

Mary Ellen's Christmas Stocking

Materials: Knitting worsted in red, green, and white

Needles: #6 or #8 double-pointed needles or long circular for magic-loop technique

Optional: extra yarn or embroidery floss for stitching on names; pom-pom maker of your choice (my grandmother used a fork, which I've since inherited)

I prefer to make these on smaller needles to obtain a dense fabric. We stuff our stockings pretty full and I don't want them to stretch too much or be loose when I'm cramming in lots of Christmas swag.

These stockings were designed by my grandmother, Mary Ellen Kinter. She made them for everyone in the family (her children when they were young, their spouses later in life, her grandchildren, her great-grandchildren, friends and their children+spouses and grandchildren, people from her church and their extended families...); there are literally hundreds of people in and around western Pennsylvania (and now WA, CA, NC, TN, and MN who have Grandma Kinter stockings as part of their holidays; they've gone to so many homes with her love, that they were [even mentioned in her obituary](#).

I'm the only person in my dad's family who knits (well, aside from my grandmother, obviously), so when Grandma died a few years ago, the family knitting became my responsibility (my duties are mostly making these stockings as the family expands and also making baby blankets). I was thinking about how happy it would make her to have more children than even the many, many that she knew and loved – and trust me, Grandma never met a child she didn't love; her door and table were open and available to every kid of any age, anyone who was hurt, lonely, hungry...or happy, content, fun, and just in need of a snack and a glass of milk. It's one of those things that sounds like a cliché to say about a loved one who's dead, but it's true – Grandma never turned anyone away, ever. Period. (The family always talks about how, in the Fifties, when other daycares wouldn't take African-American children because of color, Grandma was appalled – because how could anyone turn away a child in need of care and a safe place to be? Everyone was equal in her eyes – period – and everyone deserved to be loved – so those kids went to her place to hang with her own children and all the others she took care of.) She would love it if even more children woke on Christmas Day to a brightly colored stocking filled with treats or toys chosen for them by someone who cares. And that's why I'm making her pattern available to anybody who wants it.

I usually make these with ye olde Red Heart one-pounder yarn, to match all the other stockings already in the family. Whatever yarn I pick, it's always acrylic, simply for the sake of long-term wearability. I've made these in Christmas colors (duh), but also in blue, brown, green, and white (very pretty).

This is a standard Christmas stocking. There's nothing unique or exceptional about it except for the woman who created it.

With green, CO 60 stitches – divide by 20 on three double-pointed needles, or in half for magic loop.

Place marker for beginning of round and join for knitting in the round.

Row 1-10: K1, P1 rib for 10 rows

Row 11-31: Change to white and K 20 rows. (I wish I could color this white, but then it would be invisible.)

Row 32: **Change to red** and knit 1 row.

Row 33: K1, SSK, knit to last 3 stitches, K2tog, K1 (58 stitches).



Row 32-48: Continue in red.

Row 49: Repeat Row 33 (56 stitches)

Row 50-80: **Change to green**, continue with decreased as you did with red, decreasing on 2nd green row and 16th green row (52 stitches).

At the end of 30 rows of green you will start the heel

Row 81: Change to white, knit one row.

Row 82: K13. Knit across the next 26 stitches and put them on separate needle. The remaining 13 stitches and the first 13 stitches you knit in this row will become the heel.

Heel Row 1-16: Knit across both sets of 13 stitches. Turn to wrong side and purl back. Continue in this way for all 16 stitches (16 rows of stockinette stitch).

Heel Row 17: Begin shaping heel with short rows:

- K15, SSK, K1. Work short row turn on next stitch using method of your choice, such as slip next stitch with yarn in back, turn work, slip stitch back to right-hand needle. Turn work.
- P6, picking up wrap and knitting it with its companion stitch as you go, P2tog, P1, work short row turn on next stitch. Turn work.
- Continue picking up wraps as you knit or purl past them and working short row on every turn.
- K7, SSK, K1. Turn.
- P8, P2tog, P1. Turn.
- K9, SSK, K1. Turn.
- P8, P2tog, P1. Turn.
- K9, SSK, K1. Turn.
- P10, P2tog, P1. Turn.
- K11, SSK, K1. Turn.
- P12, P2tog, P1. Turn.
- K13, SSK, K1. Turn.
- P14, P2tog, P1. 16 stitches remain.

Heel Row 18: K16, pick up 12 stitches along side of heel flap, K26 stitches on extra needle, pick up 12 stitches along side of heel flap, knit across 8 stitches of flap. Place marker for beginning of round and begin working in the round.

Stocking Row 83: Continue working in white. (If you counted down from the top, you'd actually count 84 rows, since you added a full round on the last Heel Row.) K17, place marker, K2tog, K28, SSK, place marker, knit to end.

Row 84: Knit.

Row 85: K17, slip marker, K2tog, knit to 2 stitches before marker, SSK, slip marker, Knit to end.

Row 86: Knit.

Row 87-97: Continue working the previous two rows, decreasing after the first marker and before the second marker, until 7 total decreases have been worked. (52 stitches)

Row 98-118: **Change to red**, removing markers as you get to them. Knit 20 rows.

