

Yarn substitution cheat sheet

The pattern calls for a yarn you can't get, or don't want to pay for. Here's how to swap it without wrecking the gauge, and what changes when you switch fiber.

STANDARD YARN WEIGHTS

#	NAME	WPI	KNIT GAUGE / 4"	NEEDLE	CROCHET GAUGE / 4"	HOOK
0	Lace	30-40+	33-40 sts	1.5-2.25 mm	32-42 dc	1.4-2.25 mm
1	Super fine / fingering, sock	14-30	27-32 sts	2.25-3.25 mm	21-32 sc	2.25-3.5 mm
2	Fine / sport	12-18	23-26 sts	3.25-3.75 mm	16-20 sc	3.5-4.5 mm
3	Light / DK	11-15	21-24 sts	3.75-4.5 mm	12-17 sc	4.5-5.5 mm
4	Medium / worsted, aran	9-12	16-20 sts	4.5-5.5 mm	11-14 sc	5.5-6.5 mm
5	Bulky / chunky	6-9	12-15 sts	5.5-8 mm	8-11 sc	6.5-9 mm
6	Super bulky	5-6	7-11 sts	8-12.75 mm	7-9 sc	9-15 mm
7	Jumbo	0-4	6 or fewer	12.75 mm+	6 or fewer	15 mm+

WPI = wraps per inch. Wrap the yarn snugly around a ruler for one inch and count the wraps. It's the fastest way to identify an unlabelled yarn from your stash.

THE FIVE RULES OF SUBSTITUTING

1. **Buy yards, not grams.** Two 100g skeins of different fibers can differ by 150 yards. The pattern's yardage is the number that matters.
2. **Swatch, then trust the swatch, not the label.** Ball bands state the manufacturer's gauge, not yours. Wash and block the swatch before you measure it.
3. **Two strands of a lighter weight $\approx$ one of a heavier.** Two fingering held together lands close to DK or light worsted. Two DK lands near bulky. Useful for using up a stash.
4. **Match the fabric, not just the number.** A drapey shawl in stiff cotton at the correct gauge is still the wrong garment.
5. **Buy one spare skein in the same dye lot.** Lots shift noticeably, and running short at the last row is the worst possible time to discover it.

WHAT CHANGES WHEN YOU CHANGE FIBER

FIBER	DRAPE & BEHAVIOR	WATCH OUT FOR
Wool	Elastic, forgiving, blocks beautifully and holds its shape	Can felt; some people find it itchy
Superwash wool	Soft, machine washable, excellent stitch definition	Grows and can sag, go down a size
Cotton	Crisp, cool, great for dishcloths and summer tops	Heavy, no memory, hard on the hands
Acrylic	Cheap, durable, washable, huge color range	Won't block, the shape off the hook is the final shape
Alpaca	Warm, silky, gorgeous drape	Grows lengthwise under its own weight
Cotton/acrylic blend	Balanced, most of the wash-and-wear, less of the weight	Stitch definition softer than pure cotton
Mohair / brushed	Halo, lightness, warmth without bulk	Nearly impossible to frog cleanly

THE SUBSTITUTION MATH

Skeins you need = pattern yardage ÷ yards per skein of the new yarn, then round up.

Example: the pattern needs 1,200 yards. Your yarn has 218 yards per skein. $1,200 \div 218 = 5.5 \rightarrow$ **buy 6** (and honestly, buy 7).

Gauge adjustment: if your swatch has more stitches per 4" than the pattern, go up a hook or needle size. Fewer stitches, go down. Change one size at a time and re-swatch.

USING THIS WITH STASHKEEPER

StashKeeper records what you own and what you're making, this sheet is the reference that sits alongside it. In **Yarn Stash**, log brand, colorway, fiber type, weight, dye lot, yards bought and yards left. In **Projects**, save the pattern URL, the yards needed and your notes. **Row Counter** keeps your place; **Tools** holds the hooks and needles you own so you can check before you buy. Gauge and WPI aren't tracked in StashKeeper, that's what this page is for. Keep it printed in your project bag.