

Schoolhouse Press Sock Along with Joyce Williams

2009 (for personal use only)

Note: Other information and photos can be found at
<http://www.schoolhousepress.com/kalsocks.htm>

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Please Read: You will note this Sock Along is written in two different colors. The black is the pattern, and the green (guess what my favorite color is) explains how I work specific functions, why I take certain steps, etc. The green will also include some meaningless chatter not really useful to you at all, but will give me the pleasure of being able to chat with knitters and answer some questions I frequently receive. I admit sitting in front of a computer is not a pastime that I enjoy and I am terrible at checking in with groups. I do that at very random intervals. If you have a question you wish answered by me during this Sock Along, please send the question to: [Michelle](mailto:michelle@schoolhousepress.com) (michelle@schoolhousepress.com). Michelle will forward the question, and I can assure you it will be answered much more quickly than it would be if posted to the Yahoo Knit Along group. Remember, this involves questions you wish me to answer directly, not comments or questions in general to the group. Those should be sent to the Yahoo site.

Let us start knitting! You may use any yarn suitable for knitting socks. I have knit two pair of socks plus a shoe top length sock for this Sock Along using: Pair 1 and short pair: 2 balls Guernsey wool Pair 2: 1 skein Satakieli wool (Both yarns available from Schoolhouse Press.) Needles: 2 – 24 inch circular needles. Optional, but very highly recommended: A gallon zip lock bag; not the type with a slider, but type you squeeze together to close.

When knitting socks I prefer to knit at a slightly tighter gauge than called for on the belly band of the yarn. Because there is less friction on stitches when tightly knit, they seem to have a longer life. I am all for long-lived stitches! Guernsey knit at 7 sts/in is quite tight, so I did knit those socks at recommended belly band gauge, but Satakieli socks I knit at a gauge of 7.5 sts/in rather than recommended 6.5 sts/in. You may wish to take this information into account as you select your needle size.

When I first started knitting small circumferences using two circulars, I used two 16 inch circular needles. I soon realized if I worked with 24 inch circular needles I had a longer straight portion of the needle to hold on to, thus making it easier on my hands. I also realized I could not think of anything I could not knit if I owned two 24 inch circular needles of every size. Think about this next time you head out somewhere and think you

might be stranded on a desert island. It is definitely something new knitters should keep in mind as they start out their new needle collection.

Needless to say, my needle collection (I hate the word stash – my collection deserves more dignity than that!) has multiple numbers of each smaller sized 24 inch circulars, and a little lesser numbers of the larger sizes of 24 inch circulars, plus multiple numbers of 40 inch circulars. One does not want to be limited to how many projects they have in progress, even though progress sometimes necessitates a rest along the way. The two 24 inch circulars I use for projects with as few as four stitches total and will knit with them up to the point where the project is plus 25 inches in circumference. Then I use the one 24 inch circular until I feel the stitches have become too cramped on the needle, and I go back to using two needles. (I am referring here to projects that keep getting larger in size such as circular shawls.) When the project has reached plus 40 inches I go to a single 40 inch circular.

Note to knitters that have not previously worked with two circulars: You may want to try one of the two following options to get adjusted to working with two circulars before attempting doing both socks at the same time.

1. Cast on 8 or 10 stitches and work on knitting a small practice pouch until you are comfortable with the technique. (Follow the sock instructions but work only the instructions that apply to sock 1, and eliminate the increases.) For the first few rows it appears that you are knitting in two opposite directions, but shortly you will see a pocket form and it will be noticeable that you are knitting in the round.
2. Cast on and increase as in instructions, but one sock only. After you feel comfortable with the technique (probably after you have knit a few rounds beyond the increases), at the end of a round put the stitches from needles #1 and #2 on hold on separate pieces of yarn, or on two smaller size circular needles. Quite naturally if you happen to have two more of the same size circular needles, just leave the stitches on them and start second sock on another set. Then knit the second sock to the same length. Place the first sock onto the needles. Be sure that the beginning tail is at the left edge and the working yarn is on the back needle at the right edge of the socks. Continue to work both socks as instructed.

All the socks in this Sock Along are knit the same until after the heels are turned.

Cast On: (These socks are knit from toe to top.) Use 2 same size 24 inch circular needles. With working yarn make a slip knot with at least a 3 inch tail on stiff portion of what will be referred to as needle #2. With both needles in left hand, hold tip of needle #1 above and horizontal to the tip of needle #2, tips pointed to the right. Bring working yarn from slip knot behind needle #1 and around the front of needles #1 and #2. (Picture 1)



Starting Wrap (1)

Wrap both needles in this direction 8 times, which is half the total number of stitches you are casting on. Make a backward loop with the working yarn and place it on tip of needle #1 only.

