Sweater Planning Guide
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INTRODUCTION

We’re so excited that you’ve decided to knit a sweater! Making a sweater is a huge goal and a wonderful accomplishment!

Sometimes all of the choices that need to be made before getting started on your sweater can be a little intimidating, like deciding what type of sweater to make, which type of yarn to use, where to buy your yarn and what color to make your sweater.

This guide uses a simple question and answer format to walk you through the process of preparing to knit a sweater so that this experience is as fun and rewarding as possible. Taking the time to plan your project and choose suitable materials to work with will help you on your way to knitting a sweater you will be proud of!

We have also included links at the end of the guide to sources where you can find more information on many of the topics we touch on and sweater knitting tips from designers and industry professionals!

Welcome to the world of sweater knitting!
HOW DO I KNOW WHICH STYLE OF SWEATER TO MAKE?
STEP 1
CHOOSING YOUR SWEATER CONSTRUCTION

Choosing a style of sweater is your first step towards making one. In general, there are 5 basic sweater shapes and the primary difference between them is how they are constructed. Look at the examples below and on the following page to determine which style you prefer. Once you have chosen how you would like to construct your sweater we’ll talk about some additional design preferences.

As you are choosing a sweater style consider your preferences for the following:

- Do you prefer to knit flat or in the round?
- Do you enjoy seaming or would you prefer a seamless construction?
- Is style or perfect fit more important to you?

SET IN SLEEVE

Construction
Knit flat and seamed

Pro
Very comfortable fit

Con
Most complicated upper sleeve shaping

RAGLAN

Construction
Knit flat or in the round

Pro
Simple math and forgiving shoulder fit

Con
Some sleeve shaping methods may bunch at underarms
CHOOSE YOUR SWEATER CONSTRUCTION CONT.

ADDITIONAL SWEATER STYLES

DOLMAN / BATWING

**Construction**
Usually knit flat and seamed

**Pro**
Elegant shape for fabric that drapes well

**Con**
May cause a “top-heavy” illusion

CIRCULAR YOKE

**Construction**
Knit in the round

**Pro**
Perfect for colorwork

**Con**
Some constructions may bunch at underarms

SADDLE SHOULDER / GANSEY

**Construction**
Knit flat and seamed together

**Pro**
Great shaping for men’s sweaters

**Con**
May cause the shoulders to look broad
STEP 2
CHOOSE YOUR SWEATER STYLE

This step is pretty easy since there are only two basic styles, pullovers and cardigans.

PULLOVER
- Can be casual or dressy depending on which fiber it is made out of
- Simple to knit
- Best style for traditional colorwork

CARDIGAN
- Can be dressed up or down by changing what is worn beneath it
- Easy to use for layering
- Best style to use with pockets
STEP 3
CHOOSE YOUR PREFERRED NECKLINE

- Crew Neck
- V Neck
- Shawl Neck
- Turtle Neck
- Cowl Neck
STEP 4

CHOOSE YOUR SLEEVE & BODY LENGTH

The most common sleeve lengths are short sleeves, 3/4 sleeves and long sleeves.

Similarly, the most common body lengths are crop length, regular length and tunic length.

Take a moment to trace your basic style concept in the outline to the right.

**Construction**
- Set in sleeves
- Raglan
- Circular Yoke
- Saddle Shoulder
- Dolman

**Style**
- Cardigan
- Pullover

**Neckline**
- Crew Neck
- Shawl Neck
- Turtle Neck
- V-Neck
- Cowl Neck

**Length**
- Crop
- Regular
- Tunic

**Sleeve Length**
- Short
- 3/4 Length
- Long
WHAT TYPE OF YARN SHOULD I USE?
The yarn you choose will affect the look, feel and longevity of your sweater so it is important to choose a yarn that is suitable for the project and the person you are knitting for. But when you are faced with unlimited varieties and colors of yarn it can be difficult to choose just one! In the following pages we'll take a look at fiber choice, weight, texture and color so that you will be equipped to find the perfect yarn for your sweater.
**BASIC FIBER TYPES:**

Fiber can be grouped into three main categories - animal, plant and synthetic. Below are some general characteristics for each type of yarn. There are some exceptions to the generalizations but overall they hold true for the majority of the category.

On the next page you’ll find examples for each category of fiber.

