

The McMorran Balance

The McMorran balance offers a quick and easy way to determine the yardage of a quantity of yarn. This is particularly useful if you have lost yarn labels, are using incomplete balls or are calculating the amount of handspun needed for a project.

Place the balance on the edge of a level surface and set the pins of the balancing arm in the small notches at the top of the box.

Take a length of yarn and lay it in the notch of the balance allowing it to hang free.

Now begin to trim the yarn about 1/2" at a time until the balance is level.

Remove the yarn and measure it against a ruler. If it has been wound in a ball you will probably need to stretch it slightly to remove any kinks.

Multiply the measurement by 100.

The resulting figure is the number of yards per pound of yarn. (ypp)

e.g. 6" x 100 = 600ypp

Weigh the ball of yarn you are measuring, divide this number by 16 (oz in 1 lb) multiply by ypp to determine the total length of yarn.

e.g : 8 oz of yarn divided by 16 x 600 ypp = 300 yds.

NOTE:

1. Most sources caution against expecting 100% accuracy.
2. Wool is hygroscopic (absorbs water or moisture in the air) and therefore the weight varies with amount of humidity.

It is useful to check the accuracy against a known yarn. For example I tested a piece of Waterspun which is labeled at 138yds per 50grams. (a confusing mix but useable).

Converted to imperial measure it equals 1242 ypp.

When measured on the McMorran scale the result was 1200 ypp.

Measuring yarn by yards per pound is interesting in its own right. It will give you an idea of the thickness of the yarn as compared to industrial standard weights. Check yarn labels or notation on the inside of yarn cones for this information.

Here is a guideline of wool yarn:

Lace or 3 ply "baby" - 2,560 ypp

4 ply fingering - 1,920 ypp

DK to worsted - 1,280 ypp

Aran - 853 ypp

Chunky 682 ypp

Spinners will find the McMorran balance useful in checking the consistency of their spinning as they progress.

Converting imperial to metric: 1 lb = 450grams; 1 oz = 28.5grams