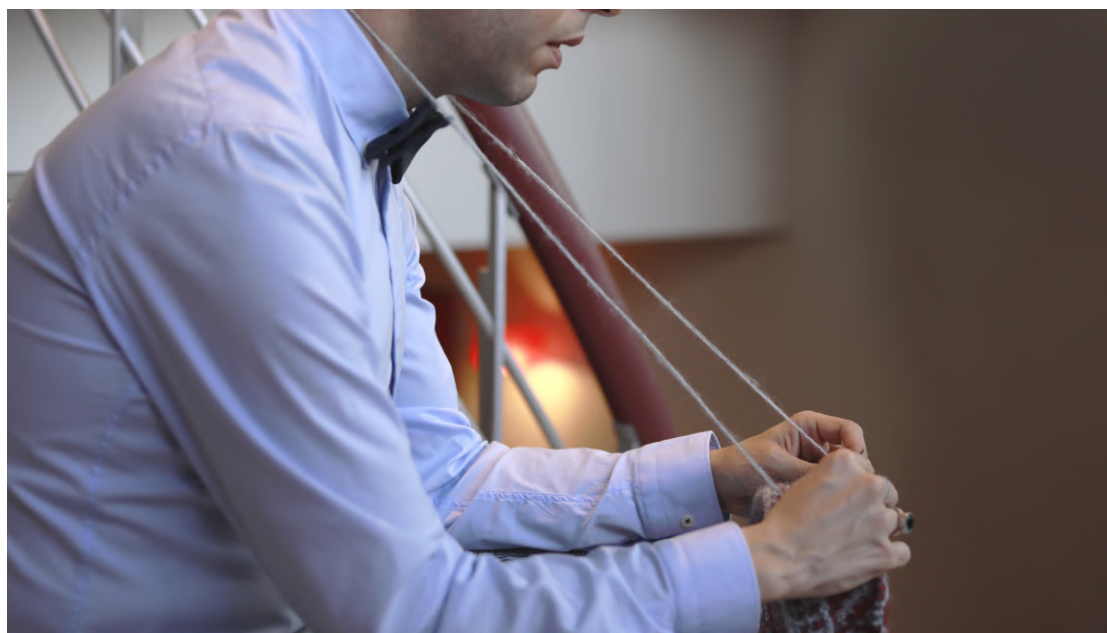




# Portuguese Knitting for Beginners

*by André de Castro*



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## A little about Portuguese Knitting Style...

The knit stitch, as you know, is the base of all knitting - just a loop of yarn interlocked with another loop of yarn. But we also know there are different ways to perform it.

Most knitters are familiar with the two most common styles of knitting: English style, in which the yarn is kept at proper tension using the right hand; and Continental, in which the yarn is kept in play using the left hand. But there is another method you may not heard of. It is way I knit and called "*Portuguese knitting*"

### *Origins*

To call it "Portuguese knitting" is a little confusing - it also sometimes referred to as "Incan knitting", "Turkish knitting", or "around the neck knitting" - because it actually originated among Arabic knitters.

We can trace its origins to the Middle East and other Mediterranean countries like Greece, Bulgaria, Egypt and Turkey also took up the technique.

So why call it "Portuguese knitting"?

Maybe because Portugal is the country where this style of knitting is still the most predominant, it was adopted the expression "Portuguese knitting".

When the muslims began to conquer the Iberian Peninsula, they introduce the technique to what is today Portugal and Spain. Then, with the colonization of South America by Portuguese and Spanish, "Portuguese knitting" spread to Peru, Andes and into Latin America.

### *Technique*

When using the Portuguese knitting technique, the yarn in play is wrapped around the middle finger of the right hand, and then strung around the knitter's neck or through a pin fastened to the knitter's left shoulder. This helps maintain an extremely even tension.

The big difference with Portuguese knitting is that the yarn comes from the front of the work and not from the back as with English and Continental styles. This happily makes the purl stitches much easier.

Not surprisingly, therefore, traditional Portuguese knitting patterns make extensive use of the purl stitch. For example, the Portuguese Garter stitch is made by *purl every row* instead of *knit every row*.

In the old days if you wanted to knit Stockinette stitch in the round, knitters would need to knit inside out with the purl side facing.

Knit/purl combinations like ribbing and seed stitch are easier and faster to perform in Portuguese style because stitches are made just by flicking the left thumb thus requiring considerably less hand movement. This is what makes it a very efficient way to knit: *less movement = faster knitting*.



