How to Knit Two Socks on Two Circular Needles

By Sarah E. White | Updated 06/27/19

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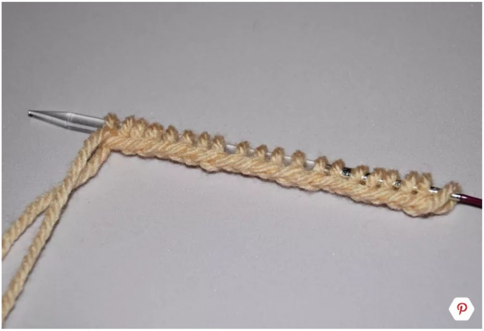
01 of 12

Casting On the First Sock



Casting on for the first sock. Sarah E. White

Knitting two socks on two circular needles at the same time is a bit of knitterly magic that, like so many other things in knitting, seems a lot more complicated than it is. The first time you knit two socks at the same time you're likely to be confused some of the time, but trust that everything will work out and soon you may be wondering why you ever knit socks one at a time.

This tutorial is designed to make that learning curve a little easier because you're not knitting socks for any particular foot (though these probably would fit a toddler); they're just for practice. And the larger weight yarn makes it easier to see what you're doing and understand what's going on than working on a smaller scale might allow.

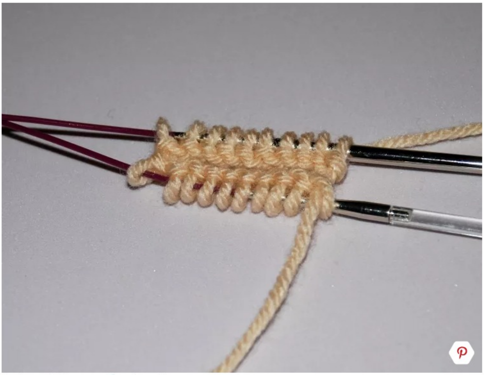
To get started, you'll need two circular knitting needles of the same size. They can be the same length or different lengths if that makes it easier for you to tell which needle you're working with. It's helpful to use two needles that aren't exactly the same so you can always tell which two ends you're supposed to be working with.

These instructions will help you get through any socks two at a time, but if you want to follow along you'll need about 40 yards of medium weight yarn and two needles in the US 7 to 9 range (that's 4.5 to 5.5 mm). You'll also probably want at least one stitch marker or a safety pin, a yarn needle or crochet hook and scissors for finishing.

Start with your yarn wound into two balls; each sock will be worked with a different ball of yarn. Pick a needle and cast on for the first sock. If you're following along, that would be 20 stitches.

02 Joining in the Round

of 12



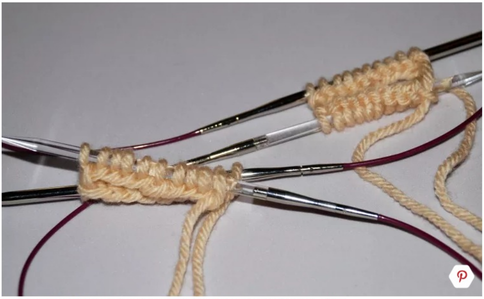
The first sock fully cast on. Sarah E. White

Take your second needle and slip half of the stitches from the first cast on sock onto this needle (that's 10 on each needle for the sample socks).

Move the stitches from the ends of the needles they're currently on to the other end. Remember if your needles aren't the same length to be careful not to slide the stitches off the shorter needle!

Now you need to join your stitches into a round so that you can knit them as a tube. The easiest way to do this for two at a time socks is to thread the yarn tail from the cast on onto a yarn needle (or use a crochet hook) and thread the yarn through the first stitch on the opposite side from where the tail is. The first sock is cast on and ready to knit.

03 Casting On the Second Sock



The two socks have been cast on and joined in the round, ready to knit. Sarah E. White

Now that the first sock is ready to go, slide these stitches back onto the cables of the needles so they're out of the way and not in danger of falling off while you cast on the second sock.

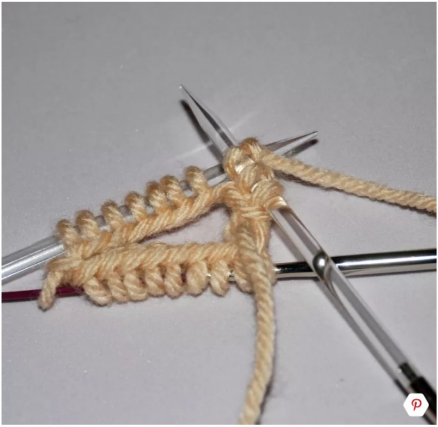
With your second ball of yarn and the same needle end you used to cast on the first sock, cast on again (20 stitches for the sample sock, or whatever your pattern calls for). Again put half the stitches on the second needle and join in the round as before.

There are now two socks on two needles, with half of the stitches for each sock on each one of the needles.

