



Knit to Fit Guide

Top-Down Raglan Sweaters Worked in the Round

Getting Gauge

The biggest factor in achieving a good fit is accurate gauge. It is imperative that you knit a gauge swatch before beginning any sweater project. Gauge refers to the number of stitches and rows that are in one inch of knitting. Typically, gauge is taken over at least four inches, for greater accuracy. To learn more about how to achieve accurate gauge, visit the [KNITTING HELP](#) page of our website to download the [GETTING GAUGE](#) guide for free.

Choosing the Right Size

To get the right fit, you must start by choosing the right size pattern. There are two factors in choosing the right size: body measurement and ease.

The most important body measurement to achieve good fit is the chest circumference. Wrap a flexible measuring tape around your chest (or the chest of the person you are knitting the sweater for) to determine the chest circumference. If your waist circumference is larger than your chest circumference, reference your waist circumference going forward.

Now that you know your body measurement you must determine your desired ease. Ease is the difference between your chest circumference and the circumference of your sweater. If your sweater measures smaller than or the same as your body, it will be very snug and fitted. If your sweater measures 1-2" larger than your body it is a close fit, 2-4" larger is a standard fit, 4-6" is a loose fit, and over 6" is considered oversized. Determine how you would like your sweater to fit and what the finished chest circumference of your sweater should be. For example, if you have a 40" chest and you'd like a close fit, you want your sweater to measure 42-44". If you're not sure how much ease you'd like, reference a sweater (handknit or otherwise) from your closet. Pick one that fits you well and is a similar thickness to the sweater you will be knitting. Lay flat and measure across the chest, then multiply that number by two to determine the chest circumference.

Once you've determined the desired chest circumference of your sweater, refer to your knitting pattern and choose the size that most closely matches that measurement.

Your pattern includes a schematic that illustrates other basic measurement of the sweater, such as body and sleeve length. Before you begin knitting, you may want to compare those measurements to your body or existing sweater, giving you a heads up to any other alteration that may be desired.

Fitting your Sweater as you Knit: Checking the Chest and Bicep

A key advantages to knitting a sweater from the top down is that you have several opportunities to adjust the fit of the sweater as you make it. The first opportunity to check the fit of your sweater comes when you complete the yoke and divide the body and sleeve sections.

Cut three pieces of scrap yarn in a color that is in contrast to your knitting yarn: two shorter lengths (about 25") and one longer length (about 60"). Following your pattern's instructions, divide the body and sleeves, placing your sleeve stitches on the shorter lengths of scrap yarn. Your pattern may or may not be asking to cast-on stitches at the underarm, between the front and back sections, as you work the dividing round of your pattern. If so, you may want to work 1 or 2 rows of the lower body sections before proceeding to the next step, as it will make it easier to get the stitches on and off the scrap yarn.

Place the body stitches on the longer length of scrap yarn. Tie bows to secure the loose ends of the scrap yarn. Make sure your length of scrap yarn is long enough that your knitting does not bunch up and it is able to rest at its natural width.

At this point you, or the person for whom you are making the sweater, can actually try it on. If you can't try it on the person for whom it is being made, you can lay the knitting flat on a table and measure the chest and sleeve widths to confirm they are in agreement with your pattern's schematic.

Adjusting the Chest and Bicep

It should be noted that there is typically a 2-3" difference in chest circumference between sizes for all James Cox Knits sweaters. So, if you try on your sweater and find that you would like it to be 2-3" smaller or larger in the chest, consider making a different size garment. For more refined fit adjustments, proceed as follows.

SCENARIO A: The chest and bicep are both too big.

Step 1

To make the chest and the bicep smaller, you need to remove stitches from the body and sleeve sections. You can do this by eliminating the cast-on stitches at the underarm (if applicable), and/or backing out the last few rows of the yoke. But first you have to figure out how much smaller you'd like your sweater to be. Do this by pinning

your sweater (using removable stitch markers or safety pins) at the underarm along the raglan seam at a point that feels comfortable to you.

Step 2

Remove your sweater and place it flat on a table. Determine approximately how many rounds you need to rip out to get back to the point where the pins are attached.

If your sweater is in stockinette, you can rip back to that point and proceed to the next step. But if your sweater is in a stitch pattern, like rib or seed stitch, then you will need to make sure that the number of stitches in the body section is compatible with the stitch pattern so that when you began working the lower body, the stitch pattern will be uninterrupted where the front and back sections join. If your sweater has a stitch pattern, take a look at the where the front and back sections meet and determine if you will need to add or remove stitches in order to make the pattern transition nicely. Add stitches by casting on at the underarm when dividing the body and sleeves, but remember that any stitches cast on at the underarm will be added to both the body and sleeve stitch counts. Remove stitches by working decreases at the underarm when starting the lower body.

Step 3

Once you've made the above alteration, you will have less sleeve stitches than originally indicated on your pattern. To compensate for this, when working the lower sleeve, omit the first several decreases. For example, if your pattern indicates you should have 56 sts, but you have 50 sts after making the alteration, you will want to omit the first three decrease rounds (since 2 sts are decreased each decrease round). This is when the Row Checker component of your pattern can come in very handy, as it allows you to easily see when to start decreasing. In this example, your first decrease would be on the round after which you have 48 sts. If you have a downloadable version of your pattern, and haven't done so already, be sure to download the free Row Checker component of your James Cox Knits pattern. jamecoxknits.com/pages/row-checkers

SCENARIO B: Only the chest is too big.