Row 119-126: **Change to green**. Knit 7 rows.

Begin working toe in **green**; toe has paired decreases:

- K10, SSK, K1, place marker, K1, K2tog (first pair of decreases), K20, SSK, K1, place marker, K1, K2tog (second pair of decreases), K10 to finish round.
- Knit 1 row.
- *Knit to 3 stitches before marker, SSK, K1, slip marker, K1, K2tog*. Repeat from * to * one time, knit to end.
- Knit 1 row.

- Repeat previous 2 rows until 12 stitches remain.
- Weave together using [Kitchener stitch](#), or turn sock inside out and close using [3-needle bind off](#).

Weave in all ends. Toss it in the washer and dryer (if you're doing ye olde acrylic) before you add embellishments. Or don't. Either way it's gonna look great, and besides, nobody else but you is going to be paying much attention once it's stuffed with junk.

Make a loop for the stocking. My grandmother always made a [twisted cord](#) using equal strands of each color, but you could also knit a thick, chunky [i-cord](#) using several colors or multiple strands of one color. I usually make a twisted cord with 2 strands of each color. I twist these together, then turn them the cord back on itself for the twists to wrap around each other (if you know how to make a twisted cord, you get what I'm saying; if not, you're probably totally lost, but there are tons of tutorials online), making a cord that's 12 strands thick. With that thickness, I need a finished cord of about 6-7 inches. Bend this into a loop and sew inside the top of the sock where you first cast on. I like to stitch about 1" of the cord inside the sock, using green to match the first band. I also like to stitch back and forth through the strands of the twisted cord using a regular sewing thread, just to make sure none of the strands can slip loose. Once your cord is sewed down nice and safe, so that it won't pull apart, trip the junk that's currently dangling down inside the sock to make a neat end just below where you sewed it all on.

If you're [one of those crazy people who doesn't hate making pompoms](#) (you are crazy, trust me), make a small pompon 1-2" across and sew this to the outside of the sock where you sewed on the loop. I always shop this out to my aunt and mail the finished socks to California, where she pompoms them for me and then ships them out to whichever extremely fertile cousin of mine has had yet another baby, or has gotten married, or whatever. Or I suck it up and make five or six of my own before I get one that I don't hate because it doesn't suck. I've also avoided having to make a stupid stupid stupid pompon by knitting or crocheting little holly leaves to attach at the top (they're so cute!). [Lucy of Attic 24](#) has [a great little pattern](#) for simple, crocheted holly leaves. Two of these look great at the edge, either in green or a contrasting color (or contrasting green).

All our stockings have first names added to them with embroidery floss. This also makes me crazy – some kind of OCD Perfectionism Syndrome, or something, but I get nutso because I can't make every bar of every letter exactly identical (I never have an issue doing embroidery or cross stitch on fabric, but on knitting? forget it). This is also better left to people who don't have an excess of neuroses attached to their crafting, although I've found that if I stitch these in yarn, I chill out about it. Whatever. Knitters are all at least slightly crazy, so I may as well wear it on my sleeve, you know?

The Kinter names are all stitched in black. These have to be done in embroidery floss for the family stockings, because otherwise if they didn't match [the world would end or something](#), but if you want to try them in yarn, it's way easier. You can use a worsted black, but a black fingering is totally great. Use your favorite letter chart, or google one, or send me a message and I can send you PDFs of the one I like. Embellish the capital letter with a little holly leaf and holly berries if you feel ambitious.

Melissa Burt, aka [Indigomouse](#), has a pattern for a [cute little lump of coal](#). If you have a bunch of kids or you're giving one of these stockings as a gift, this would be a cute addition. Let the kids take turns hiding it in each other's stockings – or YOUR stocking – for some affectionate, non-mean family teasing.

Who says that stockings have to be for Christmas? I celebrate Christmas, but not all of my friends do, so when it's my time of the year I give them presents anyway, even if they may honor Hanukkah or Kwanza or Ramadan or Yule, instead. Giving doesn't stop at some arbitrary line lots of people like to establish between themselves and anyone they see as "different". Giving is for anyone you care about, period. Plus, Christmas stocking have absolutely nothing to do with the faith portion of what lots of people celebrate at Christmas, so why not make them for any friend or loved one you care about, regardless of what he or she might celebrate as a mid-winter festival?

If you see any errors in here, or find something that doesn't make sense, please let me know. I typed this up from my grandmother's sheet, which had all of its stitch counts based on having a specific number of stitches on each of the three double-pointed needles, and I may have counted incorrectly when converting it to a single line for each row (rather than 3 sets of instructions, one for each needle, for each row).

And Merry Christmas! Or Ramadan! Or Yule or Hanukkah or Burning the Clocks or Kwanza or Festivus or HumanLight or Hogswatch or Saturnalia or Dies Natalis Solis Invicti or Newtonmas or Boxing Day or Hogmanay or Dongzhi or Sadeh or Krampusnacht or..... !!! Merry merry!!!

And may you all have a Mary Ellen in your lives.