Making a Slip Knot

1. Unwind a strand of yarn at least 8 inches long from the ball and hold it in your left hand between your thumb and forefinger. (The ball end of the yarn should be on the right, and the "tail" to the left.) With your right hand, wrap the ball end of the yarn clockwise around your forefinger and middle finger, with your fingers spread approximately 1 inch apart.

2. Pull a loop of the ball end of the yarn through the loop of yarn around your fingers.

3. Drop the yarn off the fingers of your left hand while still holding on to the loop with your right hand, and gently pull the tail end until a knot forms at the bottom of the base of the loop. Voilà! Le slip knot!

4. Slide that slip knot onto a knitting needle, and pull on the tail and ball ends to tighten it around the needle. (You get it? The knot slips!) As you do, think of the knot as a warm scarf hugging the needle rather than a noose choking off its air supply. You want this stitch to have a snug hug, not a yoke choke.
**Double Cast-on**

This cast-on method may seem a bit confusing at first, like cat's cradle, but practice it a couple of times and soon you'll be casting on stitches like nobody's business. Plus, it looks kinda cool—like you're holding a shotgun.

1. Make a slip knot, leaving a tail that's at least three times the width of the piece you want to knit. So, for a 10-inch-wide scarf, you'd leave about a 30-inch tail of yarn. Hold that needle with your right hand, with the long tail end hanging to the left and the ball end hanging to the right. Place your right pointer finger over the slip knot to hold it in place. Close the bottom three fingers of your left hand around the yarn, about 4 inches down from the needle. Now, with your thumb and forefinger, spread apart the two strands of yarn like you were opening a tiny little curtain. Bring your fingers through these strands from behind, making sure that the tail end is over your thumb and the ball end is over your forefinger. Your left hand should be in a stick-'em-up position, like you're holding a gun.

2. With the needle in your right hand, scoop up the strand of yarn that runs across your palm to the bottom of your thumb.

3. Wrap the yarn on your left forefinger around the front of your knitting needle, counterclockwise.

4. Bring the loop of yarn that's on your left thumb up and over the tip of your knitting needle.

5. Pull your thumb outta there and tighten the cast-on stitch.

Continue steps 2–5 until you've cast on the desired number of stitches, leaving you with several loops of yarn on your needle, each with a cute, snug little butt at the bottom.

**Tip:** If you find that you cast on stitches too tightly, you can make like the Europeans do, and cast on over two needles held together. When you are done, just pull one of the needles out and there you go—nice loose stitches remain on the other needle!
Two Left-Hand Holds for Continental Knitting

1. Wrap the yarn clockwise one-and-a-half times around your pointer finger, so that the wraps are between the first and second joint of your finger. The ball end of the yarn hangs down, and your pinky, ring, and middle fingers lightly close around it, to help with the tension. This is a very popular method and is particularly well suited to the Continental way of knitting.

2. If you crochet, this hold will be easy. Wrap the yarn clockwise around your pinky, then under your ring and middle fingers, and back over the top of your pointer finger. Lightly close your pinky, ring, and middle fingers around the yarn and let it run across the top of your pointer, between the first and second knuckle.
Knit Picking
The Continental (Left-Hand) Method

With your left hand, wrap the yarn using one of the methods described in Holding Your Own (page 38), then pick up the needle with the stitches on it. Keep your pointer finger, with the yarn wrapped around it, pointing in the air, and place your thumb and middle finger just behind the first stitch on the needle. Use your bottom two fingers to hold the needle up. Pick up your second knitting needle with your right hand, and hold it the way you would a set of keys, getting ready to open a door: with your thumb and forefinger resting about an inch from the tip, your forefinger resting on top, and your other three fingers supporting the needle.

2. Slide the point of the right needle through the first loop on the left needle from front to back (and from right to left). Stick the point through about 1½ inches. Your needles should be making an X, with the left needle on the top of the X (closest to you), and the right needle on the bottom (away from you).

3. Okay, here’s the tricky part in Continental knitting: With the tip of the right needle, grab that strand of yarn that’s coming from your forefinger so that it wraps counterclockwise around the right needle.
Pull this new loop back out the loop you came in from. (It sometimes helps to twist your hands so that your palms face you.) With Continental knitting, you're doing all the work with your right needle rather than your fingers, and you are "picking" stitches from the strand. And guess what? You've just created a new loop. Wunderbar!

Once you're back out, slide the right needle up again so that the new loop is about 1½ inches from the tip. Your needles should be back in an X shape.

Push the old loop off the left needle.

Hey, you did it! You made a knit stitch, Continental-wise. Now go get yourself a Continental breakfast and celebrate!

Keep It Comin', Love

Just keep knitting each stitch from the left needle onto the right needle until there are no stitches left. Then, switch hands: Place the needle with stitches in your left hand, and take the empty, naked needle in your right. Make sure your yarn is hanging straight down and in front of the needle (see Caution, page 38), and go back the other way. Then, just like a little human typewriter (you've seen one of those ancient machines, right?), work each row, switch hands, and knit back again until your piece of knitting is as long as you want it to be.

Caution: A super-easy and common mistake to make at this point is to have the yarn hanging down but to the back of your needle, making it look like you have two stitches at the end of your left needle instead of one (figure 1). Lots of beginners then actually knit both of these stitches, adding a stitch to each end of their knitting and creating a weirdly shaped shawl-like object instead of a scarf or other straight piece of knitting. So make sure your yarn is hanging down correctly (in front of the needle) before you head back (figure 2).
bound for glory
How to Bind Off Your Work

There's one last thing you need to know, and that's how to get the darn thing off the needles when you're done. Otherwise, you'd be walking around with a scarf that had a big pointed stick at one end. Okay, maybe you'd like to rock a stick-in-the-mud look this season, but it's still a good idea to know how to get those stitches off the needle and how to secure them so they don't unravel. It's called binding off, and it's easy. Really. Here's how:

1. Starting at the beginning of a row, knit a stitch. Let's call it Sally. Knit another stitch and call it Harry.

2. Slide the tip of the left needle under Sally's front leg (the first stitch you knit).

3. Then let Sally play leapfrog with Harry (the second stitch), by lifting Sally up and over Harry and then letting her drop off the tip of the right needle.

4. Only Harry is left on the right needle.

5. Repeat steps 2 and 3 over and over again, knitting a stitch, then leapfrogging the previous stitch over it, until all of your stitches have been bound off, and you're left with only one stitch. Cut the yarn about 6 inches from the end and pull it through that last stitch, tightening gently.

the end of the line
How to Weave in Yarn Ends

When you've finished knitting a piece of fabric, you'll have a couple of yarn tails hanging along the side. You might want to pass these off as some kind of really weird fringe, but you'd be better off to hide them by weaving them in. Here's how:

Thread the yarn end through a yarn needle (see page 22). Bring the yarn in and out through the bumps along the edge or the back of your piece until you've tucked in about 4 inches of your yarn tail. Snip the yarn close to the end.