

Customizing Your Socks

Having the “average foot” I don’t have a problem with the generic sock patterns, but many do. They are the persons with unusual feet, some from birth and others that have problems as a results of disease. So, where do they go for a sock that fits? Maybe they will come to you or me with- “HELP!”

As I have been working on some of these issues, I thought I would share with you some of the things I have learned. I hope in these next few pages to give you a few things to think about. And, from time to time I will be updating this tutorial with any new discoveries.

In the Beginning-

I have found that the most important step in designing a custom sock shape is getting correct measurements. To do that, my brother came up with this great idea. It’s simple, works well, and you can use it for all your sock patterns.

- A.** Fold a legal size piece of paper in half lengthwise. Measure down from the top on the center line about 4 inches and make a mark.
- B.** Cut a piece plywood about 2 inches larger than the paper, $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 18 inches. Divide the *12½ inch width* at the top and bottom and draw a line connecting the marks. Now, make a mark 6 inches down from the top of the board on that same line. Drill a hole to fit a 3 inch dowel ($\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{3}{16}$ inch in diameter) at the spot you just marked on the board, insert your dowel with a spot of glue.
- C.** With a pencil, punch a hole in your pattern paper at the mark you made in the beginning. Slip it over the dowel. Now, position your foot on the paper with the dowel riding between your big toe and your second toe. This post allows you to re-position your foot if need be at some later time, making it easier to duplicate the correct position of your foot on the paper. *It will also provide the distance from the floor to the top of your toe. This information will be helpful if you are making Tabi Socks.*

Now you are ready to draw around your foot.



Why the Picture of My Foot????

Well, maybe the shape of your toes.

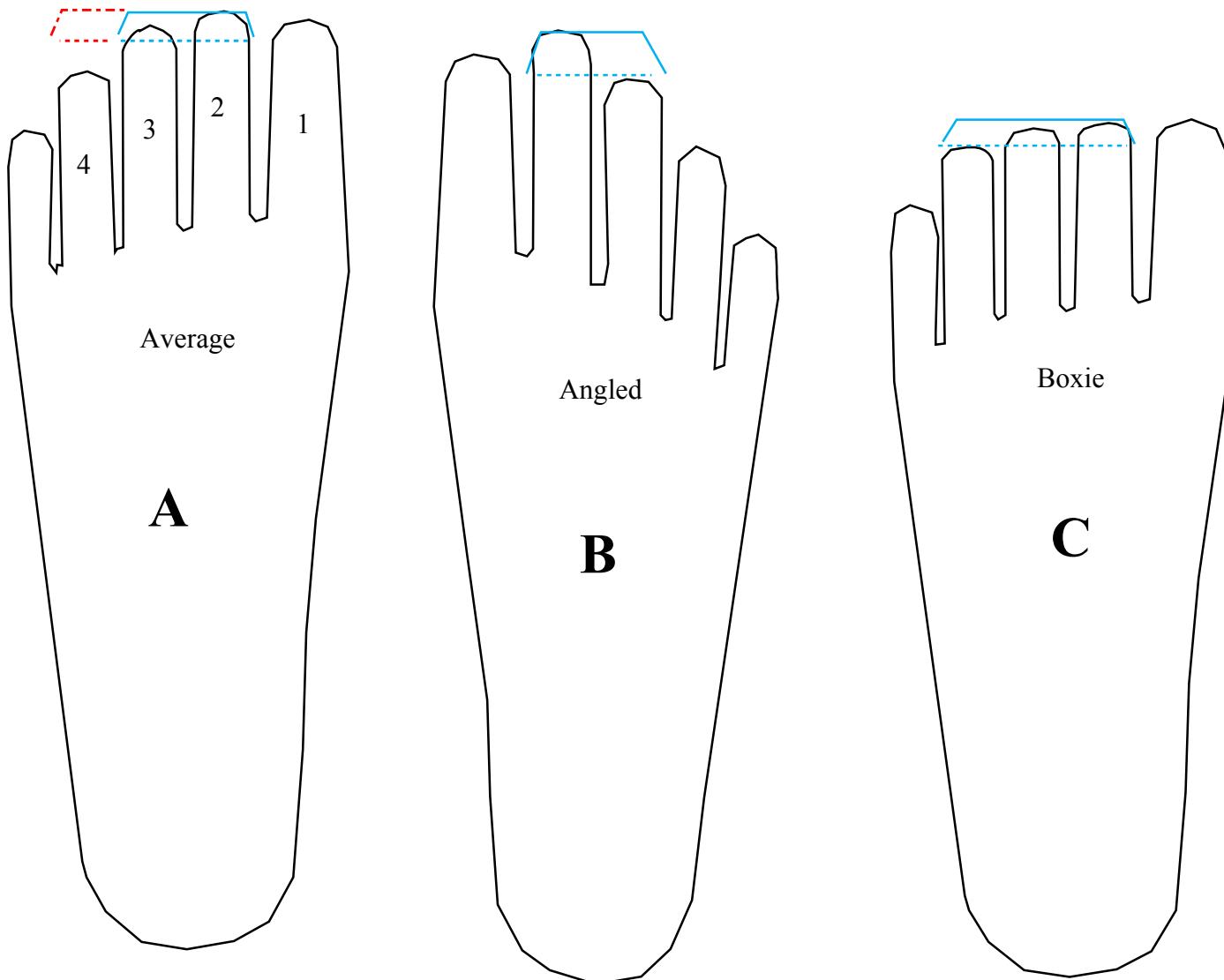
The samples below gives you three different basic shapes of toe arrangements. Which one do you have? That answer to that question will determine whether you measure around toes 2 and 3, or around toes 2,3 and 4, to get the measurement to calculate the number of stitches you will need for your "TOE-CAPS."

