

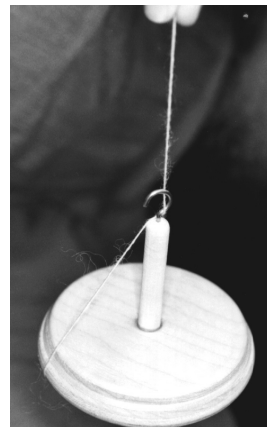
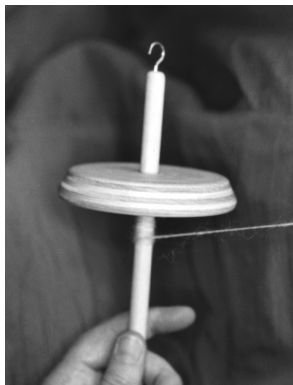
SPINNING ON A DROP SPINDLE

There are several types of handspindles so there are just as many ways to get started. If you have a low whorl spindle with a notch, you can tie a leader onto the bottom of the shaft, wind it up the shaft, and connect to the notch with a half-hitch. You can create your own leader by hand twisting some of the fibers you will be spinning. Roll them on your thigh to tighten the twist, fold the thread in half, fold back the loop end on the doubled thread, opening the loop. Pick up the doubled thread under the loop and pass the spindle tip through this slip-loop and pull tight. If you are using a high whorl spindle simply catch a bit of the fiber in the metal hook and twist in a clockwise direction to begin the spinning. You are ready to start spinning.



Decide whether you want to hold the unspun fiber in your right or left hand, and spin the spindle with the opposite hand. See which is more comfortable for you. Hold the end of the thread (and the unspun fiber should drape over the top of your hand and be held away from the spinning thread so it will not tangle). Suspend the drop spindle free putting tension on the thread.

You will be able to spin a fairly fine thread with practice, but it must be strong enough to support the weight of the spindle. Reach with your free hand and hold the bottom of the spindle, give it a clockwise turn to start it spinning.



For beginners: After you give the spindle a good strong twist, and it has spun for several seconds, stop it and place it between your knees to keep it from going in the opposite direction. Still holding tension on the thread use both hands to pull out the unspun fibers and watch the twist move up to form thread. In the drafting, always pull your top hand up to maintain the tension on the newly spun thread. When the twisting stops moving up the thread, pinch it off and give the spindle another good twist. Repeat this until you are within about 1½ inches from the end of your prepared fiber.

When you are more experienced: When you can spin a uniform thread using the method above, feel free to try the traditional drop spinning with the spindle suspended while turning. Give the spindle a good firm turn and use both hands to draft out the fibers so that the twist moves up the fibers forming thread. When the spindle is suspended, you will note that it is possible to drafting by pulling the thread down instead of pulling the fiber up, but it is still a good idea to pull the fiber up; it is a motion that will come once you start on the wheel. To keep the drafting triangle at eye level, lower your arms as you draft and wind the yarn when the spindle reaches the ground.

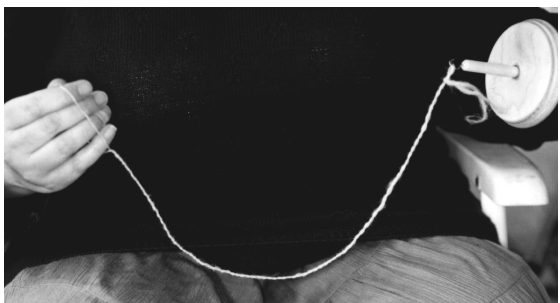
When you are ready to join on another piece of roving, allow the unspun fibers from the thread to lie on top of the new roving and draw out the two sections together for a smooth join. Once the drop spindle reaches the floor or you cannot keep it spinning, hold the thread under tension and take the spindle in your free hand. Unhook the thread from the notch or hook, and wind, clockwise, onto the shaft of the spindle evenly from the end closest to the whorl out. You will form a cone shape in your windings. You then hook the thread back on the notch or hook, leaving several inches of thread above the notch and continue spinning.

PLYING ON A DROP SPINDLE

After you have spun at least two spindles of yarn, you can ply them on your drop spindle. You can make two balls of yarn from each spindle-full, put each ball in its own mason jar, box, or basket. This keeps them from rolling around on the floor and getting tangled with each other. If you are using a high whorl spindle, you can slide the yarn off the end, and put it on a knitting needle. Using a shoe box with holes in the sides, you can put the knitting needles in the holes and form a lazy kate. The needles should turn freely in the holes. If you have three drop spindles, you can use two full spindles like the knitting needles and make a lazy kate from a shoe box.

Tie the two free ends of yarn together and loop onto the notch of the spindle, tie to a leader, or catch on the hook. Let the yarns feed through any two of your fingers on one hand to hold constant tension on the threads. You will be holding both threads with your forefinger and thumb of the same hand.

Slide your fingers along the yarns for about one-half yard while inducing them to unwind from the storage setup. Spin the spindle counterclockwise (opposite from the direction you spun the singles) until the yarn seems nicely twisted. If the yarn is newly spun, you can pick up the spindle in the other hand (do not release the hand that is holding the separate ends) and see if the plied yarn will form a nice curve from the spindle to your hand. That is a characteristic of a balanced yarn. You can use a purely visual check to make the yarn the way you want it.



above sequence plying about a yard at a time until all the yarn is plied.

Wind onto the spindle in the opposite direction from the way you spun the singles to store the yarn. Half-hitch or hook as before and repeat the

