



## *Tip of the Month May 2017 - Yarn Substitution*



Many of the patterns available on the market are from overseas and use yarns that are not always easy to get here in Australia. In addition, many old patterns are still being used where the yarns have been discontinued. I am often asked what is a suitable substitute in such cases. There is no easy answer to that question, as there are many factors to consider. Below is a 'mini' guide of factors to evaluate.

**Fibre content** – Do you want it to be similar (eg wool for wool) or different (eg cotton for wool) compared to the pattern. This will primarily be dependent on the purpose of the project.

**Drape** – how will the finished project feel and 'sit' when it is finished? A good rule of thumb is that yarn with a sheen will drape better than other yarns as the smooth surface makes it hard for neighbouring fibre to interact. If you are changing your fibre content, this will be an important consideration. Drape will also be affected by the stitch.

**Yarn Weight** – Start with finding yarn in the same weight category – eg sport weight yarn and check the yardage for the weight to see if it is the same. For example, if it comes in 50g balls and has 120m on the ball, look for those with the same grams/yardage. It doesn't have to be exact, as you can still get the same gauge with altering the size of the hook or needles. If you can't find anything you like in the same category, try a different weight and then alter the hook or needle size or make the larger/smaller pattern size.

**Yardage** – once you have identified which yarn you want, check the yardage, particularly if the ball sizes are different or the grams/yardage ratio is different. For example, if the pattern asks for 9 balls of a 75g yarn that has 150m per ball, and you want to substitute it for yarn that comes in 50g balls with 120m per ball. Work out yardage needed ( $9 \times 150\text{m} = 1,350\text{m}$ ) and calculate the balls needed in the yarn you want ( $1350/120 = 11.25$ ) – Purchase 12 balls.

**Lastly** – prepare a swatch! What works in theory based on the above, may not work in reality. Even yarn with the same weight category and yardage per ball may still give a different gauge when made up, or the stitch may not look good in the yarn chosen.

Fortunately for us there are some online resources that can help us either find suitable substitutes or give details about the yarn to assess the various factors.

These are:

Ravelry [www.ravelry.com](http://www.ravelry.com) – Type in the name of the yarn in the 'yarn' tab, you will find the properties of the yarn the pattern asks for, enabling you to consider the characteristics to be matched.

YarnSub [www.yarnsub.com](http://www.yarnsub.com) - enter the name of the yarn you are looking to replace and it will provide a list of suggested matches considering texture, gauge, fibre, warmth, drape, elasticity, durability and softness.