


spinning daily  presents



A Guide to Handspun Yarn



Types of Yarn
and How to
Spin Them



There's pleasure in letting fiber slip through your fingers in that old familiar way, creating the yarn you've been mastering for years. But the longer you spin the yarn that feels most comfortable, the more difficult you may find it to make a new kind of yarn: a new weight, a new drafting method, a new way of holding your hands. A groove can so easily turn into a rut. Think of this collection of articles from past issues of *Spin·Off* as not only your lifeline out of your well worn spinning path, but as a lab notebook for the most fun set of experiments you've ever tried. Try out these techniques and see what you can spin.

One of Interweave's oldest publications, *Spin·Off* inspires spinners to make beautiful yarn and find enchanting ways to use it. In addition to the quarterly magazine, we also host the spinning community spinningdaily.com, complete with blogs, forums, and free patterns. In our video workshop series, the living treasures of the spinning world share their knowledge. We're devoted to bringing you the best spinning teachers, newest spinning techniques, and most inspiring ideas—right to your mailbox, your computer, and your very fingertips.

Enjoy your spinning journey—and come tell us about it at spinningdaily.com.

Happy spinning,

Anne Merrow

amerrow@interweave.com



Spin·off

it's about making yarn by hand

Spin·Off magazine, published four times a year, features articles about the ancient and thriving craft of spinning. Each issue highlights the vibrant and diverse spinning community and explores the intricacies of spinning. Travel around the world to learn new spinning techniques, discover new and old spinning tools, and sit down with knowledgeable instructors whose craft and experience will enrich your life!

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Worsted, woolen, or semi-something

By Rudy Amann

Do you spin worsted or woolen yarn? Don't worry if you don't know—many spinners do not know what type of yarn they spin. They just continue spinning the same way they did for their first successful skein of yarn.

The difference between worsted and woolen yarns comes from how the fibers are prepared for spinning, the drafting technique that is used, and how twist is allowed to enter the fibers. There is general agreement among spinners about how to spin true worsted yarns and true woolen yarns. However, most of us spin something between those two types of yarn.

Most authors of spinning articles and workshop mentors generally agree that true worsted yarn is spun from fibers 3-inches or longer, hand-combed with English-style combs to remove shorter fibers, with the remaining long fibers in a parallel arrangement, using short draw, with the orifice (or spinning) hand leading the twist into the drafted fibers.

There is also general agreement that true woolen yarn is spun from a rolag made with hand-cards, with the short and long fibers (usually all less than 3-inches long) in a random arrangement, using long draw, and allowing the twist to enter the fibers unrestricted.

However, there is not general agreement about what to call the many yarns we spin that are not true worsted or woolen yarns. Some authorities call everything else semiworsted. I prefer the terminology that Anne Field presents in her book *Spinning Wool: Beyond the Basics* (Trafalgar Square Books, 2010). Depending on the spinning technique used and how the fibers are prepared, yarns fall into four categories: worsted, semiworsted, woolen, or semiwoolen. In categorizing yarns, the spinning style takes precedence over the type of fiber preparation.

Worsted yarn is spun by pinching the drafted fibers and leading the twist into them, using fibers prepared in a parallel arrangement. Worsted yarn is smooth, lustrous, hardwearing, and has good stitch definition for patterned knitting.

Semiworsted yarn is spun worsted-style, using fibers prepared in a random arrangement. Patterned knitting will not be as distinct as with worsted yarn.

Woolen yarn is spun allowing the twist to enter the drafted fibers, using fibers prepared in a random arrangement. Woolen yarn is fluffy, soft, and light. Knitted garments will be warm from the air trapped in the yarn, but patterns do not show up as clearly.

Semiwoolen yarn is spun woolen-style, using fibers prepared in a parallel arrangement. Because the yarn is smoother than woolen yarn, it will be less itchy when worn next to the skin, provided the fibers are not too coarse for comfort.

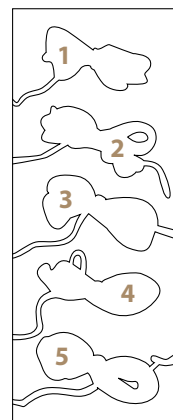
Rudy Amann of Brunswick, Maine, is a retired high school mathematics teacher and assistant principal. When he was learning to spin, Priscilla Gibson-Roberts was his mentor. He teaches and demonstrates spinning and nålbinding.

1. Bluefaced Leicester top, short forward draw (worsted-style). Parallel fibers + worsted spinning = worsted yarn.

2. Bluefaced Leicester top, short forward draw (woolen-style). Parallel fibers + woolen spinning = semiwoolen yarn. **3.** Coopworth carded roving, drafted using short forward draw (worsted-style). Random fibers + worsted spinning = semiworsted yarn.

