



Tiptop toes

By Wendy D. Johnson
Photos by Ian M. Ories

editor's note: There are many photos in this article, and they're quite large. Being able to see Wendy's work up close is essential, so if you have a slow modem, please grab a coffee and let this page load. It's worth it. Oh, and once you're done the toes, you can find Wendy's fabulous toe-up sock pattern [here](#). It's the only one I use.

I love toe-up socks. I love the idea that once I finish a sock and bind it off, all that remains is to weave in a couple of ends. I love being able to easily try on socks as I knit so I can custom fit them to the foot as I go along.

Here are three different ways to start a toe-up sock. I've used all three of them and like them all. I didn't invent any of these methods; I'm just demonstrating how I make them. I encourage you to try all three. If you're like me, one of the methods will make a toe you really like and/or will be easier for you to master.

For the purpose of this demonstration, I am making toes for a sock that is 48 stitches around, but you can easily adapt the instructions to any number divisible by four. You'll need a set of 5 double-pointed needles [dpns] in a size appropriate for your gauge and sock yarn. For the Short Row Toe and the Easy Toe, you'll also need some waste yarn similar in weight to your sock yarn and a crochet hook in a size appropriate for the waste yarn.



Short Row Toe

The first toe is the short row toe. If you already know how to make a short row heel, you know how to make this toe. Here's how I do it:
Start with half of the total sock stitches, in this case, 24.

Using waste yarn, crochet a chain that is several chain stitches longer than the number of knit stitches you need [I made my chain 30 stitches long]. Cast off the last stitch and cut the yarn. Tie a knot in this tail of yarn — you are going to "unzip" this provisional cast on later by undoing and pulling on this end, so the knot will make the right end easier to find.



Look at your chain. One side of it will be smooth and look like a row of little "vees." The other side will have a bump in the center of each vee. Using your sock yarn and 2 dpns, knit 1 stitch into the bump in the center of each little vee on the back side of the chain until you have 24 stitches. [See left.]

Purl back across the stitches. You are ready to start the short rows.

Row 1: Knit 23 stitches. Move the working yarn as if to purl and slip the last stitch from the left needle to the right needle. Turn your work.



Row 2: Slip the first, unworked, stitch from the left needle to the right needle. [See right.] Purl the next stitch [you will have wrapped that first stitch around its base with the working yarn] and purl across the next 21 stitches. Move the working yarn as if to knit and slip last stitch. Turn.

Row 3: Slip the first stitch and knit across to the last stitch before the unworked stitch. Wrap and turn.

Row 4: Slip the first stitch and purl across to the stitch before the unworked stitch. Wrap and turn.



Repeat Rows 3 and 4 until 8 of the toe stitches are wrapped and on left side, 8 stitches are "live" in the middle, and 8 are wrapped and on the right. [The photo at left shows 6 stitches wrapped on the right needle.] At this stage, you should be ready to work a right side row. Your toe is half done.

Note: How many stitches you leave unworked in the middle depends on how wide you want your sock toe to be. If you want it a bit wider, do a couple fewer short rows. If you want it a bit narrower, do a couple more short rows.

Now work the second half of the toe:

Row 1: Knit across the live stitches across to the first unworked, wrapped stitch. On the next stitch, pick up the wrap and knit it together with the wrapped stitch. *Note: the wrap sits almost horizontal around the vertical stitch. Put your needle through the horizontal wrap, then the vertical stitch, and then knit the two together:*



Wrap the next stitch [so that it now has two wraps] and turn.

Row 2: Slip the first [double-wrapped] stitch and purl across to the first unworked, wrapped stitch. Pick up the wrap and purl it together with the wrapped stitch. Wrap the next stitch and turn.

On subsequent rows you will pick up both wraps and knit or purl them together with the stitch:



Continue until you have worked all the stitches and you once again have 24 "live" stitches:



Divide the 24 stitches over 2 dpns.

