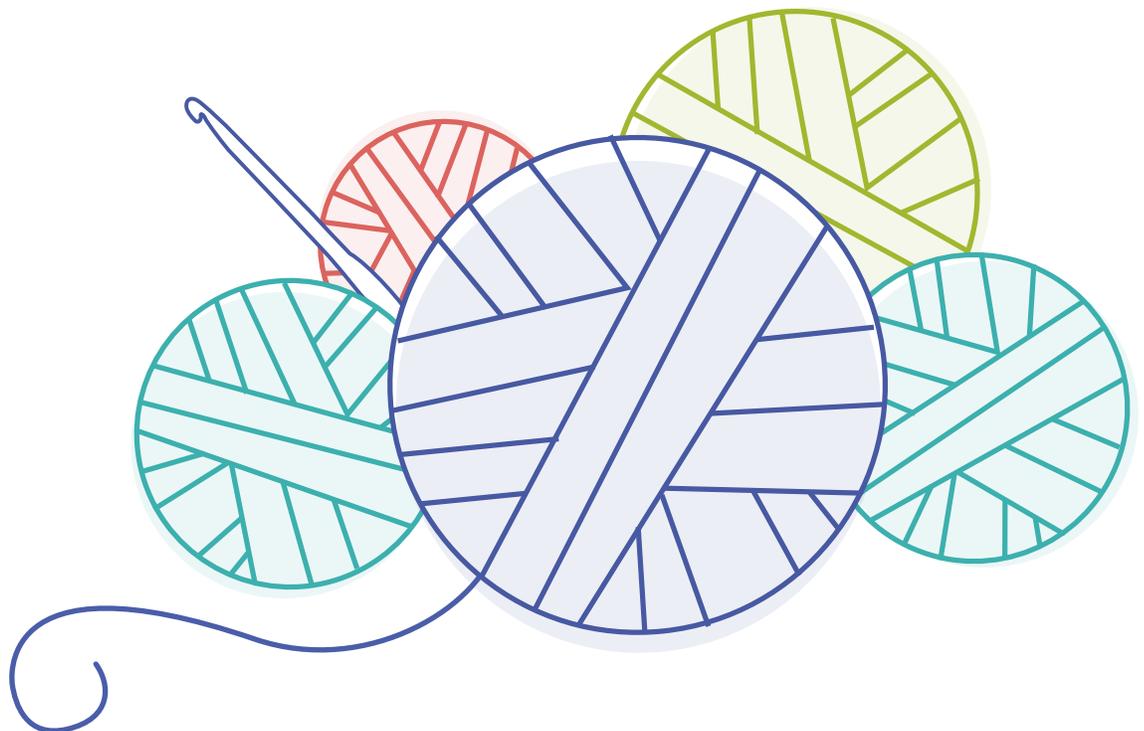


HOW TO Crochet

Gauge

Karen Costello Soltys



Gauge

I've met a lot of new knitters and crocheters over the years. And I truly enjoy sharing my love of these crafts with those who are just discovering them. I'm happy to share tips and tricks that I've learned so others can avoid the pitfalls I've stumbled over. One of the biggest problems many face—but one that's easy to fix—is working to gauge.

One thing that just about every newbie asks is, “Do I really need to make a gauge swatch?” If you want to avoid a big problem later, my answer is a definite “YES!”

I'm not quite sure why making a swatch is such a dreaded event. I'm guessing it's simply because we want to jump right in and start making a project. But believe me, spending a few minutes—or even an hour if that's what it takes—to make an accurate gauge swatch is time well spent.

Why? Because you want your finished project to turn out well. If it's a garment, you want it to fit properly. If it's a pillow or toy, maybe the finished size isn't quite so crucial. But you still want it to look nice, right? You don't want the crocheted fabric to be so tight and stiff that your pillow is more like a rock than a cushion. Or conversely, you don't want the fabric to be so loose and floppy that the stuffing leaks out of your finished toy. Like Goldilocks, you want whatever you crochet to be just right.

So, do you really need to make a gauge swatch? Yes! And now I'll get off my soapbox and explain how to make a gauge swatch and measure it, and what to do if it doesn't turn out to the correct size.

© 2013 by Martingale



19021 120th Ave. NE, Ste. 102 · Bothell, WA 98011 USA
800.426.3126

www.ShopMartingale.com

Register at ShopMartingale.com to [get a free subscription](#) to the [Stitch This!](#) blog. You'll get free patterns, tutorials, how-to videos, giveaways, and the first word on sales.

What Is Gauge?

