

Crafting

Creating and Measuring a Gauge Swatch

When you're knitting or crocheting a project that needs to be sized just right, like a sweater or another item of clothing, it's helpful to begin with a test swatch, or gauge swatch.

Most patterns include information about gauge, which refers to how many rows and stitches there should be in a specific measurement. For example, a pattern might tell you the gauge should be "10 stitches and 14 rows over 4 inches."

Creating a swatch gives you the chance to practice your stitches and see if they're the right size. If they're not, you can try a different size of knitting needles or crochet hook, adjust your technique, or even try a different yarn.

Creating the Swatch with Low Vision

Begin by knitting or crocheting a small rectangle. For the first few rows, and for a few stitches on each side of your swatch, use a stitch that won't curl at the edges.

For the middle section that's at least 4 inches square, use the stitch that your pattern calls for.

Measuring the Swatch

One handy way to measure your swatch is to use a measuring tape with large-print numbers, or with marks you can feel. Check out Hadley's workshop on measuring tips and tricks for more ideas and resources.

Another way to measure is with a tool called a swatch gauge, which is available at yarn and craft stores and online. This is a small, flat template that usually has a square or L-shaped opening.

To measure, lay the gauge over your swatch, lining it up with the stitches and rows, and then count the number of stitches (along the width), and the rows (along the length).

A magnifier can be helpful. Or, if you have a smartphone, you can take a picture, then zoom in to count the stitches. For details on using the zoom feature on your smartphone, check out Hadley's Apple or Android workshops.

Making Adjustments

Once you measure your stitches, compare your measurements to the pattern's gauge instructions.

- If you have more stitches than the pattern recommends, your stitches are small. Use larger knitting needles or a larger crochet hook, or try to make looser stitches.

Working by Touch

For detailed instructions on creating a swatch by touch, contact a Hadley learning expert.