



Lucy Neatby

Mermaid Socks

Show off a beautiful self-striping yarn and play with unusual construction techniques

THESE DRAMATIC SOCKS, designed by Lucy Neatby, are a work of art that will help any bright self-striping sock yarn to really shine. The socks also use a number of construction techniques and stitch patterns that many knitters may not have tried before, so they should make for a very interesting project.

The garter stitch cuff is knitted sideways, allowing it to be fitted exactly to the wearer's ankle. The cuff is cast on and off using waste yarn. The ends of the cuff are then simply grafted together, following the path of the waste yarn where it meets the main yarn.

The body of the sock features an Estonian Fishtail stitch pattern, which was discovered by Nancy Bush and appears in her book, *Folk Knitting in Estonia* (Interweave Press). When combined with a yarn that has strong colour contrasts and abrupt colour changes, it produces a wonderful effect.

Added interest is provided by the spiral toe design; it's softly shaped and retains the pattern appearance until the last moment. The heel is constructed using garter stitch short rows; this technique and the sideways cuff could be easily incorporated into your own sock designs. ▶

•• THE ESTONIAN FISHTAIL STITCH PATTERN, WHEN COMBINED WITH A YARN THAT HAS STRONG COLOUR CONTRASTS, PRODUCES A WONDERFUL EFFECT ••



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SIDEWAYS GARTER STITCH CUFF

The sideways sock top itself acts as a gauge swatch and thus the number of rows in the length of the cuff determines the number of sts needed for your sock. *The height of one garter stitch ridge, formed by two knit rows, is equal to the width of one stitch of stocking stitch when worked with the same yarn and needles.*

For the sideways cuff, use of the waste yarn cast-on and cast-off, coupled with precise grafting, will give a seamless cuff. If you prefer, the option for conventional cast-on/off is given below.

WASTE YARN CAST-ON FOR GRAFTED CUFF

Onto **smaller** needles, with a contrasting colour, similar-weight waste yarn, cast on 15 sts. Work 6 rows of st st beginning with a K row. Cut off waste yarn and temporarily knot on Main yarn.

Row 1 (RS): In Main yarn, K15.

Row 2 (WS): In Main yarn, K14, P1.

Repeat these 2 rows until the cuff fits around the future wearer's ankle or is the same length as the ankle circumference, measured above the ankle joint.

WASTE YARN CAST-OFF FOR GRAFTED CUFF

End with Row 1. Leaving sufficient yarn to later graft the last row, cut off the Main yarn.

Tie on a new length of waste yarn with a temporary knot.

YARN

Any sock-weight yarn (4ply), approximately 320–414m (350–464 yards). For maximum effect, use a self-striping yarn with strong contrasts and abrupt colour changes (avoid speckled yarns).

We used Regia Kaffe Fassett Design Line 4ply (75% new wool, 25% nylon, 50g/210m) in shade Exotic Easter (4450): 2 x 50g balls. You'll need a small quantity of 4ply waste yarn in a contrasting colour.

NEEDLES AND ACCESSORIES

Two sets of 5 double-pointed needles (DPNs). For Sideways Garter Stitch Cuff and Heel, choose the smallest size you can comfortably use – perhaps 2–2.75mm (size 14–12/US 0–2). Choose a set one or two sizes larger for the Fishtail (diagonal) section

of the sock – perhaps 2.25–3mm (size 13–11/US 1–3).

Stitch markers
Fine blunt needle

SWATCHING

There is no need to swatch for the Sideways Garter Stitch Cuff. The number of stitches required for your size of sock will be determined by the number of rows in the cuff. The cuff is worked (using the smaller needle size) until it will fit the ankle measurement of the future wearer. Use as small a size of needle as you can to produce a firmer fabric.

ABBREVIATIONS

yo Yarn over **s** slip

Work Row 2 **in pattern** in waste yarn. In waste yarn work a further 5 rows in st st (beginning with a K row).

