

Stitch and Row Gauge Cheat Sheet

By Nancy Wynn

Whether it is a garment or a baby blanket, there are times when you need to make some adjustments to the finished measurements.

If you want to customize the size of your knitted piece, follow these simple steps.

For our example, we will pretend that we want our stockinette sweater to measure 24 inches long and have a 40-inch circumference (20 inches each for front and back piece).

You will need to make a gauge swatch using the intended yarn and needles in the desired pattern.

To make your gauge swatch, loosely cast on 20 stitches. In stockinette, work 20 rows. Bind off loosely. It is very important that you cast on and bind off loosely otherwise your swatch will pull in and not provide accurate results.

It is in your best interest to wash and/or block your swatch before measuring. By doing so, you'll quickly learn how the fibers will behave on your finished piece. Also, the gauge may change significantly. Can you imagine your frustration if you made a beautiful sweater and learn later that once washed, it no longer fit? Sadly, it happens all the time.

Now that your gauge has been processed, it's time to measure. Measure your swatch both vertically (for rows) and horizontally (for stitches). Never round up or down. A half of a stitch can be equivalent to 4 inches in the circumference of your sweater...exact measurements must always be used.

Let's say that the swatch width is 4 inches and the length is 5 ½ inches. With that information, we can calculate the stitch gauge as follows:

Take the number of stitches that were cast on (20) and divide it by the width of your swatch (4"), which equals 5. This number represents the amount of stitches per inch.

If we want the back of our sweater to measure 20 inches, we will have to multiply that number by the stitches per inch to determine how many stitches to cast on (20" x 5 = 100). You would need to cast on 100 stitches to get the size you're looking for.

Row gauge is treated in the same fashion. You would take the number of rows you had worked (20) and divide it by the length of your swatch (5 ½ “), which equals 3.63. This number represents the amount of rows per inch.

If we want the length of our sweater to measure 24 inches, we will need to multiply that number by the stitches per row to determine how many rows are needed to obtain the desired length ($24 \times 3.63 = 87.12$). We now know that it will be necessary to work approximately 87 rows.

Tips:

When it comes to gauge, remember this, too few stitches per inch and your garment will be too large and you may run out of yarn. Too many stitches per inch and the garment will be too small and you'll have a lot of leftover yarn!

Here is a hint...one needle size is typically worth a half of a stitch.