The benefits of the different types of fiber can easily be mixed together and spun into one yarn by creating blends. The resulting blend shows off some of the distinct characteristics of each fiber type.

Common reasons to choose a blend are affordability, easier care or desirable fabric characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal Fibers</th>
<th>Plant Fibers</th>
<th>Synthetic Fibers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Naturally flame retardant</td>
<td>Flammable</td>
<td>Highly flammable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold color well</td>
<td>Hard wearing</td>
<td>Low dye absorption, good color retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High quality fiber will drape nicely</td>
<td>Excellent color retention</td>
<td>Pills readily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels warm to the touch</td>
<td>Feels cool to the touch</td>
<td>Low breathability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally tend to be soft</td>
<td>Good breathability</td>
<td>Good heat retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not machine washable</td>
<td>Low moisture resistance</td>
<td>Feels warm to the touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tend to be durable</td>
<td>Hypoallergenic</td>
<td>Good moisture resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent moisture wicking</td>
<td>Poor elasticity - tends to stretch or sag when knit</td>
<td>Can irritate sensitive skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent breathability</td>
<td>Easy to care for</td>
<td>Easy to care for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great insulators</td>
<td>Most are machine washable</td>
<td>Machine washable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good elasticity</td>
<td>Yarn prone to splitting</td>
<td>Cheaper alternative to animal fibers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depending on the spinning, will tend to pill</td>
<td>Get softer with wear</td>
<td>Fairly durable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most help regulate temperature</td>
<td>Excellent drape</td>
<td>Moderate drape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANIMAL</td>
<td>PLANT</td>
<td>SYNTHETIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOOL</td>
<td>COTTON</td>
<td>ACRYLIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALPACA</td>
<td>HEMP</td>
<td>NYLON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLAMA</td>
<td>BAMBOO</td>
<td>POLYESTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASHMERE</td>
<td>LINEN</td>
<td>LYCRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BISON</td>
<td>SOY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAMEL</td>
<td>LENPUR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SILK</td>
<td>SEACELL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOHAIR</td>
<td>TENCEL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANGORA</td>
<td>RAYON</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSSUM</td>
<td>RAMIE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QIVIUT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VICUNA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*commonly used to knit sweaters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
YARN WEIGHT

As you’re choosing yarn you’ll want to keep in mind the yarn weight.

There are a few different yarn weights that are commonly used for sweaters, fingering, worsted, chunky and bulky.

The weight of the yarn will affect a couple factors when knitting your sweater. If you choose a smaller weight of yarn your project will be much lighter so your garment could be worn in warmer climates, but in general it will take longer to knit. Fingering weight is often used to knit for babies.

A medium weight like worsted is a very versatile weight in terms of warmth and lightness. It can be used to knit garments for most seasons.

When you use chunky and bulky yarn the garment will be very warm and heavy - more like a knit coat. One positive to knitting with large weights is it will knit up quickly.

To the left you’ll find all four common weights for sweaters knit over 20 stitches with the recommended size needle.

SEE MORE INFORMATION ON CRAFTYARNCOUNCIL.COM/WEIGHT.
YARN TEXTURE

The texture of the yarn itself will greatly affect the overall look and feel of your garment.

When you are choosing a yarn keep in mind that in general the best yarn for sweaters is a smooth yarn or a yarn that you will be able to get an even gauge with.

The biggest determining factor of what sort of texture a yarn will have is the way the yarn is spun and plied. This will determine how durable the yarn is, how warm your garment will be and what overall texture the fabric will have after you knit with it.

Of the smooth yarns, plied yarns tend to be sturdiest. Single ply and roving style yarns feel very soft and tend to be good insulators.

If you have a very textured yarn that you would like to use, they tend to be best suited for small details like cuffs or edgings.
YARN COLOR

Color is probably the first thing people notice when they see your sweater. Consider the following types of yarn colors when choosing yarn for your sweater.

1. Hand-dyed yarn will have a little bit of variation, while retaining one overall color.

2. Variegated yarn will actually be changing from one color to another in short or long intervals. When knitting a sweater the "stripes" of variegation will be different on the sleeves than on the body of the sweater. Best knit in stockinette.

3. Heathered yarn is made when two colors of fiber are processed into one yarn. This coloring tends to add depth and richness the overall color. Great for textured stitches.

