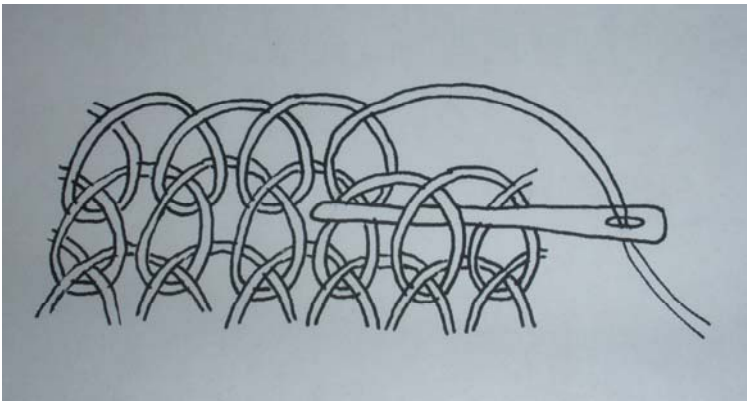


## Creating Accessories With Nålbinding (What do you mean I don't need a pattern?)

Nålbinding is an extremely old method of constructing fabric by creating interlocking loops with a single needle. The Coptic stitch is one of the earliest and easiest nålbinding stitches. Unlike other stitches, it is not constructed on the thumb, so care should be taken to ensure an even tension.

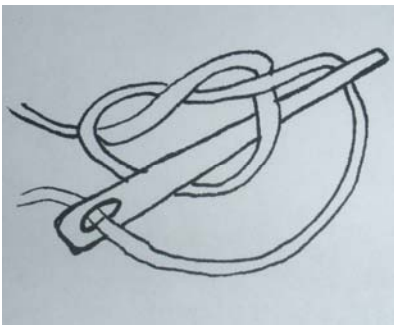
### The Coptic Stitch

Begin by making a small overhand knot and a chain of buttonhole stitches long enough to create the circumference you need. Join the chain by beginning to make the Coptic stitch through the post between each chain loop.



Coptic Stitch

Place your needle behind the post of the buttonhole stitch from right to left, keeping the needle in front of the working thread. Continue around in a clockwise direction. Increases are made by adding a buttonhole stitch between two Coptic stitches. Decreases are made by skipping a stitch.



Buttonhole Stitch

### Creating Accessories

Now that you know a stitch, what do you do with it? Nålbinding was traditionally used to make mittens, hats and sock. Unlike knitting, it is very difficult to write a successful pattern for a particular item. Since most stitches are made on your thumb, there is an infinite variety of possible stitch sizes. But don't despair! It is actually quite easy to make an item that is custom fit to you, or anyone else.

What do you want to make? Is it based on an artifact, or an idea you have in your head, or are you in need of a utilitarian accessory? What stitch do you want to use? Do you need to create thick padding, or something light and airy? Stitches like York or Vendel are very elastic, while Russian or Dalby are less so. The behavior of Coptic Stitch is very similar to knitting. Even if all you know is one stitch, the tension and the yarn can be varied to create a different look.

Whatever you are making, they can all be started from either end. Like knitting, the shape of the article is controlled by increasing and decreasing stitches. The shape will vary by how you place them.

The only rule: test the fit often. This is easy since with nålbinding you can't drop stitches and you don't have to work around the needle.

### **Starting From the Closed End**

Whether you are making socks, mittens or a hat, begin by making a small circle of stitches. For the second row, increase in every stitch.

Hands and toes are "flat." For socks and mittens as you continue to increase, place the increases opposite each other, with no or few increases between. Continue making increases in each row as needed. Place the piece on your hand or foot to test the fit. When it has grown to fit the widest part of your hand or foot, stop increasing and continue making rows. Remember that socks should fit snugly if you want to wear them with shoes.

For socks, continue until you reach your ankle. When you have made enough stitches to match the width of the front of your leg (approx.  $\frac{1}{4}$  the diameter of your ankle), disconnect the stitches and create a "caterpillar" long enough to go around your ankle. Continue going around until the sock is as long as you wish. If you are making knee socks, remember to increase for your calf. Fill in the heel hole by picking up stitches all the way around and quickly decreasing on each round until you reach the center.

For mittens, continue until the piece is as long as your fingers. As you come around by your thumb, disconnect your stitches and make a short "caterpillar." This will be a few stitches longer than the number of stitches you skip before connecting again. Continue around in whatever pattern you choose. Pick up the stitches around the thumb hole to create the thumb. Thumbs can also be made by disconnecting your stitches at the appropriate place and making a "caterpillar" equal to the circumference of your thumb. Join it in a circle and finish the thumb. Then go back and attach a new thread at the base of the thumb and continue around to complete the hand and cuff.

For a hat, continue increasing in every stitch and then every other stitch, and then every few stitches, until the piece has grown to fit the top of your head. As the piece grows, fewer increases will be needed. After that, just keep making

rows until the hat is as deep as you want. If you want a brim, add a few increases evenly spaced on the row where you want to turn it up. If you want a beret, keep increasing to make a flat circle at the beginning. When it is as wide as you want, make one or two rows at that diameter before decreasing back to the diameter of your head. Finish with a two or three row band.

### **Starting From the Open End**

All of these pieces can also be made starting from the open end. The difference is that you will make decreases to shape the piece instead of increases.

An important thing to remember is that for most people nålbinding tends to tighten up after the first row. Be sure to leave a little slack when you are measuring your initial “caterpillar,” otherwise your socks or mittens may be too tight, and your hat may be too small.

You can avoid this by trying your piece on often. If it is too tight, add a few stitches as you go along. If it is too loose, skip a stitch or two. You will quickly be right back where you need to be.

While it is not as easy as with knitting to rip out the stitches if you made a mistake, if you are nålbinding with stitches such as Oslo, Mammen, or Coptic, they can be pulled out without too much trouble. It is best to take the needle off the yarn and gently pull the yarn out, rather than try to work backwards with the needle.

If you are looking for inspiration, here is website from Sweden with many photos of artifacts:

<http://www.digitaltmuseum.se>

Search for nålbindning.

I wish you many hours of happy stitching.

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