

Free Pattern of the month - July 2003

Right/Left Socks

The free pattern for this month is a pair of Right/Left Socks in worsted weight yarn. I used one skein of Knitalty by Colorado Yarns in a variegated color way. These socks are short (just the way I like them) and the toe shaping slants right and left, just like my feet do. The following instructions work for my feet, but you may have to make a few adjustments to custom-fit them to your own feet. I've included suggestions for the shaping, but this pattern is not a knit-by-the-numbers design! Take a good look at your feet and be prepared to do a little frogging - it's only a few rounds at the toe, so it won't hurt, I promise!



Yarn: For these socks, I used one skein of Knitalty by Colorado Yarns, a worsted weight yarn (each 100 gram skein contains 215 yards) in color 613, a lovely variegated green color way. The label says that this yarn is washable in lukewarm water, but I generally hand wash my socks, so YMMV. These socks are rather short, and I had a bit of yarn left over from the single skein I used.

With this yarn the socks will fit in Birks or loose shoes or other sandals, or just wear them around the house - it all depends on how loose you wear your shoes.

Gauge: 5 stitches per inch with a US #3 bamboo needle in stockinette stitch.

Needles: I prefer a wood or bamboo needle to knit socks. They are warmer to my always-cold hands, and they give a little as I knit, making them more comfortable.

These instructions assume that you are familiar with DPN needles and that you know how to knit and purl. I place the stitches on three needles and knit with the fourth.

Cast-on 45 stitches onto a single circular needle at least 3 sizes larger than the needles you used for your gauge swatch you want that first round to be loose.

Put a point protector on the end away from the last cast-on stitch to keep them from sliding off. Start the first row of ribbing: Knit 2, Purl 2 until there are 14 stitches on another DPN needle (needle 1). Start the 2nd needle Purl 2, Knit two until there are 20 stitches on the second DPN needle. Start the third needle Purl 2, Knit 2 until there are 10 stitches on the needle. There will be one stitch left on the 4th needle. Put this last stitch on the beginning of the 1st needle so that when you join in the round you will Knit 2 together for the first stitch. If you are familiar with DPNs you will be able to visualize this when you get there. Knit the first 2 stitches from needle 1, so that needles 1 and 3 have 12 stitches each, and needle 2 has 20 stitches.

Join in the round, being careful not to twist. I like the number of stitches on the needles to be different on the ribbing of this sock because the beginning of each needle starts with a Purl stitch. Having a Purl stitch at the beginning seems to help eliminate the ladders that can form where the needles come together.

Knit 20 or so rounds of Knit 2, Purl 2 ribbing, or however much you like at the top of your socks, or until you're tired of it. Some people like to knit the whole leg in ribbing, but I find this boring and tedious, so I prefer only a little ribbing at the top, and then stockinette for the rest of the leg. You can always use a contrasting color for the rib, heel, and toe if you experience any YSO (Yarn Shortage Anxiety)

The leg of this sock is worked in stockinette stitch. I worked only 20 rounds before I started the heel flap.

Rearrange the stitches on the needles so that there are 22 stitches on needle 2, and 11 stitches on needles 1 and 3.

I like the feel of a Dutch heel. In order to get to the heel, we have to knit a flap. I like to use a heel stitch for the heel flap because it makes a firmer fabric, and it pulls in, making the heel flap narrower. I have a narrow heel, so this fits me just right. If you have no problems with a narrow heel, you can work stockinette stitch for the same number of rows, instead.

The heel flap is knit on half of the foot stitches 22. To knit the heel stitch -

Row one - Slip 1 stitch, Knit 1 stitch all the way across - 22 stitches.

Row 2 - Slip the first stitch and Purl all the way back - 22 stitches.

By slipping the first stitch of each row, you will have a series of loops on each side of the heel flap, which makes it easier to pick up stitches for the gusset.

Repeat these two rows 10 times, or about 2.5 - 3. It will depend on how deep you need your heel flap. Measure from your anklebone to the floor to get a rough idea. The only sure way to know is to knit a sock and try it on.

Now to turn the heel: It sounds scary at first, and confusing, and illogical, but if you follow the instructions blindly, without letting your brain argue, and have faith that everything will turn out fine, you'll be able to do it with little or no hair pulling. You will be working with the stitches of the heel flap - 22 stitches.

It goes like this -

Row one - Slip the first stitch, Knit 14, Knit 2 together, turn.

Row two - Slip the first stitch, Purl 7, Purl 2 together, turn.

Row three - Slip the first stitch, Knit 7, Knit 2 together, turn.

Repeat rows two and three until there are 10 stitches left on the needle. You will not be knitting every stitch on each row - you will be creating short rows that will form a cup that will follow the shape of your heel.

On this particular pair of socks I carried the heel stitch through the heel turning and about halfway through the gusset decreases. On the RS rows, simply work Slip 1, Knit 1 across to the decreases and purl back to the next decrease as usual. I think that this type of heel turn will wear longer, and I'll post the results after I've worn and washed them a few times.

End on a RS row, which means you will have to Purl across to finish where you need to be.

