

Why blocking your swatch is crucial. Really.

I'm done knitting the major pieces of the second Customfit sweater - the one that is the store sample. And I got reinforcement yet again that blocking your swatch is very, very important.

First of all, let's define blocking - I used to think blocking just meant misting the swatch and letting it dry. No longer. Now, I use the swatch as the opportunity to road-test the yarn's care. So, for a linen yarn (which gets better in the washing machine and the dryer) I am going all out with the washer/dryer on it. For a hand-wash yarn, I soak for 20 minutes, blot in a towel and spread it out flat to dry.

For this "washable wool" yarn, I did this (which is how I would care for it in the real world): I soaked in tepid water (more than 20 min), then blotted in a towel. Once that was done, I popped it into my teensy stack washer, and put it on the last 5 minutes of the gentle spin cycle with the towel (this gets more of the water out), then I popped the pieces into the dryer on medium heat until the pieces were damp dry, then spread them out.

When I knit the sleeves, I had a moment of "crap, my gauge is off" because of course the gauge had changed when I had "blocked" the swatch. I kept my faith, and knit all the rows in the Customfit pattern that put the wrist to armhole measurement two inches longer (!) than needed. Was this going to be a Gorilla Arms kind of sweater? Oh that was hard, the only reason I kept to the pattern was to match the knitting of the sample to the pattern.

Then I blocked them as above. And voila! The length is perfect, right to the inch.

Onto finishing - and a sweater that will *not* have Gorilla Arms after all.

