



How to...

Starting off on the right foot

Have a go at four alternative cast ons to make your cuffs more elastic

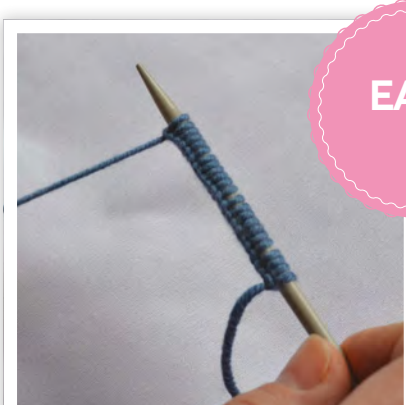
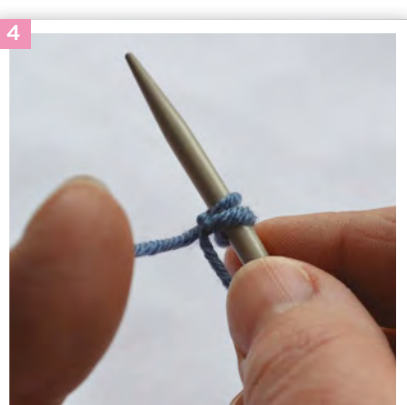
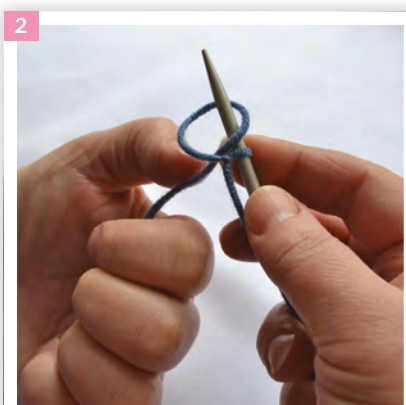
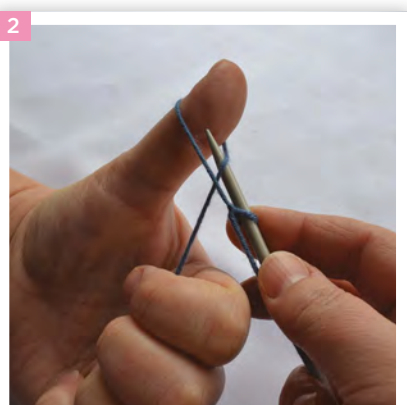
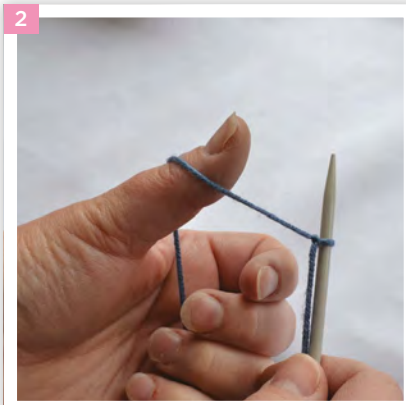
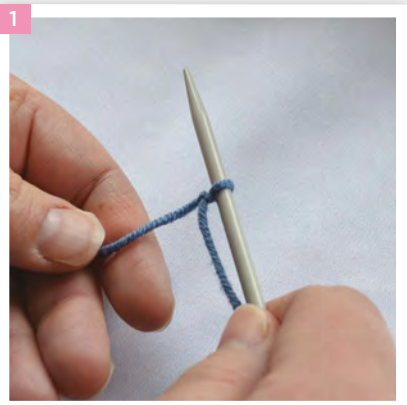
BY: EWA SHEPHARD

I started knitting eons ago. I was self-taught and that still sometimes shows: I revert to throwing when I knit rather than the speedier Continental. I started with the simplest cast-on possible – the backward loop. While this is a good cast on, there are many other methods – as I soon discovered. I progressed to using the

long-tail cast on for everything, it was my friend! When I learnt how to knit socks, I soon discovered a whole new world of cast on methods. A stretchy cast on for cuff-down socks is vital, as indeed is a version for casting off when knitting toe up. These are both important techniques to consider before starting work. There is no point in spending precious time

knitting a beautiful sock only to find that the cuff won't fit over your heel. Of course, they are not just for socks – they are equally useful for sweaters, sleeves, neckbands, hats, cowls, in fact anything you need to get any body part through!

