

## TRANSCRIPT

# What Does This Mean? Decoding Knitting Pattern Lingo

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Hi, my name is Tabetha Hedrick, design director for SweetGeorgia Yarns and I'm here to talk to you about those secret messages in patterns.

Well, they're not really secret messages, but there does seem to be a unique code within knitting patterns that can be a little overwhelming to the new knitter. So we're gonna go over some of those today. Everything from what does it mean when it says work until X inches long? Or what does it mean when it says end on a right side or wrong side row? We're gonna decipher the code for you today.

Before starting any pattern, there's one thing that you have to realize and that every pattern is based off of a finished gauge. Now what that hints at is that there are actually two kinds of gauge. You have a working gauge, or unblocked gauge, and you have finished gauge, which is blocked gauge. So blocked means to wash or treat your yarn, block it means to shape it, and then dry it. All of those factors, the water, the heat, however it all creates this magical chemistry that is far beyond my scope to explain here, but all of it reacts within your yarn and your fabric to change the makeup of your fabric. And so every single pattern that you ever pick up out there is going to be based off of that finished gauge. So when you see the gauge swatch that says take time and save time, for example, and make a gauge swatch, they're saying you need to treat your swatch exactly as you're gonna treat your finished project so that all the measurements that you see in that pattern, match with what you intend to make.

So what does that mean? Working gauge is that hot off the needles gauge swatch, and it looks like this, a little sloppy, curled edges, stitches aren't super defined. It's important to get your measurements off of this before you block your swatch, and that'll help you later on when you're actually knitting and you'll see something that says work until so many inches long. Knowing that information will help you be able to do a little bit of translating later on, so grab some measurements off of that swatch and off of your knitting while it's still hot on the needles so that you can use that information later. And then you have your finished gauge swatch.

So I'm sure you can see the dramatic difference. These have the same number of stitches, 32 stitches, same number of rows, I don't remember how many rows I worked, worked right after the other. One has been blocked, one has not. One is finished, one is unfinished. Two different gauges. This is what the stitch pattern measurements are going to be based off of. Now I know you have a lot of questions about gauge, 'cause goodness, are there a lot of things to know about gauge, and unfortunately that's beyond the scope of this particular course, 'cause we're gonna work on decoding knitting patterns, but don't worry we've got some content for you coming out soon that'll help you figure out all of those gauge questions you have ever had.

Now that we know what our working gauge is, and what our finished gauge is, then we can answer one of those primary questions that you'll see in pretty much every knitting pattern out there. It'll say work until X inches or X centimeters long. Now we know, based on what we just said, that all knitting patterns are based off of that finished gauge.

How are you supposed to measure that while you are hot off the needles with that sloppy looking unfinished knitting? I have a little math formula here, and we will include this as a handout that you'll be able to print, and you'll have all this information to take with you. But pretty much there are two little tricks you can use to be able to figure out how many rows that means to work.

The very first thing you're going to do is figure out what that finished length equals to your row gauge, so if it says to work for 10 inches, and your row gauge is five rows per inch, then that means you're gonna multiply, so 10 times five equals 50 rows, easy peasy. So if you're a counter, you just have to count how many rows you're working. And then you'll be to your finished length. It might look longer than 10 inches, or it might look shorter than those 10 inches depending on what you're working row gauge is. So if you have taken measurements off of that working row gauge, you can use that and still be able to just measure.

If you don't want to count rows, I know some people who just, they'd rather just pull out a tape measure. You can use that working row gauge information to be able to translate what the working length would be to be able to knit to. So you would take the number of rows, so if we, we'll stick with that 10 inch thing, if we have 10 inches times five rows per inch, for a finished, that equals 50 finished rows. 50 divided by your working row length, say 4.5 in this case, 4.5 you'd divide it. 50 divided by 4.5 is gonna come out to about 11.1 inches in length, and so if you wanted to, you would just knit to that measurement, when you're hot off the needles, and know that it's gonna shrink because you've done the homework and gotten your gauge swatches done beforehand.

