

Turkish Socks

ANNA ZILBOORG



Anna Zilboorg's traditional Turkish socks worked from the toe up (left) and Ram's Horn socks (right). The Ram's Horn socks are authentically patterned and traditionally shaped but are worked in a manner more familiar to Western knitters.

Photo by Joe Coca

PIECEWORK®

✿ Turkish Socks ✿

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Traditional Turkish socks (shown in the photograph on page 9) are a challenging and rewarding project for seasoned knitters. The oddly shaped but well-fitting foot is begun at the toe, with the heel worked after the rest of the sock is complete. The Ram's Horn socks (shown in the photograph at right) are authentically patterned and have the same interesting shape but are worked from top to toe in a manner more familiar to Western knitters. This construction has one advantage when working a continuous vertical pattern: the stitches that must be picked up for the heel are on the sole of the foot; therefore, any imperfection in the pattern is less visible.

Instructions

Traditional Sock

Note: The method of starting the toe—working in two directions at once with no cast-on—seems, at first try, hopelessly awkward, but perseverance is rewarded. Once your fingers catch on to how to handle all the needles, you'll have endless respect for the Turkish women who worked out this clever technique.

Materials

Harrisville Designs New England Shetland, 100% wool yarn, 217 yards (198.4 m)/50 g (1.8 oz) skein, 1 skein each of #2 Red, #4 Gold, #8 Hemlock, #18 Aubergine, and #21 Violet for traditional version; 1 skein each of #2 Red, #4 Gold, #8 Hemlock, and #21 Violet for Ram's Horn version

Needles, set of 5 8-inch (20-cm) double pointed, size 4 (3.5 mm) or size needed to obtain gauge, and 1 1/2-inch (29-cm) circular (optional)

Tapestry needle

Finished size: About 9 1/2 inches (24 cm) (Traditional) and 9 1/4 inches (23 cm) (Ram's Horn) long, about 9 inches (23 cm) in diameter around the leg and stretch comfortably to fit a 14-inch (35.6-cm) calf

Gauge: 6 1/2 sts = 1 inch (2.5 cm); 6 1/2 rnds = 1 inch (2.5 cm)

Toe

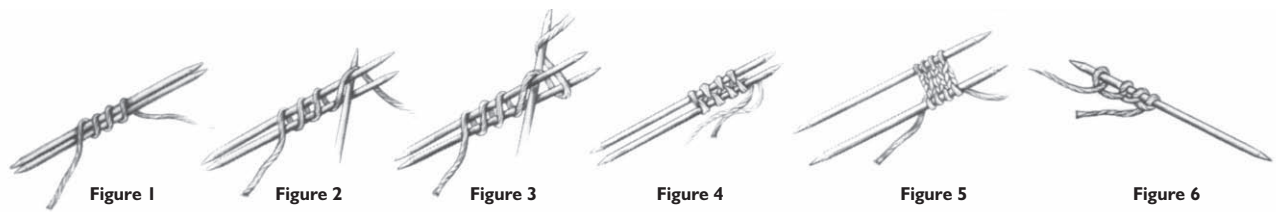
With Aubergine and 2 short needles held tog in the left hand, wrap yarn clockwise (from front to back) 4 times around needles (see Figure 1). Hold the tail down with the left thumb. Insert a third needle between the 2 needles and into the back of the lp nearest the front

Take It from the Toe

All Turkish stockings are constructed in the same way, and that way is very different from the way Western stockings are made. The leg of a Turkish stocking has a front and a back, and the foot has a top and a bottom. A Western stocking, on the other hand, is round or has a left and right side; it is customarily folded so that it looks like a silhouette of foot and leg. Turkish socks fold so that they look like a long mitten with the heel poking out the back. Often, the front and back division is supported by a side pattern that runs from top to toe. The sole, from the end of the heel to the tip of the toe, is often worked in a different pattern from that of the instep. The choice of that pattern may be aesthetic or practical, but the pattern will be simpler. In Turkey, showing the bottom of one's foot is considered ill-mannered.

