

Knitting: Socks (redux)!, by Kathe Loeffler

They usually come in pairs. Socks do. Knit one at a time, you could end up with a unique change purse. So a lot of people knit their socks at the same time, working the top on one than the top on the other. They alternate between each, working the heel flaps, the heel turns, and so forth. The approach doesn't really save any time, but it seems to result in pairs more often. Very few knitters enjoy repeating a project once done!

Last month we started a sock and ended having completed the heel turn. Slide all the instep stitches, those that will be across the top of your foot, purlwise onto one needle. It's easy to get lost at this point, so let's get oriented. Face the inside of the heel flap toward you, with the heel pointed down. If the yarn is already to the left of the heel stitches, you're ready to pick up stitches. If it's on the right side, then knit half of the heel stitches onto one needle, and the other half onto another needle. With the knitting needle in your right hand, pick up a stitch in each of the slipped stitches up the right side of the heel flap. Stick the needle from the outside of the heel flap to the inside, going through both strands of each slipped stitch, and wrap the needle as you would for a knit stitch. Pull the picked up stitch back through the slipped stitch. Work towards the instep stitches up the side of the heel flap. Pick up a couple of stitches past the last slipped stitch to avoid any holes.

Knit across the instep stitches to the other side of the heel flap. Starting just above the first slipped stitch, pick up a couple of stitches and then continue down the heel flap. The number of stitches picked up should match on both sides of the heel flap. But if they don't, there's no need to panic. Knit half of the heel stitches onto the needle with the last set of picked up stitches.

All of your stitches should be on three needles. The center of the heel is your starting point. With the inside of the heel flap facing you, the needle on the left is Needle #1, the instep needle is Needle #2, and the needle on the right is Needle #3. You should have stitches on your needles in a complete circle at this point. Our goal now is to get back to the original number of stitches, so we need to decrease. In this case, it would be 52 because that is our cast on number.

The next step is a sloping decrease on each side of the sock. Knit to the last three stitches on Needle #1, knit 2 stitches together (K2tog), then knit the last stitch. Knit across all the instep stitches on Needle #2. Knit the first stitch on Needle #3, then do an SSK decrease. Remember the SSK decrease: slip one stitch as if to knit onto the right needle, slip another one as if to knit, then knit them together by sliding the left needle into them both. Knit to the end of Needle #3 or back to the heel. Knit one complete round without decreasing. Repeat these two rounds until you have the number of stitches you started with. It might help to have a sock handy for comparison while you're working on your own sock.

Continue knitting without decreasing until the sock fits you to just where your toes begin, then knit to the last three stitches on Needle #1, K2tog, knit one. On Needle #2 knit one stitch, SSK, knit to the last three stitches, K2tog, knit one. On Needle #3, knit one, SSK, knit to the end. This is the decrease round. Knit a decrease round followed by a round without any decreases five times. You should have 32 stitches left. Knit a decrease round every round until you have eight stitches left. Break the yarn and pull it through these eight stitches, weaving the end in securely on the inside of your sock.

I have never known a hand-knit sock to disappear on the laundry room, but that doesn't mean it cannot happen. If you take to sock-making like most people I know, you might want to consider knitting a spare, three socks at one time?... just in case!