End with a right side row, period, or end with a wrong side row, period. You'll see that in a lot of patterns too. And I get so many questions, where do... Does that mean I work the right side, do I not work the right side? Do I work the wrong side? When you see end with a right side row, that means you're going to end having finished the right side row. If you see end with the wrong side row, you're going to end having finished a wrong side row. That's all it means.

Mostly when you're working sweaters, but you'll still find it in other patterns too, you'll see a phrase that says bind off so many stitches at the beginning of the next two rows, or next four rows, so let's just say we have to bind off three stitches at the beginning of the next two rows. That's actually really easy. All we're gonna do is bind off at the beginning of a row, work to the end, and then on the next wrong side row, you'll bind off stitches and work to the end.

I'm gonna show you how to do that. Gonna bind off one, we're gonna go under the premise that we're binding off three stitches here. Two, three stitches have been bound off. Now we're gonna work to the end of the row. Now you'll normally see this in areas such as setting up for an armhole when you are working a sweater flat. You'll see this in some shawl shaping, you'll see this around some neckline edges, so it's a very common phrase. Here we are at the end, I'll finish like normal, turn it, and now we're gonna bind off the other three. One, two, and three. And then you would just go back, and continue working to the end of the row on the remaining number of stitches that you have. And there we go.

Stitches bound off at the beginning and end of two rows. Now you might see this occasionally where it'll say, especially a shoulder shaping bind off, six stitches at the beginning of the next four rows or the next six rows, and that'll create a stair-stepping effect. So you'll see a bind off here, a bind off there, as it slopes forward. But that's all it means. You will also commonly see, especially in sweater patterns, and especially when you get to the neckline

area. You're going to see sections that say working both sides at the same time. The reason why you see that is because after you have divided for the neckline, you're having two shoulder sections, and so, in theory, everything is going to be worked at the same time.

It means you're going to be crossing over that center divide to work the other side at the same time. And I'm gonna show you how quickly and easily that actually really is. So, you've knit across here, we've bound off for the neck, and we've worked to the end of the row. It's going to have you, for example let's just say it says work one wrong side row at the same time. In that case, we have this one strand of yarn already attached, so we're going to now work to that neck edge.

Obviously we cannot jump across the neck edge with this yarn or we'll just have this big long strand, so when it comes to working at the same time, that means you're gonna need another ball of yarn, or another strand of yarn, the other end of your yarn ball, and you're going to join that right over here. I'll show you how I do that. I typically just loop it over that first strand, and you're going to work with that new strand to the end of the row. So it looks a little finicky here, especially when you're all tangled like this. It looks a little finicky, but now we are set up. We have two strands of yarn on each shoulder, and so every time we work a row, it still counts as the whole row, we're just going to have to drop our old yarn here, to continue working with the new yarn to the end of the row.

It is very common when you're working both sides at the same time, to see instructions that tell you to work stitches within the neck edge area. You will see, for example, bind off three stitches at each neck edge two times, that's a decent example that you'll see on a regular basis. I'm gonna show you how to do that, and it's quite simple, you have to look at the times as the number of times that you work a set. So if it says bind off one stitch at each neck edge, that means one stitch on each side is one set, and so we have to repeat that two times, so essentially you're gonna be binding off four stitches or two stitches on each side of the neck. I'm gonna show you how easy that is.

At the same time, I'm also gonna show you my favorite way to bind off at edges like that, it's called the sloped bind off, and that is where the first stitch within the bind off is going to be slipped, unworked. So, first step to that is working to the neck edge right here. I am going to slip this first stitch and leave it unworked. Now obviously we can't use this same yarn to jump across the neck to bind off the other side, we're going to pick up the new strand, I'm gonna slip that first stitch, knit the next one, and then bind it off.

The reason why you slip that first, or leave that first stitch in the bind off unworked, is so that it elongates it just enough so that you don't get what I call the ladder effect, or steps. It'll step like that if you just were to knit it like normal, if you slip the stitch, it will create a nice even slope which makes your neckline look a lot better. Anyway, so we've bound off one stitch there, and now we can work to the end of the row, 'cause of the instructions I just made up for us, is bind off one stitch at each neck edge two times.

