

Gauge and Knitted Swatches

Gauge, in knitting, is a simple measure — the number of stitches in a set measurement of knitted fabric. It's a really important component to getting the right fit and drape that is intended for the pattern.

It may take a little time to knit your swatch and sometimes I just want to skip this step. But it really is crucial. Just consider how many hours you spend knitting the project and how disappointed you will be if it doesn't fit.

The beauty lies in flexibility; the provided gauge allows you to explore different yarns and styles while maintaining the fundamental structure of the finished item. Once you get more experience you can start to experiment with different yarn weights and needle sizes, but for now, let's stick with the basics.

If you finish knitting your gauge swatch and find that it has more stitches per inch or less than your patterns suggest, no problem. You can fix this simply by increasing or decreasing your needle size. If you have too many stitches then you should move up to a larger needle size. If you don't have enough stitches move down a size.

Materials:

Yarn (use the yarn weight suggested by your pattern)

Knitting needles (size recommended in the pattern)

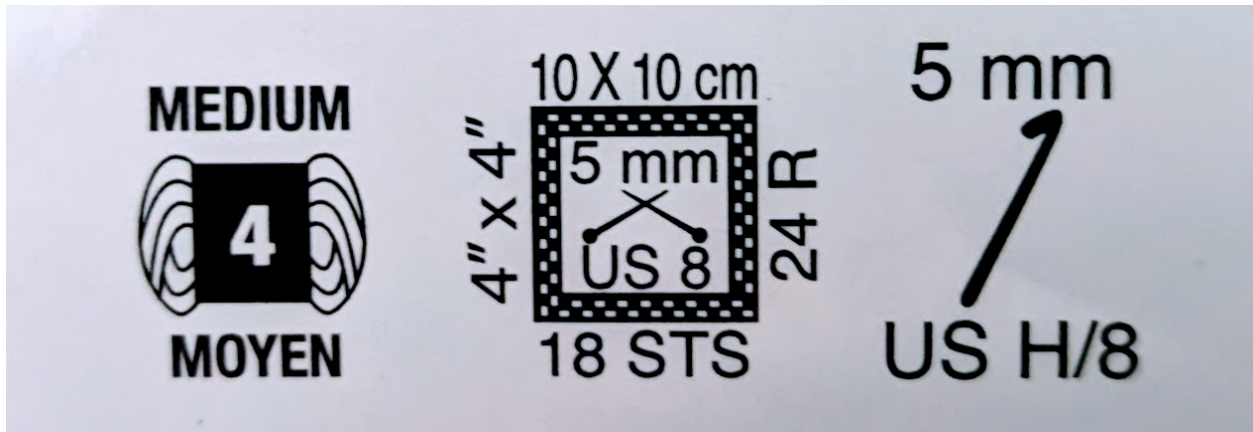
Scissors

Tapestry needle



Yarn:

Look for a yarn that aligns with the pattern. Consider colour, texture, and weight. You don't necessarily need to use the exact yarn the pattern recommends but matching the yarn weight and gauge is a good place to start.



Take a look at the yarn label. Most yarns will provide you with the weight and a gauge right on the label. For example, this yarn is a Medium weight and falls into category #4. The gauge states that 18 STS x 24 R will create a 4" x 4" (10cm x 10cm) square when knitted with a 5 mm (US H/8). That means that if you knit or crochet across 18 stitches for 24 rows with a 5mm (US 8) needle or hook you should get a square that is 4 inches by 4 inches (10 cm x 10cm).

Note: This label shows a crochet hook but in general, the size of the knitting needle will correspond with the size of the crochet hook.

Now, it's important to realize that designers may use a different needle size and have a different gauge than that which is written on the yarn label. So the most important thing to match when buying your yarn is the yarn weight.



Needles:

Check the pattern for the recommended needle size and use that size. Again, designers will often use different sizes than that recommended on the yarn label, so be sure to use the designer's recommendations unless you purposefully change the gauge.

Cast On:

Start by casting on three times the number of stitches specified in the gauge. So for example, if your pattern gauge suggests "10 stitches x 15 rows = 2 inches in stockinette stitch" cast on 30 stitches.

