to you, remembering that it has to fit around a 16" circular needle.

When this band as long as you like, cast off, and steam block it to shape (if you're using wool yarn), or wet block it if you are using acrylic yarn. After blocking you can sew the ends together into a circle using your favorite method, or kitchner if that is what you prefer.



Now it's time to pick up the stitches for the "leg" of the stocking. The reason for slipping the first stitch of each row is to create a nice "chain" selvedge along each long side.

Using a crochet hook or knitting needle, pick up one stitch in each of these chains, keeping the right side of the band towards you.

Put these stitches onto the 16" circular needle and join in the round. The number really isn't important, and you may have to increase a few stitches here and there if you have holes or bare spots.

Place a marker at the stitch closest to the seam - this will become very important - it's now where the center of the heel will be.

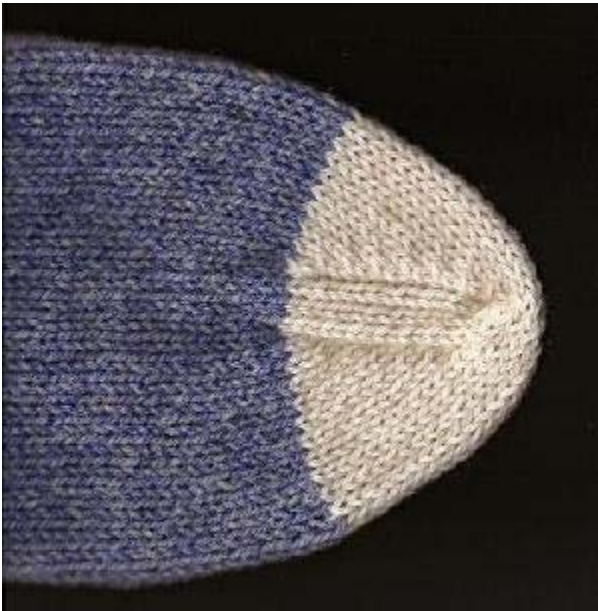
Work in plain stocking stitch for as long as you think the leg of your stocking should be. Here is a good place to add fancy colors or pattern work, if you like.



When the leg is as long as you'd like it to be, count your stitches and divide by 2. This will determine how wide the heel will be. You need to knit this number of stitches in a contrasting color, half on each side of your marker.

The easiest way to do this is knit $\frac{3}{4}$ of the next round. Then knit half of the stitches in a contrasting yarn and break it off. Slip these contrasting stitches back onto the left needle, pick up the main yarn, and knit on as if nothing had happened.

You now have half a round of stitches in a contrasting color, making a line across where the heel will go.



Once the foot of the stocking is as long as you like, it's time for the toe.

If you've decided to make a contrasting toe and heel, knit one round with the new color.

It's time to use those DPN's now. You want to have 1/4 of the sts on each needle. Start the new needle at the marker, and knit 1/4 of the sts onto each of four needles - you'll knit with the 5th. I recommend wood or bamboo needles - they are lighter and "grip" the sts better, so they are less likely to fall off as you knit. I hope you have made sure that your marker is directly below the seam for the top band. If it's not, your heel and toe will be crooked.

Now for the decreases -

Round one -

Needle 1 - Knit to 3 sts from the end the needle 1, Knit 2 together, Knit 1.

Needle 2 - Knit 1, Knit 2 together, Knit to the end of the needle.

Needle 3 - Knit to 3 sts from the end of the needle, Knit 2 together, Knit 1.

Needle 4 - Knit 1, Knit 2 together, Knit to the end of the needle.

Round two - knit even.

Repeat these two rounds until you have half of the original number of stitches left on the needles.

Now comes the grafting of the toe, or Kitchner stitch. You'll see grown women cringe at the word, and I thought it was some horrible thing until I saw it done. It makes the sts go right over the end of the toe as if they were all knitted, with no visible seam. Great in shoes, too. Once you wear a pair of handknit socks, it's hard to go back to the commercial ones, trust me.

There are lots of sites on the web about kitchner, and any good knitting reference will have pics, so I will not include it here. If you need a link, e-mail me and I'll send you one.

Okay, on the last knit round, put the sts from needles 1 and 4 onto one needle, and the sts from needles 2 and 3 onto another needle. All of the sts will now be on two needles and you're ready to Kitchner.

It should look something like the pic above when flattened out and viewed from the side.



Here's what it looks like from the top. If you want it pointier, simply decrease a few more rounds and you'll have fewer stitches to kitchner. Or just run the tail of yarn through all stitches and knot it on the inside. Knitter's choice!



Now it's time to get back to the heel.

Take out the stitches in the contrasting yarn. Just carefully pluck them all out. As you can see from the pic, if you're using wool yarn, the stitches will want to stay where they are and you can pick them up with DPN's when the contrasting yarn is all out.



Put 1/4 of the stitches on each needle, in my case 13.

There will be small gaps at the sides where the needles meet, so pick up a few extra stitches there. In my case, I picked up 4 stitches at the end of each needle - just to keep it even - for a total of 17 stitches on each needle. The number really isn't too important, just make sure the gaps are closed.

Knit one round even with the new yarn if you've chosen to make a contrasting heel and toe. Or even knit two rounds if you like. Then, decrease just like the toe:

Round one -

Needle 1 - Knit to 3 sts from the end the needle 1, Knit 2 together, Knit 1.

Needle 2 - Knit 1, Knit 2 together, Knit to the end of the needle.

Needle 3 - Knit to 3 sts from the end of the needle, Knit 2 together, Knit 1.

Needle 4 - Knit 1, Knit 2 together, Knit to the end of the needle.

Round two - knit even.

Repeat these two rounds until you have half of the original number of stitches left on the needles.

Once again, you'll kitchner the remaining stitches, and the heel is done!

A good blocking is essential, and then a simple crochet or I-cord loop to hang it from, and you're done!

The cabled band can be made more elaborate, or even knit in a lace pattern, but remember that it needs to be firm enough to stand up to all the goodies you'll be putting in it.

Enjoy!

Mary McCall

Catmccall@msn.com

This pattern is copyright 2003 by Mary L. McCall and may be shared as long as this copyright remains in place.