Undo the cast-off end of your crocheted chain. Stick the point of the third dpn in the stitch below the chain. Unzip the chain [like opening a bag of sugar], one stitch at a time, as you stick the tip of the needle in each stitch, moving each stitch onto the needle:



Divide these 24 stitches over the third and fourth dpns:



On your first round after toe shaping, you may want to pick up an extra stitch or two between the "live" stitches and the stitches you've picked up from the cast-on, to close up any holes there might be there. On the next round, remember to decrease back down to 12 stitches per needle.

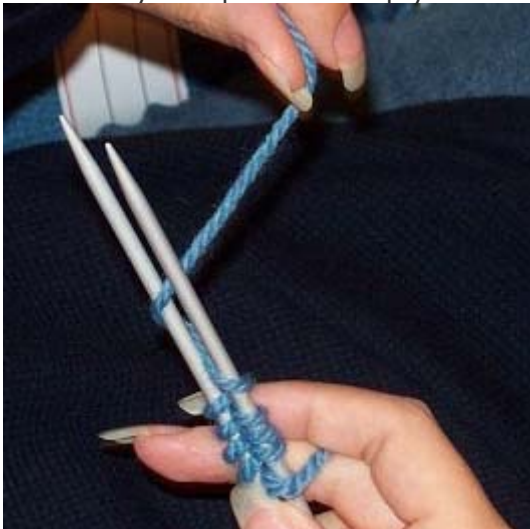
Your toe is complete! Continue on with the sock.

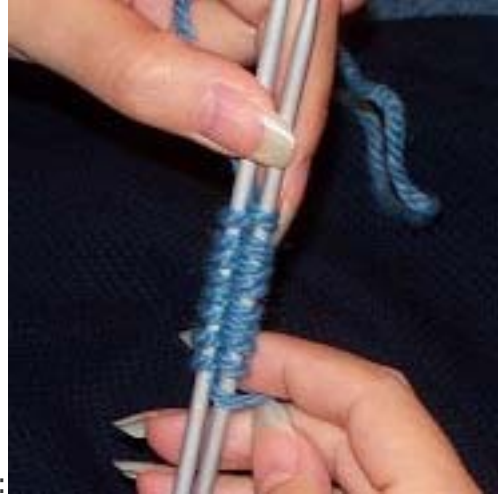


Figure-Eight Toe

This toe can be very tricky at the start, but with a little practice, you can easily master it. You don't need a provisional cast-on or waste yarn. You just start with your sock yarn and go!

Take 2 of your dpns and wrap your sock yarn around them in a figure-eight:





You want to have 8 loops on each needle, like this:

Using the third dpn, knit the 8 stitches on the top needle:



Using the fourth dpn, knit the stitches on the bottom needle.

On either the top or the bottom dpn, the stitches will be twisted the wrong way, so remember to knit into the backs of the loops when you encounter the twisted stitches. Repeat the last 2 rows, so that you have completed 4 rows. You will have a needle at the top of your work with 8 stitches on it and a needle at the bottom of your work with 8 stitches on it:



The stitches in the middle of your work may be loose, but you can tighten them up a little by working the excess yarn towards one side after you have completed a couple of rounds. Begin knitting circularly.

Round 1: Make 1 stitch at the beginning of the round, knit 4. These stitches will go on Needle 4. Mark the next stitch as the beginning of your round. Using another dpn, knit 4, make 1. This is Needle 1. Use the third dpn to make 1, knit 4, [Needle 2] then use a fourth dpn to knit 4, make 1 [Needle 3]. Knit the 5 stitches on Needle 4.



You now have 4 dpns with 5 stitches on each needle. Begin working in stockinette increasing as follows:
Round 1: Knit

Round 2:

Needle 1: Knit until the last stitch, M1, K1

Needle 2: Knit 1, M1, knit to the end

Needle 3: Knit until the last stitch, M1, K1

Needle 4: Knit 1, M1, knit to the end



Repeat these 2 rounds until you have 12 stitches on each needle [48 stitches total].
The toe is done!



