

As the Heel Turns

© 2007 Jeanne Hoffman & Jeannine Sims
All rights reserved

Description: Learn with Jeannine Sims and Jeanne Hoffman how to handle the trickiest part a traditionally-knit sock - how to turn the heel.

Skill level: Intermediate. You must be comfortable knitting with double-pointed needles.

Supplies: Smooth, non-fuzzy Worsted weight yarn, and a set of bamboo or wood double-pointed needles in US size 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8 (3.5 mm up to 5.0 mm), ring marker, a small safety pin.

Homework: Cast on 40 sts, join in a circle being careful not to twist the sts, and knit at least 1" in stockinette stitch. Stop. Leave sts on needles.

The following was done in the Mini-Workshop

The Heel Flap is knitted flat (back and forth). Before we start knitting the heel flap, the stitches must be distributed properly on the needles. (If you are following a pattern, follow its directions to do this, but the proportions are as follows.) Knit $\frac{1}{2}$ of sts onto 1 dpn: 20 sts. Divide the remaining sts for the instep evenly on 2 dpns: 10 sts each on 2 dpns, but do not knit them. Work the heel flap back and forth in St st for desired length, which is about 20 rows for our sample, slipping the first st on each row as follows:

Elizabeth Zimmermann's braided edging for the heel flap. (This creates a narrow row of garter stitch along the edges of the heel flap, and makes counting rows easier later.)

WS: Sl 1 pw, K 2, P to last 3 sts, K 2, end P 1.

RS: Sl 1 kw, K to end of row.

Repeat these 2 rows 9 times more for a total of 20 rows. When you fold your heel flap diagonally, the stitches on the dpn should meet the edge of the heel flap. End with a purl row, ready to knit the next row/round.

We are going to do a version of what Nancy Bush calls the Round Heel.

Turn heel: RS (Row 1): Sl 1 pw, then knit halfway across row (9 sts). K 2 more (12 sts on RH ndl), k 2 tog, K 1. Stop and turn work, ready to begin a purl row.

WS (Row 2): Sl 1 pw, P 5, P 2 tog, P 1. Stop, turn work, ready to knit.

RS (Row 3): Sl 1 pw, K to 1 st before the gap created on Row 1 (6 sts), K 2 tog (1 st before gap and 1 after gap, which prevents a hole) K 1. Stop, turn work, ready to purl.

WS (Row 4): Sl 1 pw, P to 1 st before the gap (7 sts), P 2 tog, P 1. Stop, turn work, ready to knit.

RS (Row 5): Sl 1 pw, K 8, K 2 tog, K 2. Stop, turn work, ready to purl.

WS (Row 6): Sl 1 pw, P 10, P 2 tog, P 2.

14 heel stitches remain after the heel has been turned. You are now at the point in the pattern to begin picking up the gusset sts, beginning with a RS row.

If you were making a sock with more stitches, you would continue working rows 3 and 4 as established, working 1 more st on each row between the slipped st and the decrease until all of the sts would be worked.

If the number of sts on the heel flap is not divisible by 3:

-for 2 sts leftover on the last 2 rows, make one more circuit back and forth, ending the last 2 rows with a decrease.

-for 1 st leftover on the last 2 rows, do another K 1 at the end of the last RS row. Then on the following row, work one more P st before the P 2 tog, and another P 1 at the end of the last WS row. (This is what we did above for our workshop sample.)

When done, the number of sts remaining should be about 2/3 of the original number of sts for the heel flap.

Instep Gusset: Count the garter ridges along the heel flap edges: you should have 10 ridges.

1.) Slipping the first st pw, knit across the heel flap sts with one dpn.

2.) With another dpn, knit up 1 st for each slipped st along the edge of the flap plus 1 st in the gap between the heel flap and the instep. To knit up a stitch in the gap, insert your needle or crochet hook so that it twists the strand between 2 sts in the gap. This will prevent a hole. Usually, the number of sts knitted up is 2 more sts than the number of ridges in the braided edging of the heel flap: you should have 12 sts knitted up along heel flap.

3.) With a 3rd dpn, knit the 20 instep sts onto one needle.

4.) Using a 4th dpn, knit up the same number of sts (12) on the other edge of the heel flap. Then knit half of the heel sts onto the same needle.

Slide the remaining half of the heel sts from the beginning of this round onto needle #1. You are now back to having your work on 3 dpns. Rounds will now begin and end in the middle of the heel/bottom of the foot. (Place the small safety pin to mark which dpn is needle #1.) Stitches should be distributed as follows:

Needle #1: 19 sts Needle #2: 20 sts Needle #3: 19 sts

Knit one round even.

Gusset Decreases:

Round 1: Needle #1 - K to last 3 sts, then K 2 tog, K1

 Needle #2 - K across

 Needle #3 - K 1, SSK, K across.

Round 2: K around.

Repeat these two rounds until the total number of sts is down to the original number cast on, which was 40 sts, distributed as follows:

Needle #1: 10 sts

Needle #2: 20 sts

Needle #3: 10 sts

Bind off your sample.

Abbreviations:

dpn(s) = double-pointed needle(s)

k = knit

k 2 tog = knit 2 stitches together (a right-leaning decrease)

kw = knitwise, or as if to knit

LH = left hand

ndl = needle

p = purl

P 2 tog = purl 2 stitches together (a right-leaning decrease)

pw = purlwise, or as if to purl

RH = right hand

RS = right side, or public side

sl = slip a stitch

ssk = slip, slip, knit (a left-leaning decrease). Sl 1 kw, slip another kw, put LH ndl through front of the 2 sts, and k the 2 sts together through the backs of them.

st(s) = stitch(es)

St st = stockinette stitch

WS = wrong side, or private side

You may contact Jeanne Hoffman at jhoffman@rpa.net or Jeannine Sims at jeanninesims_1999@yahoo.com.