In fig. A, we have an average toe shape. Here you have options depending on how you like your socks to fit. Since I like a bit more room at the 4th toe, I measure around toes 2,3 and 4, then divide it in half to determine the length of my cast on row. I work *2 sets of short rows for shaping the TOE-CAP. If you want a more form fitting toe, then measure around toes 2 and 3; divide this measurement in half, apply your gauge and work *2 sets of short rows. * See page 4.

In fig. B, we have a very angled toe section (like my brother's, pictured on the front cover). Here we measure around toes 2 and 3, divided the measurement in half, then worked 3 short row sets, *because the differences in the two toes are more extreme.*

In fig. C, we have a squared shaped toe arrangement. This one requires that you measure around toes 2,3 and 4, and work 2 sets of short rows to form your TOE-CAP. **You can also work my "Slipper toe."** See tutorial at www.idahostixandstrings.com.

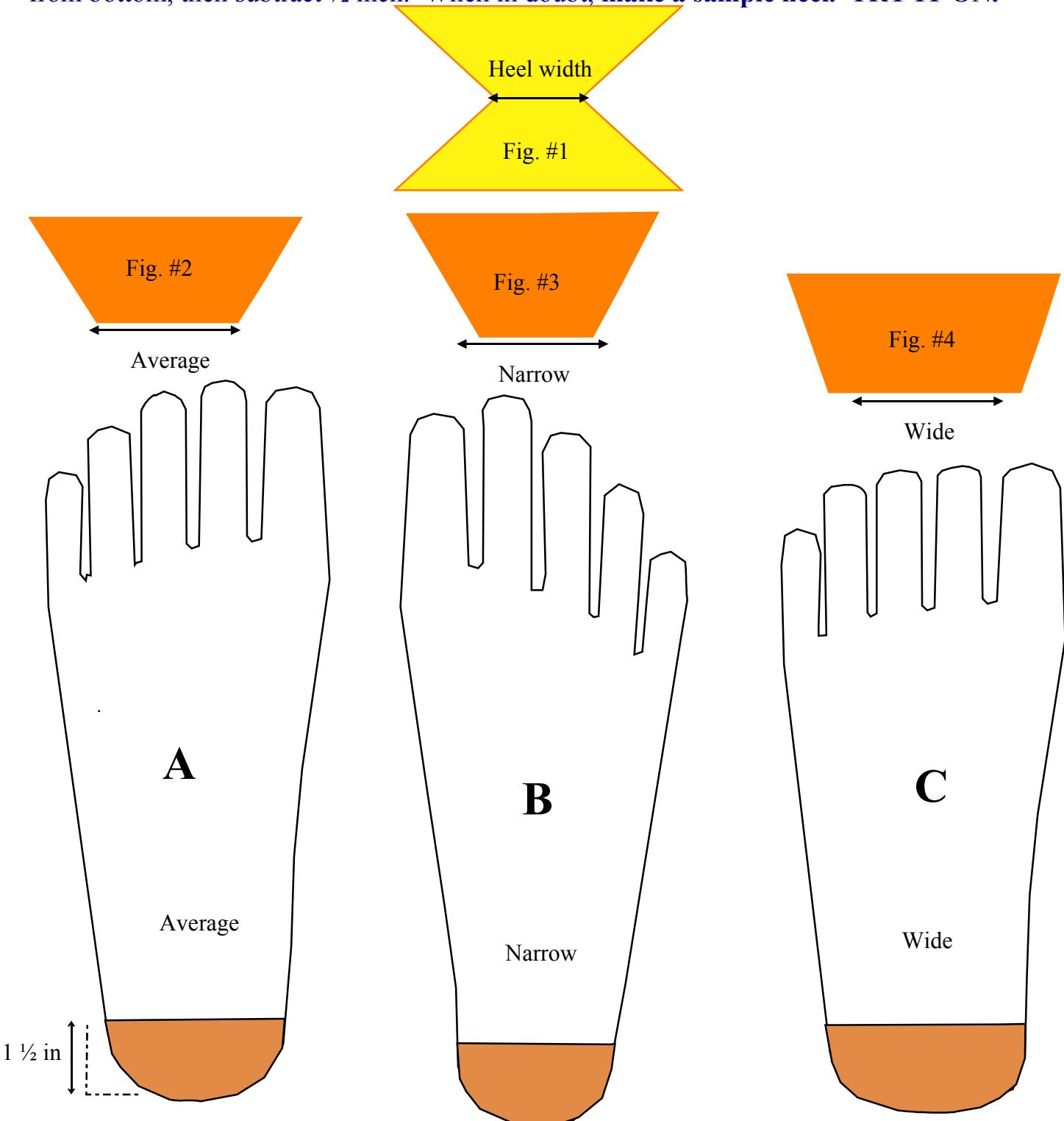
I am sure by now, you get the idea.



What about the Shape of Your Heel ?

Another important bit of information you can glean from the drawing , is the heel shape.

A, is more of a average heel. Generally this can be worked on half of the total stitches of your sock. Knitted Short row is worked in a shape similar to Fig #1. Once the short rows are closed, the result is Fig#2. You will notice that the number of stitches left in the middle determines the **heel width**. If you have a narrow heel (B), you can work more short rows sets, leaving less stitches in the middle. If you have a broader heel (C), you made need to work your heel on a few more stitches