

by Kay Gardiner and Ann Shayne

How to Stretch a Skein of Yarn

Dear Problem Ladies,

Is there a stitch that is more "economic" with yarn than others, say for instance stockinette versus garter? Just wondering how to make the skein stretch in this current economy of ours.

Frugal Knitter



Dear Frugal,

This current economy of ours is getting to be tiresome, isn't it? We're ready to move on to the future economy, or back to the previous one, where we lounged around having hilarious cashmere fights with each other on our Gulfstream V en route to our beachside bungalow.

Sigh. Every day, it seems like we are having to define the New Normal, but every day brings a new New Normal, and at this point we are wishing simply for a Normal Normal. The decent news amid all these Normals is that knitting doesn't really change at all, and frankly, that's giving us a fair amount of comfort. The little tangle of a knit stitch is there, in/around/through/off, whether life around us feels normal or absolutely not.

Whoops! Sorry! You were asking about skein-stretching. You will find that knitting garter stitch uses more yarn than stockinette. You can tell this simply by feeling the denseness of a swatch worked in garter stitch. It has a heft to it that stockinette lacks. This comes from row upon row of knit stitches locking together in a sturdy way. We love this spongy fabric, the way the stitch count and row count are exactly the same, the way it lies beautifully flat.

But garter stitch eats yarn faster than familiar stockinette, o tormented stockinette! Stockinette is a thinner fabric than garter stitch. The alternation of knit rows and purl rows leaves a fabric that argues with itself about which way its edges should curl, that leaves you with x stitches in a row

and y rows. Frugal, yes, but such conflict.

Our favorite econoknit is to make something using fine-gauge yarn. Yarn is sold by weight, not yardage. Thinner yarn goes a LOT further. Save money and knit more flattering garments. This is kind of hard advice for instant-gratification junkies. You will get sicker of the project because it will take longer, but the trade-off is that you knit a lighter garment that costs a lot less than a heavier garment.

One final note: If you really want to get the most out of that skein, we suggest that you make something, unravel it, and knit something else. You can repeat this until your fiber starts to break down, at which point you can spin it all over again.



Knit Strong! Keep those cards and letters coming in to problemladies@twistcollective.com. Write a letter that Kay and Ann choose to answer in the winter issue and we'll send you a Twist Collective tape measure.