4. Coopworth carded roving drafted using short forward draw (woolen-style). Random fibers + woolen spinning = woolen yarn.

5. Coopworth carded roving, drafting against the twist—medium draw (woolen-style). Random fibers + woolen spinning = woolen yarn.



Woolen/Worsted R.I.P.

By Rita Buchanan

In every workshop I teach, sooner or later someone asks, “When are you going to talk about woolen and worsted?”

“I’m not going to,” I reply. “I don’t use those words anymore.”

It’s true. Several years ago I decided those words are a nuisance, so I put them away. They belong in the history books, I think. And what about semi-woolen and semi-worsted? Oh, come on. Instead of history books, they could be the basis for a comic book!

I don’t know if my actual spinning has improved since I stopped talking about woolen and worsted, but my state of mind is definitely better. I never enjoyed fretting over whether I was achieving a True Worsted Yarn or mastering a True Woolen Draw. Trying to pigeonhole my efforts into one category or the other seemed absurdly confining. Spinners today make such a wonderful diversity of yarns; let’s use a richer vocabulary to describe them.



Drafting fibers pulls them into alignment, even if you spin from rolags. It’s often said that the fibers go every which way in a woolen yarn, but that isn’t so. When you look closely, you can see that the yarn is organized inside, even though its surface is fuzzy.

A Lexicon for Spinners

Often we fall back on jargon like woolen and worsted because we can’t think of what else to say. If you’re at a loss for words, try some of these. Naming what you react to when you see or touch some yarn increases your awareness and improves your spinning by helping you identify qualities that you want to create, duplicate, or avoid.

Some terms for qualities that come mostly from the fiber(s):

cool
crisp
papery
sleek
slippery
smooth
strokable
wrinkly
flexible
limp
pliable
stiff
supple
cuddly

felted
shaggy
sweaty
ticklesome
warm
fluffy
furry
fuzzy
hairy
itchy
nubbly
whiskery

Words for describing yarn thickness and structure:

bulky
fat
fine
heavy
jumbo
lightweight
midweight
ropelike
threadlike
bumpy
consistent
even
irregular
lumpy

slubby
thick-and-thin
uneven
uniform

Terms for twist and how it affects yarn:

balanced
calm
relaxed
slack
elastic
lofty
puffy
resilient
soft
squishy
distinct
energized
exaggerated
kinky

lively
snarly
wiry
compact
dense
durable
firm
strong
fragile
loose
minimal
weak
vulnerable

Ways to describe reflection and color:

bright
dull
glossy
lackluster
lustrous
matt
shiny
drab
dramatic
heathered
multicolored
muted
neutral
pastel

saturated
solid
somber
speckled
streaked
variegated
vivid

Emotional and practical descriptions of yarn:

bold
boring
comforting
familiar
fresh
masterful
ordinary
remarkable
stale
stunning
ugly
unexpected
useless
versatile



These nine swatches, all worked in medium-twist, two-ply yarns from the same Corriedale fleece, differ in several ways. I used different knit stitches. The yarns vary in thickness from fine to bulky. The swatches are different colors, because some parts of the fleece had yellow tips and other locks were nearly pure white. (These color differences are an accident, but what happened is such a common problem that I wanted to explain it.) There's another difference here, but it doesn't grab your attention. The two swatches on the bottom are both worked in popcorn stitch, from yarns with matching thickness and twist, but one is essentially woolen (spun with a long draw from rolags) and the other is essentially worsted (spun with a short draw from combed top). So what? I concluded. The difference between these two isn't as exciting as the differences between fine and bulky yarns, or between various knit stitches.

History is a muddle

Granted, I can understand why historians and Anglophiles enjoy these words, because they are so deeply entrenched in English textile history. The Oxford English Dictionary cites references to worsted (and to worstede, worsteyd, worsteede, wurstet, wostod, or wusted) cloth dating back to the 1300s and 1400s. The OED defines worsted as, "A wool-len fabric or stuff made from well-twisted yarn spun of long-staple wool combed to lay the fibers parallel," (other reference sources give different definitions) and notes that the

name comes from the parish of Worstead, in Norfolk, where such cloth was produced.

According to the OED, the word woolen (U.S.), or woollen (U.K.), or wullen, wolen, wolyn, and other archaic variants, is at least as old as worsted, but its origin and definition are less specific. Basically, woolen means "made of wool."

The dichotomy between worsted and woolen is almost as old as the terms themselves, but the distinctions have never been clear-cut or black-and-white. Both terms have been used in so many places by so many people

for so long that their meanings and connotations are like intertangled skeins. It's fun, if you like that sort of project, to try to follow the threads, but I don't think they can ever be straightened or separated. Trying to write unambiguous, incontestable definitions for worsted and woolen would be a hopeless and thankless task. I won't go there.