Cast off the waste yarn or slip the live sts onto a thread.

GRAFTING THE CUFF

Untie the temporary knots, thread a fine blunt needle onto the length of Main yarn and fold the cuff into a circle, with RS outermost.

Tuck the waste yarn flaps inside and hold them together so that you can see the sts to be grafted. Using the tail of the Main yarn, graft the Main yarn sts together by exactly following the path of the waste yarn as it intersects with the Main yarn on either side (see page 56 for photograph). When you are happy with the graft, remove both waste yarn flaps. Leave the tails of the Main yarn to be neatened later. See Knit-Up Round below.

CONVENTIONAL CAST-ON/OFF METHOD

Onto a **smaller** needle, with Main yarn, cast on 15 sts. Work from Row 1 as given above, cast off after final Row 2. Seam the cast-on and cast-off edges to the inside of the work, leaving the tails to neaten later.

KNIT-UP ROUND

Beginning at the centre back of the cuff, near to the seam line, or approximately 1cm (1/2in) to the left of the graft position, with Main yarn and one st from the lower edge of the cuff, knit up 1 st per garter

ridge (2 rows) onto a set of DPNs. Divide the sts as equally as you can between the needles, preferably with a multiple of 6 sts on each needle.

Count your sts. The number of sts will usually vary between 52–90, according to the size of the ankle. Place the end-of-round marker.

Over the next few rounds, the number of stitches will need to be modified to the nearest multiple of 6 sts. 54 (60:66:72:78:84:90) sts.

If you need to add or subtract sts, a † symbol is shown to indicate inconspicuous positions to modify your stitch count.

There are three such positions indicated; if you need to gain or lose only one st, then pick the middle † position and ignore the other two.

Although numbers of K and P rounds have been suggested, you may choose to let the colour changes in the yarn dictate the number of rounds you use or the position at which you change from K to P (or vice versa). To achieve a distinctly coloured reverse st st band, change to purl one round after the colour changes.

Rounds 1–4: P.

Round 5: K. †

Rounds 6–7: K.

Round 8: K. †

Rounds 9–12: P.

Round 13: K. †

Rounds 14–15: K.

Work as given for Fishtail Pattern Leg from this point.

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The toe shaping retains the diagonal pattern to the last possible minute



FISHTAIL PATTERN LEG

With a multiple of 6 sts (54 [60:66:72:78:84:90]) and a set of DPNs one or two sizes larger than used for the sideways cuff, work every round: K2, yo, K2, K2tog. Repeat.

If you place a beginning/end running yarn marker, it will gradually spiral around the sock, so don't use it as a reference for placing the heel or toe.

Continue in Fishtail pattern as set until the leg length of the sock (above the heel) is sufficient.

POSITIONING THE HEEL

By eye, determine the approximate centre back position of your sock; choose and mark with a coil-less pin the middle st of one of the three side-by-side knit sts that form the right-sloping ridges. It should be the st to the left of the K2tog.

Work in pattern until 17 (18:18:22:23:24:28) sts remain *before* the marked st. The next 35 (37:39:45:47:51:57) sts will become the Heel sts. The remaining 19 (23:27:27:31:33:33) sts will form the Instep sts.

GARTER STITCH SHORT-ROW HEEL

Use **smaller** size DPNs throughout the heel.

Use a **new piece of yarn** for the heel, even if you do not wish the heel to contrast.

Do not cut off the Main working yarn.

If you have only one ball of yarn, use the opposite end to the one you are working from for the duration of the heel. The new yarn will give the neatest possible heel corners.

Link the tail of the new yarn around the former working yarn. Then, as you knit the first sts of the heel, the tail of the Heel yarn may be woven in at the back of the work to simultaneously prevent a future gap and neaten the tail.