than half your total. The heel width is an important consideration for a well fitted sock. A generic heel does not always work for every foot. I measure across 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch up from bottom, then subtract $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. When in doubt, **make a sample heel. TRY IT ON.**



When to Start the Heel?

Almost all the “toe-up” sock patterns I have seen say to start your heel about 2 inches before you reach the total length of your sock. As I like my sock to fit snug and smooth on my feet, I determine my “total” length by measuring from tip of big toe to back edge of the heel, then I subtract at least 1 inch, sometimes $1 \frac{1}{2}$ inches, depending on how snug I want the sock to fit. The key here is to “**try it on.**” I like my heel to be in the curve of the turn.

That done, I can calculate when to start my heel placement by using my gauge for rows per inch.

For example, if you knit 10 rows to the inch, then you need 20 rows to make 2 inches. If you are shaping the heel with short rows, you will be using 2 rows to complete one set of short rows. This means that if you use 10 short row sets you will have completed 2 inches by the time you get to the heel turn.

If you are going to be using 12 sets of short rows, and your gauge is 10 rows to the inch, that means the you will be starting your heel, about $2 \frac{1}{4}$ inches, or 4 rows sooner.

Conversely, if you are using less than 10 short rows, (maybe 8 short rows sets) you would start your heel about $1 \frac{3}{4}$ inches, or 4 rows later.

These notes are just a few things you might want to consider in planning your pattern.