Here are four alternative cast on methods to help you discover the perfect one for your particular project.



EASY

TIPS

➡ Don't be stingy when pulling out enough yarn for a long tail (or German twisted) cast on. There's nothing worse than getting five stitches from the total needed and finding you've run out of tail!

➡ When knitting in the round using double pointed needles, do you find you get a ladder in the knitted fabric at each join between needles? Try tightening the second stitch on each needle as you knit. Tightening the first stitch doesn't work as well as this just loosens up again as you go to knit the second stitch.

➡ If, when using the backward loop method, you find that the cast on is a little too tight, try using a slightly larger needle size or hold two needles together. It is worth practising to get the tensioning right.

BACKWARD LOOP CAST ON

- The backward loop cast on is easier than the cable cast on method that most beginners learn first. It is surprisingly elastic, very quick to learn, and it gives a neat edge.

Step 1: Make a slip knot and place it on the needle. Hold the needle and tail in your right hand and rest the working yarn over your left hand.

Step 2: Wrap the working yarn over your

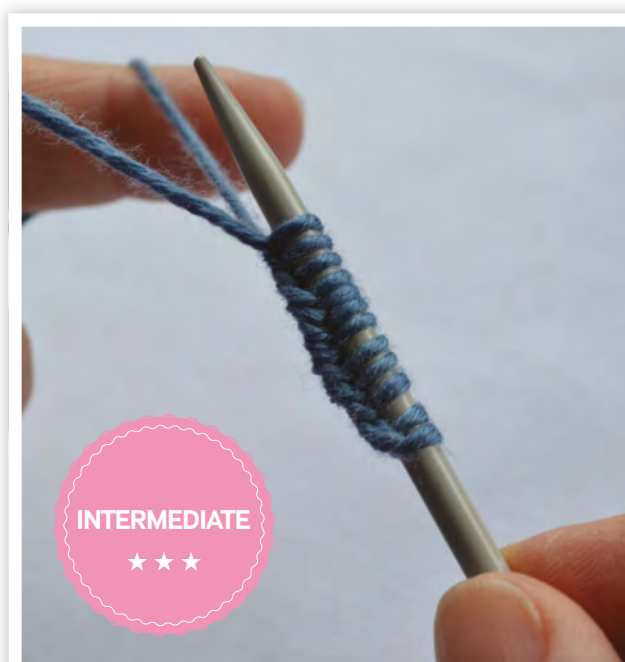
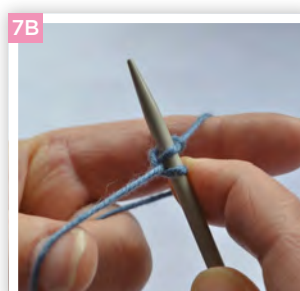
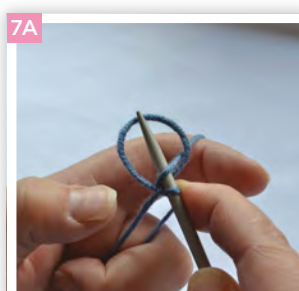
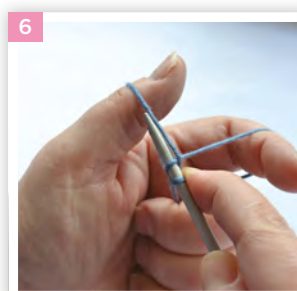
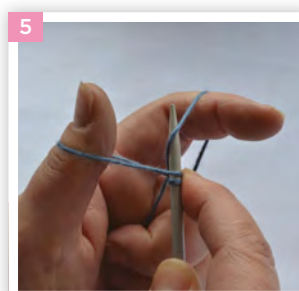
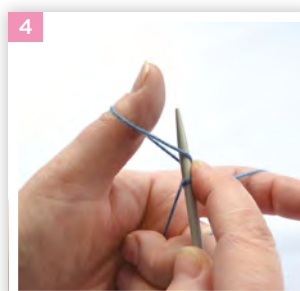
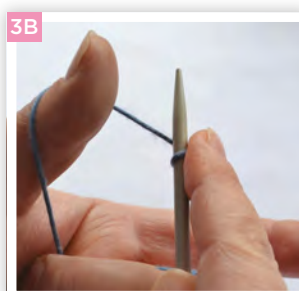
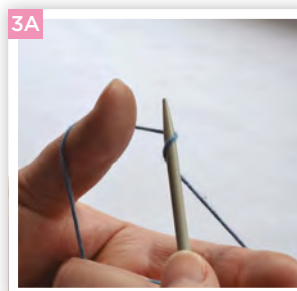
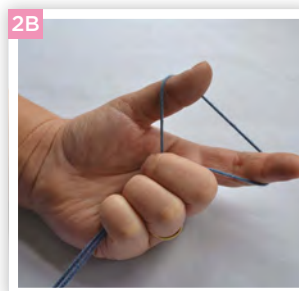
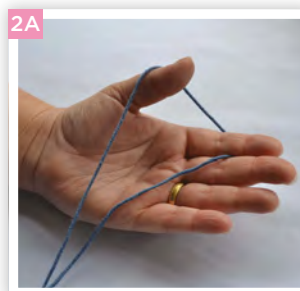
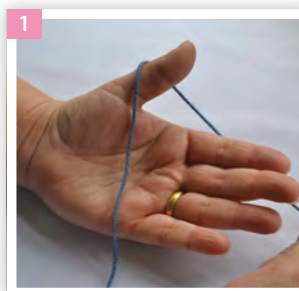
thumb, from back to front, creating a loop.

