Lifestyle Toe Up Socks – No Swatch Needed
Your Tour Guide, Charisa Martin Cairn
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Wherein I provide you with a guided tour to taking your knitting into your own hands and knitting socks that always fit.

Not a pattern, but a lifestyle
This is not a pattern for a single pair of socks, but a method - and you can use it for all your sock making.

These instructions assume you are knitting on two circular needles but you can use a single-circular needle, often called the "magic loop", or multiple double-pointed needles. Adjust as needed.

Lifestyle toe up socks are knit in the round. When you cast on your stitches using the Judy's method below, you'll have stitches on two circular needles (needle 1 and needle 2, or top and bottom, or sole and instep – however you would prefer to think about it.)

In order to get stockinette, stocking stitch, while knitting in the round, you simply knit every row. Stockinette magically appears. No purling needed. However, you will need to purl for ribbing, or cabling or any stitch pattern that uses a combination of knit/purl stitches.

Yarn
Use any size yarn desired. I usually use a fine sock yarn that knits up nicely with a size 1 or 2 US needle. Yardage varies dependent on how big and how long you make the sock. 400 yards will yield a standard length women's size 8-10 pair of socks (US sizing).

Needle Size
Use the needle appropriate to your yarn. Most sock weight yarn works well with needle sizes between US 1 up to 3. As this pattern is sized as you go, no gauge swatch is needed. So, pick the needle size that makes your yarn look good.
Video Examples: If you are a visual learner, you can view videos of each of the techniques used in this sock. Click here (you need a broadband Internet connection to view the videos.)

Start at the toe with Judy Becker’s Brilliant Cast on
For thicker yarn, start with 8 stitches per needle (16 total). For standard sock yarn, try 10-12 stitches per needle (20-24 total).

Increase for the Toe
Round 1: Increase two stitches each needle, for four increases total. I normally increase one stitch in from edge of each needle. I do not increase at the edge stitches. The type of increase I make depends on the sock. Lace? Use a Yarn over, Want a neat line? Knit two stitches into one. Try all sorts of increases!
Round 2: Knit.
Repeat these two rounds until you have a wedge that fits your toe with only a little wiggle room.

Knit until it is time for the heel (Make the foot part)
Knit to your heart’s desire, any pattern you choose. I usually make the sole part of the sock (bottom needle) stockinette. The other needle is the top of your foot - knit any stitch pattern you want. Adjust stitch count by 1 or two stitches to accommodate your chosen stitch pattern. When you are just about 1.5” - 2” short of the heel, stop!

Time to knit the heel
Knit the no muss, no fuss, no crazy yarnovers short row heel designed by Priscilla Wild and modified by me. Of all the methods for making a short row heel, this one wins, hands down.

Click to view a short video demo of this short row heel method.

Knit Short Rows – Creating Held Stitches on the Bottom Needle
You will be creating the heel on half of the total number of stitches, that is, just the stitches on your “bottom” needle. Ignore the needle that holds the stitches that are the “top” of the foot. To create the heel, you will be working flat rather than in the round.

1. Knit to the last stitch, but don’t knit the last stitch. Turn.
2. Slip first stitch purlwise (SS), purl to the last stitch, but don’t purl the last stitch. Turn.
   The stitches you are not knitting or purling are the “held” stitches.
3. (SS), Knit to the last two stitches (but don’t knit the last two). Turn.
4. (SS), Purl to the last two stitches (but don’t purl the last two). Turn.

Continue knitting (right side) and purling (wrong side) rows, each time turning one stitch earlier than the previous time on that side, until you have only 8 (or the number you had on this needle when you started your toe) active stitches remaining, ending with a knit row.
You now have held stitches on each side of your center active stitches, forming a triangle of fabric.
You have created half the heel.

