

Marilyn's Design-as-You-Go Toe Up Sock Pattern

I discovered that it actually is not hard to just make the whole sock up as you go along. I also discovered that toe up socks are easier when the needles aren't in your way so I use Susanne's Ebony Glove Needles from Germany which are easier to find here in the US than they used to be. They are 4" long and come in metric sizes, thereby making it easier for us loose knitters to drop down a half size or more. I always knit both socks at one time and knit something between two rows and a whole section (for example, the gusset or the heel) then switch to the other. Generally if you are making this up as you go along, try something, make a design decision (as in not to frog it), then switch to the other sock while you still recall what in the world you did and repeat it there! Remember that if your feet are very different, you may be making two totally separate socks out of the same yarn. Just remember to differentiate them in some way so you don't wear them on the wrong feet. You can embroider an initial or duplicate stitch a heart or even just one stitch in a different color to let you know which one is the left or the right as you choose.

I only knit socks from Koigu on tiny needles at about 7-8 st per inch.

TOES

Usually at the top of your toes, there is a flat spot across the arc of your toes and that is the place to start. Mine is across the top of my big toe and the one next to it. Your's could be across one or more toes. All feet are different so do what YOUR toes need to make socks that fit them!

Do the winding cast on for 8 stitches per needle give or take a stitch depending on how long that flat spot is. Knit one round (Row 1) then on the next round, make one stitch at the beginning and end of each needle (which means two M1s in a row in between your two needles) (Row 2). On Row 3, Knit doing a M1 at the beginning of each needle as well as picking up two stitches between the two needles and crossing them so as not to leave a hole. (my own invention) Knit row 4, then start alternating the M1 rows and plain rows. You may need to throw in some pick up stitches between the needles to make it rounder if you need rounder (I do plus I HATE those stupid 'ears' you get if you don't take care to round it off). The great thing is that you can try them on as you go to make sure they fit. If they don't,

just rip that row or two and try again, adjusting the M1s with plain rows, M1 rows, and M1-and-pick-one-up rows until you have a toe cap that fits. Oh and when you get to about 12 stitches on each of the two needles, divide them in half and use four needles. Remember that where the yarn tail is marks the start of each sock so you can keep track of where to do the increases and where not to do them. (Or you can put a marker there. I used to just tie a contrasting yarn to the end stitch after I switched from 2 needles to 4 to show me where but now I don't need that reminder.) The toe cap should be about an inch long, maybe longer if you have long toes. I don't. (just to add to my shoe-buying woes!)

ABOUT PATTERN STITCHES

Once the toe cap is done is where you start your pattern stitch to go over the instep if you want one. You may need to adjust the number of stitches to accommodate your pattern stitch. If you adjust by more than two stitches, you are making your socks lots bigger, so don't do it! Find another stitch pattern or let it wrap around the side of your foot a bit. A quarter of an inch pattern wrap is better than $\frac{1}{4}$ " of extra sock width.

Sometimes I have to swipe a stitch or two from the bottom of the foot needles to fit the pattern stitch across the top of the foot. It's okay to go over the edges a tiny bit but not too far. Four stitches max on either side is my rule of thumb before I hunt for a smaller pattern stitch repeat. Generally I look for pattern stitches with repeats of 6 st. + 1 or 2. If the +number is 4, you may be able to cut it down to 1 or 2 on the sides if not between the repeats.

FOOT

Or just plain knit the foot if you like. Knit! When the foot is long enough that the needles are at the front of the ankle (where your leg sticks up), it's time to do the gusset if you need one. Otherwise, move on to the heel.

GUSSET

Toss some markers on those needles one stitch in from the edge on the top of the foot needles (that I call #1 and #2) where you started (see the yarn tail for reference) and pick up or M1 - I knit into the stitch twice - every other row for one to one and a half inches or until the needle will be at the center of your ankle bone when you try it on.

HEEL!

Heel time! And know that it's okay to swipe the extra needle from the other sock and use six needles per sock to get around the heel once you have a few of the wraps done. I divide the gusset and top of foot stitches onto two needles to hold them and using one needle to knit with, I start wrapping and putting stitches on hold until I have about a third of the back of the foot stitches left unwrapped and held. This number of stitches should match the width of the back of your heel, so adjust accordingly. Then start wrapping and picking up stitches at each end. I like to pick up both the stitch and its wrapping (or wrappings after the first one) and knit them together then wrap the next held stitch, turn and head back to the other side. When I reach the ends of the wrapped and held stitches, I wrap each of the first gusset stitches.

GUSSET

Time to pick up the gusset stitches! Just knit a row and pick up a gusset stitch (along with its wrapping) to knit at the end of each row.

N.B.: I don't usually do the eye of partridge stitch (though I want to try it, I just haven't), so I don't really have any suggestions yet for doing that stitch. I don't know if it affects the number of rows and therefore when you pick up the gusset stitches, since it is a slip stitch pattern and they usually mean twice the number of rows.

Once all the gusset stitches are picked up, the heel is turned! The heel is done! Hurray! Go have a drink, eat an apple, have dinner, grab a Mountain Dew, or celebrate in some small way like finally letting the dog out to pee. :-))

ANKLE

Now is the time when we knit the ankle and make any adjustments needed to accommodate the leg stitches and the pattern stitch for the leg. Knit two rows keeping to your pattern on the top of the foot and either eye of partridge or plain knitting on the back. As you knit these two rows, you will need to evenly space any additions (or even subtractions) from your stitch count to accommodate the pattern as it goes around the leg. You can't put them on the front of the foot needles without messing up the pattern there so all you have left is the bottom of the foot stitches that are now the back of the leg stitches. You don't want to add more than three or four stitches

or you have chosen the wrong pattern. Do it but make a mental note not to do that one again unless this really does work for you! If you do add a lot, do half of the additions in each row and put them in different places so it doesn't show.

LEG

Knit the first round of the full pattern all the way around the ankle. Keep on going until the sock is nearly done or the yarn is nearly used up. I like K1 P1 ribbing but others have a preference for 2 x 2 ribbing or even something else of their own invention or that they swiped elsewhere. I have just been trying the sewn bind off and I think I like it. It has to be done pretty loosely to work so unless you can control your stitching tension, choose another bind off. if you have fat legs, you can try the one where you bind off a stitch, knit a stitch then bind it off (which you CAN do with a crochet hook!). It may not look the best when first off the needles but try wearing them and then washing them before you judge.

WEAR

I strongly believe in wearing socks before washing them because it 'sets' the yarn in the sock to fit you. So wear, wash as per yarn instructions, and enjoy!