



## How To Guide

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### Substituting Yarns

There are a few reasons why you might want to find a new yarn for your pattern. Maybe it's an older pattern and the original yarn has been discontinued; maybe you're looking for a vegan substitute; or maybe you simply want a different look. Whatever the reason, being able to easily find a new yarn is a useful skill, and the more successful you are in identifying a substitute, the easier and more successful your knitting or crochet will be when you come to begin your project.



Substituting yarns can seem daunting at first, as there are so many different yarn weights and lengths, not to mention how your own tension will also have an effect! But once you understand all the different numbers you're comparing and *why*, the whole process will become much less complex.

Download a pdf version of this guide for offline reading.



It will be important to consider the following things when looking for an alternative yarn for your project:

- Yarn weight
- Yarn tension
- Fibre content
- Yarn finish
- Total metreage/yardage required

**Please note:** Swapping out yarns can bring complications. Even if it seems like you've found the perfect replacement, lots of little factors will have an effect on the outcome of your project and you may find it doesn't quite work out in the way you'd hoped. But don't be discouraged – the more you do it, the easier you will find it and, anyway, our slightly wonky projects can teach us valuable crafting lessons!

So, get ready to grab your pattern and start searching!



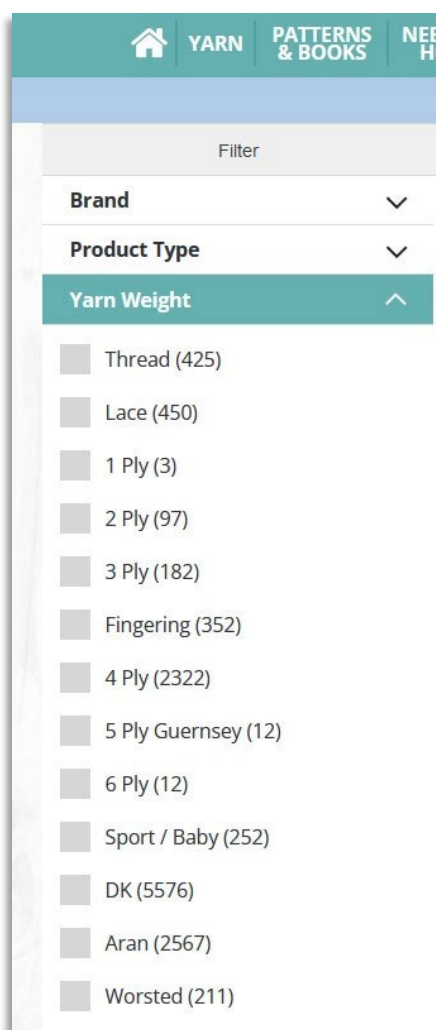
## **YARN WEIGHT**

The first and most obvious thing you'll need to match is the weight of our original yarn: whether it's DK, Chunky, Lace weight, Aran, or something else, this is the first thing to consider. Some patterns state this clearly but others, particularly older patterns, may not be so transparent, so you may need to investigate the suggested yarn to be sure what weight you are looking for. Ravelry has a very large catalogue of yarns, so even if the original yarn has long been discontinued, you might find the details you need by searching there – just don't get distracted by their pattern catalogue!

Whilst it is more commonly used by weavers, you might see some vintage patterns using wraps per inch (WPI) as a way of identifying yarn weight. The WPI number roughly corresponds to a yarn weight so a quick search should help you to confirm the weight, or check our handy table on the “Needle Size & Yarn Weight Information” page under General Information at the bottom of our website here.

If you can't find a yarn's weight on your original pattern, you may simply have to go by the tension needed, in which case please skip to the next section below entitled **Yarn Tension**.

Now to start your search for a new yarn! It is straightforward to use the filtering systems on our website to take a look at a list of yarns in your required weight – simply selected the relevant yarn weight from the drop-down menu at the top of the page, or click on “Yarn” and select your yarn weight in the tick boxes on the left side of the page.



Congratulations! You've taken your first step towards finding your substitute yarn!



## **YARN TENSION**

We all know that tension is important but we also know it's so tempting to not bother checking – we've all done it! But when substituting yarns, it is even more important to check that the tensions match, in order to ensure our projects come out looking and fitting the way we want. Please see our [How to Guide to Understanding Tension](#) for a closer look at how yarn tensions work.

Tension is another piece of information that your pattern may or may not list and, again, you can always check Ravelry to see if you can find the details you need. Most yarn will have a listed tension of number of stitches by number of rows. The closer you can get to the original yarn's tension the better, but you may be OK if the numbers are off by 1 or 2.

For example:

Original yarn tension – 16 sts by 24 rows.

Substitute yarn tension – 15 sts by 22 rows.

This may work as a substitute.

It is not possible to filter search results using tension on our website because there are too many variations, but any tension information provided by the manufacturer is listed on the page for each yarn, to the right of the image.

