

Loop Your First Socks

by Diane Mulholland



Are you drooling over all the gorgeous sock yarns available out there but blench at the thought of having to cope with a hedgehog of double-pointed needles?

This article takes you step-by-step through the basic sock-knitting techniques using one circular needle and the magic loop method. Once you have finished your mini sample sock you will have all the skills needed to follow many sock patterns.

INSTRUCTIONS

The sample sock is knitted using larger needles and yarn. Different colours have been used to show the parts of the sock more clearly. Once you are familiar with the techniques involved, you will find them just as easy to work on fine sock yarns and small needles.

Materials

1 ball double knitting yarn in a light colour;
4mm/80cm circular needle; Stitch marker; yarn needle.

Abbreviations

The standard list of *Inside Loop* abbreviations can be found at www.theinsideloop.com/abbreviations.html

Ribbing (green):

Cast on 32sts using a long-tail or cable cast-on. Cast on over two needles if necessary to ensure a stretchy fit.

Work one row of k2, p2 ribbing back along your cast on, place a marker after the first stitch to mark the beginning of the round.

To join in the round:

1. Fold the knitting in half and find the midpoint. Draw a loop of the circular needle cable out between the stitches at this point.

2. Align your knitting so both needles point to the right, with half the stitches on each one, and the cable loop to your left. The working yarn should be hanging down from the stitches on the back needle.

3. Pull gently on the back needle, drawing it out of the knitting and forming a second loop on the right.

4. Using the back needle and bringing yarn across, work in rib across the stitches on the front needle.

5. When you reach the midpoint where the first loop was pulled through, turn your knitting so the second loop is now on your left. Draw the back needle through once again to start knitting with. Make sure you place the working yarn over the back needle towards the back before starting a new row, otherwise you may find an extra loop forming at the join.

Please Note: The first couple of rows are very fiddly when working in the round. Be careful to keep the right side of your work facing outwards and at the beginning of each round check that the yarn is hanging down at the back. After a few rounds you will find it much easier (fig. 1).

Continue working ribbing for a total of six rounds.

Switch to stocking stitch, knitting each round for a further twelve rounds (*blue*).

Heel flap (green):

The heel flap is worked back and forth over 16sts, leaving the remaining 16 resting on the other side of the loop.

Setup row: k32, turn.

Row 1: sl1, p to end.
Row 2: [sl1, k1] 8 times.
Repeat rows 1 and 2 seven more times, 16 rows in total.

This slip 1, knit 1 pattern is called 'heel stitch' and is a popular way to add durability to the heel.

Heel Turn (green):

The heel turn is the tiny semi-circle at the base of the flap. It changes the direction of the sock ready for the foot.

Row 1: sl1, p8, p2tog, p1, turn.
Row 2: sl1, k3, ssk, k1, turn.
Row 3: sl1, p to last st before gap, p2tog (to close gap), p1, turn.
Row 4: sl1, k to last st before gap, ssk (to close gap), k1, turn.
Repeat rows 3 and 4 until last ssk, k1 has been worked.

Gusset and Foot (blue):

The gusset is worked over the heel turn stitches and the picked up stitches on each side of the heel flap. Regular decreases bring the number of stitches back down to the original total of 32.

Note: It is not essential to pick up the exact number of stitches stated in a sock pattern, it is more important to have a neat, even pick-up with no gaps. If you end up with more picked up stitches simply work extra decrease rounds until you are back to the required number of stitches for the foot.

Pick up and knit 8-9 sts along side of heel flap (fig.2).
Knit across 16sts on front of foot (keep these sts separate on the other side of the cable).
Pick up and knit 8-9 sts on other side of heel flap, knit across the heel turn and the first group of picked up sts.

Round 1: k16, k1, ssk, k to last 3sts, k2tog, k1.
Round 2: knit.
Repeat these two rounds until you have a total of 32 or 33 sts. Work one more decrease on one side of the gusset if necessary to reach a total of 32 sts.

Continue in stocking stitch for 3 rounds.

Toe (green):

Check that you have 16sts on each side of the needle and that your toe is aligned flat with the heel.

Round 1: k
Round 2: k1, ssk, k to last 3sts on needle, k2tog, k1, repeat for second half of sts.
Repeat these two rounds until 12sts remain, 6 on each half of needle (fig. 3).

Graft the remaining sts using Kitchener Stitch. There are many good photo and video tutorials online.

APPLYING THE TECHNIQUE

This basic sock construction can be applied to all types and sizes of yarn and you will notice it is very common when you begin browsing through sock patterns. It can be varied infinitely with lacy patterns, ribs or cables.

Happy sock knitting!

ABOUT THE YARN

The yarn used in the sample sock is *Smooshy*, by Dream in Colour. For a huge range of gorgeous sock yarns and all your needles and supplies, visit *Stash Yarns* in London or online at www.stashyarns.co.uk.

ABOUT THE DESIGNER

Diane Mulholland had the good fortune to grow up on an Australian sheep farm and a love of all things fibre-related is a natural result. A long way from home now, she tries her best to fit as much wool as possible into her tiny London flat. Read about what she's been up to at www.dianemulholland.com/blog.

Contact Diane: diane@theinsideloop.com

This printable version has been designed to minimise ink and space. For more step-by-step images, and extra information, visit the original at www.theinsideloop.com.

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