Add the Held Stitches Back Into the Work
***(SS), then purl to stitch next to the first gap, then P2tog.
There is a gap between the last active stitch and the first held stitch. You are purling together those 2 stitches to close the gap.
Make 1 stitch (M1). You are adding a stitch to compensate for the P2tog decrease. See the many ways to make (or add) a stitch at KnittingHelp.com. Select an increase method that works with the pattern you are knitting.

Turn, slip the added stitch purlwise (SS) to right needle.
Knit across to the last active stitch, K2tog (the last active stitch and the first held stitch), M1.
Turn.**

Illustration: Adding Held Stitches Back Into the Work
(number of stitches illustrated are fewer than number on your needle)

1. K2tog or P2tog using one stitch on each side of the gap.

2. After each K1tog or P2tog decrease, you make/add a stitch to maintain the same total number of stitches.

Repeat between the **’s until all held stitches have been worked back into the active row.
Check to make sure you have the same number of stitches on the bottom needle as you have waiting for you on the top needle. End with a purl row. Turn.

Try on the sock as you are knitting it to make adjustments to the fit as you go. Be really clever and knit two socks on your circs at once.
When you are happy with the foot and now lovely heel of your sock, you’ll go back to knitting in the round on both of your circular needles. Just continue knitting in the round, on both needles.

**Knit the leg as you desire**
In the examples with this pattern, I used a ribbing (k2, p2) for the animal pattern socks, and a 2-color simple design for the blue/green sample.
Finish off with a lovely garter edge
For a comfortable good-looking end to your project (and a nod to Elizabeth Zimmermann), finish off your sock with knitting 3/4” to 1” of garter stitch. Photo samples on pages 3 and 4 have a garter edge.

Garter stitch knit-in-the-round is done differently than when knitting back and forth.
Here’s how you do it:
Row 1: knit
Row 2: purl
This makes one ridge of garter stitch. Repeat rows 1 and 2 until you have the length of garter pattern desired.

Cast off with EZ's sewn cast off
Knitty has a beautiful description of this fantastic cast-off with photographs. Scroll down to the "Elizabeth Zimmermann's sewn bind off". The sewn cast off is well suited to garter stitch and will never frustrate you with being too tight!

And, there you have it! A can’t miss method of sock-making that will keep you busy for years to come!

Want a standard heel with a heel flap?
Would you prefer a sock with a standard heel and gusset? Try the “You’re putting me on” sock by Judy Gibson.

Click to download “You’re putting me on” generic sock pattern.

This is a toe-up sock with standard heel, gusset, and heel flap. I modified it to work with two circular or the one long cingular “magic loop” method of knitting. Thank you to Judy for permission to modify and offer the pattern to you.
Photo Illustrations in this Guide

Square Socks – blue/green – designed and knitted by Charisa Martin Cairn
Fiber: recycled cashmere sweater (navy) and handspun/hand dyed BFL 2-ply sock yarn spun by Kristin Pounders

Animal Socks – browns, greens, golds – designed and knitted by Charisa Martin Cairn
Fiber: Fortissima Colori Socka Color; 1 skein

Special thanks goes to Shelley Grant for editing the updated short row heel instructions.

Online references in this guide:

Video How to for Knitting on two circular needles, Judy Becker’s cast on, short row heel, and Elizabeth Zimmermann’s sewn bind off - http://pulsh.blogspot.com/2009/05/lifestyle-socks-videos.html
Judy Becker’s perfectly magical cast on - http://knitty.com/ISSUEspring06/FEATmagiccaston.html
Charisa demos the short row heel - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zu5YAKsAEpY
Elizabeth Zimmermann’s Stretchy Sewn Cast Off - http://knitty.com/ISSUEsummer06/FEATsum06TT.html
Alternate heel method (standard turned heel, gusset and flap) – The “You’re putting me on” generic toe-up sock pattern by Judy Gibson:
http://www.k1p1design1.com/YourePuttingMeOnSocksFormula_2Circul.pdf

17 May 09 Updates:

- Updated link to PULSH fiber journal
- Added link to video page for all techniques described in this guide
- Removed a non-functioning link for two circular needles knitting method