With second ball of yarn make a slip knot as before and place on needle #2. As just previously done, wrap both needles from back to front 8 times. (Picture 2)



Wrapping Complete (2)

Lightly hold working yarn and last wraps next to needles with index finger and thumb of left hand, and slide needle #2 (the bottom needle) so wraps are on the flexible portion of needle.

I have found that no matter what size sock I am knitting, or what gauge I am using, by wrapping the needles 8 times (for a total of 16 stitches) it gives me a toe that fits whoever I may be knitting for. If you choose to, you may certainly use a different number of wraps. A good starting point might be the number of stitches you tend to decrease down to when working a sock from the top down.

Round One: To assist me in keeping my yarns from plying while working two socks, at this point I place my yarn balls in a gallon size zip lock bag. I have yarn from each ball coming out of the bag at opposite ends of the “zip” and I seal across the top. (Picture 3)



Yarn in Ziploc bag (3)

I place my bag of yarn in my lap. With opposite end of needle #1, knit wraps of first sock off left tip of needle #1. (Picture 4)



First Knit Wrap (4)

Bring sock 1 yarn over the needle and leave it in front. (By leaving it in front, when you turn your work to start knitting with other needle, it will be available to bring to the front and be ready to be used when needed.) (Picture 5 and 6)



First sock yarn left on front (5)



Yarns brought forward from back needle in position to be knit with front needle (6)

Remove backward loop made with sock 2 yarn from left tip of needle #1 and with sock 2 yarn, knit across the wraps for sock 2. Slide needle #1 so all stitches are on the flexible portion.

As you knit the first edge stitch of each sock, remove stitch just knit from tip of left needle, and align the new stitch on right tip with the last stitch (or wrap) on flexible portion of the opposite needle. Continue to align the following new stitches to the stitch on its right as usual when knitting.

Turn work. Slide wraps for sock 2 to left tip of needle #2. (The tip of the needle will have the initial slip knot, and the working yarn will be coming from needle #1 which will be behind/below needle #2. Hold working yarn, remove slip knot, and with yarn coming from needle #1, knit across wraps of sock 2. Leave working yarn forward. Take hold of working yarn for sock 1 from needle #1 which will be behind/below needle #2. (You will be looking at the knit side of your knitting.) Remove initial slip knot, (picture 7)



Ready to remove slip knot (7)

and knit across wraps for sock 1. Slide stitches on needle #2 to flexible portion of needle. You have just completed one round.

As you continue knitting around, place the cast on tail first to the inside of your knitting, and next round place it on the outside of your knitting. (Picture 8 and 9)



Cast on tail inside (8)



Cast on tail outside (9)

This way you are weaving in the tail as you go. When your knitting is approximately 1-1/2 inches long, discontinue the weaving in and out and leave the tail on the outside of your knitting. You neat knitters, avoid breaking off or cutting the tail. This acts as your marker. The tail is half way through a round, which makes the beginning of the round the edge without the tail.

As you work rounds, when you turn your knitting between needles, one time the working yarns will cross over each other. Next time you turn, turn your work or the bag with your yarns to uncross the cross over. When you want to put your knitting away or take it somewhere, simply slide both front and back of socks onto the flexible portion of the needle, roll the knitting up and place it into the zip lock bag.

Some miscellaneous things I have found useful. Each time you turn and start with a different needle, be sure you are knitting onto the same needle you are knitting off of. You can do this by visually looking at the circle the needle makes, or you can tug slightly with the tip of the needle in your right hand to confirm the tip of the needle in your left hand moves. Doing this brief check each time you start with the different needle may save you time in the long run as you are not going to have to undue (tink) stitches you knit onto the wrong needle.

If your knitting is interrupted in the middle of one of the socks, slide the tips of the needles out so your stitches are further away from the tips. It is very easy for the needle to slide out of the stitches if left too close to the tips. If you are interrupted between two socks, when you go to pick up your knitting the needle with both socks on it will be the needle in the back. The sock just completed will have the working yarn at the left edge on the front needle, and the yarn you will start to knit the next sock with will be on the back needle. Begin to knit the last sock as usual.

When you pick up your knitting sometimes one sock will have flipped around and the flexible portion of the needles between the two socks will be twisted around each other. Be sure to untwist before you proceed with your knitting.