Contemporary spinners are confused

The definitions of woolen and worsted have long been unclear, and things are no better today. Many spin-

ners have their own interpretations, but as a community of spinners, we don't share a common understanding. There's no con-sensus, especially among experts, as to whether these terms refer to properties of fabric or yarn, methods of spinning, tools and techniques of fiber preparation, wool grade and staple length, or all of the above.

Periodically the woolen/worsted dragon rears its head at shows and competitions. When a judge uses definitions different from those the entrants or participants use, tempers flare and resentment follows. What a shame! I hate to see spinners argue over this issue, and urge sponsoring groups not to organize events this way. Create other categories, and be more specific in defining the basis for judging entries.

Leave out other fibers

One of the reasons I have laid aside the terms woolen and worsted is that I often spin fibers other than wool. I

know some spinners who will talk about spinning alpaca into a woolen yarn, or spinning cotton into a worsted yarn, but that seems confusing and inappropriate to me. When spinners talk like that, using woolen and worsted as code words, you can't be sure what they mean. I wish they would elaborate and give fuller explanations, such as, "I spun carded alpaca into a soft yarn with a fuzzy surface," or "I spun combed cotton into a firm yarn with a smooth surface."

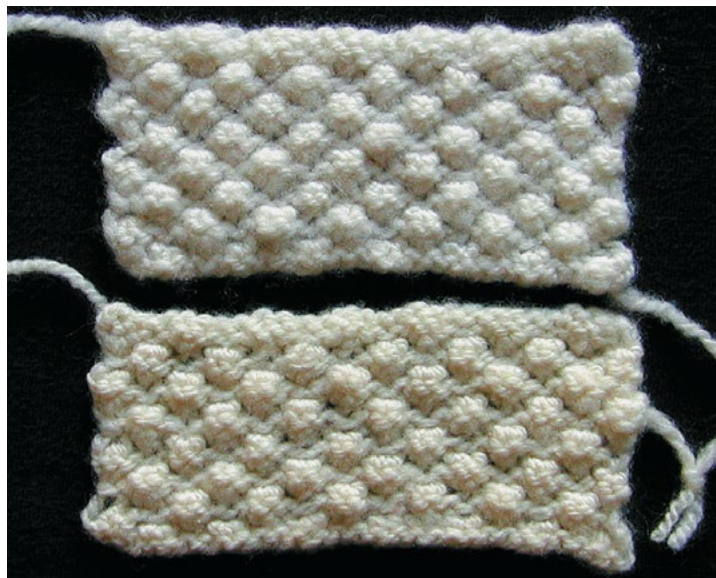
Applying wool-based terms to other fibers is a misfit, I think, and it's needless. Pre-Columbian spinners in Peru made incredible fabrics from alpaca and cotton without talking about woolen and worsted, and we can follow their example today.

Preparation isn't destiny

Here's an important point that I can only mention now; I'll return to it in a future issue. Fiber preparation and draft-

ing technique don't define or limit the character of your yarn. From any handful of fiber and with any method of drafting, you can make a variety of yarns that look and feel distinctly different. This happens all the time in workshops when I distribute a batch of fiber among the participants, demonstrate a way of holding and drafting it, and say, "Try spinning this way." Everyone spins a while, makes their yarn into a skein, then we gather around a table to observe the results. Invariably, each yarn is unique. Some are fat while others are thin. Some are firmly twisted and others are loose and soft. Some are perfectly even and uniform, while others are irregular and lumpy. How can you describe this variation in terms of woolen and worsted? Why try? That's why I don't bother with these terms anymore. ❧

Rita Buchanan of Connecticut is a former contributing editor of *Spin-Off*.



Here's a closer look at those two Corriedale swatches. For the "woolen" one on top, I handcarded the wool, made rolags, and used a Mabel Ross-style long draw. For the "worsted" one below, I combed the wool with English combs, pulled off a smooth top, and used a Peter Teal-style short draw. I deliberately matched the thickness and twist of the two yarns. In a comparison like this, what's the difference between woolen and worsted? Aside from the accidental difference in shades of white, the woolen swatch is fuzzier than the worsted swatch. Stitch definition is clearer in the worsted swatch. But these effects are really quite subtle. Working either way, you could make a wonderful sweater.



The amount of twist has a major impact on how yarn looks and feels. These skeins weigh the same amount and have the same yardage. The top skein has a firm twist and feels dense, sleek, and stable. The bottom skein has very soft twist and feels puffy, lofty, and elastic. Some spinners would say the top skein has a worsted character and the bottom skein a woolen character, but in fact, both were spun from the same drumcarded batt of Dorset wool, using the same drafting technique. The only difference is how much twist I used.

