

Plain stockings:

Cast on 60 stitches.

Knit plain to the center of the calf muscle, about a handspan down from the knee.

(measuring one handspan)



Decrease 2 at center back every 6th round until there are 48 stitches.

Work plain to the top of the heel.

Work a heel flap on 29 stitches until it's as long as it is wide.

Fold in half and sew the heel seam.

Pick up stitches around the opening to make a complete round.

Decrease 1 at each side of the instep every other round until there are 48.

Work plain to ball of foot.

Decrease 2 at both sides every 3rd round 3 times, every 2nd round twice, then every round until 8 stitches remain. Pull yarn through and finish off.

Pre-literate stocking workshop

At left, you'll find a very brief set of instructions for knitting a plain stocking – perhaps such instructions as might be passed down to you in a pre-literate society. Below are more detailed instructions, for those of us who have *not* been knitting stockings since we were six years old.

These instructions produce a slightly longer than knee-length stocking like the diagram at left (to enlarge: 1 square = 1 inch). This fits an average-sized woman's foot and leg. If you are not average, you may need to experiment with fewer or more stitches, shorter or longer length. The instructions will often tell you to "stop and try on your sock," and you can do so either by trying the stocking on your own foot, or if the diagram is the right size for you, by flattening your knitted piece and laying it on top of the diagram.

What's important is that your stockings fit *you*. Don't be afraid to rip out a couple of inches and re-do them if necessary: once you get the right measurements, write them down, and you can use them to make as many socks as you like in the future.

Note that these stockings should extend an inch or two above the knee. They have no ribbing, so they are held up with tied garters, held by a turned-down cuff. These approximate a coarse period stocking for roughly the late 13th through the 17th century.

Have courage, and begin!

Materials:

500-550 grams wool yarn, ordinary worsted weight (10-12 wraps per inch)

A set of 4 or 5 double pointed needles, size 5, 6, or 7 – or whatever gets you a knitted gauge of 5½ stitches per inch.

Instructions for the leg

Beginning at the top of the leg, cast on **60 stitches** and join into a circle. Knit plain (i.e. every stitch is a knit stitch).

Knit around plain for about one inch. Stop and try your sock on to see whether this fits over the widest part of your calf comfortably. It should feel a little stretchy but not at all tight. If it's too tight, try the same thing but with 64 stitches, or experiment till you have the right number. If it's loose or baggy, try fewer stitches.

(If you are not pre-literate, doing a bit of math may help here: measure around the widest part of your calf, subtract one inch, and multiply by your stitch gauge to get an approximate number. Math can help with getting the right size for other parts of the sock, too. Don't forget to write down what you did so you can duplicate it later.)

Knit plain for a total of **9 inches**. (Putting a marker about every inch helps you track your progress, especially if you feel it's taking forever to get there.) Try the sock on: this should bring you to about the point where your calf starts to narrow. Adjust length if needed, mark the center back of your sock, and begin the decreases as follows:

Decrease round: Knit 2 together with the two stitches before your marker. **Knit 1.** With the next two stitches, work a **SKP decrease** (slip 1, knit 1, pass slipped stitch over, or whatever your favorite method is for this).

Knit 5 rounds plain.

Repeat this, decreasing on every 6th round, until you have **48 stitches**. Try the sock on and see if this fits your lower leg and ankle correctly.

If so, continue knitting plain until you reach the top of your heel. (To find the right spot, point your toe, and locate the crease at the back of your ankle.)

Re-arrange the stitches on your needles: take the **14 stitches** before the marker, the **marked stitch** itself, and the **14 stitches**

after your center back marker and put all these on one needle (**29 sts** in all). Take a blunt needle and thread and run it through all the remaining 19 stitches for the instep. Tie the thread ends together and remove the knitting needles from these 19 stitches so you can work the heel flap on the others.

Instructions for heel

Knit **back and forth** on the 29 stitches to make a flat piece (knit across, purl back). Work until the heel flap is as long as it is wide — about 35 rows. It's helpful, but not necessary, to **slip** the first stitch of each row and **purl** the last stitch (in both directions).

When it's long enough, slip half the stitches onto another needle and fold the flap in half vertically (wrong sides together) so the two needles are parallel. Weave or sew these two rows of stitches together for the seam on the bottom of the heel (it helps to start from the open end). The start of this seam is your new "center back" stitch, so mark it (it's actually the bottom of the foot, now).

Put the 19 instep stitches back on your needles and remove the thread holding them. Pick up stitches around the heel (about one new stitch for every two rows of the heel flap) to make a complete round. Mark the first and last instep stitches.

Knit **one round plain**. On the next round, starting at the center back marker, K until you are one stitch before the first instep marker and **K2 together**. Knit plain across the instep until you reach the second instep marker and **SKP** (Sl1, K1, pss0).

Repeat, decreasing every other round, until you are back at **48 stitches** total. Try it on to be sure this is the right diameter for your foot.

Knit plain for the foot until the sock reaches to the ball of your foot, then begin the toe decreases.

Instructions for toe:

Mark the 12th stitch before and the 12th stitch after the center back stitch. This is where you'll do the toe decreases.

Decrease round: Knit 2 together with the two stitches before your marker.

Knit 1. With the next two stitches, work a **SKP** decrease (slip 1, knit 1, pass slipped stitch over, or whatever your favorite method is for this).

Knit **2 rounds plain**. (44 sts)

Decrease as before, then knit **2 rounds plain**. (40 sts)

Decrease as before, then knit **2 rounds plain**. (36 sts)

Decrease as before, then knit **1 round plain**. (32 sts)

Decrease as before, then knit **1 round plain**. (28 sts)

Decrease **every round** for five rounds (24, 20, 16, 12 and 8 sts).

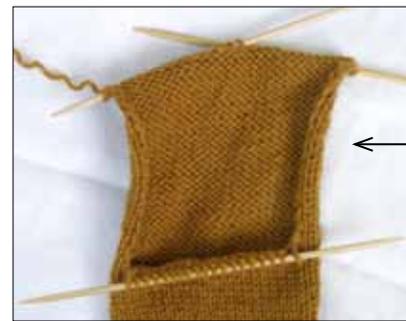
Cut the end of the yarn, leaving a foot or so, and thread it through these 8 stitches. Pull tight and fasten off.

Variations

Cuff and leg

A non-rolling top to the stocking, which can be documented to the 17th century, can be made by purling the 2nd, 4th, and 6th rounds at the beginning of the stocking.

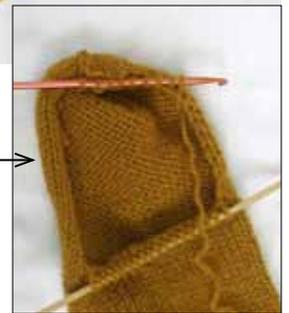
Some 17th- and later-century stockings have what looks like a "seam" down the back of the leg. To create this, mark the center back stitch and purl it on every other round. ♦



1. The heel flap is first knitted as a flat piece.



2. The heel flap is folded in half and the two sides knitted together.



3. The heel seam is complete; picking up stitches for the foot around the opening.

Pattern by Chris Laning
© 2008, 2010
<claning@igc.org>
<http://paternoster-row.org>

