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by *Cat Bordhi*



**The inserted heel sock is probably the oldest and simplest of all sock architectures. For centuries, individuals have knit a tube with a toe at one end, then snipped a stitch and unraveled sideways to open a space to knit the missing heel. Elizabeth Zimmermann called it an “afterthought heel,” and today’s popular short-row heel actually produces the same architecture via a different sequence, with the heel knit in place rather than added later.**

The Houdini socks offer another approach to this ancient architecture. Houdini socks begin with a sock footprint – a foot-shaped tube closed on both ends – with no apparent way in, and no leg. Fortunately, you don’t have to be Houdini to understand what happens next.

**Houdini Sock Basics:**





Begin by making a "footprint": Using Judy Becker's magic cast-on, knit a toe and continue up the foot.

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When the foot is long enough that adding another toe will produce total foot length, work a toe in reverse.





To insert the missing leg, slide 2 rows of stitches onto needles (leaving 1 row in between). Snip the center stitch, unravel to within 2 stitches of the needle ends (the yarn remains in these stitches once you begin knitting the leg, eliminating gaps and keeping these stress points very even and secure).



In order to avoid having two ends to weave in at one side of the sock, begin knitting the leg at the center back.  
Knit the leg upward. Voila! An “afterthought leg.”

A handpaint trick: A standard toe/ heel can be rotated a quarter-circle and still fit just as well. Thus you can position the pooling colors as you like (under the foot or centered on top, for instance). Once you have chosen the top of your sock, proceed to picking up leg stitches.

The advantages of this sock architecture include precise foot length and the pleasure of peacefully knitting footprints, letting them pile up in your knitting basket until you are in the mood to get fancy with legs. Other variations, including customized fitting methods and fancy footprints, will appear in my next book.

[Download free pattern for Cat Bordhi's Houdini Socks](#)