Easy Toe

The construction of the Easy Toe is very similar to the Figure-Eight Toe, but as the name suggests, it's much easier. Using waste yarn, crochet a chain that is several chain stitches longer than the number of knit stitches you need. I made my chain 12 stitches long. Cast off the last stitch and cut the yarn. Tie a knot in this tail of yarn — you are going to "unzip" this provisional cast on later by undoing and pulling on this end, so the knot will make the right end easier to find.

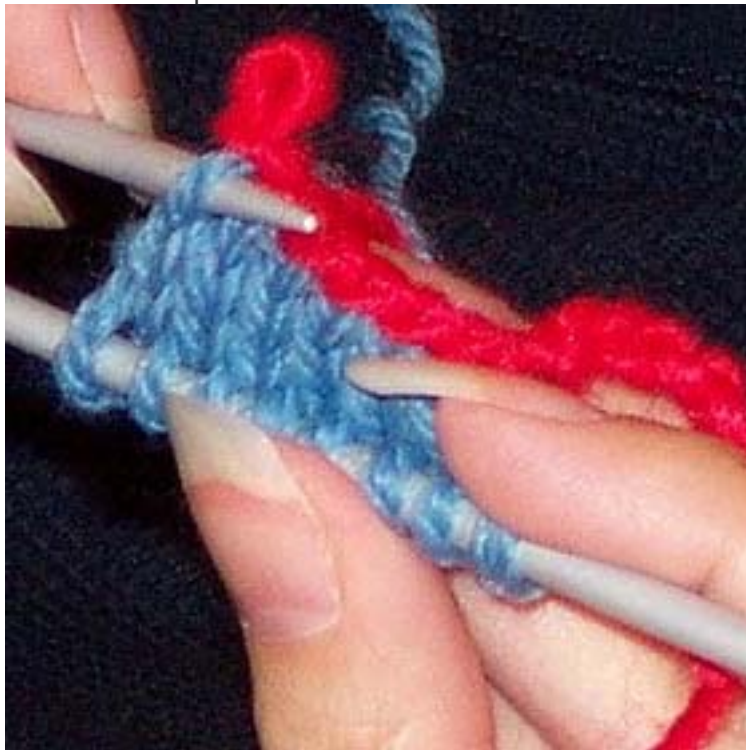
Look at your chain. One side of it will be smooth and look like a row of little "vees." The other side will have a bump in the center of each vee. Using your sock yarn and 2 dpns, knit

1 stitch into the bump in the center of each little vee on the back side of the chain until you

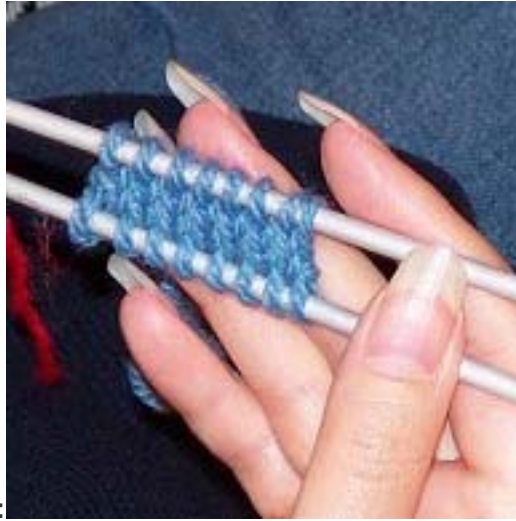


have 8 stitches:

Work in stockinette stitch for 4 rows. Unzip your provisional cast on stitches and place them on a second dpn:



You will have a needle at the top of your work with 8 stitches on it and a needle at the



bottom of your work with 8 stitches on it:

Begin knitting circularly. Complete the toe in the same manner as the [Figure-Eight Toe](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Commuters who use the subway system in the Washington DC metropolitan area are used to the sight of Wendy working on her latest sock-in-progress while waiting for and riding the train.

She has not yet stabbed a fellow commuter with her 2mm dpns, but she hasn't succumbed to any of their requests for hand-knitted socks, either.

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