Step 3: Take the needle behind the loop, scooping it off your thumb.

Step 4: Pull gently on the working yarn to tighten the loop, creating your stitch. Do not pull too tight.

Repeat steps 2-4 until you have cast on the number of stitches that is required by your pattern.

There is no point in spending precious time knitting a beautiful pair of socks only to find that the cuff won't fit over your heel



INTERMEDIATE

★ ★ ★

LONG TAIL CAST ON

• This is a very commonly used cast on and has the added bonus of putting the first knit stitches on the needle. You need a long tail to start with – measure out a tail based on the number of stitches you need. A good guide to the length needed is to wrap the yarn around your needle ten times – each wrap is approximately one stitch worth of yarn – then measure this and multiply by the number of stitches required.

Step 1: Put the working yarn over the centre of your left palm and wrap it around your thumb from front to back.

Step 2: Take the yarn tail over your index finger, from back to front and rest the tail alongside the working yarn in the middle of your palm. Close your remaining three fingers over the yarn.

Step 3: Holding the needle in your right hand, bring it over the top of the yarn between your thumb and index finger, scooping it under and twisting clockwise in order to form a loop (A). It may help at this point to hold the loop with your right hand index finger (B).

Step 4: Pick up the front of the thumb loop.

Step 5: Scoop up the yarn over the left index finger.

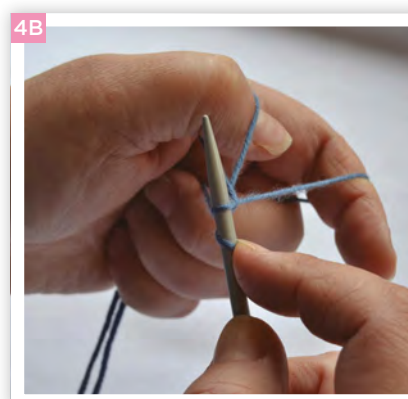
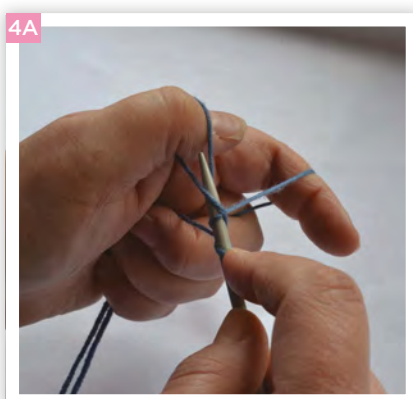
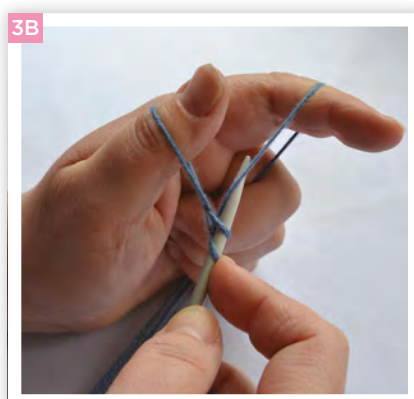
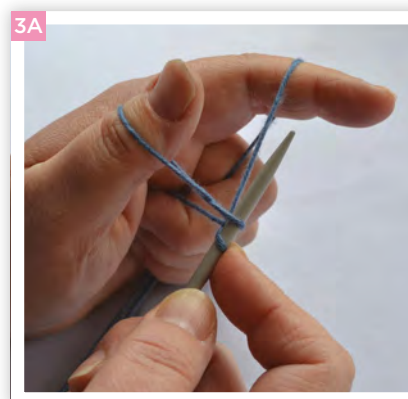
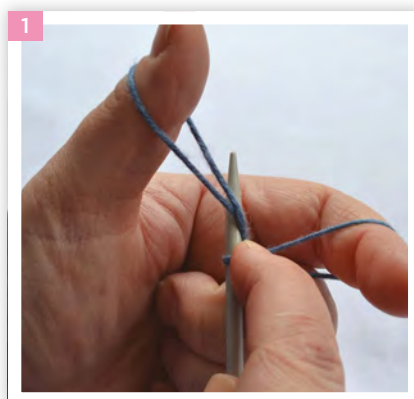
Step 6: Bring the scooped yarn through the thumb loop to the front.