So that was one stitch, now we're going to finish the second bind off on the other side of the neck so that they match and that'll be that first time. When I come to that, because it was at the neck edge, I'm just going to skip over it, because when I come back on the next row, I know that, I still have to do one more bind off, so I'm gonna leave that unworked for now.

So here we have the bind off on the other side of the neck, I'm just bringing that over, still unworked, and I will knit one, and bind off like normal, and then work to the end of the row. So now we have done the one time bind off one stitch at each neck edge, and now we're going to do it one more time because the instructions are two times. So I'm going to knit to the neck edge, but leaving that last stitch unworked, come over here, just move that over, knit one, bind off the first stitch in this little series, turn, work to the neck edge, now I don't have any more bind offs to do, so now I can work that stitch before the neck edge on this side, 'cause I've already worked the two bind offs there, so I'm going to knit that one, and then I'm gonna slip that first stitch over the neck edge here. I've got my yarn on the other shoulder, pearl one, bind off, and work to the end. And so there we have our neck bind off, one stitch on each neck edge, and both sides of the shoulder worked at the same time.

You'll see this in a lot of different patterns. Increase every X rows, X number of times, or decrease every X rows, X number of times. And that can be a little confusing because you might not know exactly where those increases or decreases are supposed to fall. Is it the fourth row, the fifth row, the second row, what row is it?

So the first thing you want to look at is the number of rows. So every two rows, right off the batt, you could see that that's going to most increases and decreases fall on a right side row. Just most pattern designers just typically end up putting them that way. Not all the time, so don't take my word on it, but that just means that we are going to increase every two rows. It could say four rows. That means you're going to increase one time every four rows, and you're going to repeat that four times or six times, so we want to look at, we'll just say, let's look at two rows every four times, and that just looks like increase one, increase two, increase three, increase four. So we have four increases, and you're going to do it every two rows. One two, one two, one two, one two, so think of them as segments. Segment one, two, three, four.

Now most patterns are very specific telling you what row to increase or decrease on. If they're not, and even if they are, it's not set in stone. You, if you're looking at a four row increase, you may want to increase on the third row every single time. You just want to make sure that it's every four rows that you increase on.

You could also look at it this way, so if we look at the two rows, if you have row one as a right side, two is a wrong side, three is a right side, four is a wrong side, we know every two rows, is gonna be the increase, so this will be the increase row, this will be the work even row. This will be the increase row, this will be the even row. And it would be the same thing, think of it if you are doing every four rows, so one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, so we have the increase, and then even, increase and then even, over those four rows, so it's not that you are increasing every two full rows, it's one of those rows will be the increase row.

Knitting patterns like to keep things as short and succinct as possible, and the reason is, is because you don't want to print out 40 different pages for one knitting pattern. And so in doing that, they use things like asterisks, parentheses, and brackets in order to condense repeatable sections, and that can be a little confusing for the first time pattern reader. I'm gonna hopefully break down some of that for you.

One of the things that they use is called an asterisk, it's a little star, and you'll often find, every time you see that, typically you'll see, later on the semicolon that'll say repeat from asterisk however many times, twice, repeat to end

of row, and what that means is everything after that asterisk and before the semicolon is going to be repeated. Now even in that, you'll see another repeat that I've included for you here. We have some brackets around these three stitches, and they say knit one, purl two, twice. That means everything in here, we're gonna repeat it twice before moving on to the next stitch, or whatever it happens to be. If it's a parentheses, it says repeat 14 times, you would repeat whatever's in those parentheses or that bracket that many times before you move on to the next stitch.

I'm gonna break that down, and you're gonna see how many stitches that really comes out to, and what it looks like when you're working on your needles. So now the first stitch is that knit one, and it's not part of any of this repeat, so you're gonna knit it that one time, and then that's gonna be done. Now we know everything in this asterisk zone here needs to be repeated, and we're gonna repeat it twice.

So we'll start right here with this knit one, purl two twice, and so everything after this point is the repeat. So we have a knit one, purl two, we're gonna do it one more time, knit one, purl two, so we've done that twice, and now we can do that knit one, but you see we have to repeat everything in here one more time, so that looks like this. Knit one, purl two, one more time, knit one, purl two, and now that we've done that, we can do this last knit one, and we've made it to the end of the row.

