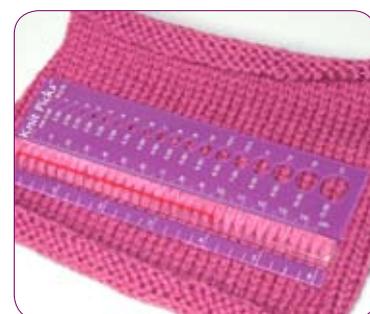


Swatching for Perfection

Using the suggested yarn and needle size for a pattern isn't enough to guarantee good fitting results. Being off one or two stitches each inch can add up over the width of a sweater and may result in a sweater that is considerably different than its projected finished size. Establishing gauge will help you follow the sizing in the pattern and avoid ill-fitting messes. Following these few suggestions for your gauge swatch can save you hours and take only minutes!

- 1) Check the suggested gauge for your yarn. Try the needle size suggested by your pattern, and cast on enough stitches to give you a swatch that's about 6" wide.
- 2) Knit in the suggested stitch (usually stockinette) until your swatch is about 5" long. Sometimes the pattern will ask you to knit the swatch in another stitch pattern (think lace, cables, and deeply textured stitch patterns)—if you calculate your gauge using the wrong stitch pattern, you could end up with an ill-fitting garment.
- 3) Using a table or the floor, lay out your swatch so that it's resting naturally. Either remove it from the needles, or slide it so it's on the cable section of circular needles to let it rest unrestricted. You want your gauge swatch to mimic the final fabric of your garment as closely as possible.
- 4) Place a pin at the left edge of a stitch near the lower-left corner of your gauge swatch. This will be your starting point for measuring.
- 5) Avoid cloth measuring tapes as they can stretch out over time, distorting your results. Use a [fiberglass tape measure](#) or a [ViewSizer](#) in order to get the most accurate stitch count.
- 6) Measure out 4" along the same row as your pin. Count the number of stitches that fit within your 4", and make sure to count half-stitches. This lets you find your average stitches per inch.



7) Repeat, using the same pinned starting point, to count the number of rows that fit within a 4" span.

8) Some patterns describe the gauge in terms of the number of stitches per inch, while others ask for the number of stitches per four inches.



Adjusting your gauge

If your gauge is too tight (too many stitches per inch) for your pattern, you can try using larger needles with the same yarn and make a new swatch. If your gauge is too loose (too few stitches per inch), try substituting smaller needles.

Washing your Finished Swatch

Unless you wash and block your gauge swatch, you'll only have a prediction of how your finished garment will behave if it never sees the laundry basket. It's extremely important to launder your swatch the way that you intend to care for the finished garment, block it out, and then measure your gauge again after it has dried in order to know the expected and final gauge.

Creative uses for gauge swatches

Although it may be handy to keep a library of laundered gauge swatches in different yarns, you can also repurpose the swatches into other projects.

- Stitch a collection of swatches together lengthwise to make a striped scarf.
- Make a hat! Either pick up stitches around the edge of a swatch or join a few with a mattress stitch to improvise a little cap.
- Use swatches of more utilitarian yarns (such as cotton blends) for washcloths and polishing cloths.
- Take the brightly-colored swatches and join them to make a "patchwork" bag or pillow.
- Try felting wool swatches and then cut them into shapes for appliqué.