

Sock Making Tips

Working with dpns (double pointed needles) frightens many knitters into not even trying to knit socks. To that end, they have developed other methods such as magic loop knitting and working with 2 circulars. I personally prefer the dpns. You're working in a small area and all those cables hanging about trying to get tangled up in my yarn provide a lot of frustration for me. I also find that the nature of circular needles puts a stretching tension on my stitches that makes them unattractive. With dpns, you are still knitting on 2 sticks at a time and you have the rest of your work, resting on stitch holders (the other 2 needles) waiting their turn to be knit. Also with dpns, the stitches not in use at the time are sitting on sticks that are the right size for the project so when it is their turn to be knit, they are not being stretched back into shape. It's a little thing and maybe it's nothing but to me, I think, it makes a nicer fabric.

Problem #1 with working with dpns. Casting on. There are a number of ways to overcome any difficulty with casting on to dpns. First, let's talk about the math... how many stitches go on each needle. Assuming your needles came in a set of 5, divide the number of stitches you are meant to cast on by 4. That's how many go on each needle. If you did not come up with a whole number, then some needles will have more than others. That is totally okay.

Method 1: The first method of casting means that you will put the right number of stitches on each needle. To do this, cast on to your first needle, then hold the second needle right next to the first needle in the same hand with the tip of the second needle extended slightly farther out than the first needle, cast on at least 2 stitches onto your second needle avoiding a gap between the first and second. Now you can let go of the first needle. Don't worry, it isn't going anywhere. Continue casting on the correct number of stitches onto needle 2. Then repeat the same process for needle 3 and needle 4.

Method 2: Method 2 is the method I use most often unless I have too many stitches. Cast all of your stitches onto 1 needle. Then slip purlwise the correct number of stitches onto each of the other 3 needles.

Method 3: Using a circular needle the same size as your dpns, cast all of your stitches onto your circular needle. Then slip the stitches purlwise onto your dpns.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9OrDriAmtI>

<http://www.purlbee.com/2008/07/25/double-pointed-needles/>

Problem #2 with working with dpns. It is very, very important that your stitches are all facing the same direction before you join in a circle. Lay your needles out flat as you can. Make sure that the stitches are all pointed downward with none of them curling around the needle.

Problem #3 with working with dpns is the joining. This is the part that seems to cause the most frustration because suddenly, you are working with 3 needles all at once. Don't worry, you can do it. We are going to start referring to your needles with numbers now.

Needle #1 is your first cast on stitch and needles 2 and 3 are in the middle (of course), and needle 4 contains the last of your cast on stitches and this is where your working yarn is come. Needle #5 is the needle that has nothing on it. Step by step, bring your needles to a full circle by closing the gap between 1 and 4. Bring your working yarn to the back of needle 4 and let it lie over the top of needles 2 and 3. Hold the tips of needles 1 and 4 together. Insert needle 5 into the first stitch on needle 1. Wrap the working yarn around the needle and make your first stitch. Make 2 or 3 more stitches before letting go of needle 4.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqkIdJ3WSzA>

Problem #4 with working with dpns is changing from needle to needle with making ladders. Ladders are caused by not holding your needles close enough together when you are changing to the next needle in line. This stretches the stitch out and it looks every bit as if you have created a ladder to climb on. There are several ways to prevent this and I will include a video on such. The way I prevent it, is to push my stitches back on the right hand side, away from the tip for about an inch. I lay my left needle tip then on top of the right needle tip. Holding them close like that, I make my next stitch onto the working needle. After a couple of stitches, I can let go of the completed right hand needle and proceed with my knitting.

<http://blog.yarn.com/tuesdays-knitting-tip-preventing-ladders/>

Problem #5 with working with dpns is the gap. Okay, that's a problem with working with circulars too. When you get to the end of the first row, you'll notice, even though you were very careful when you joined, that there is a short length of yarn that isn't taken up in the knitting. It shouldn't be there, right? You were very careful to hold your needles close together when you joined! But there it is a half inch to inch of yarn just hanging there, taunting you. It's a tease. Ignore it. Again making sure that you hold your needles close together, continue on with row 2. When you get to the end of row 2, you will probably panic to see that now there are 2 drooping bits of yarn. The second one is only slightly shorter than the first and they are both taunting you. You were careful, right? Of course you were. Like the first, it's a tease. Ignore it. Keeping with your method of carefully holding the needles close together, continue on with row 3. When you get to the end of row 3, you will see, you have tamed that beast. Your ends are now cohesively joined. By the end of row 5 or 6, you'll notice that those 2 hanging yarns have almost completely disappeared. When you have finished your project, you can close any remaining gap with your yarn tail when you bury it.

Our Project - Problems 1 - 3 and 5 do not apply to our current project because we are making toe up socks. However, I wanted you to have the information in the event that you make top down socks. You will find that many sock patterns are written for top down. Some people are inflexible and will only work toe up or only work top down. I only work sock patterns that I like. Toe up, top down, I can do both and now you can. Problem #4 is going to be the major concern you have with this project.

For our toe up socks, we will be using the figure 8 cast on. I love that with this cast on, you won't have to go back and sew the toe closed. Issues that come up with this cast on include have big holes in it from not holding the yarn close to the needles. That takes a little bit of getting used to and some practice will stand you in good stead.

