



Knit to Fit Guide

Top-Down Set-In 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 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 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 both 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 choose the size pattern you knit based on the across shoulder measurement, rather than the chest size, because the chest circumference can be increased later, while the shoulder width is determined at the cast-on.

Fitting your Sweater as you Knit

A key advantage 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’ve just completed the upper body and are ready to join the front and back sections.

Cut a piece of scrap yarn in a color that is in contrast to your knitting yarn and that is about 60” long. Transfer the front and back stitches to the scarp yarn. Your pattern may or may not be asking you to cast-on stitches at the underarm, between the front and back sections, as you work the joining round of your pattern. If so, cast-on as instructed and work 1 or 2 rows of the lower body sections before placing the stitches on the scrap yarn. Tie bows to secure the loose ends of the scrap yarn. Make sure the 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

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 is too big.

Step 1

To make the chest smaller, you need to remove stitches from the front and back 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. To do this, while wearing the knitted sweater, select a point that feels comfortable to you and pin it (using removable stitch markers or safety pins) at both of the underarms.

Step 2

Remove your sweater and place it flat on a table. Determine approximately how many rounds, if any, you need to rip out to get back to the point where the pins are attached. Note that ripping back past the round where the front and back join will also reduce the armhole length. Try to strike a balance between the chest circumference and the armhole length.

If your sweater is in stockinette, you can rip back to that point and, join the front and back sections in the round and proceed per your patterns lower body instructions. 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 begin 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 joining the front and back sections, remember that the number of 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, if you will have a smaller armhole than originally indicated on your pattern, compensate for this when working the sleeve. Reduce the number of stitches picked up by half the number of stitches omitted in the body. For example, let's say your pattern indicates you should have 100 sts total in your body after joining in the round, and that you should pick up 46 stitches around the armhole to start the sleeve. Let's say you decide to reduce the number of body stitches by 8 for a total of 92 stitches. You would then pick up 4 less stitches around the armhole, or 42 sts.

Step 4

To compensate for the reduced number of sleeve stitches, you must do two things. First, if working a set-in sleeve with a sleeve cap, you must reduce the number of short rows you work. For every 4 stitches reduced at the sleeve pick-up, omit 2 rows from the short row shaping. We recommend omitting the rows just prior to final 2 rows, when all the stitches are worked. This is when the James Cox Knits Row Checker

component of your pattern can come in very handy, as it allows you to easily see which rows to omit.

The second adjustment that must be made is to the lower sleeve decreases. Since you have less sleeve stitches, you will need to do fewer sleeve decreases. Continuing with our example, having reduced 4 stitches, you would omit two decrease rounds to the lower sleeve section (since 2 sts are decreased each decrease round). We recommend omitting the first two decrease rounds so that you can continue to use your Row Checker with ease. In this instance, your first decrease would now be the third decrease round indicated on your Row Checker, after which you would have 40 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: The chest is too small.

Step 1

To make the chest larger, you need to add stitches to the body section. You can do this by casting-on stitches at the underarm. 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.

Step 2

Determine how many stitches you must add to your body section. For example, if you want to add 1" of circumference and your gauge is 24sts per 4"/10cm, then you would add 6 stitches to the body, casting on 3 stitches at each underarm.

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 also consider adding or removing stitches in order to make the pattern transition nicely. Add stitches by casting on at the underarm when joining the front and back sections, but remember that any stitches cast on at the underarm will be added to the body stitch count. Remove stitches by working decreases at the underarm as you work the lower body.

Step 3

Once you've made the above alteration, you will have a larger armhole than originally indicated on your pattern. To compensate for this, when working the sleeve, increase the number of stitches picked up by half the number of stitches added in the body. For example, let's say your pattern indicates you should have 100 sts total in your body after joining in the round, and that you should pick up 46 stitches around the armhole

to start the sleeve. Let's say you decide to increase the number of body stitches by 8 for a total of 108 stitches. You would then pick up 4 more stitches around the armhole, or 50 sts.

Step 4

To compensate for the increased number of sleeve stitches, you must do two things. First, if working a set-in sleeve with a sleeve cap, you must increase the number of short rows you work. For every 4 stitches increased at the sleeve pick-up, add 2 rows to the short row shaping. We recommend adding the rows just prior to final 2 rows, when all the stitches are worked. 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 rows. Each added short row should go beyond the wrap and turn of the previous row, but end before the end of the round.

The second adjustment that must be made is to the lower sleeve decreases. Since you have more sleeve stitches, you will need to do more sleeve decreases. Continuing with our example, having increased 4 stitches, you would add two decrease rounds to the lower sleeve section (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 you can add the additional decrease rounds. Unless you feel you need extra width throughout the sleeve, we recommend adding the extra decrease rounds early in the shaping, spacing them as evenly as possible between the other decrease rounds. 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

Adjusting the Bicep

The best time to fit the bicep is after the sleeve cap has been worked and before the lower sleeve decreases begin. Place your sleeve stitches on a piece of scrap yarn. Tie a bow to secure the loose ends of the scrap yarn. Make sure the scrap yarn is long enough that your knitting does not bunch up and it is able to rest at its natural width.

SCENARIO C: The bicep is too big.

Step 1

To make the bicep smaller, you need to remove stitches from the sleeve, but first you have to figure out how much smaller you'd like your sleeve to be. Do this by putting your sweater on and pinning it (using removable stitch markers or safety pins) at the underarm, at a point that feels comfortable to you.

Step 2

Remove your sweater and place it flat on a table. Determine approximately how many stitches you need to remove. If you're working a stitch pattern that needs to be centered on the sleeve, be sure to remove half the stitches at the beginning of the round and half at the end of the round. If working an all over pattern stitch, like rib or

seed, it's not critical that the stitch pattern be uninterrupted at the beginning of the round. Unlike with the body, where the beginning of the round is located at one side seam, on the sleeve, the beginning of the round is in a more discrete location, at the underarm.

Picking up less stitches around the armhole will require you to make another adjustment or two. See Step 4 of Scenario A for further instructions.

SCENARIO D: The bicep is too small.

Step 1

To make the bicep larger, you need to add stitches to the sleeve. Determine how much larger you'd like your sleeve to be. For example, if you want to add 1" of circumference and your gauge is 24sts per 4"/10cm, then you would add 6 stitches to the sleeve.

Step 2

The best way to increase the bicep is to rip back and pick up more stitches around the armhole.

If you're working a stitch pattern that needs to be centered on the sleeve, be sure to add the half the stitches at the beginning of the round and half at the end of the round. If working an all over pattern stitch, like rib or seed, incorporate the new stitches into the pattern. It's not critical that the stitch pattern be uninterrupted at the beginning of the round. Unlike with the body, where the beginning of the round is located at one side seam, on the sleeve, the beginning of the round is in a more discrete location, at the underarm.

Picking up more stitches round the armhole will require you to make another adjustment or two. See Step 4 of Scenario B for further instructions.

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 your sweater. 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.