Step 7: Drop the thumb loop (A) and use your thumb

to take up the slack in the working yarn (B), this in turn tightens the stitch. This also puts the thumb in position ready to create the next stitch.

Repeat steps 3-7 until you have the required number of stitches for your pattern.

A stretchy cast on for cuff-down socks is vital, as is an elastic cast off when working from the toe up



GERMAN TWISTED CAST ON

• This is a variation to the long-tail cast on but with an added twist to give super stretchiness. Measure the tail in the same way as the long tail, and work steps 1-3 of the Long Tail cast on method before working as follows:

Step 1: Take the needle under both strands of the thumb loop, from front to back.

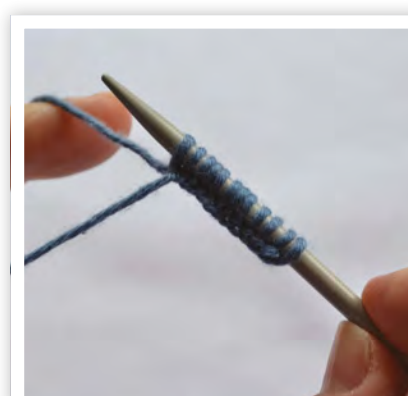
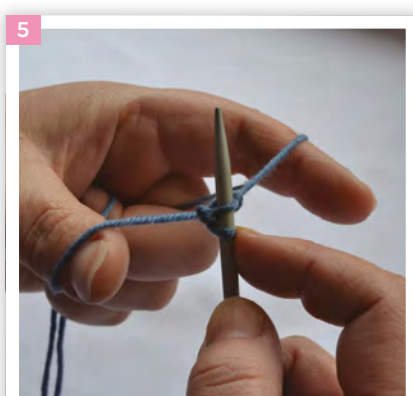
Step 2: Bring the needle tip towards you, then take it through the centre of the thumb loop.

Step 3: Bring the needle over thumb loop (A), effectively twisting the stitch, and catch the yarn over the index finger (B).

