

Factors affecting the validity of gauge swatches

To often one hears “I made a gauge swatch but the finished article did not meet expectations”.

Maria Ann and I performed a number of tests to determine how best to knit, block and measure a valid gauge swatch as well as tips of how to ensure the final product will turn out as anticipated. The presentation will describe how we determined the steps to follow as listed below:

- Follow the instructions for knitting a swatch as found in the manual for the machine you will be using. (Number of rows and stitches to knit and where and how to place markers.)
- If only 2 markers were added for measuring stitch gauge, add 4 more, 2 each side, one at the top and one at the bottom at or near the contrast yarn rows to be used to measure row gauge.
- Hang a cast on comb, with or with out weights, and long enough to include all cast on stitches, as soon as possible after casting on.
- Slip the first stitch on the carriage side every forth row (rows 4&5, 8&9, 12&13,)
- Remove the cast on comb only when you remove the swatch from the machine.

- Allow the sides to roll toward the center and holding the fabric by top and bottom pull with a jerk a few times to reform the stitches.
- Gently pull the fabric sideways and on the bias.
- Using a method appropriate for the yarn employed (moisture, steam, pressure), block the swatch to form a relaxed rectangle. The row and stitch markers should form straight, parallel lines to each other and be joined by 90 degree angles.
- Measure the distance between the stitch and row markers in the center of the encircled rectangle and calculate preliminary stitch and row gauge.
- Wash the swatch as you intend to wash the finished article. Place the wet swatch flat between Turkish towels and pat to remove excess water and then gently reshape into a relaxed rectangle and allow to dry flat.
- Recheck measurements and calculations and record final stitch and row gauge numbers together with stitch dial and tension dial numbers and machine used for future reference.

The presentation will end by comparing samples knit with an intarsia carriage rather than the standard carriage.