The design characteristics common to all Turkish stockings are intimately connected to their structure. Stockings are begun by casting on just a few stitches at the toe. If there will be side patterns, these are the stitches that will compose them. The toe is then set up on four needles: (1) stitches cast on and worked a few rows; (2) one to three stitches picked up on the side of the cast-on piece; (3) stitches picked up on the bottom of those cast on, equal in number to those cast on; and (4) one to three stitches picked up on the other side of the cast-on stitches. A fifth needle is used to knit with. The toe is now a square of two sides, a front and a back. Stitches are added every row at the beginning and end of the front and back until enough stitches have been added for the foot. In the most elegant socks made by the most skilled knitters, patterning is begun with the cast-on row so that the side bands are continuous around the toe and the top and sole patterns shape perfectly into the stocking.

Knitting continues to the heel, where something must be done. The Turks have solved the heel problem differently from most Western knitters. It is a little hard to get a Turkish sock on over the instep, although it's comfortable enough once on—but the heel has a great aesthetic advantage over the Western heel. The sole pattern can continue all the way to the end of the heel on the bottom of the foot, and the back leg pattern can extend to the bottom of the heel. The result is not only beautiful but



point of the needles (the fourth loop made; see Figure 2). Bring yarn up between needles and k the first lp off the top needle only (see Figure 3). K rem 3 lps, each time going between the 2 needles and through the back of the lp on top needle only. Be careful not to let the lps on the bottom needle slide off. Rotate the needles without turning the work so that the needle that was on the bottom is now on the top, and the yarn is coming off the back of the bottom needle on your right. You will have 4 sts on each needle with a row of sts between them (see Figure 4). In the same manner, k the 4 lps through the back off what is now the top needle. Rotate the needles so that the first needle is again on top and the p sts still face away from you. K the sts off the top needle. Rotate the needles so that the second needle is again on top, and k the sts off the top needle in the same manner. You now have a small almost-square rectangle of St st with 4 sts on opposite sides. These are the side seam sts (see Figure 5).

Rnd 1 (see chart): On side of rectangle, with third needle, pick up 1 st Red, 1 st Aubergine, 1 st Red (Row 1 of Instep). With another needle, k across 4 seam sts with

Aubergine. With another needle, pick up 3 sts in Red (Row 1 of Sole) on the other side of the rectangle. You will have a rectangle on 4 needles and will have worked Row 1 of the Foot chart.

Cont to follow the chart. Inc at the beg and end of the needles containing instep and sole sts: insert the needle between the 2 edge sts of the seam in the row below and pick up 1 st. (Only 2 of the 4 edge sts will be visible on the outside of the sock.) Cont until there are a total of 58 sts (Rnd 12 has been completed).

Rnd 13: Work the instep and sole sts as charted and work the side seam sts as follows: k2tog, ssk; 2 sts will rem on each side (54 sts total).

Foot

The toe is complete. Switch to cir needle or redistribute sts more evenly on dpn. Cont to follow the Foot chart. When you reach the end of the foot, stop at the beg of the sole. Place 27 sole sts (25 sole sts plus 1 st from each side seam) on an extra piece of yarn. With Aubergine, CO 29 sts by the simple half-hitch method (see Figure 6). Work across instep with Aubergine. Beg Leg Pattern #1