Drafting Techniques

By Jeannine Bakriges

Few of us spin strictly woolen or worsted yarns. We mix and match techniques, looking for a yarn that pleases us and suits our purposes. Hence, we hear terms for yarn such as semiworsted, semiwoolen, worsted-woolen, wooly-worsted (and probably others) as ways to label this mixed and matched yarn we're making. Often a semiworsted yarn is defined as a yarn that is spun with any fiber, spinning method, and/or preparation that deviates from those used for a strictly defined worsted yarn. However, please note that experts in the handspinning world often disagree about the exact definitions for woolen and worsted yarns. You may find another definition that differs from what I found (see page 8). Don't be alarmed. Smile and form your own conclusions. The exception, of course, is if you're studying for a handspinning certificate. In that case, you need to find out what the rule makers feel is the most accurate definition. As for myself, I'll continue to build on my arsenal of spinning techniques and use whatever methods or combination of methods that work for the situation at hand. If one technique or combo of techniques doesn't work, then I'll try another.

Short draw

The short draws (forward and backward) generally give me a level of control that I enjoy. I can use these techniques with just about any preparation and with just about any fiber: spinning from a combed lock's end, from the fold (wool locks or commercial fiber preparations), from the end of non-top (such as carded roving), from top, from rolags, etc. I may not gravitate to using the short draw, however, when spinning extremely short fibers from punis (which are tightly rolled, short-fiber rolags, often cotton) or a commercial preparation. But hey, don't listen to me—try it! Take all you hear with a grain of salt and experiment for yourself.

I particularly like the short draws for spinning slippery fibers such as silk or any of the silken fibers such as Soysilk, bamboo, etc. I often begin with a short forward draw, and if that doesn't work well, I try short backward draw. If neither of these techniques works well, I move on to the longer draws. Because I'm a knitter and want yarn full of life, I often lightly finger the twist by aiming not to pinch all the air out of the yarn, even if I'm spinning with a short forward draw (the drafting technique for a strict worsted yarn). I lightly follow the twist with my finger, gently smoothing



American long draw, unsupported, at bobbin and flyer wheel.

PHOTOS BY JEANNINE BAKRIGES



Spinning long draw on a great wheel.

any stray fibers on the surface of the singles into place. For me, neither short forward nor short backward draw has a particular advantage—it's whatever works best at a given moment with given materials.

Long draw

I like the American supported long draw with any variety of fiber lengths and any good preparation. I come from the camp where preparation is everything (or almost everything) when it comes to my enjoyment at the wheel or spindle. I like to use this two-handed, supported method when I need to have a forward hand to pinch the spun (but not-yet-wound-on) yarn so that I can gently tug against it when drafting. This forward hand offers a measure of drafting control. The longer length of spun yarn held outside the orifice before being wound onto the bobbin helps the spinner see the process and

spin consistently over a longer length than when drafting just a staple length (such as in the short draws).

I would consider an unsupported American long draw for short fibers with superb fiber preparation. I particularly like this technique with extremely well-prepared rolags or punis. I also choose to use the unsupported technique when I'm spinning short fibers on a charkha or great wheel, equipment that leaves only one hand free for drafting and fiber-holding while the other hand operates the wheel.

I was taught the American sliding, supported long draw by Celia Quinn back in the early 1990s. For this method, the front hand slides and pinches at the point of contact in order to allow short draws of fiber to be distributed over a length of yarn (see "Seven Drafting Techniques" in the Winter 2009 *Spin-Off* for more details). Go to any guild meet-

ing across the United States, and I bet you'll see this drafting technique practiced in some variation. Celia mentioned it as particularly excellent for slippery fibers such as silk.

The American long draws all are considered point-of-contact draws in which the point of contact moves position or travels over the length of the yarn before it is wound onto the bobbin or spindle. The point of contact is the area where the just-spun yarn is immediately in front of the drafting zone. We learn early that if we pinch on the point of contact (which is yarn) instead of on the drafting zone (which is still unspun fiber), we'll get a non-slubby, consistent yarn. This is because our pinching fingers are preventing twist from entering the entirety of the drafting zone. In any case, the twist, and hence the point of contact, in the American long draws moves like a freight train away from the orifice and toward the unspun fiber. Sometimes this twist actually enters the unspun fiber supply. If it enters too fully, the twist locks the fiber and the spinner cannot draft. If it enters a little, that's usually not a problem.

I find the American forward long draw really useful when spinning from punis or well-prepared rolags of shortish fibers (1½" works best for me, but some spinners find success with even longer fibers). Patricia Emerick, who introduced this draw in her article "An Alpaca Sweater For My Smaller Son" in the Summer 1990 issue of *Spin-Off*, mentions that she can sit back in her favorite chair and spin comfortably with this technique. The only thing the spinner has to get used to with this technique is that the forward hand is positioned on top of the yarn, which is very different from the other techniques mentioned.

