

BLACKER YARNS

SPECIFICATIONS AND GAUGES:

How long is a ball of wool?

The table below provides the standard data for the various yarns made by Blacker Yarns.

Please note the following important points:

- There is *no formal standard* for yarn gauge, which is each manufacturer specifies their own patterns to be knitted when buying their yarn. For the each Blacker knitting pattern we provide a tension/gauge setting on specified needles, to enable a knitter to knit up a sample to measure against the numbers of stitches and rows set in the pattern. 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 yarns vary more than worsted yarns due to the way they are made.
- *Natural fibres absorb water*. After washing and drying, there is a process called 'regain' when the yarn will re-absorb a certain amount of moisture. This will vary from fibre to fibre according to breed type, the type of yarn, etc. This means that the *weight* of a yarn is not necessarily constant and will depend on its storage conditions. Wool can absorb up to 30% moisture before feeling wet, which is why it is such an excellent outdoor clothing material. However, the *length* in a package will remain constant, which is why we also provide yardage information on our labels.
- The *UK weights and measures laws* allow for up to a 4.5% variation on a 50g ball, so that each ball will only be approximately 50g in weight, within the legal variation. Because we weigh in

grams, our ball lengths will be shorter than those for a 2 oz ball by about 12%.

- *All breeds will differ in yarn style*: lustre and hill sheep tend to produce leaner yarns while downland and Merino sheep produce bulkier yarns. Alpaca and mohair are lean. Also the lustre yarns are more dense, so can weigh more per unit length, so yardage may be less in a ball/skein of the same weight of Blue-faced Leicester than of Shetland.
- *Alpaca and mohair make considerably less elastic yarns*, so this may result in higher yarn usage for a given pattern – it is always advisable to buy (more!) extra for these yarns.
- Blacker Yarns are made to a given weight, so they should work to the same gauge/tension on the same needles, no matter whether they are lean or bulky BUT the resulting fabrics will differ considerably. Please check by looking at the photographs of tension swatches for each yarn at www.blackeryarns.co.uk

At Blacker Yarns, the ball-winding and skein-winding machines are set to run for a specific period by adjusting gears, so that the eventual ball/skein weighs close to 50g/100g on average. The machines make up to 12 balls/skeins at a time, from 12 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 also measure lengths per ball/skein, but these will not be exact for each ball/skein for reasons explained above.

The only way you can be absolutely sure is to measure each ball and each will vary! This is the joy of working with natural fibres!

The table gives yarn specifications, with yardage for 50g balls and the gauge/tension is stated assuming stocking stitch on a 10cm/4 inch square. Needle sizes are nearest equivalent (Blacker patterns are working on metric needles normally). Please note that our 2-ply is individual to the specific yarn and this is more indicative than the other gauges.

Metric: 50-gram ball (=1.76 ounces)

Yarn type	Approximate Yardage	Needle Size	Gauge/tension	Approximate WPI
2-ply	c.222+ metres (c.240+ yards)	2.25 mm, US 1, UK 13	34 sts, 42 rows	c. 20 woollen, c. 24 worsted
4-ply	c.175 metres (c.190 yards)	3 mm, US 3, UK 11	28 sts, 34 rows	c. 14 woollen, c. 18 worsted
Double knitting	c.110 metres (c.119 yards)	4 mm, US 6, UK 8	20 sts, 28 rows	c. 11 woollen, c. 15 worsted
Aran	c.70 metres (c.76 yards)	5 mm, US 8, UK 6	18 sts, 22 rows	c. 9 woollen
Chunky	c.55 metres (c.60 yards)	6 mm, US 10, UK 4	14 sts, 18 rows	c. 8 woollen
Guernsey	c.116 metres (c.125 yards)	2.25 mm, US 1, UK 13	30 sts, 40 rows	c. 20 worsted