

CHEROKEE STYLE MOCCASINS

One of the simplest style of moccasins were made and worn by the Cherokee and other Southeastern tribes. These moccasins were traditionally made from soft leather, but they can be made from just about any tough flexible material, such as canvas or imitation leather seat-covering fabrics. Once, I even made a pair from part of a plastic trash bag and some duct tape.

For many people, the hardest part of making a pair of these moccasins may be just laying out the pattern —especially if you are not familiar with the concepts involved in making your own patterns.

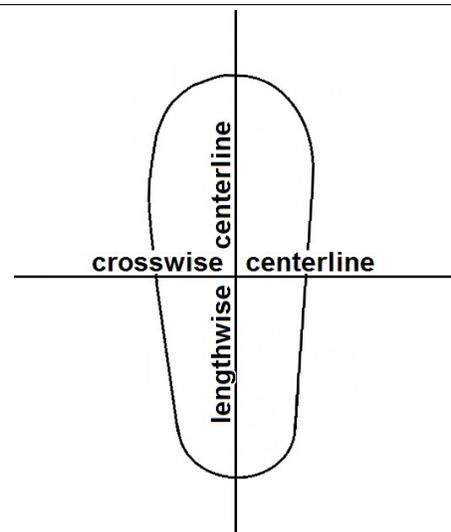
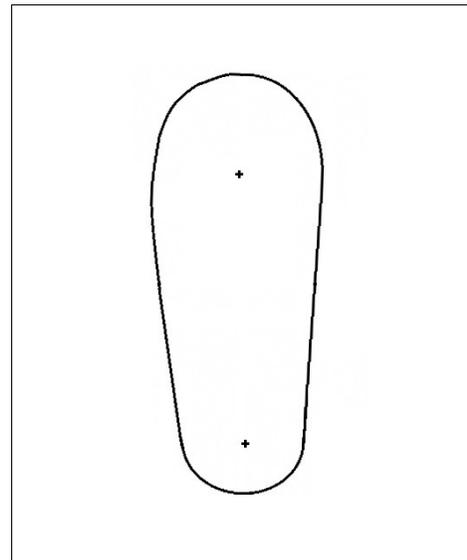


Making the Pattern:

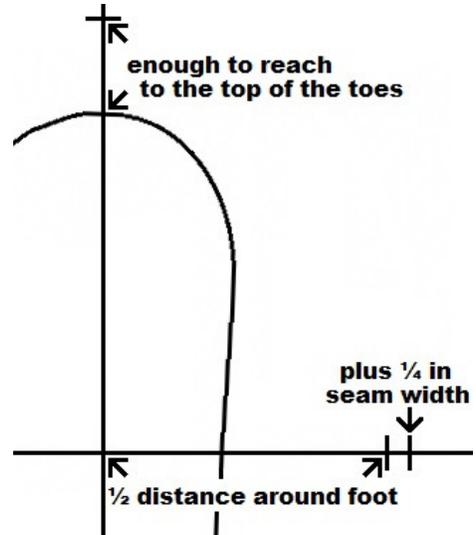
(1) Trace the foot on a piece of paper. This paper should be at least about 4 inches / 8-10 cm longer than the foot, and a little over twice as wide as the foot. Trace the foot in the center of the paper.

(2) Draw a line, lengthwise, through the center of the foot. This can easily be done by making one mark in the center of the heel area, and another mark in the center of the widest part of the foot just back from the toes. Then, with a straightedge, draw a line through these marks. Extend this line a couple inches / 4-5 cm beyond both the heel and toe of the foot tracing.

(3) Draw another line, crosswise / perpendicular to the lengthwise centerline through the center of the foot. This can possibly most easily be done by folding the paper. Place the point where the heel of the foot tracing crosses the lengthwise centerline together with the point where the toes of the foot tracing crosses the lengthwise centerline. After smoothing and creasing the fold, open the paper out flat again. Place a straight edge on the fold, and mark the crosswise centerline. The 'center' of the foot is where the lengthwise centerline and the crosswise center line cross each other.



