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# *Drop Spindle Workshop 2023*

Introduction to Hand-spinning



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## ***Drop Spindle Workshop 2023***

\*This workshop is meant to be an introduction to Drop Spindle Hand-Spinning. \*

### Short History

The concept of twisting or spinning fibres like hair or grasses goes back as far as 10000+ years. There is a long history of drop spindles, found in many forms across the world.

Some types being:



- Top Whorl Drop Spindle
- Bottom Whorl Drop Spindle
- Turkish Drop Spindle
- Navajo Spindle
- Kick Spindle

The first spinning wheels found were in India from about 500 -1000 AD, but some proof shows the origin may have been China. A wheel helps to spin the fibre faster and put it straight onto a removeable bobbin. There are many types of spinning wheels: from the Upright Wheel, Saxony Wheel and the Great or Walking Wheel.

After a fibre is spun, it is referred to as a “ply”. A single ply can be used as the “warp” on a loom, but generally 2 or 3 ply yarn is common for most projects. Spun fibres have historically been used in woven items like rugs and fabrics for clothing. The fibres can be used to knit, crochet and weave on any loom.

When deciding a project using hand-spun yarn, remember that a single ply will make more length of yarn than multiple plied yarns but will also be weaker.

### Wool Basics

There are several types of “wools” from many different animals that are great for spinning. The most common is sheep wool because of the length of the hairs, also known as the “staple”. Sheep staple tends to be longer than 2-3 inches which makes a stronger yarn.

If the fibre is not processed, it will need to be prepped. Fibres like Sheep wool need to be skirted which is the process of removing waste fibre and organic matter. Then the fibre is washed and hung to dry before spinning. If the fibre is to be dyed it is often done after this cleaning phase. When the fibre is prepped it will still need to be “combed” to:

- Help remove anymore hidden vegetation.

- Straighten out the fibres.
- Fluff up the fibres.
- Mix 2 or more fibres.

Some animal fibres, like Musk Ox and Icelandic sheep, have dual wool. This means that it contains winter or down hairs and guard hairs which need to be separated. The Musk Ox down is called **qiviut**. The guard hairs are not wanted in most projects but would still be good for rugs.

Once the fibres have been prepped and combed, these are known as rovings. Depending how it was combed and rolled or braided, they may go by other names like rolags, finger roving or even a batt.

### **Learning to Spin**

The Basic Drop Spindle kit includes ¼ lb (115g approx.) of sheep wool roving and a handmade Bottom Whorl Drop Spindle.

The basic techniques learned with the Drop Spindle are also used with the Spinning Wheel.

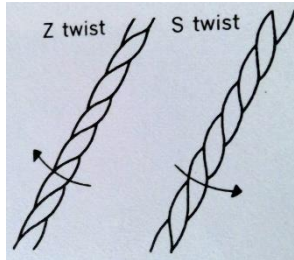
#### Extra Useful Equipment

- Hand-carder or Drum carder
- Distaff
- Comb
- Ball winder
- Niddy Noddy
- Lazy Kate
- Umbrella Swift
- Bobbins or Jars
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#### Draft and Spin a 2-ply Yarn

1. Begin by adding a cotton yarn, called the “leader”, to the drop spindle. Take a length of yarn about double the length of your arm. With the two ends together wrap into a knot. This goes around the shaft of the spindle putting one end through the other end. This end is wrapped a few times around the shaft and then fed up to the hook.
2. Now prep your roving by taking the ¼ lb (454g) of wool and split in 2. Do this by taking the one end of the roving to the other end. Split the wool at the middle or bend of the roving. Put one to the side and work the other ½ of wool. (TIP: If you can check the weights of both halves, they should be about equal.)
3. With the ½ roving braid, split this in half down the roving, to help control the thickness of your spun wool.
4. Take one of those split rovings and “bump” the wool. This is the process of gently pulling the fibres apart.
5. To test your thickness, twist a small section of the “Bumped” wool, let it twist on itself to see the thickness. That will be the thickness of the 2-ply.

6. Take the twisted wool end and loop 1 to 2 inches (5+ cm) through the “leader” on the drop spindle.
7. Choose a spinning technique like Park & Draft, or long draw. (TIP: When first learning, the Park & Draft technique gives you a bit more control)
8. Make sure that you spin/flick in one direction and ply in the opposite direction. The Z-twist (clockwise spin) or S-twist (counterclockwise spin) of yarn.



9. “Park” The spindle in your knees or feet and allow the spin to twist into the draft.
10. After drafting the first spin, wrap spun yarn around spindle shaft, close to the whorl, in the direction of the spin, leaving enough to have about 2-3 in (10-15 cm) past the hook.
11. Repeat spin, park & draft until all the roving is spun.
12. Transfer the spun wool to a jar or a ball winder.