If desired, place markers to indicate the end of the rounds (this isn't as crucial if you're using needles that don't match). At the very least you'll probably want something to mark which sock is the first sock so you'll know where you are in the process at any given time.

04
of 12

Knitting the First Part of the First Sock



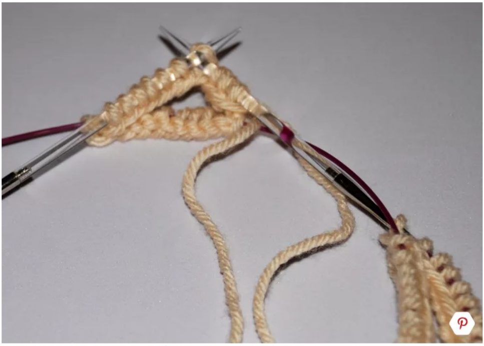
Knitting the first half of the first round on the first sock. Sarah E. White

The first confusing thing you have to conquer when knitting two socks at a time of two circular needles is the fact that you don't knit all of sock one and then all of sock two. Instead, you knit the first half of sock one, then the first half of sock two (these stitches are on the same needle). Then you knit the second half of sock two and the second half of sock one from the other needle.

So, to get started, situate the needles so that you can knit the stitches from the first half of the first sock you cast on. Remember you are always keeping the stitches on the same needle they started on, so if your needles don't match, you're always knitting stitches onto the needle that looks the same as the needle you're knitting from.

For the purposes of this sample sock tutorial, the sample was knit across all stitches, but if this were an actual sock, you'd probably work ribbing here.

Starting the Second Sock



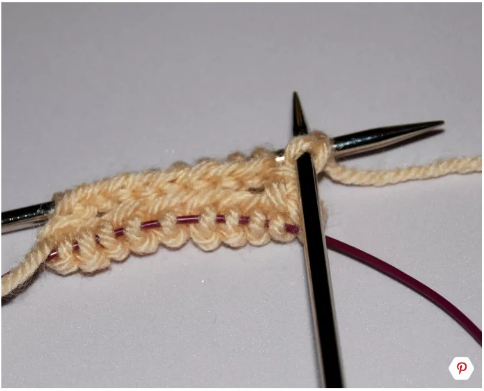
Knitting the first half of the second sock. Sarah E. White

Once the first half of the first sock is done, you'll need to move the needles and the stitches around so that you can knit the first half of the second sock. Slide the first sock down onto the cables so it's not in the way as you do this.

Remember again that you're working with two ends of the same needle, and make sure you change to the ball of yarn that's attached to the second sock, rather than the one you were using on the first sock.

In fact, if you're just practicing along, you might even want to knit the two socks in two different colors to reiterate the fact that you have to switch working balls of yarn when you change which sock you're knitting.

Finishing the First Round of the Second Sock

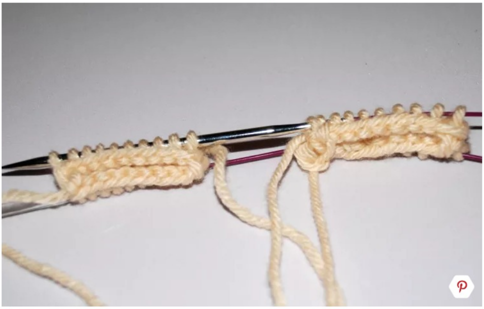


Knitting the second half of the second sock, round one. Sarah E. White

You've now worked the first half of both socks, so it's time to work the second half, this time starting with the second sock. Flip the work over so that you have access to the second needle.

Adjust the needles as necessary to knit the stitches of the second sock, again working onto the same needle that you're working from.

Finishing the First Round and Continuing to Knit



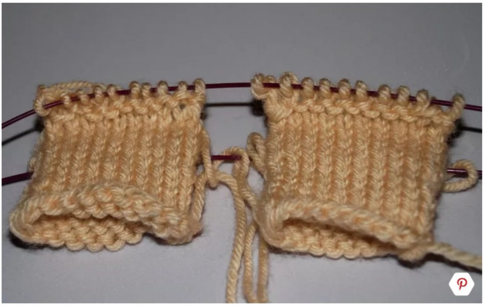
(c) Sarah E. White

To finish the first round of knitting, slide the second sock onto the cables of the needles so it is out of the way, then adjust the second needle so you can knit the second half of the first sock.

You've now finished one round of knitting on two socks at once!

Continue in exactly the same manner through the ribbing and leg portion of your pattern, or, if you're following along the practice sock, knit until you're nice and comfortable with the procedure (mine are about 2 inches long).

Knitting the Heel Flaps



Working the heel flaps on two at a time socks. Sarah E. White

Once your sock legs are the desired length, it's time to work the heel. In the case of these sample socks, a heel flap is incorporated.