Knit Away:

Knit the first inch in garter stitch (knit every row). This will make sure that the swatch doesn't roll up at the edges. Then switch to stockinette stitch (knit on the right side, purl on the wrong side) unless the pattern gauge section suggests otherwise. Knit two times as many rows as the pattern gauge suggests. Then switch back to garter stitch and knit another inch.

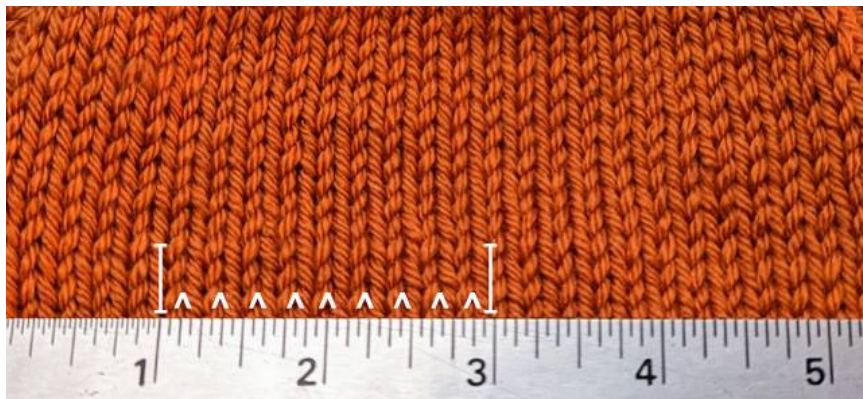
Remove From Needles:

Take your knitting off the needles and place the stitches onto a piece of yarn or a very large stitch holder that won't distort your swatch. Keeping the knitting on the needles will stretch your knitting and won't give you an accurate measurement.

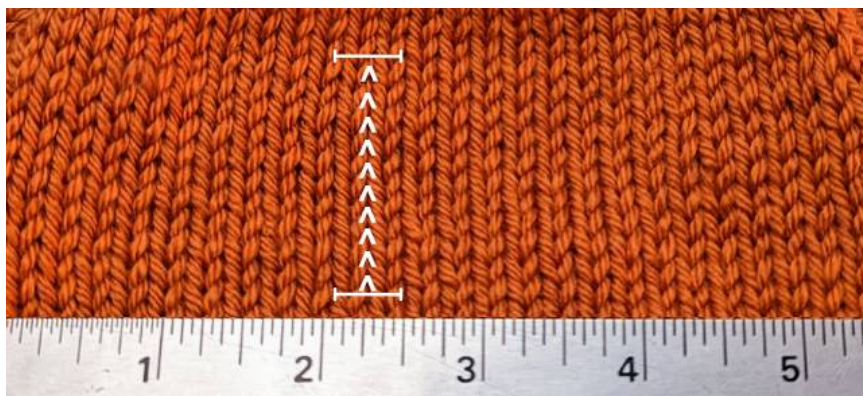


Gauge Check:

Lay your swatch on a flat surface and place a hard ruler overtop of it.



Count the number of stitches the pattern gauge has recommended. For example, if your pattern gauge is 10 stitches = 2 inches then count how many stitches you have in two inches. Don't round up or round down.



Now measure how many rows you have per inch and compare it to the pattern's gauge. For example, if your pattern gauge is 15 rows = 2 inches then count how many rows you have in two inches. Again, don't round up or down.

If you have too few stitches per inch then move down to a smaller needle. Too many stitches per inch move up to a larger needle. Put your stitches from the yarn back onto your needles and knit another 2-3 inches of stockinette and



another inch of garter. Measure again using the same process to make sure your changes match the pattern's gauge.

Texture Feel:

Feel the knitted swatch. Give your swatch a little squish and flop it around. Is it matching the pattern's feel? Does it feel too loose or too tight? If so, you may want to consider adjusting your needle size. But keep in mind this may change your gauge.

You've just mastered the art of matching your knitted tension to a pattern. Embrace the journey, and happy knitting!



