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## How to Substitute Yarn with Debbie Stoller

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### Chapter 1 - Substituting Yarn

#### Tips for swapping out yarn

(inspiring tones) - Let's say there's a pattern you found in a book for a sweater that you really wanna make. Only problem is the yarn that you're supposed to use is 50% angora and 50% wool, and angora makes you really itchy. Can you use different yarn to make the sweater or can you use some of the yarn that you have already in your stash to knit a nice sweater with? The answer is, "Of course, you just gotta follow "a couple of rules." The first thing to look for if you're gonna replace yarn is to try and replace a yarn that's wool with something else that's wool or even wool-like and yarn that's cotton with something that's cotton or cotton-like. So if we went to the yarn store together and you came over and said, "Oh, I really like this yarn. "Can I make that sweater with this yarn?" I would say, "No, that's not a good idea." This is cotton yarn and that sweater is wool and angora. And the problem is if you make it with this yarn it might get really saggy. Cotton doesn't hold its shape that well. It may stretch out and it's gonna be a lot heavier and it's not gonna work. So you put that one away. Next thing to look at is to try to replace the yarn that you're using with another one that's of approximately the same gauge. Well, this yarn is worsted and I know that because I see that it calls for size seven and eight knitting needles, and that's about the size of knitting needle that you use with worsted weight. When you're first starting out you probably won't realize that. In that case, just look the yarn up online. On the website for the yarn or someplace else online it will tell you what the weight of the yarn is, if it's fingering weight, if it's worsted weight. And so then you can know that you're on the lookout for worsted weight. But like I said one of my tricks is to look just at the size of the needle that the materials in the pattern call for and that gives you a sense of the yarn. So back to the yarn store. You come running over and you say, "Okay, okay, here's wool. "This one's 100% wool, no cotton. "Can we use this yarn? "And it's worsted weight. "Can we use this yarn instead of the yarn in the pattern?" Well, I'd say, "Yeah, it is wool," and I'd look at it. The recommended needle size for this yarn is nine. So that means maybe it's a little bit heavier but the dead giveaway is this. On a size nine I'm supposed to get 16 stitches to the inch for four inches and this wants me to get 20 stitches to four inches. And that's in ribbing, which is already a compressed thing. So I'll never be able to do that with this yarn or if I do and make go on really small needles this fabric is gonna be so tight that the sweater would just be able to stand up on its own. So this one's out. For the same reason this one, which is really soft and a beautiful yarn and not as heavy as the other one, this one is too light. The recommended needle size for this yarn is three, which is already way smaller than the needle that the pattern is calling for. So that already gives me clue that the gauge of this yarn, the weight of this yarn, is way lighter than that. But I can also see that it says using size three needles I should be getting 25 stitches to four inches and that's just not gonna work with this gauge. So I'd say, "No, put that one aside. "You'll never get the right gauge." So then you come over with this one and you say, "Okay, it's wool and it's worsted "weight and I think the gauge is sort of right." And sure enough this yarn says it would get 17 stitches on size eights. You need to get 20 stitches on size sevens. You might have to go down a needle size or two but that small of a difference isn't gonna really be noticeable on the fabric. You wanna replace it with this yarn and so I say, "Yes, let's do it." So you replace it with this yarn. Now, the pattern, let's say you're doing a size small. The pattern calls for seven skeins of the original yarn. So do I have to get seven skeins of this or is seven skeins gonna be enough? Do I need more, do I need less? In

order to figure that out you gotta do a pretty simple calculation. Now, that original yarn was 123 yards per skein and the pattern told me to get seven skeins. So if I use my calculator and I multiply 123 by seven, I get 861. So really this pattern needs 861 yards of yarn. It's not so important how many balls it is. It's just important that there's at least 861 yards of yarn available for me to make this pattern. Now, let's look at the replacement yarn. This yarn has 183 yards of yarn in it. So if I need 861 for the project and each ball of this yarn has 183, I have to divide 861 by 183. 861 divided by 183 is 4.7. Well, they don't sell 0.7, 7/10 of a ball of yarn so I'm just gonna get five balls of this new yarn. The original pattern called for seven but I only need to buy five. So now I have the right amount of yarn and the right, you know, approximately right width, the right fiber. I can try to use it in this pattern. Now, you found a yarn that will probably work in the pattern. It has the right gauge, it has the right fiber makeup. There's one last thing that you should probably do though. And that's to knit up a gauge swatch with this yarn, getting the gauge that the pattern calls for and then seeing if you like that fabric. Does it drape well enough, is it too stiff because sometimes using different yarn, even if it's the same fiber and the same gauge, can still give you unexpected results. Luckily most yarn stores will take back any yarn that you don't need. So you can either buy all of it or just buy one and test it out and then buy the rest. But this way you can use whatever yarn you want.