13. \*If a ball winder is used, it winds into a center pull ball that can be plied onto itself. \*
14. **With the remaining roving from Step 2, repeat from step 3 to step 12, don't forget to bump the roving.**
15. Transfer to a 2<sup>nd</sup> jar or use a ball winder.

### Plying the 2-Ply Yarn

1. Unwind the leader on the drop spindle to prepare to spin in opposite direction to ply.
2. Place jars with spun wool or wound on the ball winder, on either side of legs to keep separated from tangling together.
3. Take each end of wool and gently twist together, place approximately 1-2 inches (5+ cm) through the leader loop, as you did in the previous step
4. **Remember to spin/twist spindle in the opposite direction**, using the park & draft or long draw method.
5. As the strands are plied, keep the tension back with one hand, to control any excess twist from the spinning process.

- After plying the wool, transfer the 2-ply wool onto the Niddy Noddy to form a skein.



### Setting the 2-Ply Yarn



- Fill a sink or tub about half-full of tepid water, add approximately 1 capful of lanolin (optional)
- Unwrap a skein and gently press into the lanolin bath, squeeze to absorb lanolin bath water.
- Repeat from step 2 for remaining skeins.
- Let soak for about ½ hour.
- Pick up one skein at a time and carefully squeeze the water.
- \*Do not twist or you will felt the wool\***
- Find the knot on the skein, and with both hands, stretch the skein in opposite directions.
- Repeat this stretching process around the skein, to help lock the ply, relax the tension and remove excess water.
- Hang skein on hangars, drying rack or even the shower rod; place towels underneath to help catch water drips. \*Dries faster in front of a fire on a drying rack\*
- When yarn is thoroughly dry, if available use an Umbrella Swift, back of a chair, or a volunteer to help to hold the skein

11. Find both knots on the skein and undo them.
12. Take one end and feed through ball winder, wind the skein into a ball.

Congratulations! You have spun your own 2-ply yarn!

### **Crochet Basic Headband Project**

A simple project you can do with your spun wool is a crochet headband. Test a crochet needle on your plied wool, to determine the best size, for example 5mm, 6mm or 7mm. Make sure to do a test swatch.

These patterns are easily adjustable, depending on your yarns thickness. Double crochet was used for thicker wools, but with thinner yarns you may want to use Single Crochet. If the length is too long, reduce to the circumference of wearers head, with ears included.

Try Pattern #1:

- Chain on 8 stitches
- Row 1 by double crochet (dc) in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chain. Dc into the next chains (5).
- Chain 1 and turn. This will be the width of the headband approximately 7cm (2.5 “).
- Continue repeating Row 1 directions until the length is 56 cm (22”).
- Attach last row to beginning, by lining up stitches with chain side.
- Use a slip stitch(sc) to connect.
- Cut yarn about 10 cm (4”) and weave ends into headband.

Or

Try Pattern #2:

- Chain on 10 stitches
- Row 1 by double crochet (dc) in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chain. Dc into the next chains (7).
- Chain 1 and turn. This will be the width of the headband approximately 8cm (3 “).
- Continue repeating Row 1 directions until the length is 56 cm (22”).
- Attach last row to beginning, by lining up stitches with chain side.
- Use a slip stitch(sc) to connect.
- Cut yarn about 10 cm (4”) and weave ends into headband.

### **Online Resources:**

Handspinning

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-etLnz7f4> -Drop Spindle Basic from Evie
2. <https://www.youtube.com/@JillianEve> – More Great Youtube videos from Evie
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpxs-HlwLZ8> – Qiviut from Musk Ox Wool
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKAJTKvl0nE> – Spinning without leader or bumping.
5. <https://blog.paradisefibers.com/the-park-and-draft-drop-spinning/>
6. <https://www.thoughtco.com/spinning-wheel-evolution-1992414>

## Musk Ox/Qiviut

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LcBAFx64RMs>
2. <https://www.textileschool.com/266/qiviut-fiber-musk-ox-musk-oxen-wool/>
3. <https://fibergypsy.com/fibers/qiviut.shtml>
4. <https://www.davidmorgan.com/shop-content/qiviut/>
5. [https://www.qiviut.com/about\\_fiber\\_yarn.cfm](https://www.qiviut.com/about_fiber_yarn.cfm)

## Natural Dyes

1. <http://publicationsnunavik.com/book/plants-of-the-villages-and-the-parks-of-nunavik/>
2. <https://alaskaherbalsolutions.com/23-alaskan-plants-dye-your-fabric-with/>
3. <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/special/children/natural-plant-dyes.htm>
4. <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/70564>

## Book Resource

1. Step by Step Spinning & Dyeing by Eunice Svinicki