



Converting to a Different Stitch Gauge

All too often, we find ourselves unable to match the gauge specified in a pattern, even when using the same yarn and needles. This is most likely to happen when we make yarn substitutions.

In most patterns, stitch gauge is the most important in terms of fit. The bust/chest circumference in a sweater is determined by the stitch gauge. For drop-shoulder, modified drop-shoulder, set-in sleeve, and saddle-shoulder sweaters, the body, armhole, and sleeve lengths are specified by numbers of inches. In these cases, the exact row gauge isn't crucial.

Follow the guidelines below to accommodate a different stitch gauge than specified in a pattern.

Be Sure to Knit a Proper Gauge Swatch

Quite often, our gauge is off because we've knitted a skimpy gauge swatch (or no swatch at all).

The first step in matching the gauge in a pattern is to knit a generous swatch at least 6" (15 cm) square, using the yarn, needles, and stitch pattern you plan to use for the garment. The larger the swatch, the better it will represent how you'll knit the garment. A large swatch allows you to get into the rhythm of knitting before you have to stop and turn at the end of a row.

- Wash and block the swatch as you plan to wash and block the garment. Sometimes this will alter the gauge. Because you'll wash and block your garment, you'll want measure the washed and blocked gauge.
- After the swatch has dried, count the number of stitches over 4" (10 cm), including partial stitches. Divide by 4 to get the number of stitches per inch.
- If you're getting too many stitches per inch, your stitches are too small and you should try again with larger needles.
- If you're getting too few stitches per inch, your stitches are too big and you should try again with smaller needles.

Be Sure You Like the Fabric

After knitting your gauge swatch(es), take a moment to evaluate the fabric you've produced...even if you match the specified gauge.

Make sure that the fabric is not too thick and dense for the garment you want to make. Conversely, make

sure it's not too loose and flimsy.

If you don't like the fabric at this point, you're unlikely to like the finished garment.

- Reswatch until you get a fabric that you like.
- Measure the gauge of the fabric (washed and blocked) that you like.

If this gauge doesn't match the one specified, you have some options.

Check Out Other Sizes

It's quite possible that one of the other sizes provided in the pattern will work for your gauge.

- Multiply your gauge (in stitches per inch) by your desired finished width (if the garment is knitted in pieces) or finished circumference (if the garment is worked in rounds). This tells you the number of stitches you'll want for the bust/chest width or circumference
- Look at the number of bust/chest stitches for other sizes in the pattern.
- If one of other sizes comes close to the number you want, follow the stitch counts for that size.
- Be sure to follow the length measurements for your size (provided in the schematic).

Use The Formula for Converting Gauges

If all else fails, use the Formula for Converting Gauges, which is based on simple ratios.

- Be aware that rounding is necessary to end up with whole numbers.
- Pay particular attention to neck, armhole, and sleeve cap shaping.