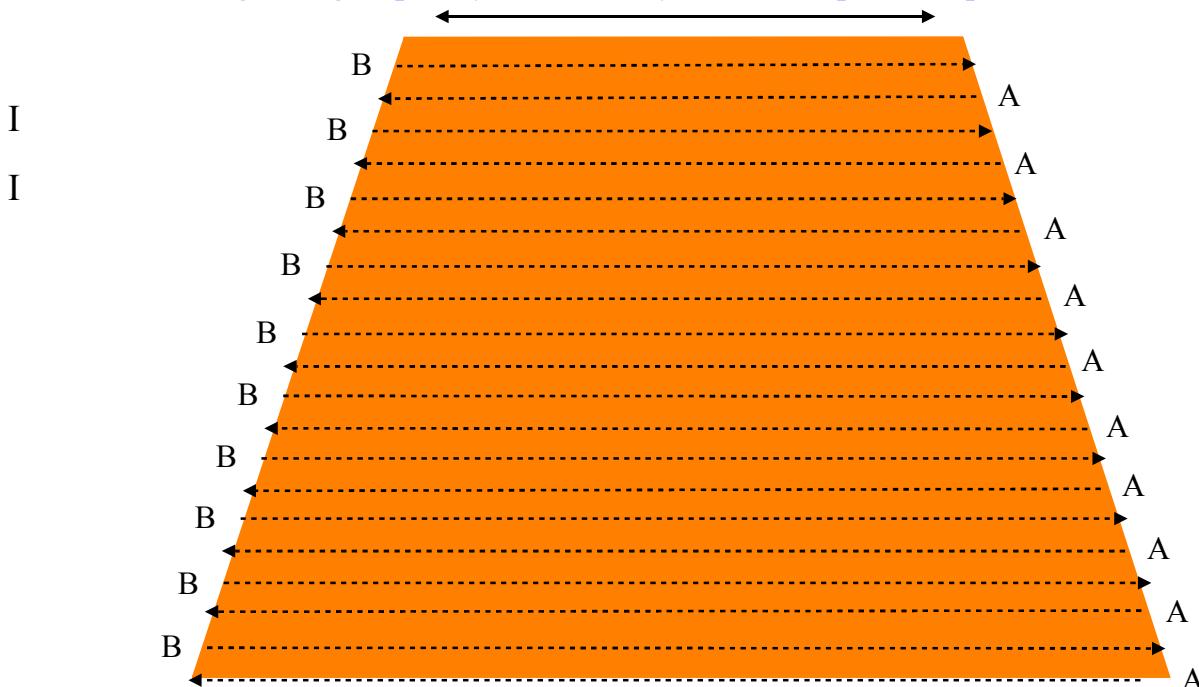
This is another one of those times when the infamous **swatch** is invaluable.

Short Row Layout to Heel Turn

Short row B (P) Sl 1 

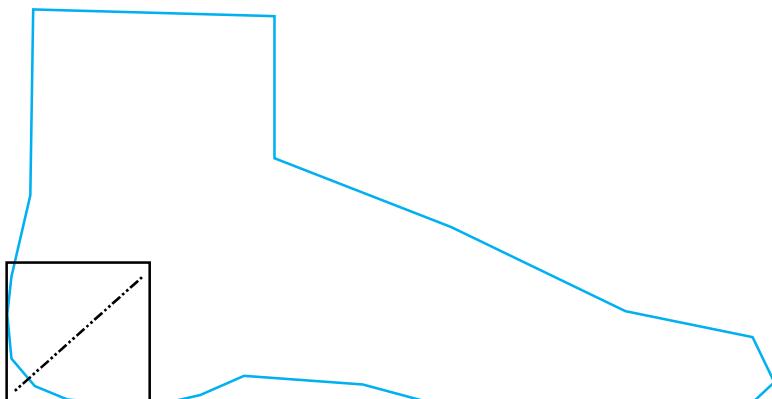
Heel width at ‘Heel Turn’

The beginning Slip st of each row of A and B equal complete one short row set.