With the **new piece of Heel yarn**, knit the first half of the Heel sts (17 [18:19:22:23:25:28] sts) onto an empty DPN, and the following 17 (18:19:22:23:25:28) sts onto another DPN, s1, bring the yarn between

Stitches are picked up from the bottom of the garter stitch cuff, making the sock seamless



the needles, return the slipped st to the adjacent needle (next to the Instep sts). This st has a 'wrap' of the Heel yarn around its base, but remains in the Main colour.

Divide the remaining 19 (23:27:27:31:33:33) Instep sts onto two DPNs.

Turn the work around, WS facing. With an empty smaller size DPN (use a second DPN for the last half of the Heel sts), (K33 [35:37:43:45:49:55]), s1, bring the yarn between the needles, return the slipped st to the adjacent needle holding the Instep sts.

Subsequent RS and WS rows

Turn the work RS facing, K until one heel st remains unworked on left-hand needle (K32 [34:36:42:44:48:54]), slip, wrap and replace.

At this point the wrapped and replaced sts should ideally be slipped onto spare smaller needles rather than the larger Instep needles. Add the first and last previously wrapped sts to these needles. Be careful that the needle with the two sts doesn't fall out; it will become firmer as more sts are added.

Turn the work WS facing, K until one heel st remains unworked on left-hand needle (K31 [33:35:41:43:47:53]), slip, wrap and replace.

As an aid to keeping on track, there should always be the same number of 'wrapped' sts on either side of the heel on completion of each WS row. Remember that the first 'wrapped' st on the left-hand side is in the Main colour.

Repeat these two rows, ending with a WS row, approximately (K7 [7:7:7:9:9:9], slip, wrap and replace) or until the heel is deep enough for your foot. There should be an equal number of 'wrapped' sts on either side of the central 7 or 9 sts.

Suggested stitch distribution

Initially, when working the heel sts on two DPNs: On both RS and WS rows, K two extra sts onto the old needle before introducing the empty DPN. This staggers the junction of the work and helps to prevent distortion down the centre-line of the heel.

When the number of working heel sts is sufficiently reduced, work them onto a single DPN, and use the spare needle to hold the middle section of the Instep sts. This greatly increases working comfort.

HEEL INCREASE SECTION

RS Facing: K an equal number of sts as are in the previous row (K7 [7:7:7:9:9:9]), K 1 previously 'wrapped' st from the next needle. *Work this st as usual, leaving the 'wrap' around the base of the st (don't K into the wrap)*, slip the next heel st from the Instep needle to the right-hand needle, bring the yarn between the needles (making a wrap) and return it to the Instep needle. Turn.

WS Facing: K across all the sts on the heel needles (K8 [8:8:8:10:10:10]), K 1 previously 'wrapped' st from the next needle – work the stitch as usual, slip, wrap and replace. Turn.

RS Facing: K across all the sts on the heel needles (K9 [9:9:9:11:11:11]), K 1

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In detail Grafting the cuff

The waste yarn flaps are tucked inside and held together while grafting takes place. The tail of the main yarn is used to graft the two ends of the cuff together. Use the main yarn to trace the path of the waste yarn as it intersects with the main yarn, at the beginning and end of the cuff. Alternatively, you could use the conventional cast-on/off method detailed previously.



previously 'wrapped' st from the next needle - work the stitch as usual, slip, wrap and replace. Turn.

Repeat these two rows, increasing by one the number of sts worked on each successive row, until the last heel st has received its second wrap. End with a WS row (K32 (34:36:42:44:48:54] plus 1 previously 'wrapped' st), wrap the heel yarn around the first heel st, but do not return the wrapped st to the left-hand needle. Turn. Cut off the heel yarn, leaving a tail.