4. Solid colored yarn is just one color, no variation. This type of coloring is great for textured stitch patterns, cables and lace.

5. Tweed yarn is a solid color with flecks of a few other colors. This type of yarn tends to look a bit rustic. Great for men!
### WHICH YARN IS GOOD FOR WHAT?

Are you still having trouble deciding what yarn to get? **Look through these common questions to find some guidance.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you...</th>
<th>Try this...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Live in a warm climate? | - Lightweight yarn (fingering, worsted)  
- Fibers that are cool to the touch like cotton or bamboo  
- Temperature regulating fibers like wool  
- Blends of cotton, wool, bamboo, or acrylic  
- Use open stitch patterns like lace |
| Live in a cold climate? | - Extremely warm fibers like Alpaca, Buffalo, Cashmere or Angora  
- Heavier yarn weights like chunky or bulky  
- Single ply yarns  
- Use patterns like allover cables, fisherman's rib, or brioche which hold air close to the body |
| Get messy? | - Washable wools (superwash)  
- Cotton or bamboo  
- Synthetic fibers or washable synthetic blends |
| Have allergic reactions to wool? | - Alternate animal fibers like alpaca, llama or cashmere  
- Vegetable fibers like cotton, linen and bamboo  
- Synthetic fibers  
- High quality wools (sometimes you're not allergic to the fiber but how it was processed) |
| Have allergic reactions to acrylic? | - Stick to animal and vegetable fibers |
| Want super soft yarn that isn't too warm? | - Lightweight yarn (fingering, worsted)  
- Loose gauge, try using larger needles to make a looser, softer fabric  
- Linen or linen blends, start off rough but get very soft with wear  
- High quality wools will be soft but help regulate body temperature so you don’t get too warm |
HOW MUCH YARN SHOULD I BUY?
MEASURING

Now that you've chosen your yarn you'll need to figure out how much to buy. But first, you should find out how big your sweater will be so that you can get the proper amount of yarn. Fill out the measurement worksheet on the next page or use the Standard Measurement Chart chart to figure out your approximate measurements.

Once you have determined your measurements, use the yardage estimator to find out approximately how much yarn you'll need.

Always buy one ball more than you think you'll need and save the receipt. That way if you don't use it, you can return it. It is always better to have too much yarn than to not have enough.

Heather Zoppetti
@StitchSprouts

“To get a great fit, you have to be honest with yourself and your measurements.” [tweet this]
http://stitchsprouts.com
MEASUREMENT WORKSHEET

1. Chest/Bust ________
   ~ Measure around the fullest part of your chest. Be sure to keep the measuring tape parallel to the floor.

2. Neck ________
   ~ Measure around the largest part of the neck. If you are creating a circular neckline and would like to make a wider neck, you can add inches here. However, I would not recommend making the neck any larger than 26”.

3. Raglan ________
   ~ Measure diagonally from your shoulder seam at the point where it meets the collar to the side seam at underarm.