The English long draw varies from the American long draws in very particular ways. First the spinner, who is treadling, pinches firmly at the point of contact, not letting the point of contact move backward as twist builds up between the pinched point of contact and the orifice. The spinner also pinches off the fiber mass at the point between the mass and the fiber to be drafted. Then with continued treadling, the spinner drafts a portion of unspun fiber, which should be a consistent amount each time, stops pinching at the point of contact, and allows the built-up twist to enter that controlled portion of unspun fiber, quickly moving backward as a soft yarn forms. By drawing out this spun yarn, inconsistencies within the yarn are "worked out" and

Worsted versus woolen yarn

Note: These generalized definitions are not total and undisputed truth—they are generally accepted as the definitions of these terms but are not absolute. Please note the frequent use of the words "usually," "generally," and "often."

Worsted yarn: Usually spun from long fibers but sometimes from shorter fine wools; includes only the longest fibers in the lock (produced by combing the fibers and removing the shorter bits); fibers remain parallel throughout the preparation and during drafting; usually no twist is allowed in the drafting zone (drafting triangle); generally a yarn with luster; generally strong; often has little to no loft or air, making it a cool yarn; typical drafting technique is short forward draw; often described as hard, smooth, well-defined, of firmer twist, and very compact.

Woolen yarn: Usually spun from short to medium fibers (often with pronounced crimp); usually includes both short and long fibers in a preparation (blended together by carding the fibers); fibers angle in various ways to each other (i.e., not parallel); twist is, more or less, allowed in the drafting zone (drafting triangle); generally on the matte side; usually much air is incorporated, making it a warm yarn; generally weak and subject to pilling (due to shorter fibers rising to the surface but still caught in the twist); typical drafting technique is the English long draw (though some authors say the American long draws are suitable); often described as fuzzy, less-defined, of lower twist, and soft, and may be bulky.

seemingly melt away (depending on how well the fiber is prepared). The spinner then adds more twist, via treadling, into that soft yarn to stabilize it before letting it wind onto the bobbin. It actually feels like pulling taffy when you let the initial built-up twist enter the controlled amount of unspun fiber and continue to draw out the inconsistencies. Neat!

The fiber of choice for the English long draw is a really well-prepared rolag from short (less than 3-inch) fibers. I've read that English long draw is like no other draw because it retains the coiled structure of the rolag as twist enters into it, rather than attenuating the fiber so that it is more parallel as the twist enters, as in the American long draws. Thus, the English long draw allows for a yarn of incredible elasticity and loft.

Controlling the twist and drafting just behind it is a rather delicate balancing act. For any of these draws, if your fiber supply gets locked and you can't draft, one helpful tip I can give is that a roll back

(rolling the yarn in the opposite direction of the twist—usually done at the point of contact with short draws) works well. The cool thing about the two-handed long draws is that you can perform this bit of unlocking magic with your forward hand near the orifice (in other words, not near the unspun fiber and its traveling point of contact). Many spinners do this automatically, even unconsciously. A roll back is another helpful technique in your spinning toolbox that you can choose to use or not.

Voices of experience

I asked a few spinner friends of mine to comment, in particular, on the long draws for this article. All of them said excellent fiber preparation is crucial for long-draw happiness. Friend and mentor Rita Buchanan wrote, “For me, the main points about long draw are simple: fiber prep, fiber prep, fiber prep!—so that the fiber can pull smoothly and easily into the yarn. I mostly do long draw with short fibers, or from the fold with longer fibers, rarely with long fibers from the end, although I’ve watched other spinners spin long fibers from top or batts, easy as pie, on great wheels.” Regarding long draws, Michigan spinner Jofran Pastor said, “Relax and let go. It’s all about feel. I do best when I Zen out.” She goes on to exclaim, “Long draws are an act of faith!”

Rita Buchanan offered this gem concerning drafting techniques: “I was recently given seven Icelandic fleeces. So far I’ve washed two, a white and a brown. In the white fleece, the outer hairs aren’t much longer or coarser than the short fluff, so I drumcarded a few sample batts. That fiber feels nice and soft to my hands but not so good next to my neck. The brown fleece is very dual, so I combed a sample. There, the long outer fibers are as coarse and straight as my hair, and 6 to 8 inches long, while the short fluff is like camel, yak, or other downs, under 2 inches, fine but not crimp like Merino, say. Interesting.”

Rita continues, “These two kinds of brown fiber make an extreme but great example of why it’s helpful to master different drafting techniques. To my mind, the big reason for having a repertoire of skills is so that you can handle a variety of fibers, by sampling until you arrive at a method that offers comfort and control. Unlike many spinners, I don’t think how you draft makes a big difference in how the yarn turns out. Nope, it’s more about if you spin that fiber into yarn, versus putting it away in the closet because you can’t manage it.”