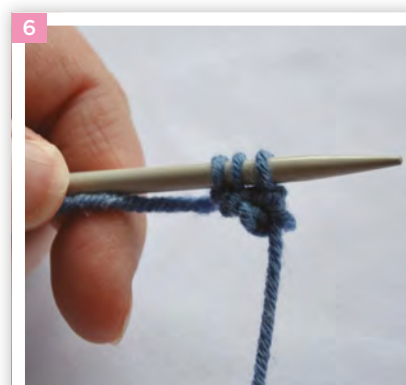
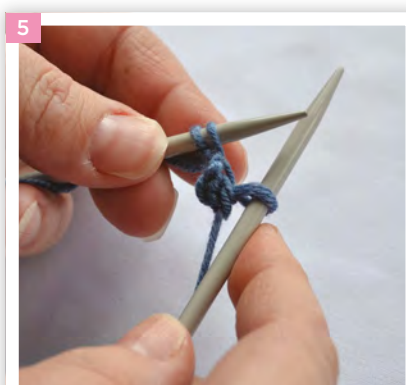
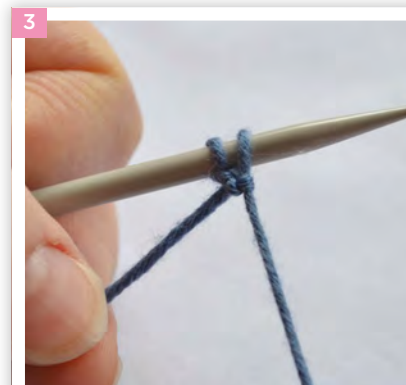
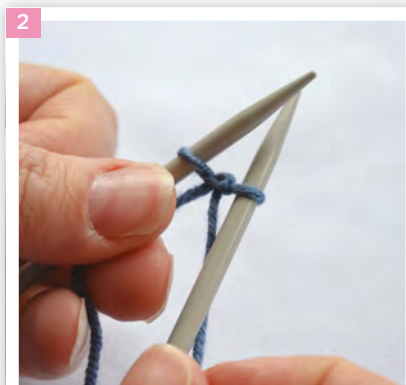
Step 4: Take the needle back through the thumb loop (A). It may help to slightly drop your thumb at this point (B), to open the loop up.

Step 5: Drop the thumb loop and use your thumb to take up the slack in the working yarn, which tightens the stitch. This also puts the thumb in position ready for the next stitch.

Repeat steps 1-5 for more stitches.



Stretchy cast ons are not just for socks. They are equally useful for sweaters, neckbands, sleeves, hats, gloves, cowls and much, much more



ALTERNATIVE: PICOT CAST ON

• This cast on is used to make a lovely decorative edge with little points, or picots, along it. Coupled with a single or double rib cuff it makes an attractive and comfortable start to a sock.

Step 1: Place a slip knot on the left-hand needle (this counts as the first stitch in the cast on).

Step 2: Knit into the first stitch on the left-hand needle – do not drop the stitch from the left-hand needle.

Step 3: Place the newly made stitch onto the left-hand needle knitwise. This twists the stitch into the correct position.

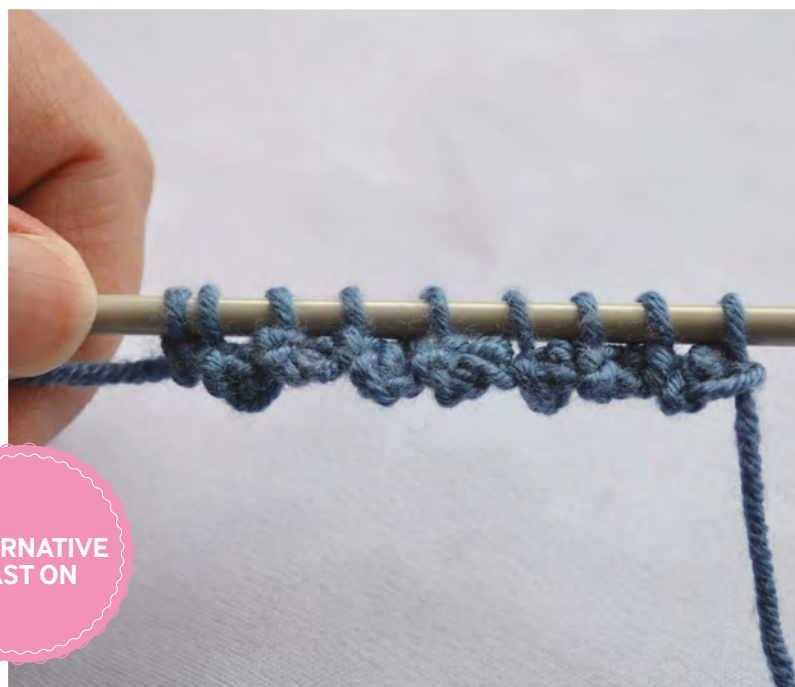
Step 4: Next, repeat steps 2 and 3 three more times.

Step 5: Cast off two stitches.

Step 6: Place the remaining stitch from the cast off back on the LH needle

Repeat steps 2-6 until the desired number of stitches are on the needles. Each repeat of steps 2-6 increases the overall stitch count by 2 stitches.

ALTERNATIVE CAST ON



This is a great cast on for a decorative interesting edge. Use it instead of your usual cast on for a unique finished garment!