

## Understanding Knitting Gauge with Debbie Stoller

### Chapter 1 - Introduction

#### Overview

- One thing you'll hear a lot about once you start knitting is this concept of gauge. Gauge is basically a measurement of how many knit stitches there are in an inch of fabric and how many rows of knit stitches there are in an inch length of fabric. There's three things that basically influence gauge. One is the thickness of the yarn that's being used. The other is the thickness of the needle that's being used. And the third is the person who's knitting themselves. I'm gonna show you how to knit a gauge swatch, how to measure your gauge, and what to do if you don't get the gauge that the pattern calls for.

### Chapter 2 - Understanding Knitting Gauge

How to knit a gauge swatch and measure your gauge

- Let's say I'm knitting a pattern and it tells me to use this yarn and size nine needles and it says that I should be getting a gauge of 16 stitches and 20 rows per four inches. What does that mean? Well what I'm gonna do to find out whether my gauge is the same gauge as what the pattern is calling for is I'm not gonna cast on 16 stitches, which is supposed to be four inches. I don't want it to be exactly four inches. What I did here was I cast on 20 stitches so I have a little bit of extra. I used size nine needles and most gauge is measured over stock and net stitch fabric. If it's not that, it will say so on the pattern. So then â™«« Dupe de dupe dupe I knit a bunch of stock and net stitch fabric. The next step is to, well they usually tell you to wash and block your fabric, I don't know anybody that really does that. I did it for this 'cause I'm doing a video but basically if you just kind of let your fabric hang relaxed on your needle so it's not bunched up and it's not stretched out, you'll be able to get a good measure of your gauge. I like to use a stitch gauge like this. Although you could just as easily use a measuring tape or a ruler. I put the gauge over my fabric and make sure that it's nice and relaxed. Not stretched out and not squashed. Then I count the number of v's. This gauge here is showing me how many stitches I'm getting in two inches. So let's just count the number of v's. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. So I'm getting seven stitches for two inches but just to make sure, I usually like to measure it in another spot on the swatch also. And I'll count here again. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. Alright, so I'm definitely getting seven stitches per two inches. Which means, if I double it, it means I'm getting 14 stitches for four inches and my pattern said I'm supposed to get 16 stitches per four inches. So I don't have the same gauge as what the pattern's calling for. Now the pattern also said something about the number of rows in four inches. I will count mine here the same way. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. This took me ten rows to get two inches of fabric. I'll test it out somewhere else also. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten oh and a half. Ten and a half. So in this yarn, I'm getting between 20 and 21 stitches per four inches. I'm getting around five stitches per inch. Same thing with width wise, I was getting 14 stitches per four inches and about three and a half stitches per inch. That's my gauge for this fabric. Three and a half stitches per inch. Five rows per inch or 14 stitches per four inches and 20 rows per four inches. Now if you're not using a stitch gauge like I am and you're using a ruler, you should still try to count the number of v's in at least two inches wide of the fabric and two inches long. Don't try to just count the stitches in one inch because that's not gonna be very accurate. It's better that you do it in two inches and take a couple of measurements. And also, don't try to knit a swatch

that's exactly four inches wide. Your edge stitches are gonna be a little bit tighter, a little bit different than the stitches in the middle. You wanna make a swatch that's a bit bigger so that it can all relax and you can get good accurate gauge when you measure.

#### How to get gauge

- My pattern says that I should be getting 16 stitches per four inches and 20 rows per four inches of knit fabric. That's the gauge it wants me to have, but when I knit my gauge swatch on size nine needles like it suggested, I only got 14 stitches in four inches wide of fabric, but I did get 20 rows of stitches in four inches of fabric. So, what do I do? First thing you should know is that getting the right row gauge doesn't matter as much as getting the right stitch gauge. That's because often a project will say, knit until something is seven inches long and it doesn't really matter how many rows it takes me to get there. I can still knit it seven inches long whether I knit tightly or loosely or whatever. Much more important is to get the right stitch gauge. So, you're supposed to have 16 stitches in four inches of fabric and I only get 14 stitches in my four inches of fabric, so I'm knitting too loosely. I'm not getting enough stitches. My stitches need to be a little bit smaller, so how do I get there? Just try to start knitting much more tightly? No. What I do is I change the size of my needle. If I want to get more stitches in those four inches than what I'm getting when I use the needle size that's suggested, which was a nine, I might go down two sizes, let's say to a size seven needle. Size seven needle's gonna make smaller stitches so I might be able to fit those 16 stitches into that four inches. So, here's what I did. I cast on that same 20 stitches on size seven needles and I knit a whole bunch of rows. Now, I have to see what's my gauge on size seven needles. I'm gonna take out my stitch gauge again to measure that. You can use whatever you like to have. Now, when I count my stitches I have one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. Now, I have nine stitches in that two, so that would mean 18 stitches per four inches. Let me just check that someplace else. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight and a half. So, that's still 17 stitches, and I'm supposed to get 16, so now I went too small. So, this was size nine, this is size seven. I try it with a size eight. Do the same thing. I cast on the same 20 stitches. I knit for a bunch of rows and now I'm gonna measure my gauge. Make sure that's nice and relaxed. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, bingo. I got exactly the gauge that the pattern is calling for, 16 stitches wide, 20 rows for four inches. So now, what that means is that although the pattern said use size nine needles with this yarn, in order for me to get the gauge the pattern calls for I'm gonna use size eight needles. Knit just the way I do. I don't have to start knitting tighter or looser. I'm just gonna use size eight needles, then I can follow the pattern just the way it's written and my fabric will be the right size. Now, that's my gauge for this yarn and this project. It doesn't mean that I can always, if something says nine use size eight. You have to go and do your gauge swatch with the yarn and the needles that you're gonna use for the project until you get the right gauge which is why patterns will say, use size nine needles or size needed to get gauge. Some of the differences I found when I was knitting my gauge swatches were pretty small, right. Like half a stitch or two stitches off from the gauge. So you might say, Debbie, really, does that make such a big difference? Take a look. Here's the swatch I know on size eight needles when I got the right gauge. And, here's the swatch on size nine when my gauge was too loose. You'll see that there's about half an inch extra of fabric in this swatch as there is in this one and it's the same number of stitches. Half an inch doesn't seem so much here, but what it means is that every four inches or so I'm gonna have an extra half inch of fabric. So, if my project is supposed to be eight inches wide and I cast on that number of stitches, mine's really gonna be nine inches wide, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And, with even bigger difference the fabric is really

different. So, even though it doesn't seem like it's very much of a difference in a small four inch swatch of fabric, multiply it over a number of times. It can really add inches or make you fall short inches in the fabric which means, you'll work really hard on a sweater and it'll be too small for you or way too big for you, and that's a giant bummer. Look, nobody really likes to make gauge swatches. It's not nearly as fun as getting started on a project, but it's like going to the dentist, you gotta do it.