4. Body Length ________
   ~ Measure from from underarm to your desired sweater length (crop, regular, long or tunic).

5. Natural Waist ________
   ~ Measure around at height of navel.

6. Waist Shaping 1 ________
   ~ Measure from bustline/widest point of chest to natural waist.

7. Waist Shaping 2 ________
   ~ Measure from natural waist to hip or to desired length of sweater.

8. Hip ________
   ~ Measure around at hip at widest point.

9. Sleeve Length ________
   ~ Measure from underarm to desired sleeve length.

10. Wrist ________
    ~ Measure loosely around wrist

11. Sleeve Shaping 1 ________
    ~ Measure from underarm to inside of elbow

12. Elbow ________
    ~ Measure around arm at elbow with arm bent
**YARDAGE ESTIMATES**

Below are estimates on about how much yarn you will need to make your sweater. These estimates are for smooth yarns and plain knitting and are given in the 3 most common yarn weights. Estimate generously, as it is much better to have leftovers than to run out of yarn before you’re finished.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE / SIZE</th>
<th>SPORT</th>
<th>WORSTED</th>
<th>BULKY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babies 12-18 Months</td>
<td>550-650 yds</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toddlers 2-6 Years</td>
<td>800-1000 yds</td>
<td>600-800 yds</td>
<td>550-650 yds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children 6-12 Years</td>
<td>1000-1500 yds</td>
<td>900-1200 yds</td>
<td>700-1000 yds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misses Sizes 32-40 Bust</td>
<td>1400-1600 yds</td>
<td>1100-1400 yds</td>
<td>1000-1300 yds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer, loosely fitting, or oversized misses</td>
<td>1500-1900 yds</td>
<td>1400-1600 yds</td>
<td>1200 - 1400 yds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men sizes 36-48 Chest</td>
<td>1700-2100 yds</td>
<td>1500-1700 yds</td>
<td>1100-1400 yds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer, loosely fitting, or oversized mens</td>
<td>2000-2400 yds</td>
<td>1500 - 1700 yds</td>
<td>1300-1500 yds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generous sizes 42-52 Chest</td>
<td>1600-2000 yds</td>
<td>1400 - 1600yds</td>
<td>1200 - 1600 yds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**For Adult Cardigans add 5% to the recommended yardage.**

To calculate 5% extra use this equation:
Yardage recommended _____ x .05 = _____ additional yardage (add to yardage recommendation)
WHAT NEEDLES DO I NEED?
Before you go and buy needles for your project take a few minutes to sit down and check your gauge - that is how many stitches and rows you are getting per inch. When you are knitting a project where exact sizing is important (like a garment), getting the correct gauge is essential.

If you are using a pattern, the desired gauge should be listed, as well as a suggested needle size. The needle size listed is just a suggestion, a place to start. If you knit tighter or looser than the designer who created the pattern you may need to use a different size of needle to get the correct gauge. That is why checking gauge is a MUST!

Gauge is affected by the size of yarn you are using and the size of needle you choose.

Looser gauge generally allows fabric to drape better and tighter gauge can help a garment to have more structure.

Using the yarn you have chosen for your project knit a small swatch using a compatible size of needle. If the fabric you end up with is exactly what you want it to be there is nothing left to do, buy that size of needles. If the gauge is too loose try going down a needle size, if the gauge is too tight try going up a needle size.

Once you have a gauge that you’re happy with (or that is prescribed in your pattern) you will want to purchase that size of needle.
## Making a Gauge Swatch, Washing & Blocking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yarn Weight</th>
<th>Stitches to Cast On</th>
<th>Minimum # of Rows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fingering</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worsted</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulky</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use this chart to determine how many stitches to cast on and how many rows to knit for your gauge swatch.

### Washing & Blocking Your Gauge Swatch

After you have finished your swatch make sure to wash it like you will wash your finished garment. *Don’t skip this step!* Washing and blocking your swatch will help even out the stitches and show you how your yarn will react to washing (sometimes it is surprising).

1. Soak finished swatch in warm water for 10-15 minutes, gently squeezing out all air bubbles.
2. Drain sink and squeeze out excess water, being careful not to twist or wring fabric.
3. Roll swatch in a clean, dry towel, burrito-style and stomp on rolled towel from end-to-end.
4. Remove swatch. Fabric should feel damp but not saturated.

Once you have your swatch washed lay it out flat on a flat surface. Let it dry completely.

---

**Anastasia Wraight**

“Wash and block the swatch. This is most important when knitting clothing that needs a certain fit. Otherwise, even with a perfect swatch, you risk ending up with a sweater that doesn’t properly fit.”

[tweet this]

http://fortheknitofit.wordpress.com
Measuring Stitch and Row Gauge

Using a RULER - not a tape measure, measure 4 inches in the center of the swatch for both stitches (horizontal) and rows (vertical).

Place a straight pin in-between the stitch columns to mark the beginning and then place another at the 4 inch mark. Be sure to place the second pin exactly at the 4 inch mark, DO NOT fudge the numbers to get a certain gauge.

Repeat this step TWO MORE times in different areas of the swatch.

NOTE: Round to the nearest quarter inch. 1/4 = .25, 1/2 = .5, 3/4 = .75

Stitch measurement 1 = 
Stitch measurement 2 = 
Stitch measurement 3 = 

Next, use the following equation to find your average:

Add all three measurements together ______ then divide by 3 = ______Average stitch measurement over 4 inches

Averaging the measurements from different areas of your swatch ensures the accuracy of your gauge numbers.

Repeat this sequence for your row measurements.

Your row gauge is much less likely to change vertically, so we’ll only measure once.