Proceed as for Scenario A. Then, complete the yoke per your pattern, but work only the raglan increases that occur in the sleeve sections and omit the ones in the body sections. If your sweater has a stitch pattern, take a look at the where the front and back sections meet and determine if you will need to add or remove stitches in order to make the pattern transition nicely. Add stitches by casting on at the underarm when dividing the body and sleeves but remember that any stitches cast on at the underarm will be added to both the body and sleeve stitch counts. Remove stitches by working decreases at the underarm when starting the lower body.

SCENARIO C: Only the bicep is too big.

Proceed as for Scenario A, Step 1. Then reknit the rows that you have ripped out but work only the raglan increases that occur in the body sections and omit the ones in the sleeve sections.

SCENARIO D: The chest and the bicep are both too small.

Step 1

To make the chest and the bicep larger, you need to add stitches to the body and the sleeves sections. You can do this by casting-on stitches at the underarm, and/or continuing to work the yoke and increasing at the raglans. First, make an educated guess as to how much larger you'd like your sweater to be. If you'd like it to be 2-4" larger, consider starting over and following the instructions for a larger size garment, rather than altering this one.

Step 2

Determine how many stitches you must add to your body and sleeve sections. For example, if you want to add 1" of circumference and your gauge is 24sts per 4"/10cm, then you would add 6 sts to your body and sleeve sections.

Place your stitches back on your needle and continue to work the yoke as before, increasing at the raglan marker every other round until the desired number of stitches (or close to it) is achieved. At this point, place the stitches back on scrap yarn and try on the sweater again to confirm it fits correctly.

If your sweater is in stockinette, you can proceed to the next step in your pattern. But if your sweater is in a stitch pattern, like rib or seed stitch, then you will need to make sure that the number of stitches in the body section is compatible with the stitch pattern so that when you began working the lower body, the stitch pattern will be uninterrupted where the front and back sections join. If your sweater has a stitch pattern, take a look at the where the front and back sections meet and determine if you will need to add or remove stitches in order to make the pattern transition nicely. Add stitches by casting on at the underarm when dividing the body and sleeves but remember that any stitches cast on at the underarm must be added to both the body and sleeve stitch counts. Remove stitches by working decreases at the underarm when starting the lower body.

Step 3

Once you've made the above alteration, you will have more sleeve stitches than originally indicated on your pattern. To compensate for this, when working the lower sleeve, add decrease rounds throughout the first quarter of your lower sleeve knitting. For example, if your pattern indicates you should have 56 sts, but you have 62 sts after making the alteration, you will want to add three decrease rounds (since 2 sts are decreased each decrease round). If your lower sleeve has a total of 80 rows, add the decrease rounds in the first 20 or so rounds. Space them as evenly as possible between other decrease rounds. This is when the Row Checker component of your pattern can come in very handy, as it allows you to easily see where to add your decrease rounds.

SCENARIO E: Only the chest is too small.

Proceed as for Scenario D, but when completing the yoke, work only the raglan increases that occur in the body sections and omit the ones in the sleeve sections. If your sweater has a stitch pattern, take a look at the where the front and back sections meet and determine if you will need to add or remove stitches in order to make the pattern transition nicely. Add stitches by casting on at the underarm when dividing the body and sleeves, but remember that any stitches cast on at the underarm must be added to both the body and sleeve stitch counts. Remove stitches by working decreases at the underarm when starting the lower body.

SCENARIO F: Only the bicep is too small.

Proceed as for Scenario D, but when completing the yoke, work only the raglan increases that occur in the sleeve sections and omit the ones in the body sections. Refer to Step 3 of Scenario D for instruction on how to adjust the lower sleeve shaping to account for the reduced number of sleeve stitches.

Fitting the Sweater as you Knit: Checking the Body and Sleeve Lengths (Tips for Knitting for Women)

Not always, but in general, women tend to have narrower shoulders and shorter arms and torsos than men who share their same chest circumference. Because James Cox Knits patterns are designed to fit men and women, women may find that the sweaters have a more oversized, or what the fashion industry calls “boyfriend”, fit on their slighter frames. While the boyfriend fit can be quite flattering, if you’re knitting your James Cox Knits sweater for a woman, you may want to check the sleeve and body lengths as you knit because you are more likely to adjust the sleeves and body to be shorter.

Adjusting the Body Length

Adjusting the body length is usually the easiest change to make to any top-down sweater. To check the length, simply place the body stitches on scrap yarn, as described in the above section, and try it on. If it’s too long, simply rip back, and if it’s too short, determine how much longer you would like it and work the corresponding number of rows.

Adjusting the Sleeve Length

Place the sleeve stitches on scrap yarn, as before, and try on. It’s best to do this before starting the cuff.

If the sleeve is too long, rip back to the desired length (less the cuff). Once ripped, check to see if the cuff opening is too big. If so, rip back an additional 4 to 8 rows, put stitches on needles and decrease 2 sts every 4 rows. Then complete cuff per pattern instructions.

If the sleeve is too short, continue to desired length (less the cuff), then complete cuff per pattern.