**Yarnsmiths Pebble Haze DK Prints - All Colours**



<b>Brand Name</b>	Yarnsmiths
<b>Yarn Name</b>	Pebble Haze DK Prints
<b>Man. Part Code</b>	PHPDK
<b>Shade Count</b>	20
<b>Yarn Weight</b>	DK
<b>Ball Weight</b>	150g
<b>Length</b>	435 metres
<b>Needle Size</b>	4mm
<b>Blend</b>	33% Acrylic 67% Cotton
<b>Tension</b>	22 stitches and 30 rows for a 10x10cm tension square using 4mm needles



Once you have a list of yarns that are of the right weight and have a matching tension, you're well on your way to finding the perfect match.

## FIBRE CONTENT AND YARN FINISH

Two different but linked details to check are the fibre content of the yarn and the finish of each strand, as these may dramatically affect the appearance of your completed project.

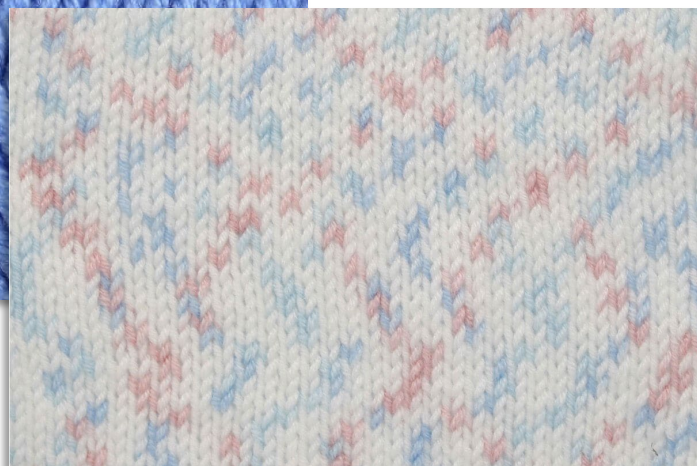
In general, we would recommend matching the fibre content of the original yarn if possible. Different fibres can behave in different ways and so may affect the fit, drape and/or shape of your completed project. If you substitute a wool yarn for a cotton yarn, for example, your item will likely be much heavier than originally intended, and perhaps cause it to hang in an odd, undesirable way. If an item has been designed with a particular wool in mind, the shaping and sizing of the item will probably reflect this and using different fibres may change the outcome.

If you need to change fibre content of your yarn because of allergies, beliefs, or even simple personal preference, it might be a good idea to do a little research to see if there are any other fibres that behave similarly to the original, in order to minimise any possible unwelcome effects of your substitution.

The construction and finish of each yarn strand can also affect how your finished piece will look. If the original project was completed using a single ply yarn it will have a smooth finish, whereas using a plied yarn will add extra texture that may not suit the item and would not be what you are hoping for. Before you grab a yarn that is the right colour and has the correct tension, make sure to check if the strand is plied or has a sheen, or any other details that might change how you feel about the project when it is completed.



Yarns with sheen



## HOW MUCH WILL I NEED?

So, you have checked your details and searched various sources and come up with a yarn, or maybe more than one, that you think will work for your project – now all that's left is to work out how much of your substitute you will need. This isn't complicated, but you may need a little time at first to work it out – it will get easier the more you do it, of course! Initially, don't worry about the weight of each ball, the first calculation you need to do uses the total metreage/yardage of the yarn, rather than the weight of each ball.



The first step is to figure out how much yarn *in total* you need for the project in your chosen size. Imagine you have a pattern that was written for a discontinued yarn and the details you can find tell you that the original had 120 metres of yarn on every ball. Your pattern tells you that 10 balls of this yarn were required to complete the project, so we simply multiply these two numbers:

$$120 \times 10 = 1200$$

So now we know that 1200 metres of yarn in total are needed to make this piece.

Whatever yarn you've chosen as a substitute, it is possible that it will have a different metreage/yardage than the original, meaning that each ball will have more or less in it than the original yarn. But you know that you need 1200 metres, so you just have to get the right number of balls to match this number.

Let's say your substitute yarn has only 75 metres on each ball – to find out how many balls you'll need, you divide your *total yarn amount* by the metreage/yardage of your *new yarn*:

$$1200 \div 75 = 16$$

In splitting up our total length into sections of 75 metres we can see that this creates 16 pieces, meaning you'll need 16 balls of your new yarn for your project. Of course, not all numbers will divide so perfectly and result in a whole number, but if this is the case, just round the number up to the next whole number. For example, if your calculation result is 3.4, you will need *over* 3 balls so you should purchase 4 balls of your chosen substitute. Additionally, be very careful that both calculations (amount of yarn required for the project and amount of yarn on the ball) are both in either metres or yards – mixing the two will not result in an accurate result.

So, it really is as simple as that – you can figure out how much yarn you will need from just two calculations.



If you find any of these instructions unclear, or just need a little extra help, don't hesitate to email us at [sales@woolwarehouse.co.uk](mailto:sales@woolwarehouse.co.uk) or give us a call on 01926 88 28 18.