*Position of the yarn strung around the neck*

Portuguese knitting offers other advantages in addition to increase ease with purling and picking up speed.

Nowadays a lot of people suffer from hand injuries related to knitting. Switching to the Portuguese technique is a good choice for people who suffer from carpal tunnel syndrome, arthritis, joint pain, or difficulty using their hands because less movement is needed to form the stitches.



*Left thumb movement*

It is also easier to work stranded colorwork or double knitting in Portuguese way because you can strand each color on either side of your neck or through two different knitting pins. This helps multiple colors from getting tangled, makes dropping yarn less of a problem, and offers a wonderful smoothness to your knitting.



*Stranded colorwork in Portuguese Style*

### ***What are the pros as cons of Portuguese knitting?***

As a native Portuguese knitter and one who has experienced other ways of knitting I can honestly say that I haven't found any disadvantages. Portuguese knitting is quite easy, fast and straightforward. I think it's just you need to learn another way to do something. I know knitters like new things and I think you will like this too.

I definitely recommend you to try it!

*André de Castro article on Portuguese Knitting for "Cast On" magazine Fall 2019*

## Position of the yarn and hands...

- The yarn should be strung around the neck, letting the yarn ball rest on your right side and the tail to the left side.  
If you are using a portuguese knitting pin instead, the pin its attached to your left shoulder and the yarn passes through it, with the yarn ball resting in the right side and the tail on the left side.
- The tension of the yarn is achieved by making a loop around your right hand middle finger. Don't keep the yarn too much tight around the middle finger, the yarn have to flow and run freely in order to keep an even tension.
- The hands should be in a relaxed position, not to high or not to low, just at the level of your belly.

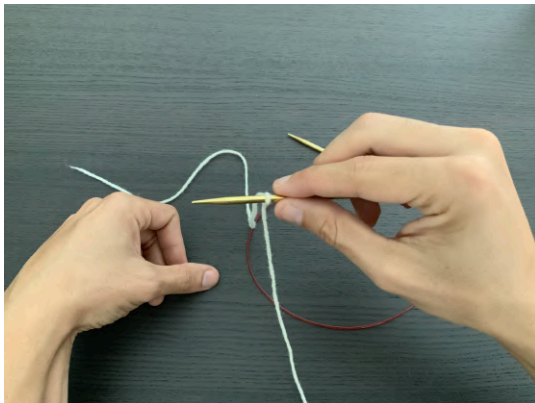
## Casting on in Portuguese Style...

In this type of cast on you will be casting on the stitches on your needle, with the yarn around your neck.

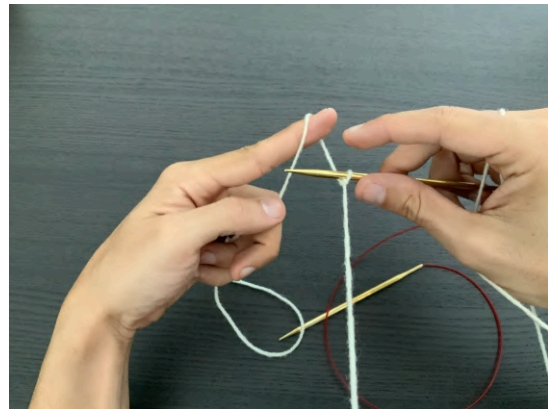
For this cast on you will need to leave a tail long enough to cast on the desired number of stitches.

If you are knitting flat after cast on you will be ready to work a **right side row**.

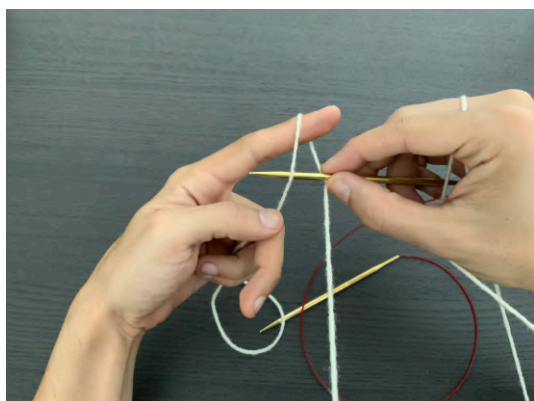
*This type of cast on is not suitable to work in the round since the wrong side of the cast on will be facing out when you join to work in the round. If you want knit in the round just use the regular long tail cast on method or another you like.*



