

by Kay Gardiner and Ann Shayne

Making the Most of Peculiar Amounts of Yarn

Dear Problem Ladies,

When faced with the responsibility of shopping at the 40-percent-off sale so the local yarn shop can move to the more desirable location, but none of the “good” yarn that’s left will add up to a sweater, what’s a knitter to do? Doomed to knit a striped sweater? I found 770 yards of good yarn and could only think to buy single skeins of another brand in complementary colors.

I’m not interested in scarves, baby afghans, or felted potholders.

Chagrinned in Chicago

Dear ChaChi,

That’s a tough one, and frankly, if you’re ruling out scarves, afghans and potholders, we’re not sure you’re asking the right people. Stripes are a classic option for a multi-color garment that reads as “sweater” instead of “textile,” but there are other ways to go. Your choice depends on how radical you want to be. We throw out the following ideas.

1. Don’t buy the yarn. There. We said it. You don’t have to buy all yarn that is 40 percent off. Like many knitting problems, it boils down to math. If you don’t buy two sweaters’ worth of 40-percent-off yarn, and then you don’t buy one sweater’s worth of 20-percent-off yarn, you can buy a whole sweater’s worth of not-on-sale yarn, all in the same color and everything. (Actually that math is

incorrect, but do you see our point?) In fact, a sure-fire way to buy yarn at full price but still pay 40 percent less for your sweater is to just knit it in a finer gauge than you're used to. You'll spend more time, but spend the same (or less) money, and you'll end up with an arguably nicer finished product. Think about it, that's all we're asking.

2. Color block. It is a rare color-block sweater that is wearable by a person over the age of 4 or 5, but they do exist. For example, a raglan pullover with sleeves in a contrasting color to the body is a classic, casual look.

3. Tonal. If your nonmatching skeins are very close to the main color, the effect will be nuanced enough to pass for a solid color. Use the nonmatching skeins for the sleeves or back, or alternate the colors for subtle shifts or a mottled effect.

4. Hems, cuffs, bands in a contrasting color. This only works if you're just a single skein short of what you need, but you can take the idea further with a striped or patterned border at hem and sleeves, and still avoid having to stripe the whole sweater.

5. Cinch it! Many sweaters are too dang big to begin with. If you compare patterns in your size, you will see a wide variation in yardage requirements. A sweater with short or three-quarter length sleeves (or hey—no sleeves) and a more fitted waist will require much less yarn than a long-sleeved sweater with a boxy fit. Even armhole shaping affects yardage: a drop-shoulder sleeve will take more yarn than a set-in sleeve or raglan. Edgings also make a difference. Ribbed or textured edgings take more yarn than plain ones.



Knit Strong! Keep those cards and letters coming in to problemladies@twistcollective.com. Write a

letter that Kay and Ann select to answer in the summer issue and we'll send you a Twist Collective button.