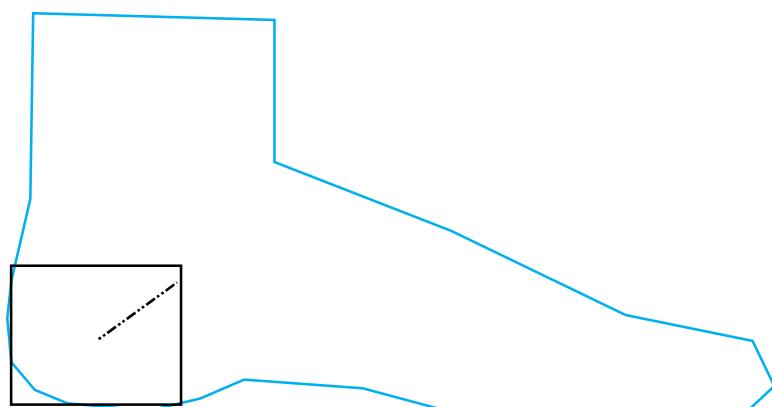


Heel Turn Placement

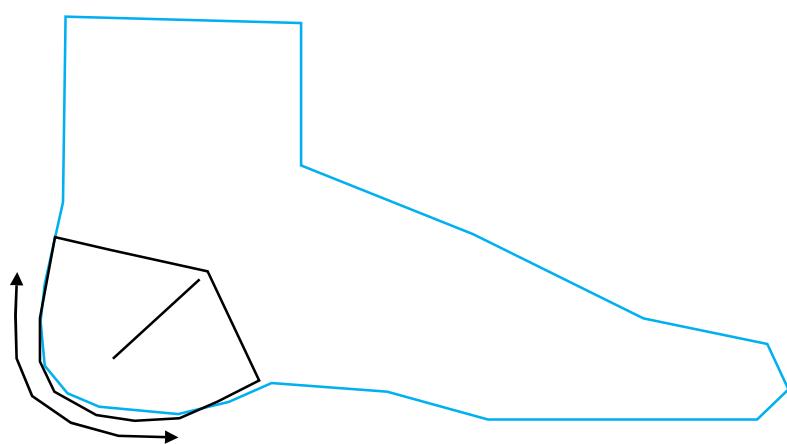
I want my heel in the “cup” of the turn.



NO



YES



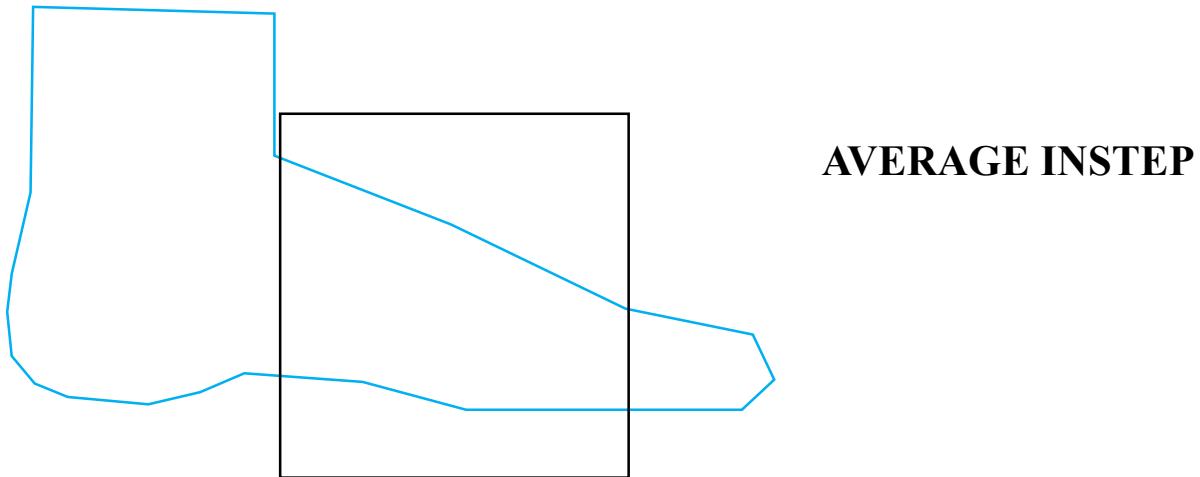
Instep Increases

Measure the highest point of your instep. Next, determine the amount of space you have to make the increases in. Using your row gauge, determine the amount of rows in the space, and divide the number of increases you need into the number of rows.

Increase equally on each side of your instep stitches. Normally you will only have to add these extra stitches on the top of the sock, not the sole.

If you have a narrow ankle area you can decrease a few by making a center decrease (or decreases) in the ankle stitches (an inch above the completed stitches of the heel). These stitches can be added back as you go up the leg section in preparation for your ribbed finish.

We did this on my brothers socks. It worked great.



HIGH INSTEP

