



## How To Guide

### Sock Knitting

Ok so you've seen a fab pattern to make a pair of socks, but you've never made a pair. There are thousands of sock knitters out there, so is it an impossible task or one that's easy to master?

I've made a few socks and even managed one whole pair, but with the launch of our new sock yarn Yarnsmiths Merino Sock I thought I would give it another go!

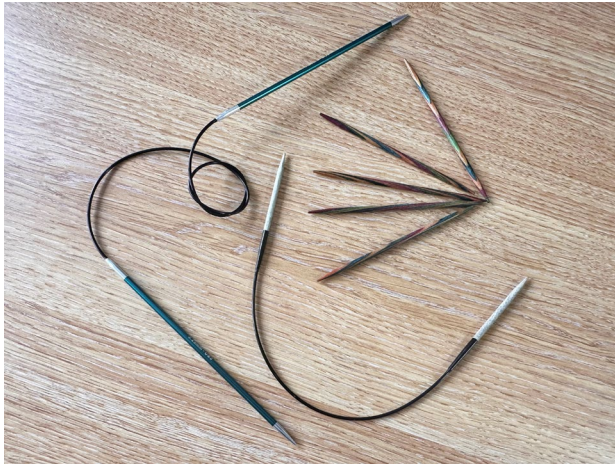


Yarn that is specific to socks usually has additional fibre content such as nylon, to ensure that the socks are hard-wearing. You can usually make a pair of adult sized socks out of a 100g ball.



## Choosing your needles

This when many people start to panic but hang in there – hopefully, we can help you to pick the perfect needles. So DPNs, magic loop or short circular? Let's explain...



*Above: A selection of sock knitting needles*

### **DPNs**

Double pointed needles are a popular choice for knitting socks. They usually come in packs of five and are available in various lengths. The best advice is to try some and see which fit best in your hands. Too long and they become unwieldy, too short and the stitches may fall off the end. You can either knit on four needles using the fifth to work with or with three using a fourth. The stitches are spaced evenly across the needles, and you work in the round.

### **Short Circular**

This may be easier for beginners as all the stitches are on one needle, making it less likely that you will drop a stitch. They can sometimes be tricky to manoeuvre if they are especially short, but by making sure you pick the correct length this challenge should be minimised. 30cm is a good starting needle. Depending on the size of sock you are making you may need a longer or shorter cable. It is also worth noting that not all tips are the same length. They may vary across ranges and across brands so depending on your style of knitting and how you hold your needles, you may find that one brand suits you better than another. You will also need DPNs for casting on, and for finishing the heel and toe.

## **Magic Loop**

This method certainly looks very confusing, but once you get going, it's very straightforward. It means you may be able to make use of a circular needle you already have in your craft stash rather than buying additional tools. To use this method, you divide your stitches and put them on the needle tips. You then have a loop on the left-hand side of your needles. You pull the needle out just enough to knit the stitches, creating a loop on the right side. At the end of the row, you turn your work around and continue. It is probably much easier to look at this in action rather than reading a description! There are lots of really helpful videos available on [YouTube](#).

Ultimately your choice of needles is down to personal preference. You may find one type of needle easier to hold or maybe you need to work on your project whilst travelling. There is no one way to make socks, but hopefully this short explanation will help you decide. One important point to note is that it is better to buy good quality tools as your crafting process will be much easier if the knitting glides along the needles.

## **Needle Size**

Your chosen pattern will explain what size needle you need to use. 2.5mm are the usual size but you may need to adjust your needle size according to your tension. It may also be better to cast on and complete your rib rows on a 3.00mm needle just so that the cuff is a little stretchier.

As with all knitting you will need to have a pair of scissors to hand for snipping ends. Another tool for a sock knitter is a stitch marker, which can be used to mark the start of the round. There are many different stitch markers to choose from, from simple and functional to fancy and fun! This is where you can express yourself and work with a marker that suits you best!

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### **Choosing your Pattern**

There are lots of patterns out there, especially from brands such as Opal, West Yorkshire Spinners and Regia. You can also find some really good free patterns on Ravelry and on the Wool Warehouse website.

### **Casting on**

As with all crafting there are several ways to do this. Some people prefer to cast on and begin working straight onto the circular needle. Another way is to cast on to straight needles and then transfer the work onto a small circular or DPNs once you get going. This should make it easier, and you will be less likely to twist the stitches. It does mean that you will be left with a tiny gap at the top of your sock (unless you follow Ellie's joining tip below), but this can be easily sewn closed once the sock is complete.

