



LENGTH OF WOOL IN A BALL, SKEIN OR HANK: *“How long is a ball of wool?”*

Well, this depends on many factors.

Firstly, a ball of wool made from fleece of one sheep breed will differ from that made from another breed.

Main reasons for differences are:

- There is in fact no British Standard (or any standard) for yarn size, which is why manufacturers specify their own patterns to be knitted when buying their wool. For the purposes of each knitting pattern, that is also why there is always a tension/gauge setting provided, to enable a knitter to knit up a sample of set numbers of stitches and rows and to measure it against the standard set in the pattern, whereafter the tension/gauge, or needle size, or number of stitches and rows can be adjusted by the knitter to achieve the garment dimensions set in the pattern.
- All natural fibre yarns may vary by up to 15% in diameter over every 100 yards or so. This is in the nature of the fibres and the spinning process, hence the variations between the lengths given in the tables below. Woollen spun will vary more than worsted spun.
- Wool, as a natural material, will absorb water and after washing and drying, there is a process called "regain" when the wool will re-absorb a certain amount of moisture. This will vary from wool to wool according to breed type, the type of yarn, etc. This means that the weight of a ball of wool is not necessarily constant and will depend on its storage conditions. Wool can in fact absorb up to 30% moisture before feeling wet, which is why it is such an excellent outdoor clothing material. A regain of 18% from completely dry is the industry standard.
- The UK weights and measures laws allow for up to a 4.5% variation on a 50g ball, so that each ball of wool is only actually approximately 50g in weight, within the legal variation.

At Blacker Yarns, when ball-winding the wool, the way the machine works is that it will run for a set period and this period is set by adjusting gears on the machine so that the eventual ball weighs close to 50g on average. The machines make 12-20 balls at a time, from 12-20 cones of wool, and each will vary slightly. The setting is designed to approximate the length to the weight, and we check by weighing, due to the legal requirements. We can also measure lengths per ball, but they will not be exact for every ball for the reasons explained above.

Therefore the only way you can be absolutely sure is to measure each ball and each will vary!



BLACKER YARNS



The tables below give ranges of yarn lengths for 50g / 1.76 ounce balls of wool. These can be doubled for 100g / 3.52 ounce balls and for skeins/hanks.

Because we weigh in grams, our ball lengths will be shorter than those for a 2 oz ball by about 12%. Please also see our more detailed Blacker Yarns information sheet on Yarn specifications and gauges.

Metric: 50 gram ball (=1.76 ounces)

Yarn size	Length of yarn, range	No. 50g balls for 91cm chest plain pullover	Total length for pullover, approx.	Metric needle size
2-ply	230-400 m (249-433 yd)	4.5	1040-1800 m	2-2.5 mm
3-ply	200-240 m (217-260 yd)	6	1200-1440 m	3-3.25 mm
4-ply	150-200 m (163-217 yd)	7	1050-1400 m	3-3.75 mm
Double knitting	100-120 m (108-130 yd)	9	900-1200 m	c. 4 mm
Aran	60-80 m (65-87 yd)	12	720-960 m	c. 5 mm
Chunky	50-60 m (54-65 yd)	14	700-840 m	c. 6 mm plus

Imperial: 1.76 ounce ball (=50 grams)

Yarn size	Length of yarn, range	No. balls for 36" chest plain pullover	Total length for pullover, approx.	Conventional needle size	
				UK	US
2-ply	249-433 yd (230-400 m)	4.5	1120-2000 yd	12-13	1-0
3-ply	217-260 yd (200-240 m)	6	1300-1560 yd	10-11	3-2
4-ply	163-217 yd (150-200 m)	7	1150-1500 yd	9-10	4-3
Double knitting	108-130 yd (110-120 m)	9	972-1200 yd	8	5
Aran	65-87 yd (60-80 m)	12	800-1050 yd	6	7
Chunky	54-65 yd (50-60 m)	14	760-950 yd	4	9

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