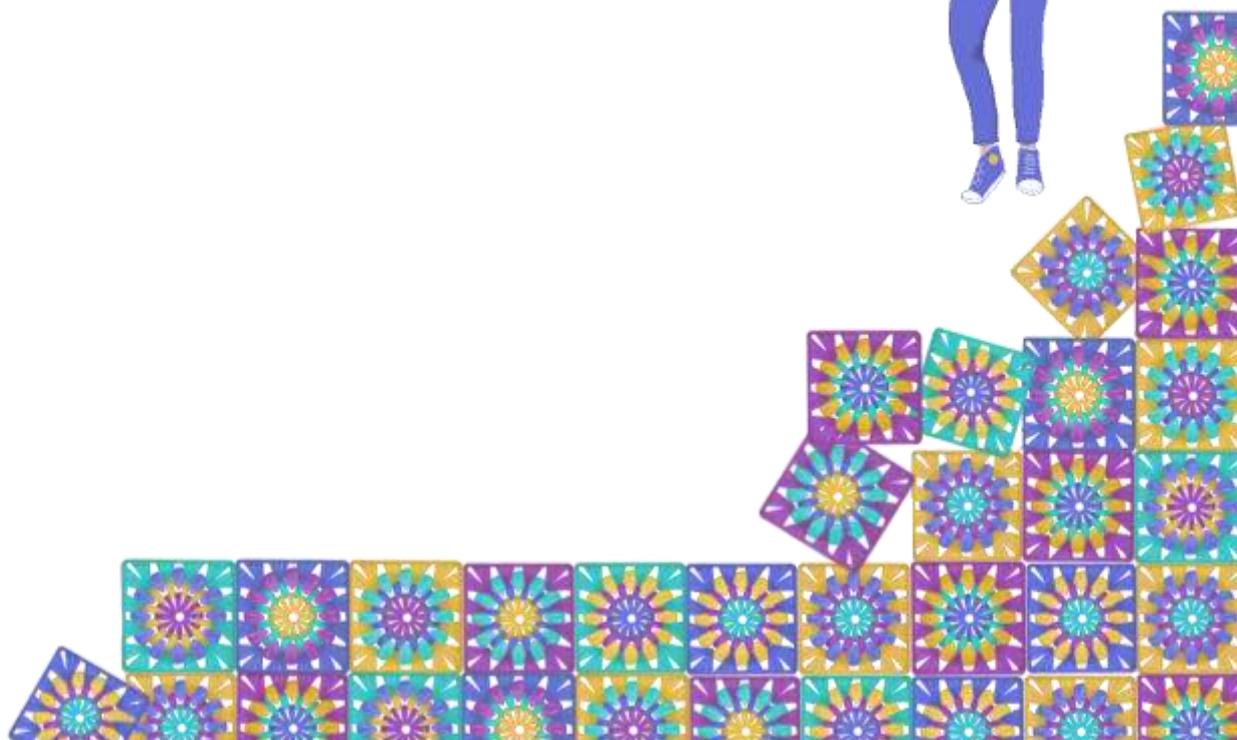




A GOOD YARN

Why Should I Knit a Tension Square?

Have you ever fallen in love with a design, spent a small fortune on the perfect yarn and invested a whole heap of time in creating a masterpiece — only to find it doesn't fit grrrrrrrr!



SWATCHING

Oh swatches. Knitters do seem to love to hate them. I personally enjoy making swatches. What I tend to do is, while I'm knitting a current project and I have that moment where I'm either bored or a little frustrated with what I'm doing, I get a ball of yarn for my next project and make a swatch. I get to play with my new yarn and, make sure that what I'm going to do next is going to fit.

A swatch doesn't take long to make, and I'd rather do that than have to reknit the garment. Little teeny swatches aren't the most helpful of things, because they'll lie to you. A good hearty sized swatch will pay you back that bit of extra effort.

Let's say the pattern states that the gauge, which it's worked to is 22 stitches by 30 rows in stocking stitch across 4" (10cm) on 4.00 mm needles in a DK weight yarn.

The swatch ideally wants to be at least 6 – 8". What I'd tend to do is cast on about double the stitches, so something like 44 stitches (it doesn't need to be exact - I'd probably round down to 40). This gives me a good-sized swatch. The bigger the swatch the more accurate the measurement will be, as the edge stitches will tend to distort.

The cast on and cast off edges can distort your swatch, so try this link for a different cast-on to try. <https://youtu.be/dAgcbX0wdzs>

- Knit 1 row
- Purl 1 row
- Repeat these two rows until at least 6" long

Here's a brilliant tip that I picked up from Ysolda Teague's Little Red in the City. By using yarnovers (yo), k2tog and p stitches you can mark what size needle you are using. I've found this really useful, for when I've done several swatches on different sizes or if months/years down the line I use the same yarn again, I don't have to do another swatch because all the information is there. So for this example ...



