Knitting Gauge:

   The number of stitches per inch, and the number of rows per inch (knitting gauge) is one of the most important elements in knitting. You can find out if you are knitting to gauge by knitting a 4" square sample using the needles and yarn suggested in the pattern. Once your sample is knit, lay it on a flat surfaced (do not block the sample first), and count the number of stitches in the middle 2" of the sample. Divide the resulting number by 2 to get the number of stitches/inch. Next, count the number of rows in the center 2". Divide the resulting number by 2 to get the number of rows/inch. If your stitch or row numbers are different from what is given in the pattern, your knitted item won't be the expected size.

   You can adjust the gauge by tightening or loosening your stitches as you knit:
      a tighter stitch will give you more stitches per inch
      a looser stitch will give you less stitches per inch
Just be aware that tightening or loosening stitches is difficult to maintain throughout the entire sock.

   Another way (and perhaps the easiest way) to adjust the gauge is to change the size of the needles that you are using:
      a needle one size (or a half size) smaller will give you a smaller stitch
      a needle one size (or a half size) larger will give you a larger stitch.
You should be aware that a smaller needle will also give you a tighter stitch, and a larger needle will result in a looser stitch.

   You can also adjust the gauge by changing the size of the yarn that you are using:
      a slightly thicker yarn will give you a larger stitch
      a slightly thinner, or more loosely twisted yarn will give you a smaller stitch