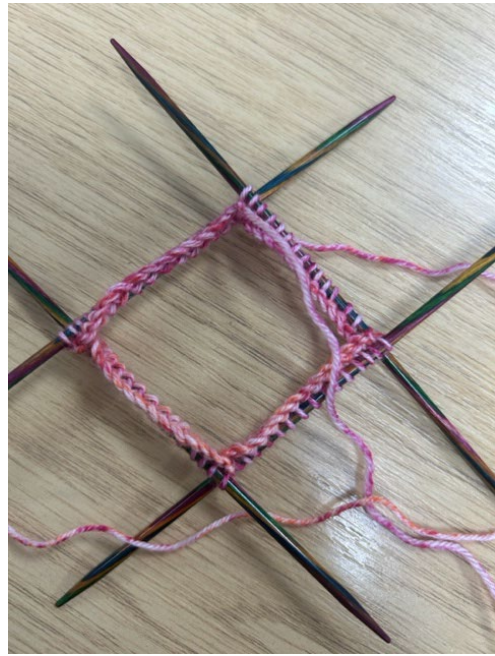


*Above: Casting On*

You will need to cast on the number of stitches directed in your pattern. For DPNs you will spread the stitches across your needles evenly, e.g. 64 stitches = 16 stitches on each needle when using 4 DPNs.

### Joining in the round

Once you have transferred your work onto your circular needle or DPNs you will need to ensure that you join your work. A tip, from Woolly Worker Ellie, is before starting the first row of the sock, move the first cast-on stitch onto your last needle, and then move your last cast-on stitch over to your first needle - this will then create a crossover between these two stitches, so that you have no gap in your first round of stitches. Ellie then usually knits the first round, before starting the 1x1 or 2x2 rib.



*Above: Joining in the round and first row*

If you would prefer not to cross your stitches over on the initial joining round, then start the sock pattern as directed, making sure that you pull the yarn tight at the end of the first round, and on the very first stitch of the second round of the rib to try to prevent a gap. Once you have done a few rounds of ribbing you should find that there is no gap between the stitches of your first and last needles, and you can use your cast-on end of yarn to sew up any gap once the sock is finished.

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*Above: Ribbed Cuff*

### **The Leg**

This part of the sock is usually straightforward – you just keep going! If you are making a patterned or textured sock you will need to follow your pattern carefully and ensure you count your rows. You can make this section of the sock as long or as short as you wish – it depends on your finished design. You can experiment with different lengths for different pairs until you find the best length for you.



*Above: Knitted leg*

## Heels

These are often quite daunting, especially after the simple leg! You will find a number of methods of turning the heel. Your pattern will specify the one that works best for your design. It may be easier to use DPNs for this part of the sock rather than a small circular. This part of the sock is knitted differently to reinforce the heel. Some people are happy knitting a more tubular sock as it is simpler, but if you want 'real' pair of socks then turning the heel is essential.



## Foot and Toes

For the foot section of the sock, one tip is to measure the foot of the lucky sock recipient as everyone's feet are slightly different! Again, stitch markers would be really helpful to ensure that you keep track of your decreases. If you are using a small circular, you may have to switch back to DPNs to work the fewer stitches that will be left as you near the toe. Kitchener Stitch is then used to close the toe without making a really bumpy seam. If you have a large seam here it will not be especially comfy for the wearer, so a neat toe is definitely preferable.



*Above: Knitted toe*

## The End

Once this is done your very first sock is now complete! (You will need to nip back to the cast on and close up that small gap.) Now you can move on to your second sock with confidence!

Once both are complete, it is a good idea to block your socks to ensure that they are the correct size and shape. You can buy sock blockers which will make it easy to do this. It's not essential but does make them look attractive and helps to show off the stitches. Sock blockers come in all different materials – wood, plastic, or metal. Some are adjustable and some suit a selection of similar sizes. Pick the ones that you think will work best for the size of socks you are regularly going to knit.



To block your socks, firstly, soak them in a bowl of warm water. You can add a small amount of suitable detergent if you wish. Once the fibres are all damp, this could take about 15/20 minutes, rinse them in clean warm water and squeeze all of the water out of them, without wringing and twisting them. You can roll them up in a towel if this makes it easier to remove all the excess water. Then pop them onto your blockers to dry.

## So you're stuck...

### I've made one sock but...

One helpful tip by Woolly Worker Phil is that you should start your next sock as soon as you've finished your first. Don't wait and pack that first sock away and promise to start the next another day. It may never happen...

## I keep dropping my stitches.

Sock stitches can be a little fiddly – they are smaller and use smaller needles than the size 4mm and DK we are often used to. With practise this can become easier, but if you are really struggling, trying a different needle style may also help.

## Can I crochet socks?

Of course! There are lots of crochet sock patterns out there too.

For more help with knitting socks why not take a look at [Winwick Mum's guides and patterns](#). She really will help you to get started on your sock knitting journey!



If you really get stuck and need additional help, then please contact our Customer Service team on 01926 882818 or email [sales@woolwarehouse.co.uk](mailto:sales@woolwarehouse.co.uk), they'll be happy to help :)