On my next row, I'd knit a few stitches past the border then, (yo, k2tog) four times, knit to the end. If the needle size was 3.75mm, then I would change it to (yo, k2tog) three times, then, (k1, p1) three times. Each yo represents a full mm and each purl bump is 0.25mm. Think this sounds far more complicated than it is to knit.

- Purl 1 row
- Knit 1 row
- Cut yarn to the width of the swatch and using a darning needle thread and thread through all the stitches



I always treat my swatch as I would the finished garment, which means that generally I'll wash and block the swatch. It is useful to measure your swatch before blocking, so you can check your knitting isn't going off gauge.

Use a solid ruler (not a tape measure - it'll be more accurate), and count how many rows and stitches you have in a 4" square. It can help to mark with pins, where you start and finish counting. Remember to count 1/4 and 1/2 stitches as this does make a difference to the size of the garment.

Generally, I'll see how far off the swatch is and pick the most appropriate size or perhaps alter the pattern to work but if you're quite a long way off then reswatch on a different size needle to get gauge. Go up a needle size if you have more stitches in 4" or down a needle size if you have less stitches in 4".

Sometimes, if the pattern is complicated, I'll do another swatch in the stitch pattern too. It does sometimes depend on what information the designer has given you for the swatches. I always think it's a good pattern if they give you a swatch for stocking stitch and for any stitch pattern (if it's different).

Swatching can be fun (really) and take away the frustration of spending months on a project, to find it doesn't fit. Different yarns behave differently when blocked, so block your swatches and you'll see what happens to them and you won't get a nasty shock at the end of your project.

For the majority of knits then it is the stitch count that is the most important figure, especially when the pattern is worked with instructions such as "knit until 15 inches long". However, if the garment is worked from side to side then it is the row count that will determine how wide the finished garment will be.

There are times when swatching will take as much time as knitting the garment, so it's sometimes just worth taking an educated guess on what your needle size will be rather than knitting a swatch. Where size isn't relevant such as shawl/scarves then swatching is less relevant, though you can still see if it would be too small to be useable, whether you like the texture on the needle size you have chosen or if you will have enough yarn.

Benefits of swatching

- Make sure your finished garment is going to be the size you intend
- You can practise the stitch pattern before doing long rows of it on the garment
- See if you like the combination of yarn and stitch pattern before you start
- Check to see if the yarn will grow when washed
- Get to try out your new yarn
- You can keep your swatches for reference later or even make them into a blanket
- See if you will have enough yarn for the project you have in mind. If you have a finite amount of yarn and your gauge is different to the pattern, you will use more or less yarn than recommended (depending on gauge).
- If you regularly make swatches then you get a very good idea on whether you are a tight or loose knitter and for smaller projects, make an educated guess on what size needle you will need.

Tip

Hang your swatch up for a few days and hang pegs to weight it at the bottom before measuring your gauge. The reason for doing this is often the weight of all the wool in the finished garment can pull on your knitting, changing the gauge and the shape. By hanging your swatch, your gauge will be more accurate. However, I would only bother to do this if it was a large worn garment and I wanted the gauge to be exact.



Example Size Chart (if pattern is written for 22 sts and finished size 40")

Gauge	Chest Measurement	Dress Size
18	49	22/24
19	46 ¼	20
20	44	18
21	42	16
22	40	14
23	38 ¼	12
24	36 ¾	10/12
25	35 ¼	8/10
26	34	8

Fill in your numbers here

Pattern stitch gauge _____ ÷ 4 = stitches per inch = _____

Finished chest circumference _____ ÷ 2 = back or front measurement _____

Actual stitch gauge _____ ÷ 4 = actual stitches per inch 5

Find stitch count for width/circumference of garment. For a standard garment, look on back for stitch count, just before SHAPE ARMHOLE _____ stitches.

To find actual measurement -

stitch count _____ ÷ actual gauge 5 = _____ inches for back

Multiply by 2 for chest size = _____ inches

Example to see how much bigger/smaller your garment will be

Pattern stitch gauge 22 ÷ 4 = stitches per inch = 5.5

Finished chest circumference 40 ÷ 2 = back or front measurement 20

Actual stitch gauge 20 ÷ 4 = actual stitches per inch 5

Find stitch count for width/circumference of garment. For a standard garment, look on back for stitch count, just before SHAPE ARMHOLE 110 stitches.

To find actual measurement -

stitch count 110 ÷ actual gauge 5 = 22 inches for back

Multiply by 2 for chest size = 44 inches