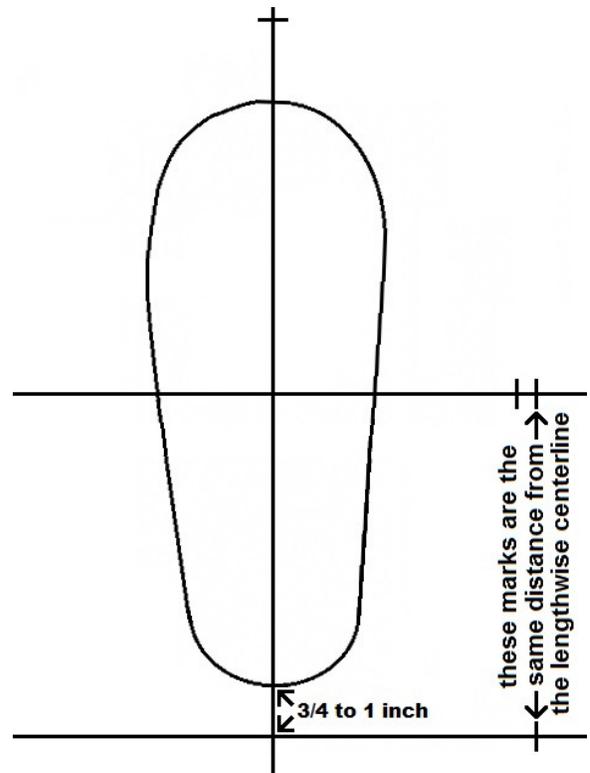
(4) Place the foot in the same spot on the paper again. Fold the paper which extends past the toes up and over the toes. Make a mark on the lengthwise centerline about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ in / 5 to 10 mm in from the top edge of the toes.



(5) With a piece of string, measure loosely around the center of the foot. Fold this string measurement in half. Lay one end of this folded string half-measure at the center of the foot on the pattern paper, and extend the rest of the string out along one side of the crosswise centerline. Mark the end of this half-measure on the crosswise centerline. Then, make another mark about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. / 5 mm beyond the half-measure mark to allow for seam width.

(6) On the lengthwise centerline, make a mark about $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 in. / 1.5 to 2 cm, (depending on the size of your foot), past the heel.

(7) Make a line crosswise, or perpendicular, to the lengthwise centerline at the mark made in step 6. This is probably most easily done by folding the paper at this mark by placing the lengthwise centerline on both sides of the mark together. After smoothing and creasing the paper, open it up, place a straight edge on the fold, and mark a line along this fold going through the mark made in step 6.



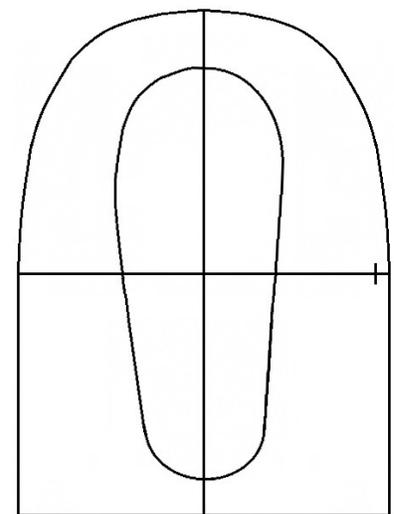
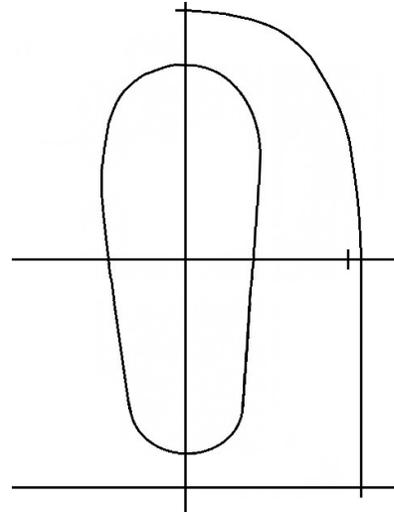
(8) On the crosswise line just past the heel made in step 7, make a mark that is the same distance from the lengthwise centerline as the second mark that was made in step 5. Make this mark on the same side of the pattern as the mark that was made in step 5. This may be easily done by folding, (but not creasing), the paper. Make the two crosswise lines come together, lining up where the lengthwise centerline crosses them. Mark the spot where the second mark made in step 5 comes to on the crosswise line just past the heel.

(9) With a straight edge, make a line between the second mark made in step 5 and the mark made in step 8.

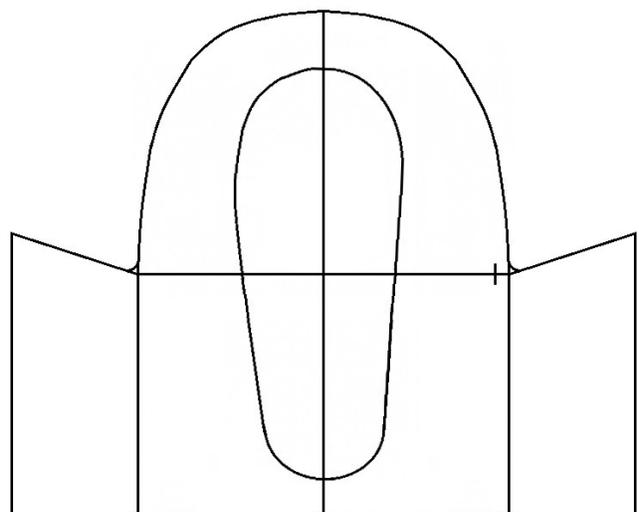
(10) Draw an arc from the mark made in step 4 at the top edge of the toes, to the second mark made in step 5.