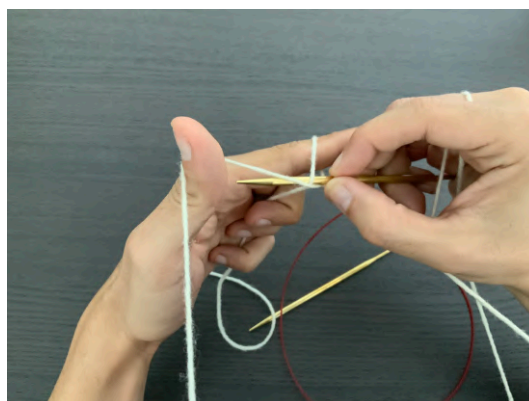
**1.** Make a slip knot and place it on one needle with the working yarn to the front and the tail to the back. Keep the needle in the right hand with pointing to the left. This is the first stitch.



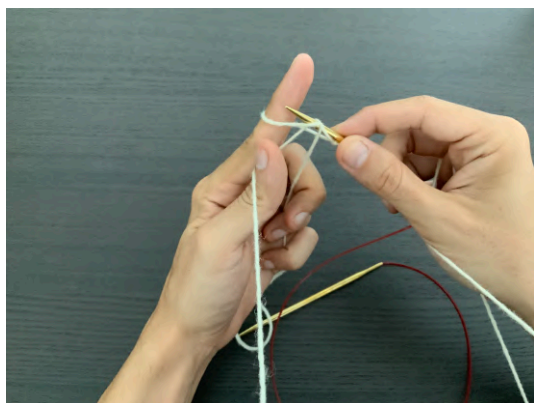
**2.** Hold the tail with the last 3 fingers of the left hand and lift your left hand index finger in order to have the tail passing over.



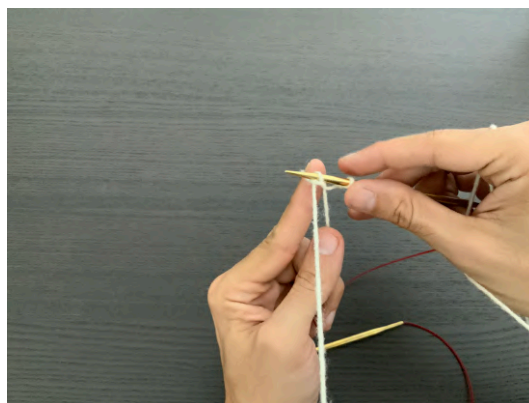
**3.** Insert the needle under the tail, from right to left.



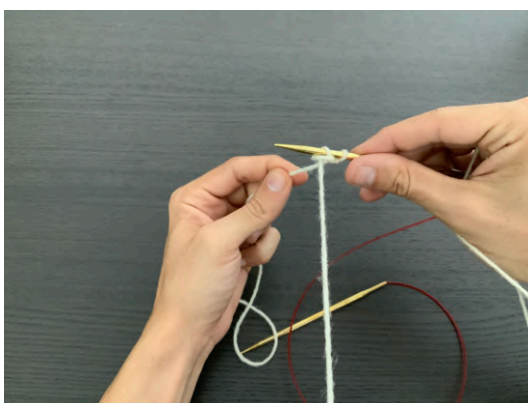
**4.** With the left thumb, and working yarn in front, wrap the working yarn around and over the needle.



**5.** With the RH needle tip, remove the working yarn from inside of the loop around the index finger.



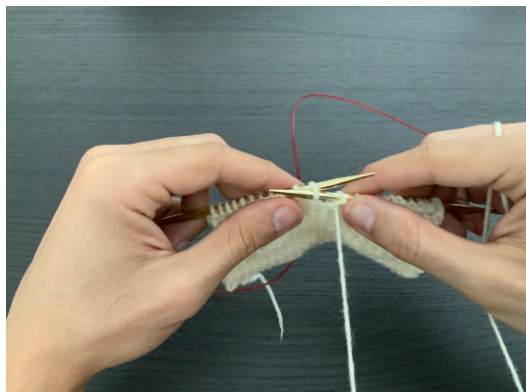
**6.** You have now the second stitch on your right hand needle.



