



# SECRETS OF YOUR LYS

SARAH KELLER :: KNOT ANOTHER HAT

Peek behind the scenes to learn what we shopowners know,  
so you can shop for that next project with confidence!

## Choosing Yarn: Experience, Evaluation, and Excitement

In other words, knowing the basics of gauge and yarn weights, as well as purposefully building your own experiences with various yarns, and some informed shopping will lead to project success.

### Experience

Let's get some yarn! Wait, what? Already? The best way to build your experience is to get different types of yarn in your hands. Buy yourself a skein each of the following (or split them with a friend!):

- 100% cotton
- 100% linen
- 100% alpaca
- 100% non-superwash wool
- 100% superwash wool
- 50% wool/50% cotton blend
- 50% wool/50% alpaca blend
- 50/50, 60/40 or 70/30 wool/silk blend
- Cotton/silk or cotton/bamboo blend

Spend some time with each of these, knit large ladder swatches on a variety of needles (start with 2 sizes below the recommended needle size and go to 2 sizes above). Get a feel for the drape of the fabric (or lack of). Measure their gauges, then wash them and lay them to dry naturally. Compare their pre-wash gauges to post-wash gauges to see how or if they have changed.

### Evaluation

Evaluate your pattern:

- What is the gauge?
- What is the weight of the yarn called for?
- What are the properties and fiber content of the yarn called for?
- What other knowledge can be gleaned from the pattern?





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## Excitement (this is the best part!)

You're ready to buy for your project ... now what? Things to look for in a store:

- Organization: how are their yarns organized throughout the store?
- Signage: do they have signs by each yarn giving critical info?
- Knowledge: the staff is there to help you! Ask, ask, ask.

Let me tell you the most disappointing thing ever in the history of yarn shopping, and the thing that NO yarn store owner wants to actually admit: you should only buy 1 skein. With 1 skein you can:

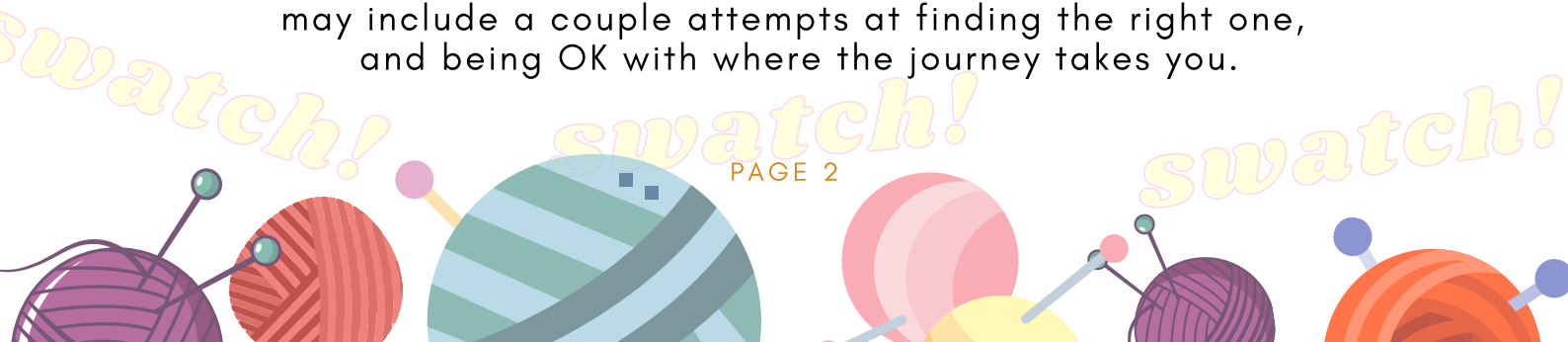
- Swatch
- Swatch some more, remembering that yarns can often play many roles and fit into many niches.
- Wash your swatch
- Test for colorfastness
- Test your stitch pattern in that colorway
- Knit a small gift for a friend when you decide it's not the right yarn.
- Go back and buy the entire quantity you need when you've done the above and found it to be your absolute dream yarn (for this project).

## Beyond Yarn

Beyond your yarn choice, what other factors can help ensure a successful outcome for your project?

- Quality of pattern: check Ravelry for those who have knit it before you, looking for comments, yarn choices, and errata postings
- Don't mix needle types in the same project (without re-swatching). Wood, metal, square - all these different types of needles can give you different gauge results, even if they are supposed to be the same size.
- Read through an entire pattern - but at the same time don't expect that every step will make sense before you've even started.
- Know your body and know what you like! Everyone should have a good set of their own measurements somewhere handy (like saved on your phone).









Like everyone's favorite broken record, I say, "swatch, swatch, swatch". Open yourself up to enjoying the process of choosing your yarn, knowing that may include a couple attempts at finding the right one, and being OK with where the journey takes you.



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## Standard Yarn Weight System

Categories of yarn, gauge ranges, and recommended needle and hook sizes								
Yarn Weight Symbol & Category Names	 <b>0</b> LACE	 <b>1</b> SUPER FINE	 <b>2</b> FINE	 <b>3</b> LIGHT	 <b>4</b> MEDIUM	 <b>5</b> BULKY	 <b>6</b> SUPER BULKY	 <b>7</b> JUMBO
Type of Yarns in Category	Lace, 10 count crochet thread	Sock, Fingering, Baby	Sport, Baby	DK, Light Worsted	Worsted, Afghan, Aran	Chunky, Craft, Rug	Bulky, Roving	Jumbo, Roving
Knit Gauge Range* in Stockinette Stitch to 4 inches / 10 cm	33–40** sts (8.25-10 sts/inch)	27–32 sts (6.75-8 sts/inch)	23–26 sts (5.75-6.5 sts/inch)	21–24 sts (5.25-6 sts/inch)	16–20 sts (4-5 sts/inch)	12–15 sts (3-3.75 sts/inch)	7–11 sts (1.75-2.75 sts/inch)	6 sts and fewer (1.5 sts/inch)
Recommended Needle in Metric Size Range	1.5–2.25 mm	2.25–3.25 mm	3.25–3.75 mm	3.75–4.5 mm	4.5–5.5 mm	5.5–8 mm	8–12.75 mm	12.75 mm and larger
Recommended Needle U.S. Size Range	000 to 1	1 to 3	3 to 5	5 to 7	7 to 9	9 to 11	11 to 17	17 and larger
Crochet Gauge Range* in Single Crochet to 4 inches / 10 cm	32–42 double crochets**	21–32 sts	16–20 sts	12–17 sts	11–14 sts	8–11 sts	7–9 sts	6 sts and fewer
Recommended Hook in Metric Size Range	Steel*** 1.6–1.4 mm Regular hook 2.25 mm	2.25–3.25 mm	3.5–4.5 mm	4.5–5.5 mm	5.5–6.5mm	6.5–9 mm	9–15 mm	15 mm and larger
Recommended Hook U.S. Size Range	Steel*** 6, 7, 8 Regular hook B–1	B–1 to E–4	E–4 to 7	7 to I–9	I–9 to K–10 ½	K–10 ½ to M–13	M–13 to Q	Q and larger

\* GUIDELINES ONLY: The above reflect the most commonly used gauges and needle or hook sizes for specific yarn categories.

\*\* Lace weight yarns are usually knitted or crocheted on larger needles and hooks to create lacy, openwork patterns. Accordingly, a gauge range is difficult to determine. Always follow the gauge stated in your pattern.

\*\*\* Steel crochet hooks are sized differently from regular hooks--the higher the number, the smaller the hook, which is the reverse of regular hook sizing (p. 27).