(11) Fold the paper along the lengthwise centerline so the lines are facing out. Cut both sides of the pattern: along the crosswise line made just past the heel in step 7, along the line made in step 9, and along the arc made in step 10.

(12) Open up the paper again. This is the pattern to trace on the material you will be making the moccasins out of. If using leather, be sure to orient the pattern either in line with the back bone of the animal, or crosswise / perpendicular to the back bone. The thickest / 'toughest' leather is usually in the shoulders area. Therefore the 'best' moccasins will usually be cut one on each side of the back bone at the shoulders. If you will be purchasing leather to make moccasins, buy 'bucktanned' leather —as tooling leather, latigo, and even many suede leathers are too stiff to make the puckered lacing at the toes for this type of moccasin. If you are new to leather working, it may be a good idea to make a sample moccasin from some other less expensive material before you make a pair from leather. Trace, and cut out two pieces from this same pattern. At this point, there is no 'left' or 'right' foot. As the moccasins are worn, they will take on a 'leftness' or 'rightness' as they form to the feet.

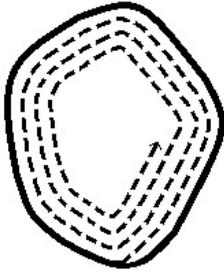


The simplest moccasins are essentially 'slippers' without any ankle flaps such as what would be made from the pattern as it is described above. If moccasins with ankle flaps, (or even taller 'boot' style moccasins), are desired, extend the pattern out between the midline and heel line. Angle the front line of the ankle flaps forward about 20 degrees, and make a small arc where the front of the ankle flap joins the main foot pattern. The top of the ankle flaps should also be made parallel to, or the same distance out from, the lengthwise centerline.



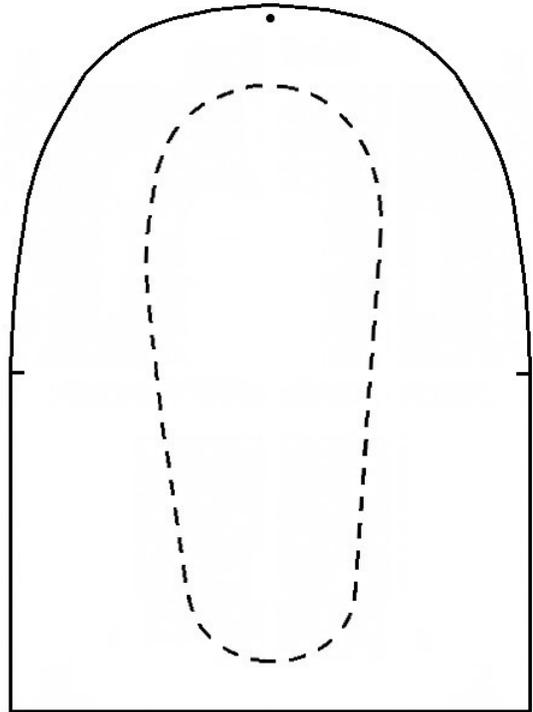
Stitching Them up:

Cutting Lace



From some extra leather, cut four strips about $\frac{3}{16}$ in / 4-5 mm wide and 8 to 10 inches / 20 to 25 cm long. These can be cut along an edge of a larger piece. Or, round the corners of a smaller scrap, and cut the strips by making a spiral around

the scrap. Cut one end of each lace on a diagonal to make a point, and tie an overhand knot at the other end. If not using leather, cut four lengths of strong cordage 8 to 10 inches / 20 to 25 cm long. Tie overhand knots on one end of each of these pieces the cordage.