Roll back with the American supported long draw.

Rita also wrote, “I carded the brown fluff, made rolags, and spun some with the American-style point-of-contact long draw and some with Mabel Ross’s English-style draw, and either way makes brown yarn! No big deal there, I swear there’s not! Small deal maybe, but I really think it’s mostly just a matter of personal choice and preference and habit. Without labels, I can’t tell which samples were spun one way and which the other.”

In conclusion, Rita said, “There sure are lots of ways to spin!” ☘

Jeannine Bakriges has celebrated her thirty years of putzing around with yarn and fiber by writing a book, *Spinning Around: Spinning, Dyeing, and Knitting the Classics* (Schoolhouse Press, 2010). She’s trotting off along other paths, but her spindles and wheels will no doubt come along for the ride.

Resources

Bakriges, Jeannine. “Seven Drafting Techniques,” *Spin·Off* 33, 4 (Winter 2009), 66–68, 70.

Raven, Lee. *Hands-On Spinning*. Loveland, Colorado: Interweave, 1987.

Jeannine wishes to thank Elizabeth Johnson for modeling for her article.

The Short Draw Drafting for Worsted Yarn

By Carol Huebscher Rhoades

Worsted spinning makes a smooth, dense, and lustrous yarn, with the fibers lying parallel to each other along the yarn's length. While you can use the short draw for short or long fibers, industry uses staples three inches or longer for worsted yarns. Choose a good quality fleece with long and even staples. Combing yields the smoothest preparation for worsted spinning. You can comb your own top or purchase commercially prepared tops. To draft easily and quickly, elongate or strip the roving or top in proportion to the desired yarn size. Oil the wheel well and adjust it so that the tension allows you to draft without adding too much twist. Work slowly until you feel comfortable with the drafting process, and use a contrast cloth on your lap to see the drafting zone clearly.

Begin by deciding what grist (relation of yardage to weight) yarn you want. Focus on maintaining a consistent fiber amount in the drafting triangle and adding a consistent amount of twist. To avoid too much twist buildup, adjust the rhythm of your feet and hands by slowing down the treadling and/or speeding up hand movements. Try a larger bobbin whorl for fewer twists per wheel rotation. There are two generally accepted methods for how much length to draft: either one inch or about one-half to three-fourths of the staple length. Try out each to see which you prefer.

Carol Huebscher Rhoades lives in Madison, Wisconsin where she spins, knits, translates, writes, and edits. She most loves spinning primitive wools to knit up into traditional Scandinavian garments.



Carol prepares for worsted spinning by dividing the top into manageable strips.



1. For a thin yarn and almost effortless drafting, use a narrow strip of top.



2. Start by attaching the length of top or roving to the leader thread and drawing out a few inches while you add twist to secure the join.



3. The active hand stays 5 to 6 inches away from the orifice. Its job is to pull the fibers forward and then smooth them as the twist is added. The active hand moves forward (toward the orifice) while drawing out the fiber and then back as the twist goes into the yarn.



4. The passive hand holds the fiber. Depending on the drafting length you prefer, it stays in about the same place behind the active hand: either (a) slightly more than a staple length or (b) about an inch and a half away.



5. Begin by pulling less than a staple length or an inch of fiber from the top with the active hand. As you draft, keep the twist pinched off with the thumb and forefinger of the active hand.



6. While you prevent the twist from entering the undrafted fiber in the passive hand by pinching off at the base of the drafting triangle, release thumb and forefinger of the active hand just enough to allow the twist to slowly enter the drafting zone as you slide the active hand towards you.



7. As the twist enters and compresses the drafting zone, smooth the yarn with the active hand. The active hand follows the twist toward the passive hand and back to the starting position (about an inch and a half or just more than a fiber length in front of the passive hand).

Repeat steps 4–6. When you're joining in more fiber, fan out the spun yarn and overlap it with a fan of new fiber; draft slowly, then add twist.



8. Worstid spinning produces a smooth and lustrous yarn.



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The Long Draw Drafting for Woolen Yarn

