

Alice's Illusion socks

BY ALICE BELL

Alice found that the strangeness of Wonderland didn't altogether disappear when she returned to normal life. Her stripey socks had developed a surprising new secret... maybe the Cheshire cat's way of leaving her with a smile?



Photography: Alice Bell

YOU WILL NEED

Two contrasting solid colours of sock yarn, at least 350m MC, 200m CC. The socks pictured used RYC Cashsoft 4-ply, in Papyrus and Bark.

80cm circular or double-pointed needles, 2mm-2.75mm to suit yarn. When matching yarn to needle, I would suggest a reasonably firm gauge; illusion knit should not be too loose.

Stitch markers (optional)

Tapestry needle

RATING

PG Occasional strong language.

Illusion knitting, short-row heels, toe-up sock construction.

PATTERN NOTE

This pattern produces knits to custom fit the wearer, worked to whatever yarn they choose (though it should be a light sportweight at the heaviest). You actually measure the gauge on the toe (*no swatching!*) but it does mean a small amount of knitter's maths. This only seemed fitting for Wonderland socks.

These socks are worked toe-up, using figure eight cast-on and sewn bind-off techniques. If you are not familiar with these I suggest typing the terms into a search engine as there are several excellent online tutorials (knitty's articles have very clear photos).

To make the socks symmetrical, the chart is reversed for the right sock. Throughout, when changing colour just carry the yarn up.

ILLUSION KNITTING (IN THE ROUND)

Each row of the chart is actually four rounds of knitting – one double-round stripe of both the MC and CC. The CC is, at heart, stocking stitch, giving a nice flat surface, whereas the MC is based on the bobbles of garter. By swapping the MC to stocking you create a little valley; looking at the work from an angle you see through the valley onto the next “mountain” of garter stitch, which you provide by a corresponding swap of stitches in the next CC stripe.

For each row of the chart:

Round 1: (CC) knit one round plain

Round 2: (CC) knit the blank boxes, purl the filled in ones

Round 3: (MC) knit one round plain

Round 4: (MC) purl the blank boxes, knit the filled in ones

Illusion knitting in the round is easier than flat – because you always work RS, you can normally work out what you need to do from what's been worked in the rows below.

INSTRUCTIONS

TOE

With MC, using figure eight cast on, cast on 16 sts (that is 8 on each needle).

If you are using dpns you should now move to working on three or four needles. Dpn users may also want to place stitch markers at the start and middle of the round – magic loopers can just read ‘sm’ in the pattern as meaning the end of a needle.

Rnd 1: kfb, k to st before sm, kfb, kfb, k to last st, kfb.
Rnd 2: knit.

Repeat until you have a total of at least 44 st (it needs to be roughly the width of your foot, but no bigger).

TIME FOR SOME MATHEMATICS. Using the fabric on your toe, take a gauge measurement (you only need the stitch gauge, don't worry about row measurements). It should be somewhere around 2.8-3.2 per cm. Next, measure around the ball of your foot in centimeters. Multiply this by your gauge per cm and round it up to the nearest number that is divisible by four sts (eg, 23cm x 3.4 = 78.2, so you'd round that

up to 80 sts). If in doubt, go for the slightly smaller option, as the fabric will stretch around the foot and you don't want it to be baggy – I normally take away four stitches for good measure.

Continue to work increases every second round until you have this number of stitches on your needle.

LEFT SOCK – FOOT

Bring in the CC yarn and knit two rounds. With MC, knit one round, purl to stitch marker, knit to end of round. This gives you a nice flat stocking stitch for the underside of the foot.

Work plain until 18 st before the stitch marker, then start following the chart. You are going to work the chart from left to right, starting from the bottom up. Always complete the round with st st.

Continue in pattern, following the chart, until the sock is about 5cm less than the length of your foot.

HEEL

Leave the CC, and place the (patterned) stitches for the top side of the foot on a spare needle. This is a short row heel, feel free to substitute your favourite technique.

Row 1: Knit to last stitch, move your yarn as if to purl and slip the last stitch from the left needle to the right needle. Turn work.

Row 2: Slip the first (unworked) stitch from the left needle to the right needle, and purl to the last stitch. Move the working yarn as if to knit and slip last stitch. Turn.

Row 3: Slip the first (unworked) stitch from left needle to the right one, knit 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 you have 8 stitches left unwrapped in the middle of the heel. If you have a very tight gauge (around 3 sts per cm) you might want to stop earlier, unless you have a particularly pointy heel.

Row 1: Knit across the unwrapped stitches to the first wrapped stitch. On this, pick up the wrap and knit it together with the wrapped stitch. Wrap the next stitch, so it has two wraps, and turn.