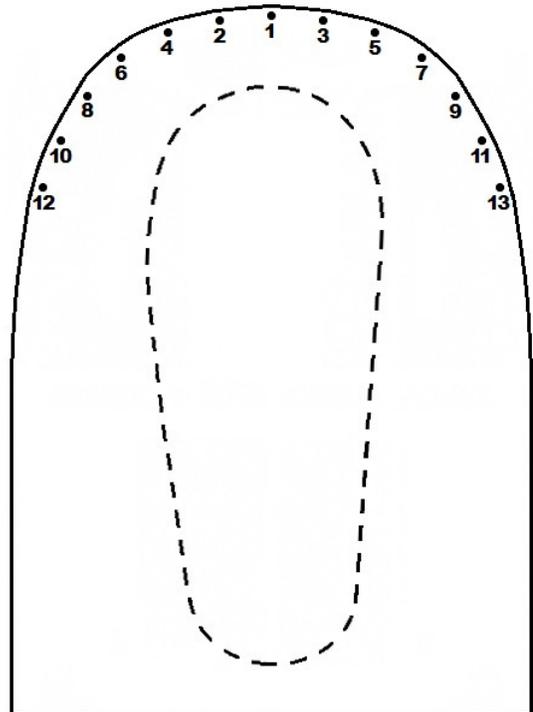


Stitching Up the Toe and Top

(1) Fold the moccasin in half lengthwise to find the center of the toe. On the inside of the moccasin, make a mark about $\frac{1}{4}$ in / 5-7 mm from the edge at the center of the toe. Also, on each side of the moccasin, make marks in the middle of the edge corresponding to the crosswise-centerline of the pattern.

(2) Make six marks out along the edge on both sides from the center mark at the toe. These marks should be about $\frac{3}{4}$ to $\frac{7}{8}$ in / 20 to 22 mm apart, and the same $\frac{1}{4}$ in / 5-7 mm in from the edge. The traditional distance for these marks is the width of one's thumb or index finger, but people have different sized thumbs and fingers.

(3) With an awl, or similar pointed object, make a hole at the first mark in the center of the toe. Insert the pointed end of the lacing strip or cordage through the hole, passing it from the *outside* of the moccasin to the inside of the moccasin. Pull it all the way through, so the knot at the end of the lace or cordage is tight up against outside of the moccasin.



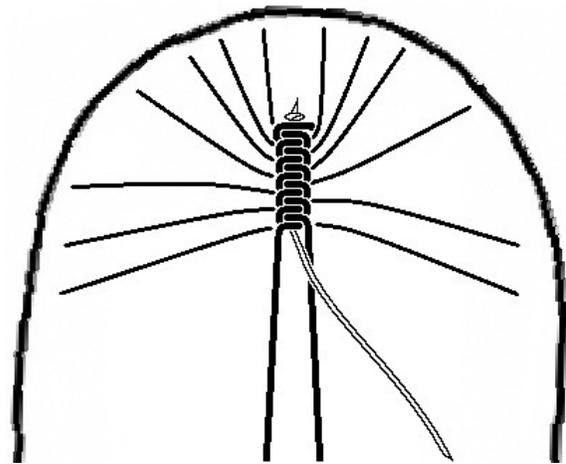
(4) Next, make another hole at one of the marks immediately to one side or the other of the center. (In the illustration to the left, this second hole is made in the mark to the left of the center, but it really does not matter to which side you go first.)



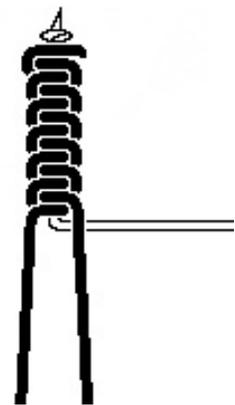
Pass the cordage through this second hole, again from the *outside* of the moccasin to the inside of the moccasin, the same as was done on the first hole. Pull the lace or cord up tightly to create a gathered pucker between the two holes. The illustration shows the pattern of what the stitching from outside to inside will look like just before the lace is pulled completely tight on the second stitch. This outside-to-inside gathered puckered stitching is key, and somewhat unique, to this style of moccasin. Each stitch must be pulled up tightly so the outside of the last stitch ends up against the inside of the previous stitch. You should not be able to see any lacing in between the stitches. If you are able to see lacing, (as shown in the illustration), pull the lacing up tighter. If the leather or material the moccasin is being made from is too stiff, and can not be pulled up this tight, you may not be able to use it to make this style of moccasin. (However if this is the case, it is possible to make slits about 1 to 1¼ in / 2.5 to 3 cm long halfway between each of the hole marks, and lace up the resulting 'tabs' using this same basic pattern. The stitching of these tabs will give a toe somewhat similar to Irish brogues.)

(5) Next make a hole at the first mark on the opposite side of the center. Insert the lace again from the *outside* of the moccasin to the inside of the moccasin, and pull it up tight.