You can see how long that is compared to that, it's a lot to take in and absorb when it's a lot easier to keep it condensed this way. It takes a lot less pattern page space, I guess you could say, especially you see how I squished it in. And that's all those mean. It's just, you just have to break down where those repeats fall, and how many times to work them.

So when you see a knitting pattern, sometimes they'll have repeats within a repeat, within a repeat, and those are usually the complex ones, I'm gonna sometimes you'll see an asterisk, and you might have a bracket, we might have a knit one, and then you might see a parentheses in there, purl three, knit three, parentheses, three times, and then you might see another purl one, and then you'll see the end of the bracket, and it may say twice, and you might see some other stitches, knit one, purl one, knit two, semicolon, repeat to end of row.

Now that looks really really complex, but you're gonna take it the exact same way that we worked it out before. You'll knit one, so we're gonna look at just the bracket here first, we're gonna do the knit one, and now we're gonna move into this, so you're purl three, knit three, purl three, knit three, purl three, knit three, those three times, purl one, and now we're gonna repeat that whole bracket one more time. Knit one, purl three knit three, purl three knit three, purl three knit three, three times, purl one.

So we've worked that section twice, and now we're gonna follow up with the knit one, purl one, knit two. But now we're here at that semicolon, so that means we have to repeat all of this, all of those stitches, to the end of the row, so you'll just come right back to the beginning, and you'll repeat that same process until you've worked to the end of the row. And those are the three repeat, parentheses, brackets and asterisks that you can see in just about any knitting pattern.

When it comes to the final end of your pattern, we have what's called block to measurements, and I know what you're thinking. What does that mean? How do I block? Block remember, means to shape, and so all you're going to do, is you're going to check out this handy dandy schematic that's usually included, or should be included in all of your garment patterns and sometimes your accessory patterns. And it is just a vector line drawing that breaks

down all of the measurements for every size for the pattern. Now as long as you have done your gauge swatch and matched your gauge to the pattern like it's supposed to be, everything that you have just knit should match all of the measurements in the schematic. The schematic is just a visual representation of what it's gonna look like in all of your pieces. In this example here, we have the front and back are superimposed upon each other. Sometimes you'll see where the front will be here, the back will be here, and a sleeve will be over here. All in separate line drawings.

Overall it doesn't matter. The goal of the schematic is to show you what those measurements look like in the shape and construction of the actual sample. So for example, this flat drawing, we know the direction of knitting is going up, we know it's in one piece worked flat here, if it was a circular, or worked in the round project, you would see curved arrows like this with the measurements along those.

When it comes to blocking, you have a variety of different methods to use. There's wet blocking, there's steam blocking, if you have something that could withstand it, you could throw it in the washer, and then lay it flat to dry. It's totally up to you. Steam blocking is my favorite method to use, and I will take the schematics, I will lay it out into those, that shape, pin it to those dimensions if I need to, and I'll blast it with steam from my steam iron. Don't touch your iron to the fabric, if you have an iron. You could soak your pieces in water, for about 20 minutes, and then again, lay them out in the shape of the schematic, and pin them into place and let them dry overnight. The trick here though, just like with your gauge swatch that you worked earlier on, you want to treat your finished pieces just as you were going to treat the overall final finished sweater. If you're gonna wash it, hand wash it in the future, then you're gonna hand wash your sample pieces. If you're gonna throw it in the dryer, then throw it in the dryer. Over all, it doesn't really matter, as long as you're consistent about it within the final thing.

And that, I think is everything you might need to know to break the code of knitting patterns. I want to say that SweetGeorgia Yarns produces both knitting patterns and crochet patterns, and a lot of what we talked about here is really focused on knitting because I'm a knitter and not a crocheter, so I'm speaking to what I know, but a lot of these foundational pieces really translate into crochet patterns as well.

For example, the pattern repeats that we talked about, or blocking your finished pieces and the way schematics work. I think you are set up to have everything you need to be able to move forward in working either your knitting or your crochet pattern.

Hopefully everything we've covered in this tutorial will help you moving forward in decoding all of your knitting patterns moving into the future, so happy making.