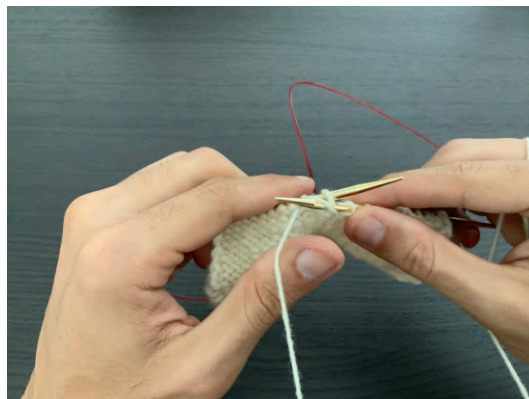
**7.** Remove the index finger and adjust the loop around the needle without tighten it too much.

Repeat the steps 2 to 7 until you have the desired number of stitches

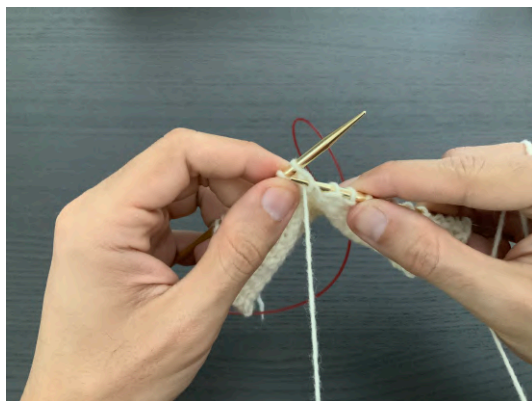
## The purl stitch...



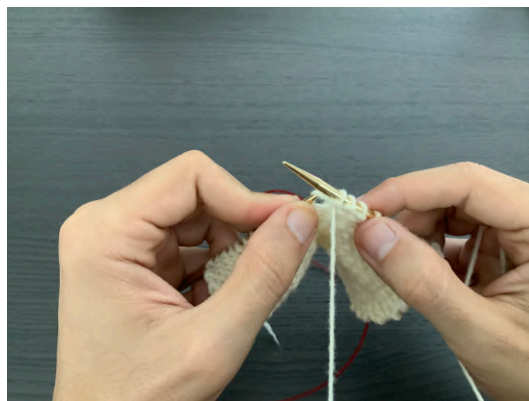
**1.** With the yarn **in front**, insert the RH needle tip in the first stitch of the LH needle from right to left.



**2.** With the left thumb, wrap the working yarn around the tip of the RH needle, from front to back.



**3.** With the RH needle tip remove the yarn from inside the stitch, creating a new stitch on the RH needle.



**4.** Remove the stitch from the LH needle.

**Exercise 1:** CO 26 sts using the Portuguese Cast On and purl 6 rows.

## The knit stitch...



1. With the yarn **in back**, insert the RH needle tip in the first stitch of the LH needle from left to right. When introducing the RH needle be careful that the needle stays in front of the LH needle.



2. With the left thumb, wrap the working yarn around the tip of the RH needle, from front to back.



3. With the RH needle tip remove the yarn from inside the stitch, creating a new stitch on the RH needle.



4. Remove the stitch from the LH needle.

**Exercise 2:** Knit 6 rows.

## Knit / Purl combinations...

Now its time to combine the two stitches!

### Exercise 3: Stockinet stitch

**Row 1:** Knit all the sts.

**Row 2:** Purl all the sts

Repeat this 2 rows 8 times.





### Exercise 4: 2 x 2 Ribbing

**Row 1:** \* k2, p2 \*, rep from \* to \* until last 2 sts, k2

**Row 2:** \* p2, k2\* rep from \* to \* until last 2 sts, p2

Repeat this 2 rows 8 times.

## To be aware...

-  Try to keep an even tension, don't tighten up the yarn and be relaxed...
-  Don't wrap the yarn multiple times around your middle finger... you'll not get more grip making this. Instead you'll not give freedom to the yarn to run freely and end up with your knitting at your neck level!
-  Keep attention where's the working yarn before you make a stitch... remember: ***purl stitches begin always with yarn in front*** and ***knit stitches begin always with yarn in back***.
-  If you are having "holes" in your knitting it's a sign that you are making stitches with the opposite yarn position that the stitch requires... (it's the way to make yarn overs!!!...but keep it away at this stage.

Happy Knitting!

André