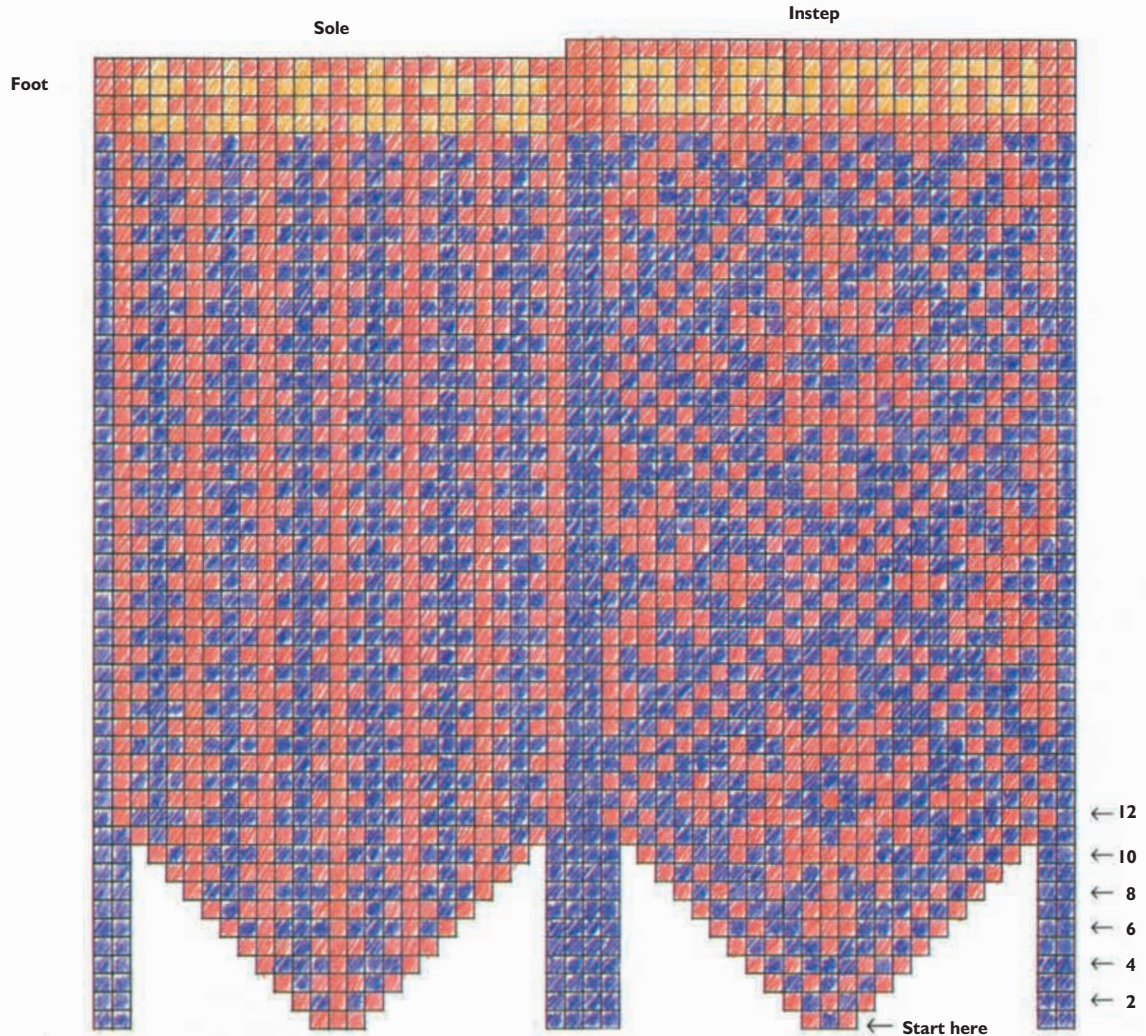
practical, as I discovered one frigid evening in Erzurum when I had nothing but sandals with me and socks I had bought to take home. I put on a pair. Almost immediately, I was as warm as though there was central heating.

The technique is simple. The knitter takes off the sole stitches on a holding string and casts on, with a simple half hitch, the same number of stitches in the correct color alternation for the pattern on the back of the stocking. Work then continues up the leg. When the top is finished, the sole stitches are transferred from the string to two needles, and an equal number of stitches are picked up from the cast-on stitches on two other needles. Because the half hitch has been used, these stitches can be picked up so that the join to the leg pattern is invisible. (This cannot be done with the modern Western technique of knitting in an extra piece of yarn when you want a hole surrounded by stitches in your finished piece—as you might to insert a thumb or a pocket or even a heel.) The heel is tapered similarly to the toes of Western socks, by decreasing along the sides. Finishing causes some trouble since grafting seems not to have been invented in or found its way to, the East. Usually, the last few stitches—those of the side band if there is one—are sewed together as neatly as possible. It makes a shallow, pointy heel—but a beautiful sock.

One more technique distinguishes Turkish socks from Western ones. They do not end with ribbing. Instead, they typically end with a braid stitch and a tassel. This braid stitch is found, as far as I know, only in Turkey and in the Baltic. The technique is the same as that of Swedish twined knitting (see *Tvåändstickning: Sweden's Two-End Knitting* on page 62), in which two strands of yarn are alternated and twisted between stitches, but it is done with alternating colors and with the purl side facing the knitter. It makes a firm raised braid.