By Carol Huebscher Rhoades

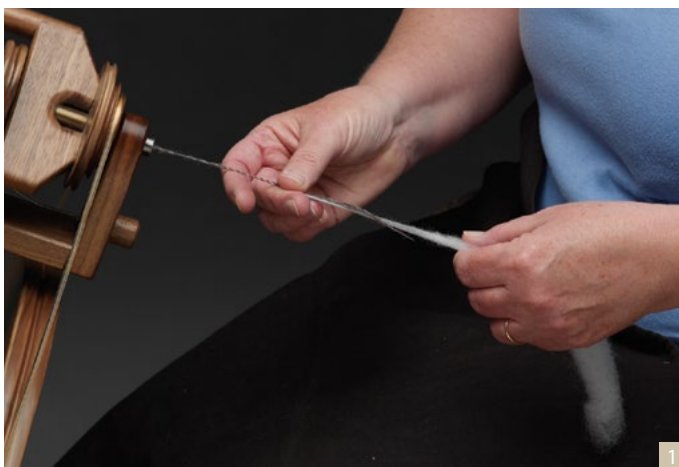
Woolen spinning makes a lofty, insulating yarn, with long and short fibers intersecting randomly to create air pockets. Think light and airy throughout the process of making a woolen yarn. Choose an open, clean fleece, with locks three inches or shorter, and scour it well. A woolen yarn is easiest to spin from a well-carded rolag with a core of air surrounded by fiber. Card rolags in proportion to the desired yarn size. Make small diameter rolags for fine yarn and large diameter ones for fatter yarn. Adjust the wheel by loosening the tension until the flyer parts rotate but there is little pull-in tension. Oil the wheel well and keep the tension light by trying a lighter weight drive band and/or single drive. Work slowly until you feel comfortable with the drafting process. You can always add more twist if necessary, but remember that a woolen yarn should be light.

For an even yarn, use consistently sized rolags, pinch off the same amount for each segment of drafting, and draft back the same distance. For a big yarn, draft back only a very short distance; for a thin yarn, draft the segment back further. If you find yourself twisting your body more than 30 degrees, draft shorter segments of the rolag.

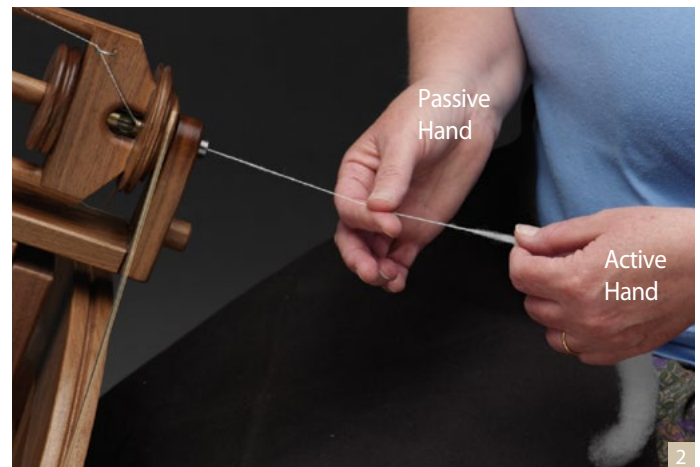
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Carol Rhoades demonstrates the long-draw drafting technique to make a woolen yarn.



1. Start by attaching the rolag to the leader thread and drawing out a few inches while adding twist to secure the join.



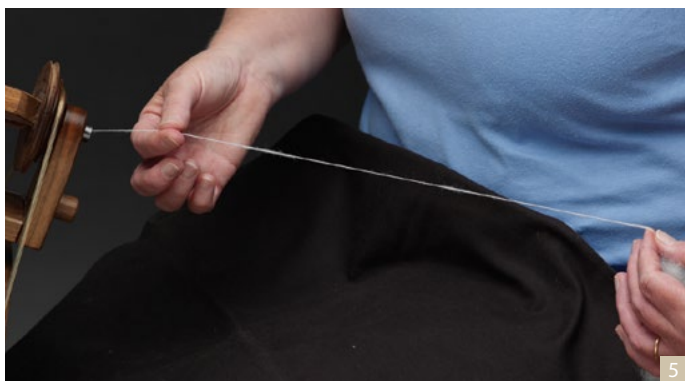
2. The passive hand stays 4" to 5" away from the orifice. Its job is to pinch the twist off and on as needed. It should stay in the same place except to pull off a bit of fluff or vegetable matter or to catch a broken yarn. It does not smooth the yarn or move back to meet the active hand.



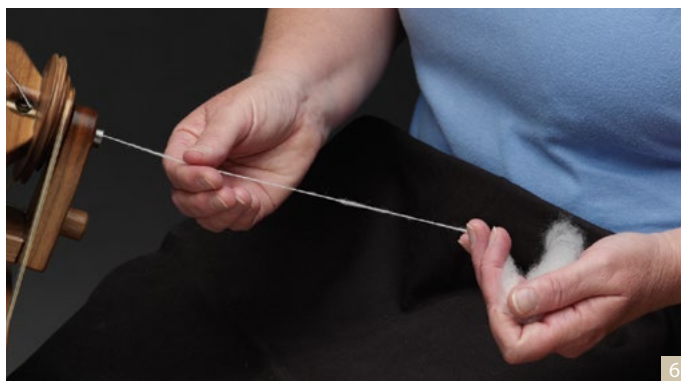
3. The active hand holds the fiber. It starts 7" to 8" away from the passive hand and does not get closer. There should always be twisted yarn between the passive hand and the orifice and between the passive and active hands.