<http://www.knitnowmag.co.uk/how-to/item/205-how-to-figure-of-eight-cast-on>

Toe Up Socks for K4K KAL Kate McCullough 2015

Size 5 US (3.75 mm) dpns We will only be using
4 of your needles for this project)
200 - 400 yards dk superwash wool

Using figure 8 cast on, cast on 8 (baby, **but don't attempt baby socks on your first sock outing. It's too fiddly. I'm just giving you that for future reference**), 16 for women's and children's socks and 24 for men's socks.

Here is a guide for making the figure 8 cast on.

<http://youtu.be/GrbzPNpNLEs>

<http://www.knitnowmag.co.uk/how-to/item/205-how-to-figure-of-eight-cast-on>



Toe: (You'll always see sock patterns divided up into it's parts. Toe, foot, heel, and leg)

Row 1: knit all stitches on both needles

Row 2: k1, m1, k1 (3, 3, 6) (**this needle will henceforth be known as needle 1**) bring in an empty needle. K1 (3, 3, 6), m1, k1 (**this needle will henceforth be known as needle 2**), needle 3 - k1, m1, k6 (8), m1, k1

Row 3 and all odd rows: knit all stitches on all 3 needles

Row 4: needle 1 - k1, m1, k to last stitch, needle 2 - knit to last stitch, m1, k1, needle 3 - k1, m1, knit to last stitch, m1, k1

Repeat rows 3 and 4 until you have 24, 36, 48, 64 stitches on your needles.

Foot:

for all rows

needle 1 and needle 2 - knit all stitches, needle 3 - k1, p1 (yes it's okay to end with a purl stitch, it won't make a difference in the appearance of the sock and not worth dealing with an odd stitch later on.)

Repeat this row until sock measures (**wild hysterical laugh! This is the fun part**) 3 inches for the baby sock, all others will use your hand method. Measure the hand of the person you are making the socks for. This is the measurement you will use to make perfectly fit socks. Knit the foot until the whole piece equals the measurement of your hand or the hand of the future recipient of the socks. If you don't have this measurement a sock chart will be provided in the kal documents. Begin heel.

Needle 3 will be the top of your sock. Needles 1 and 2 will be the bottom. The heel of the sock (by far the most difficult part) will only be worked on needles 1 and 2)

Heel:

Here is a tutorial for the short row heel. Watch it before beginning your heel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xe6OIMna3zQ>

Row 1: needle 1 - knit, needle 2 - k5, 8, 11, 15, slip the last stitch, bring the yarn to front, slip the stitch back onto your left needle, bring the yarn to back (**This is called a wrapped stitch. Basically you are tying a noose around the little bugger's neck. It will be written as wr1 from here on out.**) ,turn. (remember that you are not working on needle 3 for this part of the sock.)

Row 2: needle 2 - **ignoring the wrapped stitch which should be on your working needle already** p11, needle 1 - p11, wr1, turn

Row 3: needle 1 - k11, needle 2 - k10, wr1, turn (**now you have 2 wrapped stitches on your working needle**)

Row 4: needle 2 - p10, needle 1, p10, wr1, turn (**now you have 2 wrapped stitches on both sides of your work**)

Row 5: needle 1 - k10, needle 2 - k9, wr1, turn

Repeat rows 4 and 5 continuing to decrease in this manner until you have 6, 10, 12, 14 remaining live stitches. End with an even numbered row. Begin second half of heel

Row 1: needle 1 - k, needle 2 - k to first wrapped stitch, knit the wrapped stitch, then wr1, turn

Row 2 : needle 2: p, needle 1 - p to first wrapped stitch, purl the wrapped stitch, then wr1, turn

Repeat rows 1 and 2 until you have eventually knit and purled all the wrapped stitches and you are back to the original number of live stitches on needles 1 and 2. Begin leg.

Leg:

You should end up at the end of needle 2. Because you've knit a lot of rows that didn't include needle 3, there is going to be a gap right there where your ankle bone is. We are going to fix that as we begin the leg. Using needle 3, pick up a stitch that is in the gap between needles 2 and 3. (choose the strongest looking spot)

Needle 3 - knit the picked up stitch together with the first stitch, p1, continue in the k1, p1 pattern.

Needle 1 - Pick up a stitch that is in the gap between needle 3 and needle 1. (choose the strongest looking spot) Knit the picked up stitch together with the first stitch, p1, *k1, p1 across the remaining stitches

Needles 2 and 3, k1, p1 ribbing across all stitches

Row 1 and all subsequent rows - k1, p1 ribbing across all stitches.

Repeat row 1 until leg is 4, 6, 8, 10 inches from top of heel.

Optional cuff: When 1, 2, 3, 4 inches remain, change to k2, p2 ribbing.

Other options: Knit the toe and heel in a contrasting color or add stripes to your socks.

You can also knit the cuff in a contrasting color.

Bind off. *****#!This is critical!!!#***** It is very important that you do not use a tight bind off for the top of your leg. This can be accomplished in a couple of ways.

#1 - bind off in pattern. Continue to knit or purl the next stitch accordingly but when you are binding off the p stitch, lift the stitch from behind to slip over the p stitch. This does not always give you a loose enough bind off.

#2 - use a needle 2 sizes larger to make your bind off.

#3 - hold 2 needles together to make your bind off. This will be loose enough but sometimes has a sloppy look to it.

I personally prefer the number 2 method of binding off ribbing because it keeps the edge looking like it's part of the knitting.