The Eastern way of knitting differs from both Western methods. The yarn is tensioned neither by the right hand, as in English knitting, nor by the left hand, as in continental knitting. It is tensioned around the neck. Balls of yarn sit in a basket by the knitter's side. The ends come up under the arm and around the back of the neck and down to the work. The yarn is then flicked with the left thumb to make a stitch. Extra colors can be held out of the way with the right hand. Stitches can be made rapidly, and with all the yarns attached to the knitting under correct tension, color changes are easy and frequent. With this arrangement, purling is most natural, so the work proceeds on the wrong side.

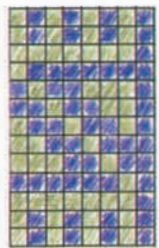
Traditional Sock



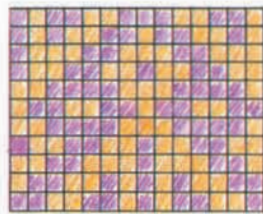
2 sts dec to 1 on Rnd 12

4 sts dec to 2 on Rnd 12

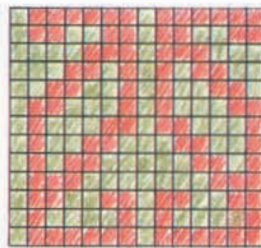
2 sts dec to 1 on Rnd 12



Leg Patt #1



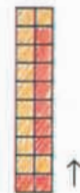
Leg Patt #3



Leg Patt #5



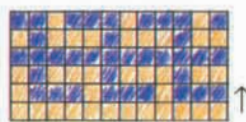
Leg Patt #7



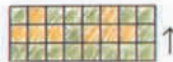
Leg Patt #8



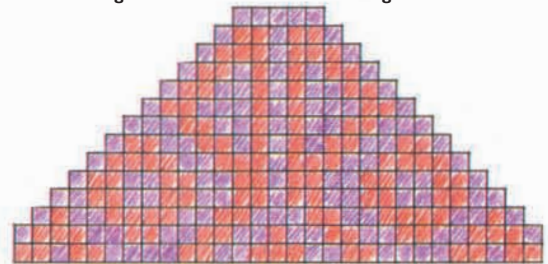
Leg Patt #2



Leg Patt #4



Leg Patt #6



Heel

on the newly CO sts. (This will become the back of the leg.) Work Leg Patterns #1 through #6. On the first row of Leg Pattern #7, k2tog at each side (54 sts rem). Work Leg Patterns #7 and #8. On the second sock, stop at the end of Leg Pattern #7. Rearrange sts so that the beg of the rnd is on the other side of the sock and then work Leg Pattern #8. (This is done so that the tassel will end up at the opposite side from that on the first sock. If you are not making tassels, you don't need to move the sts.)

Braid-Stitch Finish

K 1 rnd, alternating 1 st Red, 1 st Gold. Sl 1 st from left needle. Bring yarn to the front. Return slipped st to left needle (to prevent a hole). Turn work so that p side is facing you. K 1 st Gold, *k1 Red bringing yarn *over* Gold, kl Gold bringing yarn *over* Red. Rep from * around. The yarns will twist with each st. When you reach the beg of the rnd, work another rnd, cont to alternate colors with each st, but this time bring the yarn for each stitch *under* the other. This will unwind the twisted yarn. Sl 1 st. Bring yarns to front. Replace sl st. Turn work. BO, alternating colors, around sock. Cut off yarn, leaving 10-inch (25.4-cm) tails.

Make a 3-inch (7.6-cm) tassel with 8 wraps each of Red and Gold yarn. Sl it over the tails of yarn left on the sock, tie the tassel neck, and twist the tails together tightly. Hold tassel about 2 inches (5 cm) away from the sock on the twisted tails and release the end of the tails so that they twist together on themselves. Cut the long ends and weave them in at the top of the sock. Cut tassel to desired length.

Heel

Place sole sts on needle. Work across in established sole patt with Red and Violet.

Pick up 2 sts with Red in the space in front of the CO sts. Pick up 29 CO sts, foll Row 1 of Heel chart. To pick up the sts, insert the needle behind the cross of yarn that constitutes each CO st. Pick up 2 sts with Red in the space before the sole sts.

