

How to Use a Drop Spindle

Learn how to use a drop spindle in this step-by-step, introductory guide that focuses on drop spindle spinning and more.

Before using a drop spindle, practice drafting out the fibers. Take a handful of wool in one hand and with the other hand, gently pull some of the fibers away from the mass and then add some twist by twisting the fibers in one direction between your fingers. This is the essence of spinning—drawing out the fibers and adding twist until you have created a stable yarn. Continue to pull out the fibers (drafting) and add more twist. If you don't have enough twist, the yarn will fall apart. If you have too much twist, you won't be able to draw out the fibers from the drafting triangle. Spend a few minutes drafting out the fibers and adding twist—you will need to be able to maintain a comfortable rhythm when you start drop spindle spinning.

** Drafting is pulling a small amount of fibers from a fiber supply to be twisted. ... The front hand drafts out the fiber and pinches it to keep the twist out of the draft zone. The draft zone is the unspun fiber in-between your two hands.*

1. Take a piece of plied wool yarn about 18 inches long and tie it onto the spindle shaft as your leader. Top-whorl spindle: Tie the leader under the whorl, bring the leader up and over the whorl, and catch it with the hook. Bottom-whorl spindle: Tie the leader above the whorl and then spiral the yarn up the spindle shaft. If your spindle has a hook rather than a groove, catch the yarn with it and you are ready to go. If you have a groove, you will have to make a half-hitch knot to hold the yarn to the spindle.
2. Start practicing with the spindle. Remember that most singles yarns are spun clockwise (to the right). Most spinners hold the fiber in the left hand and the spindle in the right hand, but try both ways and see which feels comfortable to you. Hold the leader in one hand and with the other hand, give the spindle a twist. Practice until you can get the spindle to turn smoothly.
3. Once you are comfortable drafting out the fibers and twisting the spindle, put these actions together. Start by sitting down, because your lap will be a valuable tool.
4. Before you start to spin, fluff out the end of the leader. With one hand, hold a handful of fiber and the leader together. With the other hand, twist the spindle clockwise. Watch the twist run up the leader and grab the fibers in your hand. You've just made a join. (You will do the same when you need to add more fiber to your spun yarn.)

5. After you have made the join, twist the spindle and then stop it between your knees so it can't go backward. Slide your twisting hand above the spindle, pinch the leader, and draft out some fibers. Pinching the yarn keeps the twist from running up into the fiber source. The twisting/pinching hand keeps the twist under control while the fiber hand drafts out the fibers to the correct size. Once the yarn is the right size, open up the pinching hand and let the twist run up and stabilize the fibers you have just drafted.
6. Continue to twist the spindle, stop it in your lap by holding the shaft between your knees, pinch, and draft. You determine the size of the yarn by how much you pull the fibers out. A few fibers make a fine yarn; many fibers add bulk. If too much twist gets into the fiber, slide your fiber hand back a little, untwist the yarn in the opposite direction it was spun, and draft out more fiber before allowing the twist to move back into the yarn.
7. When the yarn is longer than your arm, it's time to wind it onto the spindle. Keeping the yarn taut, wind it on the spindle clockwise and make a cone under the whorl on a top whorl and an upside-down cone on top of the bottom whorl. The neater you wind the yarn, the easier it will be to remove from the spindle.
8. After you feel comfortable spinning the spindle and stopping it on your lap, it is time to spin with the spindle suspended in the air. Continue to draft the fibers out the same way, but instead of stopping the spindle in your lap, let it keep spinning. When it stops of its own accord and starts to twist counterclockwise, add more clockwise twist. If the spindle keeps going backward, the twist will come out of the yarn, it will turn it back into fluff, and the spindle will drop.
9. Soon you will have a spindle full of yarn. Now you can wind the yarn off the spindle and into a ball or skein.

Best of luck drop spindle spinning!

You are encourage you to look are some YouTube videos! Here are a couple how to videos.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJ6ASfOfCjI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKAJTKvIOnE>