

The Oslo Mitten Stitch

By Ann Asplund

The Oslo mitten stitch is not the same as the Oslo stitch. This stitch occurs in the mitten featured in Odd Nordlands book "Primitive Scandinavian Textiles in Knotless Netting". I have named it the Oslo mitten stitch, or mitten stitch for short, to separate it from the Oslo stitch. It was found in 1926 by Gerhardt Fisher, under some wooden construction belonging to a passage belonging to the earlier settlement, and was probably lost by a worker during the construction, which dates this mitten by circumstances to the eleventh century (Nordland, page 43).

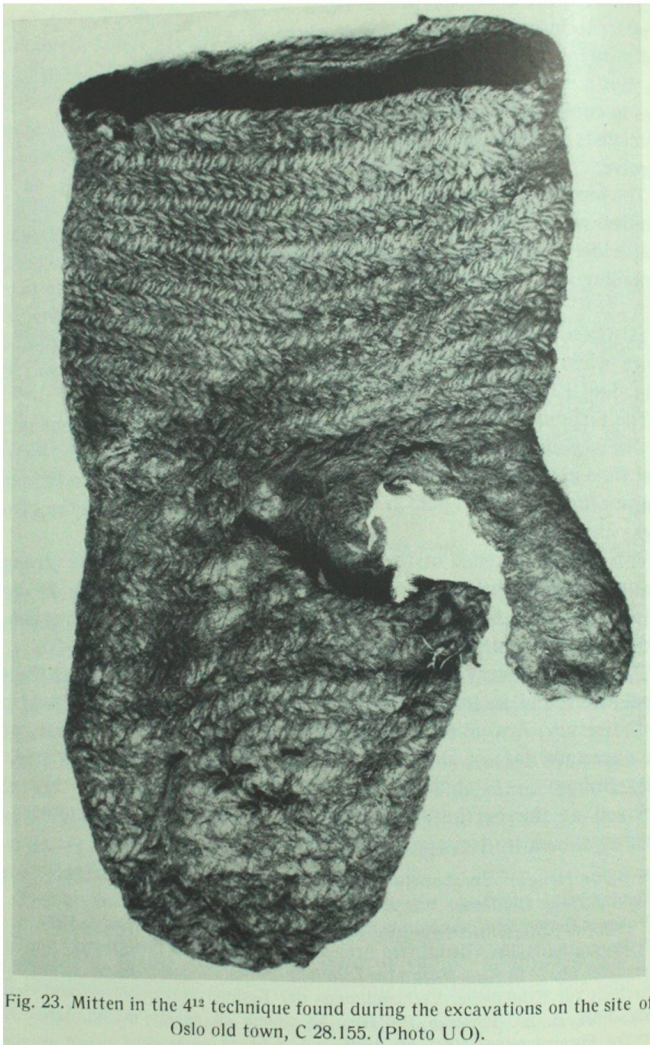
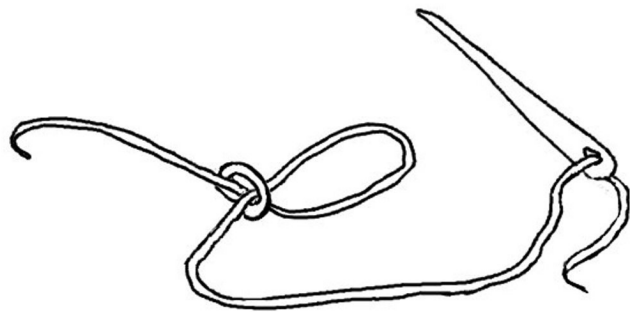


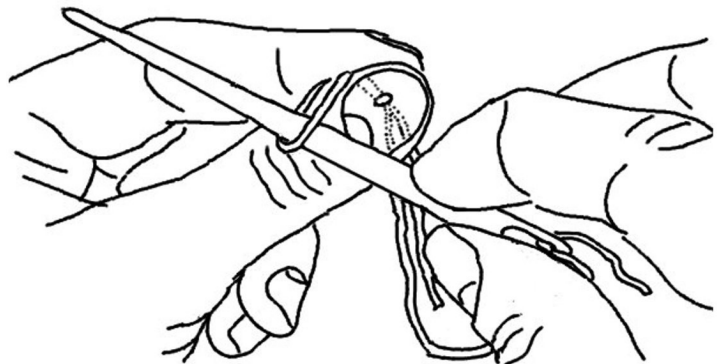
Fig. 23. Mitten in the 4¹² technique found during the excavations on the site of Oslo old town, C 28.155. (Photo U O).

The original mitten. Picture from Nordland, 1961.

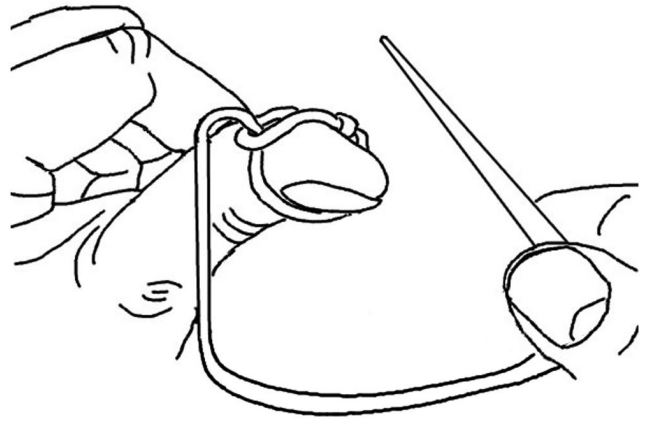
To start the mitten stitch, thread your needle with an armslength of yarn, and make a slip knot loop in the end of the long end. Make it somewhat large, and loose.



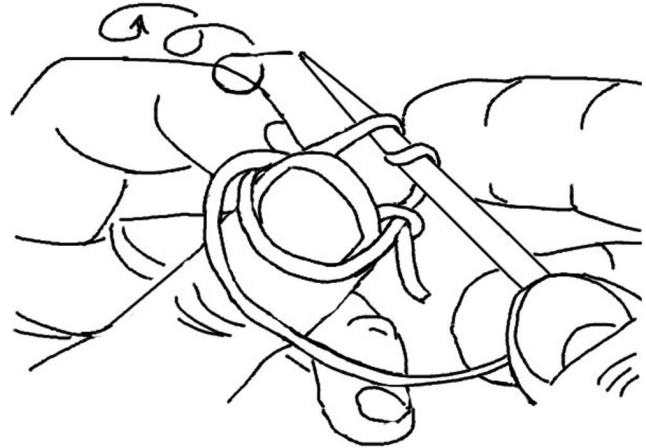
Then hold the loop between your left index finger and thumb, and pull the needle through, to create a thumb loop, on the back of your thumb (the knuckle side).



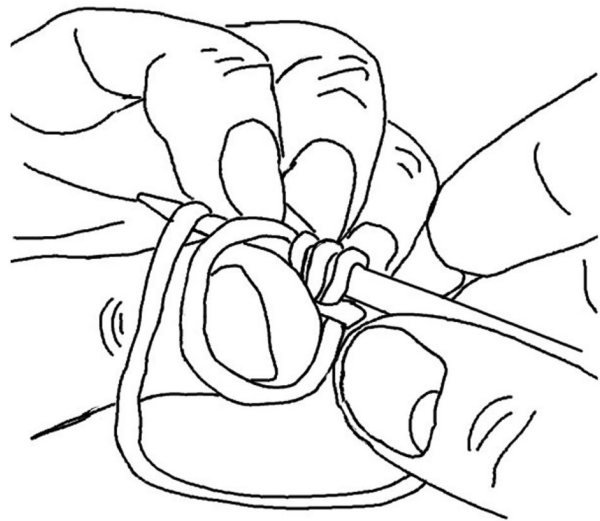
After creating the thumb loop, you will have this: ----->
A thumb loop on the back of the thumb, and a "pick" loop on the pad side of the thumb. The stitch is circular, with the needle coming in from the right, going out to the left, going round and round your thumb counter clock wise.



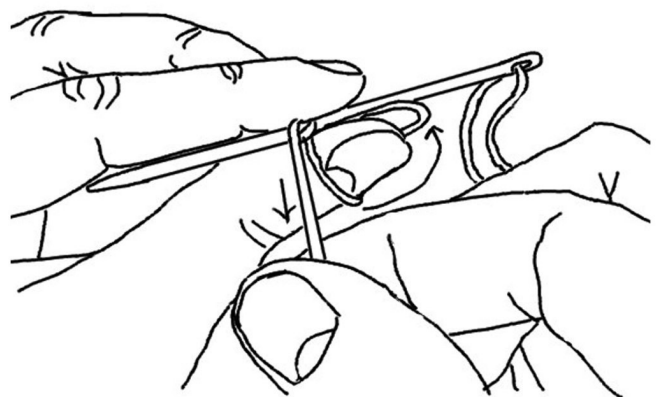
This stitch works with one thumb loop, and on every turn around the thumb it picks three loops. Since this is the first turn, there is only one loop to pick. To create three loops, the needle tip is inserted through the "pick" loop from underneath, and then the tip is twisted three times around the pick loop, to pick up three loops on the needle. If the yarn is really thick, it is ok to pick only two loops, but it will change the look of the finished textile.



When you have picked up three strands of the pick up loop on the needle, bend the tip down through the thumb loop on the left side of your thumb, and under the running thread. At this point, do not pull the needle through!

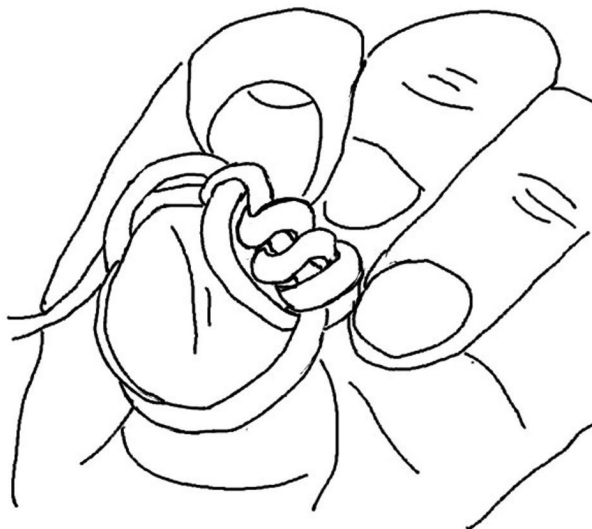


While holding the needle in place, flip the thumb loop over the top of the thumb, and gently pull to make it smaller. Do not pull too hard! Since you have to pick three strands, it can get tight quite quickly, so work softly. This is also the first time around, so it will be a bit tricky to make smaller. The next turn will be easier.

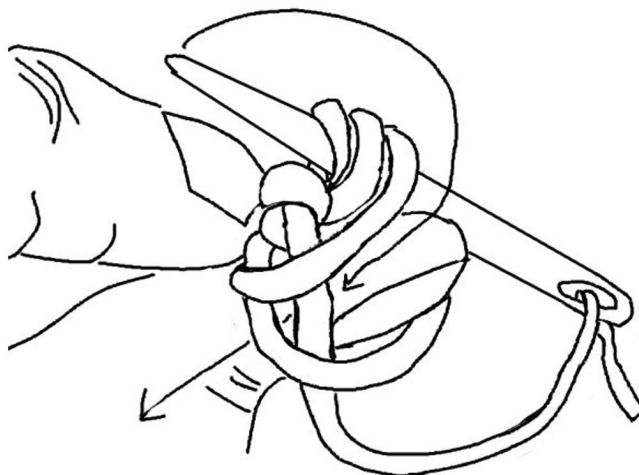


After pulling through the first time, what you have on your thumb, will look something like this, with the three created loops on a row. This will slowly change to three nested loops in diminishing size. As with all needle binding every stitch builds on the previous stitch, and will therefore require a number of reiterations to build up the proper loop structure.

So perseverance and persistence is the key word in all needle binding. As long as you are performing the correct movements, it does not matter if you picked the wrong loop once, as long as you pick it, it will create the right loop for when you come round the next turn.



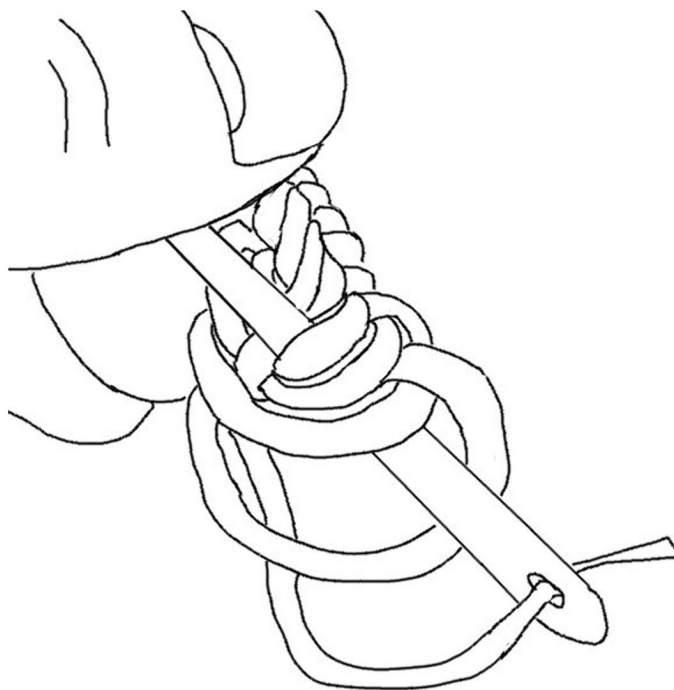
For the next step, we repeat the process of picking three loops, bending down under (on the left side) and through the thumb loop, and under the running thread, stopping to flip the thumb loop and tighten it, and so on and so forth. To pick the three loops, insert the needle from the right side of your thumb, picking them from underneath the loops, pick the two right most loops. The third loop is the former thumb loop from the last turn. So every turn you pick two older and one new (the former thumb loop). The second will be hard to separate from the third old one, so sometimes you will have to tease them apart with the tip of the needle to make sure you get the right one, before you pick the former thumb loop.



After working for a while, you will have a chain looking like the picture to the right ----->

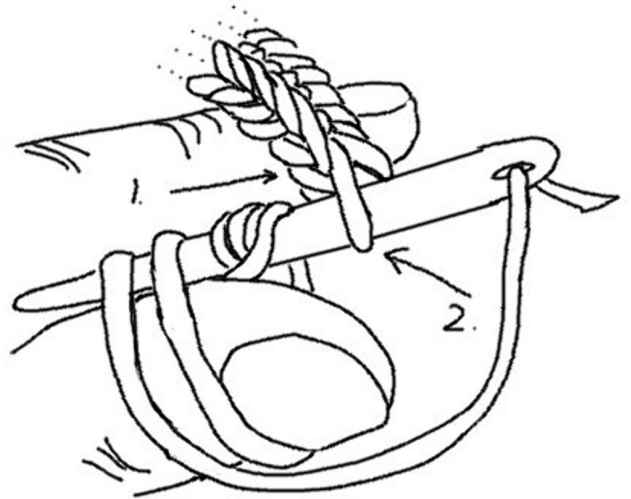
The needle has picked two old loops and one new, totalling the required three, stopping just before going down through the thumb loop on the left side. The braid will have a triangular cross section with the right side being thicker with a standing edge (seen from the top as in the picture), with a flatter braid making up the left side and the narrower side of the wedge.

In the picture the thumb is not there, leaving the thumb loop lose.



Joining the first row with a second row, is how you turn your braid into a textile. Most stitches simply catches the edge loop of the previous braid/row, before going through the ordinary round of movements involved in one turn of the stitch.

In this stitch, to create the characteristic ridges of the original mitten, the joining is done through the second edge stitch, the right hand stitch of the two edge stitches. The edge stitches are numbered 1 and 2 in the picture, for first and second edge stitch.



Mitten stitch trouble shooting:

You get weird twisty things happening, - well, you are probably picking the third old loop too, now and then, but there will be some minor wave action on the side braid regardless, and excessive pulling will enhance this.

If it is hard to find the loops, or separate the second from the third of the old ones, pry them apart with the needle, and try to loosen up on the tension. This stitch is pretty dense to begin with, and choosing a thinner or less fluffy yarn will help with finding the loops.

If you want less ridges, you can use the first edge loop for the joining, and if using a thick yarn, just picking two loops (one old, the right most one, and the former thumb loop), will also lessen the ridge effect and make it easier to pick the loops in each turn.

So have fun, and remember; Perseverance and Persistence!

For questions, and updated version of this handout, do not hesitate to contact me on asplund.ann@gmail.com or visit my website: www.annotherday.com where you can find this and other handouts, plus other fiber arts.