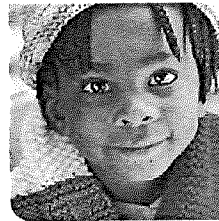




...and make a vulnerable or orphaned child warm



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## History of knitting, from knotted nets and knitted socks to knitting guilds

**Historical content:** This blog post is more than 12 months old, so some content may now be out of date.

Please use the main menu items on the side of the page to get the most up-to-date information.

## History of knitting, from knotted nets and knitted socks to knitting guilds

We researched many of the great knitting sites on the net and other historical references for information on the history of knitting. Most of them cited a similar story from which we were able to establish this basic knitting history.

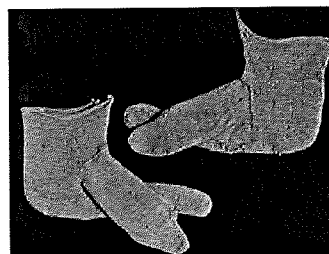
### Knotted nets

Among many other theories, there is supposition that knitting may be connected to the ancient skill of knotting fishing nets. The similarity in spelling is tempting enough. And this concurs with the historical view that knitting was introduced by Arabian seafarers sailing and trading in the Middle East and the Mediterranean.

Knitting certainly appears to have its roots in pre-Christian times, but the spread of Christianity may have carried the germ of the practice with it. Its evidence in South America, for example, is thought to be as a result of the influence of the Spanish conquistadors. The lack of many surviving examples – fabric and fibres deteriorate relatively quickly – makes it difficult to judge the exact history of knitting.

### Knitted socks

The earliest example we could find was these knitted socks, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London, circa 300-499, excavated from Egypt at the end of the 19th century. According to the museum, they have been knitted in stocking stitch using three-ply wool and a single needle technique, similar to *Nalbinding*.



*Nalbinding* is described as an ancient Scandanavian technique used to produce woollen clothing from lengths of yarn and a single short needle. This method created a tight weave which was suitable for felting and therefore, provided maximum protection from the cold. While this is not considered knitting, it is suggested it may be its precursor and certainly that of crochet-work.

Evidence of the earliest knitting, using two needles, is believed to come from Egypt in the eleventh century, where more knitted socks were found.

But from there we jump to thirteenth and fourteenth century Europe, particularly France, Germany and Britain. The painting, *The Visit of the Angels*, circa 1390, by the German painter, Master Bertram, depicts the Madonna knitting in the round.

### Knitting guilds

Fashionable knits were known in France as early as the 1420s. It is also known that knitting guilds, exclusively male and with structured apprenticeship systems, were formed in Europe in the 1400s. These knitting guilds appear to have been



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Learning Posters (Kas Ops Support)

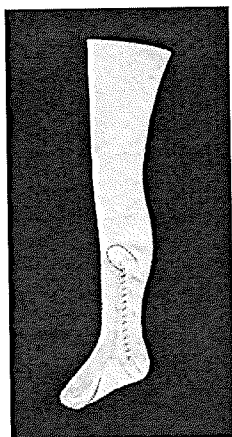
Many pre-school aged children in South Africa are cared for during the day by community run day care centers or crèches. These organizations do...

### Free Pattern

Zanny's T Sweater



established to improve the quality of the profession and to attract a wealthier and more stable clientele. From the Elizabethan period in Briton, knitting history is easier to determine. The development of knitting was driven by the fashion of the time, in particular fitted stockings worn by the men under short trunks. These stockings were exported to many other parts of Europe.



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During the 17th century, knitted stockings continued to be very popular and could be beautifully knitted and finished with embroidery as shown in this example, ©

Victoria and Albert Museum, London, circa 1660 - 1670. Knitware such as this jacket below, circa 1525-1650, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London, were knitted in incredibly fine gauge out of silk and silver gilt thread and then embroidered. It is hard to imagine how many knitting stitches that would involve.

### Knitting and modern history

As we approach more modern times and with the industrial revolution and the two world wars, the history of knitting, particularly in Britain, is better documented.

We were even able to find evidence of square knitting for blankets and for charitable purposes too.



Sources: [www.menknit.net](http://www.menknit.net), *The Complete Encyclopedia of Stitchery* by Mildred Graves Ryan, [www.helium.com](http://www.helium.com), <http://www.jelldragon.com>, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