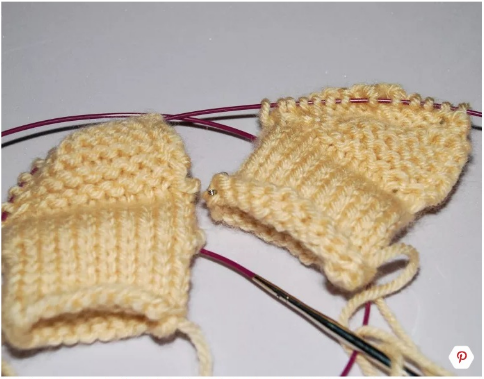
To knit it, work back and forth on just the first half of the stitches of each sock. This means you'll be working back and forth just on that one needle, while the other stitches hang out on their own needle.

As before you will work the stitches of the first sock, then those of the second. Turn the work and again you're knitting the stitches of the second sock, then the first.

For the purposes of this demonstration, because this isn't really a sock that's meant to be worn, the heel is worked in Garter Stitch. To knit it my way, slip the first stitch as if to purl on each row, then knit across. Repeat this row until 10 rows have been worked. End on a right side row.

09
of 12

Turning the Heels and Picking Up Stitches



The heels have been turned and half of the heel flap stitches have been picked up. Sarah E. White

To turn a heel, you have to work short rows, meaning that you aren't working across all the stitches in a single sock's heel on every row. That means when you're working socks two at a time, you have to complete one heel turn before you can start the other.

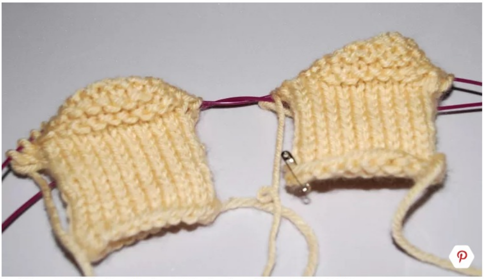
If you're following a pattern, it will give you the math for the heel turn, but if you're working the sample socks, the heel is turned as follows:

- **Row 1:** Slip 1, knit 5, knit 2 together, knit 1. Turn.
- **Row 2:** Slip 1, knit 3, slip, slip, knit, knit 1. Turn.
- **Row 3:** Slip 1, knit 4, k2tog. Turn.
- **Row 4:** Slip 1, knit 4, ssk.

Once the heel has been worked, pick up and knit stitches along the left-hand side of the first sock's heel flap.

Adjust the needles as necessary to do the same thing on the second sock. Leave the second half of the heel flap without having picked up the stitches for now.

Picking up the Remaining Stitches



The fully completed heels after all the gusset stitches have been picked up. Sarah E. White

In order to get the yarn in position for picking up the remaining stitches along the other sides of the heel flaps, it's time to revisit that other needle. Knit across the top of foot stitches for each sock as established.

Using the needle that's holding the rest of the heel turn and gusset stitches, pick up stitches along the heel flap with the left-hand needle from the bottom up, then knit them onto the right-hand needle and work across the rest of the heel and gusset stitches.

Repeat for the second sock.

Traditionally the center back of the heel is considered the beginning of the round once the heel turn has been worked, but in my mind, it's the end of this needle. Think about it however makes sense for you.

11 Working the Gusset and Foot

Shaping the toes on two socks knit on two circular needles at the same time.

Shaping the toes on two socks knit on two circular needles at the same time. Sarah E. White

Now the gusset stitches must be decreased until you are down to the original number of stitches that were cast on. If you're following a pattern it will tell you exactly how to go about doing this. Remember that the stitches that are decreased are all on that first needle; the stitches that weren't part of the heel remain the same.

If you had been working a pattern stitch on the leg of your sock that continued on the foot, you would continue to work it only on the stitches on the second needle.

For the demonstration socks, knit one stitch on the first needle, the knit 2 together. Work to 3 stitches from the end of the first part of the sock, work an ssk and knit 1. Work the second sock in the same manner and simply knit across the stitches of the second needle.

On the next round, knit all stitches without decreasing. Repeat these two rounds until there are 20 stitches remaining in each sock.

Knit without decreasing in rounds as established as long as you like or as your pattern specifies. My sample socks have about an inch of knitting between the end of the gusset decreases and the beginning of the toe shaping.

Shape the toes as your pattern specifies. For this pattern, on the first half of the sock, knit 1, k2tog, knit to 3 stitches from end, ssk, knit 1. Repeat on the second half.

Knit the next round without decreasing. Repeat these two rounds until 12 stitches remain.

Continue to 12 of 12 below.

12
of 12

Finishing the Socks

Two finished socks knit at the same time on two circular needles.

Two finished socks knit at the same time on two circular needles. Sarah E. White

If you were knitting socks that were meant to be worn by a person, you would probably want to graft the toes closed, one at a time, in the same way, that you would if you were knitting a single sock at a time.

For the demonstration socks, we simply cut the working yarn, threaded it onto a yarn needle and slipped the remaining stitches off onto the yarn.

Pull tight and you've just finished two socks at once!

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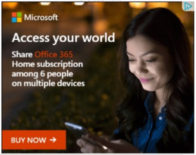

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