Resuming with the Main working yarn and **larger** DPNs, tighten up any slack that has crept into the last st worked in the Main yarn, and K across to the last Heel sts. *The tail of the Heel yarn may be woven in as you work across the first half of the heel sts.*

Once all of the heel sts have been knit (including the final one which was only wrapped), resume the pattern. The first repeat will be: K2 (1:5:3:2:5:3), yo, K2, K2tog, followed by the regular (K2, yo, K2, K2tog) for all sizes. Work in patt until sock is approx 4 (4:4: 4½:4½:5:5) cm (1½ [1½:1½:1¾:1¾:2:2] in) short of the desired foot length.

SPIRAL TOE

This is a softly shaped toe which retains the pattern appearance to the last moment.

Stay alert with the pattern (check off the rounds and use a marker), as it can become confusing.

Near the side of the sock, place a beginning-of-round marker after the completion of a full repeat.

Round 1: (K2, yo, K2, K2tog, K4, K2tog) 4 (5:5:6:6:7:7) times, end (K2, yo, K2, K2tog) 1 (0:1:0:1:0:1) times. 50 (55:61:66:72:77:83) sts.

Round 2: (K2, yo, K2, K2tog, K2, yo, K1, K2tog) 4 (5:5:6:6:7:7) times, end (K2, yo, K2, K2tog) 1 (0:1:0:1:0:1) times. 50 (55:61:66:72:77:83) sts.

Repeat Round 2: 1 (1:2:2:2:3:3) times more. Round 3: (K4, K2tog, K2, yo, K1, K2tog) 4 (5:5:6:6:7:7) times, end (K4, K2tog) 1 (0:1:0:1:0:1) times. 45 (50:55:60:65:70:75) sts.

Round 4: (K2, yo, K1, K2tog) 9 (10:11:12:13:14:15) times. 45 (50:55:60:65:70:75) sts.

Repeat Round 4: 1 (1:2:2:2:3:3) times.

Round 5: (K2, yo, K1, K2tog, K3, K2tog) 4 (5:5:6:6:7:7) times, end (K2, yo, K1, K2tog) 1 (0:1:0:1:0:1) times. 41 (45:50:54:59:63:68) sts.

Round 6: (K2, yo, K1, K2tog, K2, yo, K2tog) 4 (5:5:6:6:7:7) times, end (K2, yo, K1, K2tog) 1 (0:1:0:1:0:1) times. 41 (45:50:54:59:63:68) sts.

Repeat Round 6: 0 (0:1:1:1:2:2) times more.

Round 7: (K3, K2tog, K2, yo, K2tog) 4 (5:5:6:6:7:7) times, end (K3, K2tog) 1 (0:1:0:1:0:1) times. 36 (40:44:48:52:56:60) sts.

Round 8: (K2, yo, K2tog) 9 (10:11:12:13:14:15) times. 36 (40:44:48:52:56:60) sts.

Repeat Round 8: 0 (0:1:1:1:2:2) times more. Round 9: (K2tog, yo, K2tog) 9 (10:11:12:13:14:15) times. 27 (30:33:36:39:42:45) sts.

Round 10: (K1, yo, K2tog) 9 (10:11:12:13:14:15) times. 27 (30:33:36:39:42:45) sts.

15) times. 27 (30:33:36:39:42:45) sts.

Repeat Round 10: 0 (0:1:1:1:1:1) times more.

Round 11: (K1, K2tog) 9 (10:11:12:13:14:15) times. 18 (20:22:24:26:28:30) sts.

Round 12: K.

Round 13: K2tog 9 (10:11:12:13:14:15) times. 9 (10:11:12:13:14:15) sts.

Round 14: K.

Round 15: *Very small DPNs may be used for this round, if available.*

K2tog 4 (5:5:6:6:7:7) times, end K1 1 (0:1:0:1:0:1) times. 5 (5:6:6:7:8) sts.

Cut off the Main yarn leaving a 15cm (6in) tail. Using a fine blunt needle, thread the tail through all of the remaining sts, beginning with the first st. Tighten the loop and gather the sts before threading the yarn through the sts once more.

FINISHING

Reinforce the sts on either side of the heel and darn in all the ends. ☺