

Knitting Basics

Chapter 1. Gauge

The gauge of a pattern is determined by measuring a swatch of knitted fabric. Information from the gauge swatch helps you to get predictable results in your finished piece.

The gauge of a knitting project determines what size needles should be used and what amount of tension should be applied throughout the pattern. The standard measurements for gauge are given in terms of 4" (10 cm). The pattern instructions you are working from will tell you the stitch pattern used to achieve the gauge. You must work in the same stitch pattern in order to get the same results.

Some helpful tips for checking your gauge:

- Always measure your gauge on a flat, rigid surface
- Measure the swatch while there is no stress on the stitches
- Most knitting instructions will instruct you to bind off and block your swatch before measuring

Chapter 2. Creating and measuring a gauge swatch

Creating a gauge swatch will help you find the correct needle size and appropriate tension for a given pattern.

Creating and measuring a gauge swatch is a useful tool to utilize before embarking on a complex pattern. Matching your gauge to the gauge specified in the pattern will help you to achieve reliable results for your end product in size and shape.

Begin by selecting a pattern and gather the required yarn, needles, and accessories indicated by the pattern.

1. Locate the gauge specified in the pattern. This is typically located above the pattern steps near the information about what yarn and needles to use. An example gauge: 28 stitches and 28 rows = 4" (10cm).
2. Cast on the specified number of stitches (e.g. 28 stitches) to your needle.
3. Work the given stitch pattern until your swatch measures slightly longer than 4" (approximately 4.5"-5") in order to measure accurately.
Many patterns indicate that it is necessary to bind off and block your swatch before measuring. If this is noted in your pattern be sure to follow those steps to insure an accurate measurement of gauge.
4. Lay your swatch on a flat, stable surface and get your rigid ruler. The swatch should be neither compressed nor stretched out while measuring.
5. Place the ruler horizontally across the center of your swatch and count the number of stitches present within a 4" section.
6. If your stitch count matches the gauge (e.g. 28 stitches) then you can begin your project with confidence that your final product will be the correct size and shape.

Chapter 3. Blocking a swatch

Blocking is the process of adding moisture to a knitted fabric in order to relax the yarn, and then reshaping it as desired and letting it dry.

Blocking your knitting helps it to look its best: it evens out the consistency of the stitches, and it can show you how the yarn behaves. There are a number of ways to block your knitting, but this is the most simple way.

You will need your knitted swatch, a sink or basin, rustproof pins, a dry towel, and a padded, moisture-safe surface such as an ironing board. Optional: liquid wool wash.

1. In the sink or basin, run the water until it is lukewarm (approximately 86 degrees Fahrenheit). Once the water reaches the desired temperature, let the sink fill up so that there is about 2 inches of standing water.
2. If you are using liquid wool wash, add it to the water, and then submerge your swatch until it is entirely covered with water.
3. Gently squish the swatch to ensure it is fully wet, but be careful not to wring or rub it. Agitating the swatch in that way could induce felting.
4. Let the swatch soak for at least 10 minutes.
5. Drain the water from the sink and gently squeeze the extra water out of the swatch.
6. Remove the swatch from the sink in a bundle. Do not hang the swatch to dry, because that will stretch out the fibers.
7. Refill the sink with the same temperature water used in step 1.
8. Put the swatch in the water to rinse it.
9. Remove the swatch from the rinse water, squeeze out the excess water, and then roll the swatch in a dry towel and let it sit for a few (2-3) minutes.
10. Pin your swatch in the desired shape to your flat, padded surface (such as an ironing board) with the rustproof pins inserted vertically through the piece and into the padding.
11. Let the piece dry completely before removing the pins.

Chapter 4. Common pattern abbreviations

These are common abbreviations used in knitting patterns.

Table 1. Common Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Defintion
BO	bind off
CO	cast on
dec(s)	decrease(s); decreasing
DPN	double-pointed needles
inc(s)	increase(s); increasing
k	knit
p	purl
rnd(s)	round(s)
RS	right side
sl st	slip stitch
st(s)	stitch(es)
St st	stockinette stitch
tog	together
WS	wrong side
yo	yarnover
*	repeat starting point
**	repeat all instructions between asterisks
()	alternate measurements and/or instructions