Next row (Row 1 of the chart): Work across sole sts in patt. K tog the 2 picked-up sts with Red. Work across back heel sts. K tog the 2 picked-up sts with Red. Sl this st back onto left needle. There are now 29 sts on the back of the heel and 29 sts on the sole, including the picked-up sts. Work around, following sole patt and Heel chart. Dec with ssk at the beg and k2tog at the end of each sole row and each heel back row. Cont until 5 sts rem on each side. Break off yarns. To graft heel sts, rearrange sts so there are 5 sts on each of 2 needles, with

the sides of the heel facing each other; use grafting stitch (also known as Kitchener Stitch) with Violet.

Finishing

To finish the sock in the authentic Turkish manner, cut all ends about 1 inch (3 cm) long and let them hang on the inside. Wash socks in warm soapy water and lay flat to dry. The yarns will fluff up and soften noticeably.

Ram's Horn Socks

On cir or dpn, CO 56 sts with Hemlock. *K1 in back of st, p1. Rep from *. Work 8 rnds. Cut off Hemlock. Beg chart with Violet as ground, Gold as patt color. Work 9 rnds. Change ground color to Red. After another 9 rnds, change ground to Hemlock. Work 3 more patt reps in the same color sequence. Work Row 1 of seventh patt rep in Violet and Gold.

Foot

Mark heel sts: With a piece of contrasting yarn, k 29 sts. Sl these sts back onto the left needle. Take up ground and patt yarns and work across these 29 sts in Row 1 of sole patt. Cont working the foot circularly, following sole patt on sole and ram's horn patt on instep, changing ground color in established sequence at each patt. Rep 4 times.

Shape Toe

On the fifth row of the fifth patt rep, beg dec for the toe as follows: *k1 (the side st), ssk, work 23 in patt, k2tog. Rep from *. Cont in patt, dec in the same way on each side of side sts every row (see chart) until 5 sts rem on each side of the sole and instep (16 sts total). Do not change ground color after ninth row of the fifth patt rep. Work last row of toe in Gold. Rearrange rem sts on 2 needles with the sides of the toe facing each other. Graft toe; use grafting stitch with Gold.

Heel

With the tapestry needle threaded with contrasting yarn, work a running st through the sts of the first sole row. Run the needle over one side of each st and under the other side. This will let you cont the established color patt on the picked-up sts. Carefully pull out the 29 sts of contrasting yarn and pull the two sides of the heel opening gently apart. Place the 29 sts for the back of the leg on cir or 1 dpn. Place the 29 sts for the sole on cir or 2 dpn, following the path of the running st and pulling out the running st as you go. Some of the sts will be laid over the needle at an angle. Keep them in their right place by smoothing the loose yarn to the back with your

left thumb. When it's time to k these sts, k them tbl to correct the twist.

With Gold, pick up 2 sts in the space between the sole and the leg. Work Row 2 of the Leg Pattern across the back leg sts. Pick up 2 sts with Gold between leg and sole. Work Row 2 of Sole chart across sole sts (62 sts total). This completes Rnd 1 of the Heel chart.

Rnd 2: Cont Rnd 3 of Ram's Horn and Sole charts. (Because you are knitting in the opposite direction on the sole, the direction of the sole patt will be reversed.) K tog the 2 sts picked up on each side (60 sts rem).

Rnd 3: Work a double dec at each side on the Violet, Gold, Violet sts as follows: sl 1 Violet, sl 1 Gold, k the next Violet st with Violet, pass the 2 sl sts tog over the k st (56 sts rem). The side sts are now like those

on the foot and toe. Cont to work around in patt, dec as for the toe, following the Heel chart. When 10 sts rem on each side of heel, break off yarns. Rearrange stitches on 2 needles so that the sides of the heel are facing each other with 10 sts on each needle. Graft sts tog. Pull end through firmly to wrong side. Weave in ends of yarn.

For the second sock, reverse the placement of Violet and Hemlock, including ribbings. 🌸

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND DESIGNER. Master knitter Anna Zilboorg, formerly a professor of Slavic literature at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, lives in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia.

Ram's Horn Sock