Very Important: If your stitches are not easily sliding over the joins of the flexible portion and the tips, check to make sure you are not tightening up the first stitch on each needle too much, or that your increases are not too tight. If all the stitches have to be forced over the join, it usually means a bad join. If this is the case, the biggest favor you can do for yourself is to return the needle(s) to where you purchased them and get a new needle or set of needles. Recently when leaving on a trip I grabbed two circulars and some yarn to start a pair of socks. Both needles had bad joins, and I struggled through the pair of socks only because the other project I had with me was much larger and the socks were easier to take along in my purse. From now on I will check joins when leaving on a trip where I cannot purchase more needles.

Toe Increases: Increase until you reach the width of your foot at the base of your toes (stand on a ruler to get this measurement or wrap a tape measure around your foot), or you may try on the socks until your desired width is acquired.

It will first appear that you are knitting in two opposite directions, but after a few rows it will be noticeable that a pocket is forming and you are knitting in the round.

Toe Increase: This increase has two stitches between the increases at each side of the sock. (Picture 10)



Sock Toe (10)

Remember to change the yarn ball you are working with between the two socks.

Round 1: Needle #1 and Needle #2, both socks. Knit 1, right increase of your choice, knit to last stitch, left increase of your choice.

Round 2: Knit around.

Repeat Rounds 1 and 2.

When you have reached desired width (which is half the circumference of the sock), continue to knit round and round until you have reached desired length to turn the heel. You may measure the length of your foot to determine desired length, or you may try a sock on. You start to turn the heel when the sock reaches the back of your heel. I suggest you may also want to try the sock on after you have reached the measured length. If the sock stretches horizontally at all, it might affect the total distance required.

Raised Bar or Running Yarn Right Increase: Yarn as it travels between two stitches is referred to as a bar or running yarn. From the back, go under bar with tip of left needle and catch bar. Insert right needle tip from the left under the left leg of bar at front of needle, forming a loop. Knit loop off left needle. (Picture 11 and 12)



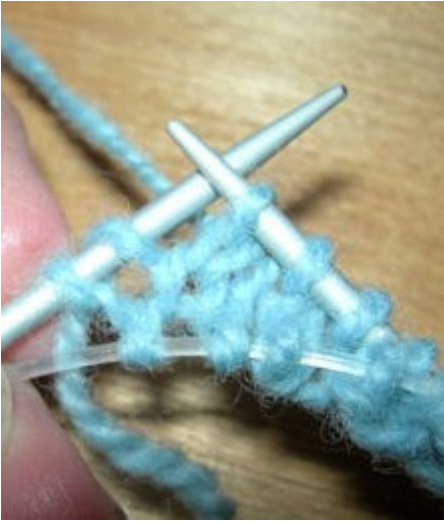
Left needle under bar from back (11)



Insert right needle tip from left under left leg of bar (12)

Raised Bar or Running Yarn Left Increase: Yarn as it travels between two stitches is referred to as a bar or running yarn. From the front go under bar with tip of left needle

and catch bar. Insert right needle tip from the right behind right and in front of left legs of bar to back of left needle, forming a loop. Knit loop off left needle. (Picture 13 and 14)



Left needle under bar from front (13)



Insert right needle tip from right (14)

Knit in the Row Below Right Increase: Insert right needle tip from the right under right leg of stitch in row below. Place stitch onto left needle by inserting tip of left needle through center of stitch and in front of right needle. Knit stitch onto right needle. (It is a twisted stitch.) Knit stitch above stitch just knit. (Picture 15)



Right needle in stitch in row below (15)

Knit in the Row Below Left Increase: Catch left side of second stitch down from stitch just knit on right needle (third stitch down on right needle) by inserting left needle tip under left leg of stitch and out through center of stitch. With right needle knit into stitch from left side of stitch, twisting it. (Picture 16)



Left needle in second stitch down (16)

Knitters certainly do not knit the same way. I feel the raised bar increase gives me the best appearing increase, while Meg Swansen gets the best results with the knit in the row below increases. You may wish to experiment and use one on one sock and the other on the second sock.

At the end of this section of the Sock Along, I will throw in some of my chatter which answers questions I am frequently asked. Reading definitely not a requirement! Be back on March 16. Hope most of you will be close to approaching your wanted foot length at that time. Those of you that have the pleasure of a lot of time to knit and reach your sock length before then, please be patient as you wait for us to join you. (You certainly must have a project or two you can work on while waiting.) It is so nice to be able to have most of us knit along together rather than some having to feel rushed and in need to catch up. Remember this is a Sock Along, not a marathon.

I am often asked how I came up with the idea of working with two circulars. In either 1990 or 1991 I knit a many colored body of a sweater depicting winter on the farm where I live. I used Shetland jumper weight yarn and incorporated Bohus style knitting. It did

not have a specific overall pattern, but I threw in random scenes as I knit. The body had so many colors and overall intensity I felt I wanted to have the sleeves a solid color. Since the sweater was representing winter, quite naturally I chose off-white for the sleeves which I had frequently used in the body.

