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KNITTING ♦ Editors choice, How much yarn wt ⌚ 3 min read

How Much Yarn Do I Need for Knitted Sweaters or Cardigans?



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Have you ever wondered, “How much yarn do I need for my (insert type of knitwear) project?” I have, and I learned the hard way! Once, while planning to make a beautiful long vest, I purchased what I thought was enough fiber. When I got home, however, and looked at the pattern I had in mind, I didn’t have enough yarn. Bummer! And I only needed about 250 more yards.

The yarn, Twisted, came in generous skeins of 560 yards, so I would have had leftovers if I ordered another skein, plus the dye lot might not be consistent with my lot. (One of the lovely characteristics of hand-dyed yarn is that it’s just that—dyed by hand!—so the dye from one lot might be pretty different from that of another lot.)

Anyway, after half a year of thinking about this yarn type and what project to use it with, I found some inspiration hidden in one of my favorite books, *The Knitter’s Companion* by Vicki Square.

While looking up some technique or other, I passed the section on yardage estimates, which definitely answered the question, “How much yarn do I need for...?”

I thought about my lonely bag of Blue Moon yarn, and lo and behold—the idea came to me: A cardigan with the main body knit from Twisted and the ribbing at the bottom, cuffs, neck (and the button band) knit from Socks that Rock held double. I realized I might need another skein of sock yarn for this, but I could choose anything similar to my colorway and hold it with Socks that Rock and it would work. Right?

The moral of this story is that inspiration comes in all forms. If you find yourself unknowingly wondering, “How much yarn do I need,” never fear! I’ve provided for you the list of yardage estimates. Take a look at the list and then wander through your stash and see if you have any yarn that’s a tad short (or long!) on yardage for the project you had planned for it; use the estimates to plan a new project for that yarn. You never know what will pop out at you.

How Much Yarn Do I Need? Yardage Estimates for Sweaters in Standard Yarn Weights

The following guidelines are for the yarn amounts needed for a basic pullover or cardigan in a variety of sizes and weights. These 'how much yarn do I need?' estimates are for smooth yarns and plain or lightly textured knitting.

Keep in mind that heavily textured patterns such as all-over cables or oversized looks can easily require additional yarn (400-600 yards; 375-550 meters). When knitting with two or more colors, the total yardage will be greater to account for the yarns being carried across the back of the work.

Estimate generously, and if you have leftovers ... well, they're a designer's best friend!

Babies 12-18 Months

(for a pullover or cardigan)

Fingering weight: 600-700 yards (550-650 meters)

Sportweight: 550-650 yards (500-600 meters)

Worsted weight: 450-550 (400-500 meters)

Toddlers 2-6 Years

(for a pullover or cardigan)

Sportweight: 800-1000 yards (750-950 meters)

Worsted weight: 600-800 yards (550-750 meters)

Bulky weight: 550-650 yards (500-600 meters)

Children 6-12 Years

(for a pullover or cardigan)

Sportweight: 1000-1500 yards (950-1400 meters)

Worsted weight: 900-1200 yards (850-1100 meters)

Bulky weight: 700-1000 yards (650-950 meters)

Diamond-Seed Baby Jacket Pattern.

Misses Sizes 32-40 Bust

(for a regular, comfortable-ease pullover; add 5% for a cardigan)

Fingering weight: 1500-1700 yards (1400-1600 meters)

Sportweight: 1400-1600 yards (1300-1500 meters)
Worsted weight: 1100-1400 yards (1000-1300 meters)
Bulky weight: 1000-1300 yards (950-1200 meters)

For a longer, loosely fitting, or oversized misses-sized pullover (add 5% for a cardigan)

Sportweight: 1500-1900 yards (1400-1750 meters)
Worsted weight: 1300-1500 yards (1200-1400 meters)
Bulky weight: 1100-1400 yards (1000-1300 meters)

Cable-Down Raglan Knitting Pattern.

Men sizes 36-48 Chest

(for a regular, comfortable-ease pullover (add 5% for a cardigan)
Sportweight: 1700-2100 yards (1600-1950 meters)
Worsted weight: 1500-1700 yards (1400-1600 meters)
Bulky weight: 1300-1500 yards (1200-1400 meters)

For a longer, loosely fitting, or oversized man's pullover (add 5% for a cardigan)

Sportweight: 2000-2400 yards (1850-2200 meters)
Worsted weight: 1500-1700 yards (1650-1850 meters)
Bulky weight: 1300-1500 yards (1400-1550 meters)

—Vicki Square, from *The Knitter's Companion*

Vicki doesn't cover plus-size sweaters (**42-52 bust**), but from my experience, you need the following amounts for adding the same

Hank's Pullover Knitting Pattern

5% for cardigans:

Sportweight: 1600-2000 yards (1500-1850 meters)

Worsted weight: 1400-1600 yards (1300-1500 meters)

Bulky weight: 1200-1400 yards (1100-1300 meters)

Now go forth and visit your stash! Never get stuck on the question, “How much yarn do I need for a knitted sweater or cardigan?” again!

Cheers,

Now that you know how much yarn you *need*, do you know how much yarn you currently *have*? This neat Yarn Hack will help you estimate the yardage remaining on your partial skeins.

00:59

This video is part of our Yarn Hacks series—you’ll find many more great knitting tips and tricks in these snack-size videos!

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