

Handy Tools

One of the best things I have ever done for my knitting is to ramp up my "hand" tools. No, I'm not talking about needles, or hooks, I'm talking about using your hands to help you measure your knitting. Seriously, think about it. You *always* have your hands with you, you never need to dig in your bag for them (well, ok, if you have a prosthetic hand you would). Hands, they are right there, attached to your arms. So "handy." And I've not seen this in any recent knitting book, except for the Yarn Harlot in terms of measuring hats for length (she's like that, always a couple of steps ahead of me). But I don't even use them the way she does (I think).

Ok, so how do I use them in my knitting? I use them as a rough measurement tool for my knitting. Personally, I use two basic measurements most of the time, but I suppose that you could take this farther.

Thumb Measurement

Take your thumb, and measure how long the top digit is. Mine is about 1 inch. Use this for ribbing and the like. Seriously, whether your ribbing is exactly 2 inches, or 2 1/4 inches hardly ever matters. Trust me on that one. And kill me for assuring you of this and you decide to use it the one time it doesn't. **But do not use it for gauge.** Gauge measurement needs to be precise like baking measurements - you can't be off on that flour fat sugar soda thing.

Hand Span Measurement

My other basic hand measurement is the hand span. Open up your hand big and wide, stretching out your fingers, and see how long that is. Like this (note: this is not my hand):



Mine is about 8-ish inches, which makes it really good for figuring how long a sock is - from the toe or at the end of the toe, the length of the foot. When I get to two hand-spans on the body length of a sweater, it is time to start figuring out where I am and when I'm going to start the

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shaping. A single hand span is a little longer than a length of an armscythe on a sweater (for me), and the width of a neckline on a sweater (also for me). See how useful this can be?

Using Hands and Thumbs

When I get close to the neighborhood of the needed measurement, *then* I pull out the actual measuring tape (see the ribbing exception above), but I can almost assure you that using your hand will cut down about 80 percent of the time that you need the dang tape measure. Which means an 50 percent reduction, at least, in the number of times

- you will leave it in a place that you can not remember (because you'll put it back in the right place more often the less you use it), or
- the cat or the dog has decided it is a really cool toy to tear apart or hide in a mysterious place, or
- some other member of your household found they needed one, took it, and now they can't remember where it is,

and there might be just a freak out on the part of the knitter who has *reached a crucial point in the knitting and now cannot move on*. This sad state has been known to cause marital and maternal friction in the extreme.

See, we started with hands, and now I am saving your marriage, your pets, or your child's life. You're welcome.

Does anybody else do this? How do *you* use your hands as measuring tools? Please leave a comment!