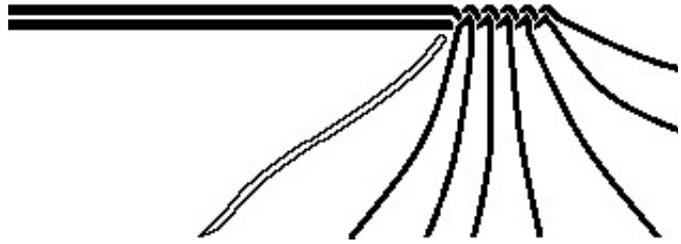
Continue stitching up the toe by making these same sets of puckered stitches, alternately taking one stitch from one side, and then another from the other side, working your way back along the edge. Be sure each stitch is pulled up tight, so that you cannot see the lace in between any of the stitches. The toe should begin looking something like this illustration.



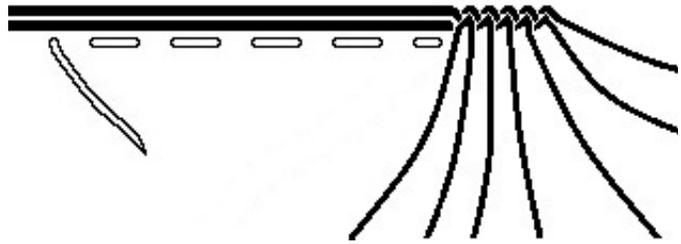
When you have finish five sets of puckered stitches, (there should still be one mark left on each side), try the toe on for size. The gathered puckered stitching should be running up the center of the toes, and reach about to the back of the toes, or maybe just a little farther. If the stitching already reaches to the back of the toes, don't take the last set of stitches. If it doesn't quite reach the back not, go ahead and make the last set of stitches, and then try the toe on for size again. If necessary, mark and make an additional set, (or sets), until the puckered stitches reach to the back of the toes.



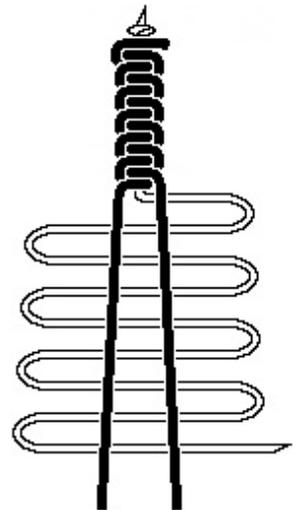
(6) Once the puckered stitching reaches the back of the toes, make a hole on the opposite side close to the last puckered stitch. Pass the lacing through this hole from the *inside* of the moccasin to the *outside*. Place both sides of the moccasin together and pull the lacing tight. (See illustrations.)



(7) Finish the top of the moccasin by making 'running stitches' the rest of the way to the middle of the foot. Place both sides of the moccasin together and make holes at the same point through both sides, every $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ in / 10 to 14 mm, (although you will probably have to poke a hole through one side at a time), the same $\frac{1}{4}$ in / 5-7 mm in from the edge. If the marks in the middle of the moccasin don't quite line up, you can make slight adjustments at each stitch to even things out so that when you reach the middle marks they will be fairly close to each other. For each stitch, pass the lacing through both sides, always ending up on the outside of the moccasin. (See illustrations.)



Continue making running stitches until you reach the middle marks on the moccasin. The length of the stitches can be adjusted slightly so as to end up with a final stitch right at the middle marks. It does not matter which side of the moccasin you end up on. Try the moccasin on for size, making any necessary adjustments. When everything looks good, tie an overhand knot in the lace as close to the last stitching hole as possible to keep the stitches from unraveling, and trim off the extra lacing.



Lacing Up the Heel

Put the moccasin on the foot and check to see if there is too much leather or material out past the heel. There will be running stitches coming up the heel, so allow the same $\frac{1}{4}$ in / 5-7 mm in from the edge for seam width, plus a bit more to be able to slip the moccasin on and off the foot. If necessary, cut off a strip of the extra leather/material across the heel. (This strip can possibly be used for lacing.)

There are several ways to stitch up the heel, but probably the easiest is to make it similar to what was done on the toes. Fold the moccasin in half to find and mark the center of the heel. But this time only make two marks on either side of this center mark for the gathered puckered stitches. Start by making a hole at the center mark and bring another lace through the leather/material from the outside to inside. Take two sets of

the same gathered puckered stitches used for the toes to form the rounded bottom of the heel. Try it on for size. If necessary make a third set of puckered stitches. Then, continue the rest of the way up the heel with running stitches the same as was done along the top of the foot. When finished, tie an overhand knot in the lace to keep it from unraveling, and trim off the extra lace.