Row measurement = ______

Once you have your average stitch and row measurement over 4 inches use the following equation to find your stitches per inch:

Average stitch measurement ______ ÷ 4 = Stitch Gauge ______

Average row measurement ______ ÷ 4 = Row Gauge ______

Ta-da! Now you have your gauge!

It may seem like this has taken a long time but taking the time to swatch, wash, block and measure for gauge is probably the most important step to creating a sweater that fits properly.
CHOOSING YOUR NEEDLES

Generally for a sweater you’ll need one set of double pointed needles (DPNs) and one circular needle in the size needed to get gauge.

Needles can be made of wood, bamboo, plastic, aluminum or even carbon fiber. Needles made from natural fibers like wood or bamboo tend to be have a little bit of grip on the yarn whereas metal or plastic needles are a bit more slippery.

The material the needle is made out of is a matter of personal preference. But typically the easiest circular needles to knit with are ones with a very flexible cable that doesn’t have much memory - that is, it won’t hold it’s shape by itself and can be easily moved with your knitting.

How long should my circular needles be?

The length of the circular needle will depend on the size of sweater you are making:

- 16”-20” for a baby or small child
- 24”-30” for larger children or women
- 32”-36” for larger adults or men
- 40”-46” for plus size or with a chest of larger than 40”
WILL I NEED ANY OTHER TOOLS?
In addition to your knitting needles you will need the following tools:

- Darning needle (for weaving in ends and seaming)
- Stitch Markers
- Stitch Holder or some scrap yarn
- Measuring Tape
- Sewing Needle and Thread
- Buttons or Zipper (if you’re making a cardigan)
- Scissors
- Calculator
- Cable Needle

In addition to these tools I recommend keeping a pencil and paper nearby just in case you need to make any changes to your pattern while you’re knitting or remind yourself what row to start on after taking a break.
“It’s the most obvious, but be honest with measuring. Measuring your body, measuring your sweater, measuring your gauge. Fudging on any one of these items will give you a finished sweater that may not fit as well as you hoped.”

http://dragonflysoars.blogspot.com/

Charlotte Dunning

“Color is very important; make sure you choose shades that compliment your skin tone. The last thing you want is to have a hand knit sweater you can’t wear because it makes you look washed out.”

http://accidental-knitter.blogspot.com

Rohn Strong

“It is not a race. If it is your first or your 70th sweater, it is not a race. Take your time and knit. You are participating in a marathon so pace yourself. No one wants to get halfway through the sweater and put it aside out of exhaustion.”

http://www.strongandstone.com

“Focus on knitting the row you are on. Freaking out about how much of the sweater is left to knit helps no one. Just keep your brain trained on where you are currently.”

http://www.martinimade.com

Kari Wymer

Use interchangeable needles so that you can put the sleeves on cables with end caps instead of using yarn to hold them.

http://thehighfiberdiet.blogspot.com

Adrienne Martini

“Treat your swatch how you will knit your sweater - in the round or flat, then wash and block it!”

http://nutmegknitter.wordpress.com
**TIPS & TRICKS FROM THE EXPERTS**

Jennifer DeAlmeida

“If an adult-sized sweater seems too daunting, practice on a baby sweater. You will learn the basics of sweater construction (i.e. shaping, sleeves, button bands, etc) on a smaller scale, which easily translate into a sweater for you.”

http://commuterknitter.blogspot.com

Katie Mayer

“Look in your closet for sweater styles you already love to wear and feel great in for inspiration on which sweaters to make.”

http://www.spudandchloe.com

Amy Gunderson

When adding in a new ball of yarn, don’t begin with the new strand right at the beginning of a row. Either begin beneath a textural element such as a cable that will make hiding your ends easier, or begin two stitches in from the beginning of the row.

http://universalyarn.com

Sara Kay Hartmann

Read your knitty godmothers: Elizabeth Zimmerman, Barbara Walker, Maggie Righetti. Meditate upon their words (calculator in hand), then go and do likewise -- or completely differently! It’s up to you because it’s YOUR sweater!

http://sarakayknitandcrochet.com

Tabetha Hedrick

Read through the pattern to make sure you understand all of the terminology before starting. Then you can hit all of the online tutorials for anything you need a refresher on.

http://tabethahedrick.com