Knit these 10 stitches. With a crochet hook, pick up one stitch in each of the slipped stitches on the sides of the heel flap. The number will vary, and that's okay. Its always good to fake it and pick up a couple of extra stitches at the beginning and end of the heel flap - this will help eliminate any holes.

I picked up 19 stitches on the first side of the heel flap, knit across the stitches previously neglected on the third needle (the instep stitches), then picked up another 19 stitches on the other side of the heel flap, and knit across the heel stitches to the beginning.

This brought my total stitch count to 70 stitches. This may vary, so don't be too worried about it. The important things are these:

1. Its always better to pick up more stitches than less - this way your socks wont have gaps at the sides.
2. Be sure that you pick up the same number of stitches on each side of the heel flap. If you cant, its not a big deal, just make sure that you decrease on the side with more stitches in the first round, so that they are even.

Now for the gusset decreases: Knit one round even - this will even out the picked-up stitches and make the decreases easier to perform - picked-up stitches sometimes are tight and don't like to be knit together.

Put the stitches on four needles again: The picked-up stitches on the left side of the gusset on needle 1, the instep stitches on needle 2, the picked-up stitches on the right side of the gusset on needle 3, and the heel stitches on needle 4.

Next round:

Needle 1: Knit to the 3rd stitch from the end, Knit 2 together, Knit the last stitch.

Needle 2: Knit the instep stitches even.

Needle 3: Knit 1, Knit 2 together, Knit to the end.
Needle 4 (heel stitches) Knit even across to the end.

Next round: Knit even.

You can repeat these two rounds until you reach 44 stitches, alternating a decrease round with an even round. This works for most feet. If you have a narrow heel or foot, you may need to do two decrease rounds, followed by one even round until you reach the number of stitches you need. Knitter's choice. If your socks are regularly loose around the ankle, you may want to try this way, if not, consider yourself lucky and continue on to the foot. Rearrange the needles so that there are 22 stitches on needle 2, and 11 stitches on needles 1 and 3.

After the gusset decreases are done, its time for the foot. This is just endless rounds of stockinette stitch, around, and around. It helps to make a mark on a scrap of paper or use a row counter if you are as anal as I am about making the socks identical. That way you only have to measure one sock, and the second becomes very meditative - just stockinette stitch and marks on the paper.

Anyway, stop knitting when the sock measures 3" (in my case) less than the length of your foot from the back of the heel to the tip of your longest toe. Measure the sock from the back of the heel flap to the bottom of the current round of stitches. This may vary slightly depending on your row gauge. If you measure how far 22 rows is, you can subtract that from your foot measurement, and calculate how soon to start the toe decreases. I generally make my socks $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ shorter than my foot to allow them to stretch slightly when worn and fit perfectly.

A word about the toe shaping - my feet slant rather dramatically from the great toe down to the little toe, and the decreases I describe below worked for my feet. The toes did come out a little more pointed than I might have liked and the next pair will have one less decrease round to compensate. You will have to take a long look at the way *your* feet slope to determine if this shaping will work for you or if you'll have to fuss with them a bit. Don't be afraid to rip if it doesn't work quite right the first time - it's only 22 rounds of a toe and it won't take long to get it right and is well worth the extra effort.

Measuring how far it is from the tip of your longest toe, along the top of your foot to a point directly across to where your shortest toe begins will give you a general idea of how many rounds you'll have to decrease. This measurement on my feet is just shy of 3" and that is what I based the following decreases on. Be sure to make notes on how you worked the first toe so you can repeat for the second, remembering to mirror the shaping (you wouldn't want to end up with two right feet, now would you?)

Toe decreases (right sock - don't forget to reverse the shaping for the left sock):

Needle 1: Knit until 3 stitches from the end of the needle, Knit 2 together, Knit 1.

Knit even on needles 2 and 3.

Next round - Knit even around.

Repeat these two rounds 6 times - 32 stitches remain.

You will now have 5 stitches on needle 1, 16 stitches on needle 2 and 11 stitches on needle 3.

Re-distribute your stitches so that there are 8 stitches on needles 1 and 3 (move 3 stitches from needle 3 to needle 1 these are the stitches that will end up on the bottom of the sock.)

Next round:

Needle 1: Knit to the 3rd stitch from the end, Knit 2 together, Knit the last stitch.

Needle 2: Knit 1, Knit 2 together, Knit to the 3rd stitch from the end, Knit 2 together, Knit 1.

Needle 3: Knit 1, Knit 2 together, Knit to the end.

Next round: Knit even.

Repeat these two rounds until you have 8 stitches left.

Knit across needle 1. Put the stitches from needle 1 and 3 onto one needle. Graft the two together, run in all the loose ends on the inside of the sock, and you're done!

There are many sites on the web for the Kitchner stitch, and every good knitting reference has instruction and pictures, so I wont include them here.

Put the sock on and see if it fits. If it's a little off, that's okay - make the appropriate changes on the second one.

Put your foot up on a coffee table or low stool, and admire your work. While the heady feeling of making your own sock is still with you - and before you get up to do anything else (some arcane superstition, but I still do this <G>) cast-on for the second sock.

Send me a picture, and I may post it here - with credit to you, of course.

Enjoy!

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