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Friends of mine know or suspect that I have rather a large inventory of sock yarn, which amuses them because they certainly know that I am a paltry sock knitter. I love hand knit socks, but my needles are usually occupied with larger things, and uppity knitter that I am, the humility of the hand knit sock is something I sometimes have a hard time fitting into. I'd rather wear my status as a knitter on my :ahem: sleeve.

But the sock stash, it is big nonetheless. I like socks, but I love sock yarn; every little ball is an entire ecosystem unto itself, the prospect of a week's worth of knitting within 12 cubic inches. And as the population of yarn artists grows, my responsibilities as a collector have become positively curatorial. Like the fourth graders trading Pokemon cards on the school bus, I can click through [The Loopy Fwe's](#) website as if it were a card deck, chanting "got it got it need it got it . . ."

But accumulation has its practical aspects when it comes to casting on and needing just the right yarn. Thanks to my recent finishing frenzy, I have room in the project bag for Cookie A.'s [Maelstroms](#) that I've been wanting to knit. The pattern is written for an 8 inch finished circumference, but I measure  $9\frac{1}{2}$  inches around the ball of my foot. I have to knit to a larger gauge, which means fewer stitches to the inch. The sock is 65 stitches, so for my foot I would calculate the necessary gauge by dividing 65 by  $9\frac{1}{2}$ , and get 6.8 stitches to the inch.

However, I know there is some stretch in the pattern. I want a snug sock, because a loose sock is a miserable thing. How much stretch is there exactly in the Maelstrom pattern? My guess is that I'll need at least a 10% deduction from the foot measurement to take up the ease built into the pattern. Ten percent less than  $9\frac{1}{2}$  is about  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The stitch count of 65 divided by  $8\frac{1}{2}$  gives me  $7\frac{1}{2}$  stitches per inch result. Remember: when talking about gauge, smaller numbers per inch means larger stitches. Larger numbers per inch mean smaller stitches.



I have two options, I can use similar yarn but use larger needles, but the fabric would be looser and would wear poorly. Or I can look through my stash for a slightly larger yarn to keep that nice dense fabric I prefer in a sock, and swatch. I'm looking for a ball band that promises my target gauge, and I come up with several options in my stash, but only one of the yarns is in a colour that says "Maelstrom" to me: [Socks that Rock](#) Mediumweight in Bella Coola. Don't get me wrong: I love all the colours I've seen Maelstroms knit in. I'd entertain a good red, or even autumnal browns and oranges, but all the other yarns I had in the stash with this gauge were too flat or too busy. This one was just right with analogous colours that are a fun mix but don't muddy the texture.

All that was left was to swatch and confirm that indeed I had my gauge. But since swatches can be deceptive, and certainty could only come with some of the sock to put on my foot, I just cast on.

Stay tuned, as usual.