Your pattern will most likely specify a gauge. What does that mean? Gauge is simply the number of stitches per inch of crocheted fabric. Often gauge is given as the number of stitches worked over 4" because it's easier and more accurate to measure the number of stitches over a larger swatch, especially when the gauge per inch involves a fraction of a stitch. Fractions—yikes!

For example, the specified gauge may look like any of the following:

4 sc = 1" using G hook

20 dc = 4" using I hook

30 sc and 10 rows = 4" using F hook

How do you interpret that? Let's have a closer look.

Well, 20 dc = 4" means you need 5 dc per 1" ($20 \div 4 = 5$). On the other hand, 30 sc = 4" means you need $7\frac{1}{2}$ sc per 1" ($30 \div 4 = 7\frac{1}{2}$). It's not that easy to measure half stitches, so we start by making a larger swatch.

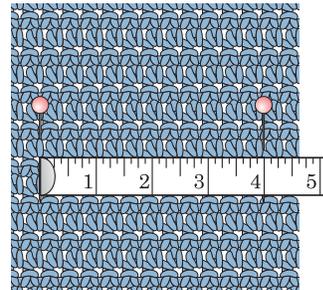
Making a Gauge Swatch

To determine if the way *you* crochet will yield the same number of stitches per inch as what's specified in the pattern, start by making a swatch. Using the hook size called for, crochet a swatch that's at least 4" x 4". If you have enough yarn, go ahead and make it 6" square. Be sure to use the stitch called for in the gauge, such as single crochet or double crochet, to make sure you're comparing apples to apples, as the saying goes.

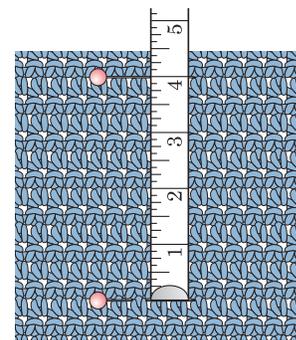
It's hard to measure a curled swatch accurately, so you may want to wash or block your swatch first or steam it with an iron (provided it's not acrylic or nylon or some other fiber that can melt). Don't pull or tug the swatch to get it to be a certain size; you simply want an accurate measurement of your gauge. You can always adjust your hook size to get it to be correct.

Measuring the Gauge Swatch

Lay your prepared swatch flat on a table. Using a measuring tape, measure 4" across the swatch in the center of the swatch. (The starting row and ending rows or the edges may be a little tighter or looser, so it's more accurate to measure in the middle.) Mark the distance with straight pins, and then count the number of stitches between the pins.



Measuring stitches



Measuring rows

If the specified gauge is 20 stitches over 4" and you have 20, that's great! You're ready to start your project.

Adjusting Your Gauge

To demonstrate how to make adjustments if you're not right on gauge, let's divide the gauge down to stitches per inch. It's a lot easier to work with for making calculations. For example, if the gauge is 20 stitches in 4", then that means there will be 5 stitches per 1" ($20 \div 4 = 5$).

So, if the gauge is supposed to be 20 stitches (5 per inch) but you have 21 stitches, that means you have 5.25 stitches per 1" ($21 \div 4 = 5.25$) and your gauge is too small. But wait. Isn't 21 *bigger* than 20? Yes, it's a bigger number, but that means you have *more* stitches per inch than needed because your crocheting is *smaller* or tighter than desired. Still not sure why that's such a big deal? Let's look at a specific example.

Say you're crocheting a sweater and your pattern calls for 100 stitches across the back that will measure 20" wide when finished. Divide the total number of stitches by the specified gauge to get the width: $100 \div 5 = 20$ ". Now, divide the total number of stitches by *your actual gauge*, which we've already calculated to be 5.25 for this example.

How bad can being off by $\frac{1}{4}$ stitch per inch be? Well, if you're making that same sweater pattern, divide 100 stitches by your gauge to get the finished width: $100 \div 5.25 = 19$ ". Your sweater will be 1" smaller than it needs to be across the back. Which means it will also be 1" smaller across the front. Being off by just one stitch in a 4" swatch has now multiplied into a sweater that's 2" too small—an expensive mistake.

The good news is that you've crocheted a gauge swatch, so you haven't made that mistake! You can simply switch to a larger hook and work a new gauge swatch! I admit, it sounds a bit confusing when you have more stitches than needed and the solution is to use an even bigger hook. But try another swatch and see. This small investment of your time will guarantee your project turns out to be just right.



Gauge-Swatch Mantra

Too many stitches per inch =
Use a bigger hook.

Too few stitches per inch =
Use a smaller hook.