4. Begin by pinching off a section of rolag (1" to 1½") with the thumb and forefinger of the active hand. While treadling the wheel, pull the pinched-off section of the rolag back against the twist until it is the desired diameter. Think of the section of rolag elongating and holding that core of air. Do not let more fiber from behind the pinched-off section in the active hand enter the drafting zone.



5. While you're drafting back with the active hand, open and close the thumb and forefinger of the passive hand to let in or pinch off twist as necessary. Usually there is enough twist built up in the yarn between the active and passive hands to draft out the unspun fibers without adding more twist. There should be just enough twist to hold the unspun fibers together but not so much that you can't draft out any uneven spots.



6. When the yarn is drafted to the desired diameter, add enough twist to hold it together. Move the active hand toward the orifice but only back to the starting position—7" to 8" away from the passive hand. If the yarn doesn't feed onto the bobbin easily, add a bit more tension until it does so.





7. Go to the next section of the rolag by opening the forefinger and thumb of the active hand and floating them over the rolag 1" to 1½" backward and then closing the fingers to pinch off that section. Repeat Steps 4–7 until a rolag is almost spun up; overlap the last bit with a new rolag and continue.



8. The result is a beautiful, soft and lofty yarn!

Yarn Standards

The Craft Yarn Council has worked with fiber, needle, and hook manufacturers and publishers to set up a series of guidelines and symbols to bring uniformity to patterns and to yarn, needle, and hook labeling. *Spin-Off's* goal is to extend these standards to spinners and to create a system for referencing the yarn we make. We have augmented the Craft Yarn Council standards by adding useful gauges for spinners, such as wraps per inch and yards per pound. We have also added recommended setts for weaving. Our additions come from a variety of sources, from experience, and from patterns. This chart offers only rough guidelines, as a lot of variation is created by what fiber is used and how it is spun.

	 LACE DENTELLE Lislon	 SUPER FINE SUPER FIN Super Fino	 FINE FIN Fino	 LIGHT LEGER Ligero	 MEDIUM MOYEN Medio	 BULKY BULKY Abultado	 SUPER BULKY SUPER BULKY Super Abultado
Examples of Types of Yarn	Lace, 10-Count Crochet Thread	Sock, Fin- gering, Baby	Sport, Baby	DK, Light Worsted	Worsted, Afghan, Aran	Chunky, Craft, Rug	Bulky, Roving
Wraps per Inch	18 or more	16 to 18	14 to 15	12 to 13	10 to 11	8 to 9	7 or less
Yards per Pound	2,401 or more	1,901 to 2,400	1,201 to 1,900	901 to 1,200	601 to 900	401 to 600	400 or less
Knit Gauge* in Stockinette Stitch to 4"	33 to 40 sts**	27 to 32 sts	23 to 26 sts	21 to 24 sts	16 to 20 sts	12 to 15 sts	6 to 11 sts
Recommended Needle in U. S./ Metric Sizes	000 to 1 / 1.5 to 2.25 mm	1 to 3 / 2.25 to 3.25 mm	3 to 5 / 3.25 to 3.75 mm	5 to 7 / 3.75 to 4.5 mm	7 to 9 / 4.5 to 5.5 mm	9 to 11 / 5.5 to 8 mm	11 / 8 mm and larger
Crochet Gauge* in Single Crochet to 4"	32 to 42 double crochets**	21 to 32 sts	16 to 20 sts	12 to 17 sts	11 to 14 sts	8 to 11 sts	5 to 9 sts
Recommended Hook in U.S./ Metric Sizes	Steel*** 6, 7, 8 / 1.6 to 1.4 mm. Regular B-1	B-1 to E-4 / 2.25 to 3.5 mm	E-4 to 7 / 3.5 to 4.5 mm	7 to I-9 / 4.5 to 5.5 mm	I-9 to K-10½ / 5.5 to 6.5 mm	K-10½ to M-13 / 6.5 to 9 mm	M-13 / 9 mm and larger
Plain-Weave Sett	15 or more	12 to 15	10 to 12	8 to 10	6 to 8	4 to 6	4 or less

*GUIDELINES ONLY: The above reflect the most commonly used gauges and needle or hook sizes for specific yarn categories.

**Laceweight yarns are usually knitted or crocheted on larger needles and hooks to create lacy, openwork patterns. Accordingly, a gauge range is difficult to determine. Always follow the gauge stated in your pattern.

***Steel crochet hooks are sized differently from regular hooks—the higher the number, the smaller the hook, which is the reverse of regular hook sizing.

Sources: Craft Yarn Council's www.yarnstandards.com and *Handwoven* magazine's weavingtoday.com.