I picked up sleeve stitches around the armhole and started to knit down toward the cuff. I was working with a 16 inch circular needle when I reached elbow length and decided I would like to try the sweater on to see how I liked the solid off-white sleeves. Being rather a lazy knitter, I decided to knit half the sleeve stitches on a second 16 inch circular rather than put all stitches on hold on yarn. I liked the sleeve color and decided to continue on. I grabbed a third 16 inch needle and knit the stitches from the original needle. When they were all knitted, I just automatically grabbed the opposite end of the needle I had earlier knit the second half of the sleeve stitches with and knit them. Midway through I realized what I was doing and at the same time it dawned on me I could knit small circumferences using two circulars. I continued to knit and decrease the sleeves all the way using the two 16 inch circular needles.

I have not knit with double points since that time except when working twisted I-cord. I have absolutely nothing against double points, other than the fact I never liked using them. It always seemed to me it was a dangerous feat with all those ends poking out in all directions. Fortunately it was my mother's favorite method of knitting and the many years I was knitting ski sweaters for myself she would knit matching socks for me. However, I did knit the sleeves of the sweaters myself using double points, but never really enjoyed what I considered was knitting dangerously.

After I started to use the two circulars I demonstrated it at Meg Swansen's Knitting Camps and also self-published the technique in sock and glove patterns as well as on self-published videos. I gave workshops teaching the technique around the country. Word of mouth spread the technique and it was brought up frequently on KnitU, as well as being published as a technique on the Sock List with my permission. In 1999 I was contacted by Nancy Thomas, then editor of Knitter's magazine and asked to write an article about the technique. I did write the article and it was published in the summer 2000 issue of Knitter's .

I am also asked about Cat and I both simultaneously coming up with knitting on two circulars. We both independently came up with the idea, not simultaneously as is reported in some sites on the Internet. To quote from Cat's first book: "I did not wake up in the middle of the night with a sudden realization of how to knit this way. Instead, I spent months puzzling over how to use two circulars to knit a tube, following blind instinct, seemingly making no progress. It seemed obvious that it must work, but how? Having knit many socks on double pointed needles, I thought the process would follow the same steps. I kept trying to work from one needle to the other, tying myself in spiraling knots that I had to back out of. I don't recall precisely how I muddled my way to "Eureka!", but within days of solving the mystery Joyce Williams' excellent article on knitting with two circulars appeared in the summer 2000 issue of Knitters' Magazine ."

Next question: How did I come up with my method of starting at the toe? In the Sept/Oct 1993 issue of Piecework magazine Anna Zilboorg had an article on Turkish socks which are commonly knit from the toe up. This is the first I had heard of knitting socks from the toe up. Anna gave very clear instructions with drawings on how to do it. Since I thought it to be a wonderful idea, I proceeded to try it exactly as written which was wrapping the yarn around two double pointed needles and knitting them off with a third needle. After spending 20 to 30 minutes attempting to do as instructed with no luck, I told myself I really did not want to start socks from the toe up.

A few days later the “duh!” came. I had been using two circulars for several years. Why did I think I had to use double points for this technique just because the instructions told me I should? I got out my circular needles and slid the wraps on the bottom needle so they were on the flexible portion which made it much easier to knit the wraps off of the top needle. One thing that still gave me trouble, however, was that the original instructions did not have you secure the yarn end in any way which I had trouble holding onto as I was knitting off the wraps. Thus I came up with the slip knot on the bottom needle.

Another change I made was the direction of the wraps. Anna’s sketch showed the yarn being wrapped around the needles from the front to the back. This is traditionally what the Turkish would do as they have the left leg of their stitches in the front of the needle. (Now days you seldom see Turkish knitting where they knit into the front of the stitch, but rather into the back of the stitch so it is not twisted.) If you come across older Turkish knit socks you will see stitches twisted to the right as the knitter had knit into the front of the stitches. As you will note, I tell you to cast on wrapping from back to front so the wraps will have their right leg in front of the needles and you may knit into the front of the wraps as you work them off the needles without twisting the stitches.

And, what is the advantage of knitting from the toe up? For one thing you end up with a seamless toe (although I guess you could also consider weaving the toe stitches together seamless). Increases give you a smoother fabric than decreases. Thus, for those with sensitive toes, the toe up method would be the better way to go. And, last but not least, starting from the toe you can continue to knit until you run out of yarn and quit, no matter where you are beyond a short distance after the heel turn.

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