

Exceedingly Vanilla Socks

(For non-
standard stitch
counts!)

My go-to sock pattern after a year of making socks.



For the longest time socks were something I could not imagine myself knitting. The needles are so small and the stitches so tiny and ohmygoodness, how do you even begin to figure out to make a heel?

But, like everything I say I am not going to do, eventually I gave in to the sock bug. And spent all of 2016 focused on making socks. What follows is my general recipe for a top down sock with a heel flap and gusset. Once you master the basic construction,

nothing will come between you and a drawer full of squishy socks knit with love.

Skill level: adventurous beginner

Skills needed: knit, purl, slip stitches, decreases (k2tog, ssk, p2tog), picking up stitches

Yarn: approximately 100 g of fingering weight yarn. Some of the best fiber content I have found for socks are yarns that are 75% superwash merino wool and 25% nylon. Or try an 80% wool, 20% nylon. Explore different varieties of wool (BFL, merino, highland, corriedale, etc) and see what you like best. Most important of all, pick a color you enjoy because you are going to be spending a lot of time with it.

Needles: US 1 / 2.25 mm, either in a set of 5 DPNs, two 24" circulars, or one 32" circular for magic loop

Notions: tapestry needle, stitch markers and row markers (optional), extra DPN (for those using two circulars or magic loop this can make picking up gusset stitches easier)

Gauge: 9-10 stitches/inch (4 sts/cm)

Sizes: It is expected that you are using this version of the pattern because you do not feel that standard sock stitch counts work for you. So pick an in-between size and see how that works!

Abbreviations:

k = knit

p = purl

[...] = repeat stitches in brackets for instructed length

sts = stitches

RS = right side of work (in our case, the outside of the sock)

WS = wrong side of work (the inside of the sock)

k2tog = knit two together

ssk = slip slip knit (I do mine as slip 1 knit-wise, slip 1 purl-wise, move both stitches back to left needle then knit together through back loop. On the following row I knit the ssk through the back loop.)

p2tog = purl two together

Instructions

Cast on your desired number of stitches using a stretchy method. My favorite is the German twisted cast on.

Separate stitches evenly onto your desired needle configuration. For the remainder of the pattern, stitches that form the front of the leg/top of the foot will be referred to as "front stitches" and stitches on the back of leg/bottom of foot will be "back stitches."

Cuff

If you have an even number of stitches which is a multiple of 8:

Row 1: k1, [p2, k2] to last three stitches on front needle, p2, k1. Repeat on back needle.

If you have an even number of stitches which is a multiple of 4 but not 8:

Row 1: k2, [p2, k2] to end of front needle. p2, [k2, p2] to end of back needle.

If you have an even number of stitches which is not a multiple of 4 or 8:

Row 1: [k1, p1] to end of front needle. Repeat on back needle.

Repeat row 1 until cuff is desired length.

Leg

Knit all stitches on both needles until leg is desired length.

Heel flap

Knit all stitches on front needle. The heel flap is worked only across the back needle.

If you are using a contrasting color for your heel, add the following step:

Knit all stitches on back needle in main color. Cut main color and use contrasting color to purl across the back needle.

*If you have an **even** number of stitches on your back needle:*

Row 1 (RS): k3, [s1, k1] to last three stitches, k3. Turn.

Row 2 (WS): k3, p to last three stitches, k3. Turn.

*If you have an **odd** number of stitches on your back needle:*

Row 1 (RS): k3, [s1, k1] to last four stitches, s1, k3. Turn.

Row 2 (WS): k3, p to last three stitches, k3. Turn.



Repeat rows 1 and 2 until the heel flap is the same number of rows as stitches on the back needle.

Heel turn

Tiny bit of math needed here:

of stitches on back needle / 3 = ____

Round your previous number to the nearest even number = ____

Add three to your previous number = ____ - I will refer to this number as Q.

Row 1 (RS): k until Q stitches remain, ssk, k1, turn. *You should have an even number of unworked stitches after doing this.*

Row 2 (WS): s1, p until Q stitches remain, p2tog, p1, turn. *You should have an even number of unworked stitches after doing this.*

You have now divided your stitches (roughly) into thirds - one third in the middle that form your heel cup and one third on each side that will be separated from the middle stitches by a gap that forms each time to you turn your work.

Row 3 (RS): s1, k to 1 stitch before gap, ssk, k1, turn.

Row 4 (WS): s1, p to 1 stitch before gap, p2tog, p1, turn.

Repeat rows 3 and 4 until all unworked side stitches have been used.

If you have been using a contrasting color, cut it and reattach your main color.

Gusset

(RS) Knit across back needle. Pick up one stitch in each garter ridge along the right side of the heel flap and one extra stitch in between the front and back needles.

Knit across front needle.

Pick up one stitch between the front and back needles and in each garter ridge along the left side of the heel flap.

Note - a lot of patterns will now have you consider the start of your row to be in the middle of the back needle. While this makes sense, I don't like it and have a hard time keeping track of when to do my gusset decreases. So we will continue to have the start of the row between the end of the back needle and start of the front. Sure, on one side of the gusset you work an extra row, but trust me, you won't notice on the finished sock!

Knit the rest of the way across the back needle.

Gusset decreases

Row 1: knit all stitches on both needles.

Row 2: knit all stitches on front needle.

On back needle, k1, ssk, k to last three stitches, k2tog, k1.

Repeat rows 1 and 2 until there are equal stitches on both needles.

Foot

Time for some math! (Trust me, this is the most foolproof way I've found to always get socks that fit.)

1. Measure your row gauge: _____ rows/cm
2. Foot length of recipient: _____ cm

3. Socks need at least 10% negative ease to fit well:

$$\text{total sock length} = \text{foot length} \times 0.9 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \text{ cm}$$

4. Let's account for the length of the toe decreases:

$$\frac{\text{\# of toe rows}}{\text{row gauge}} = \frac{(\text{total number of stitches}) \div 4}{\text{answer to \#1}} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \text{ cm.}$$

5. The length you need to knit before starting the toe is $\#3 - \#4 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \text{ cm}$
(round down to the nearest half cm)

Knit all stitches on each row until the length of the foot from the heel turn is your answer to #5.

If you don't want to do any math, knit until your foot is ~6 cm shorter than the **foot length** of the sock recipient.

If you are doing a contrasting toe and want it to pop a bit more, I suggest switching colors 5 rows (~1 cm) before starting the toe decreases.



Toe

Row 1: k1, ssk, k to last three stitches, k2tog, k1 on each needle.

Row 2: k all stitches

Repeat rows 1 and 2 until you have decreased to approximately 2/3 of your starting stitch count.

Row 3: k1, ssk, k to last three stitches, k2tog, k1 on each needle.

Repeat row 3 until you have decreased to approximately 1/3 of your starting stitch count.

Close toe using kitchener stitch, weave in ends, and enjoy your new sock!