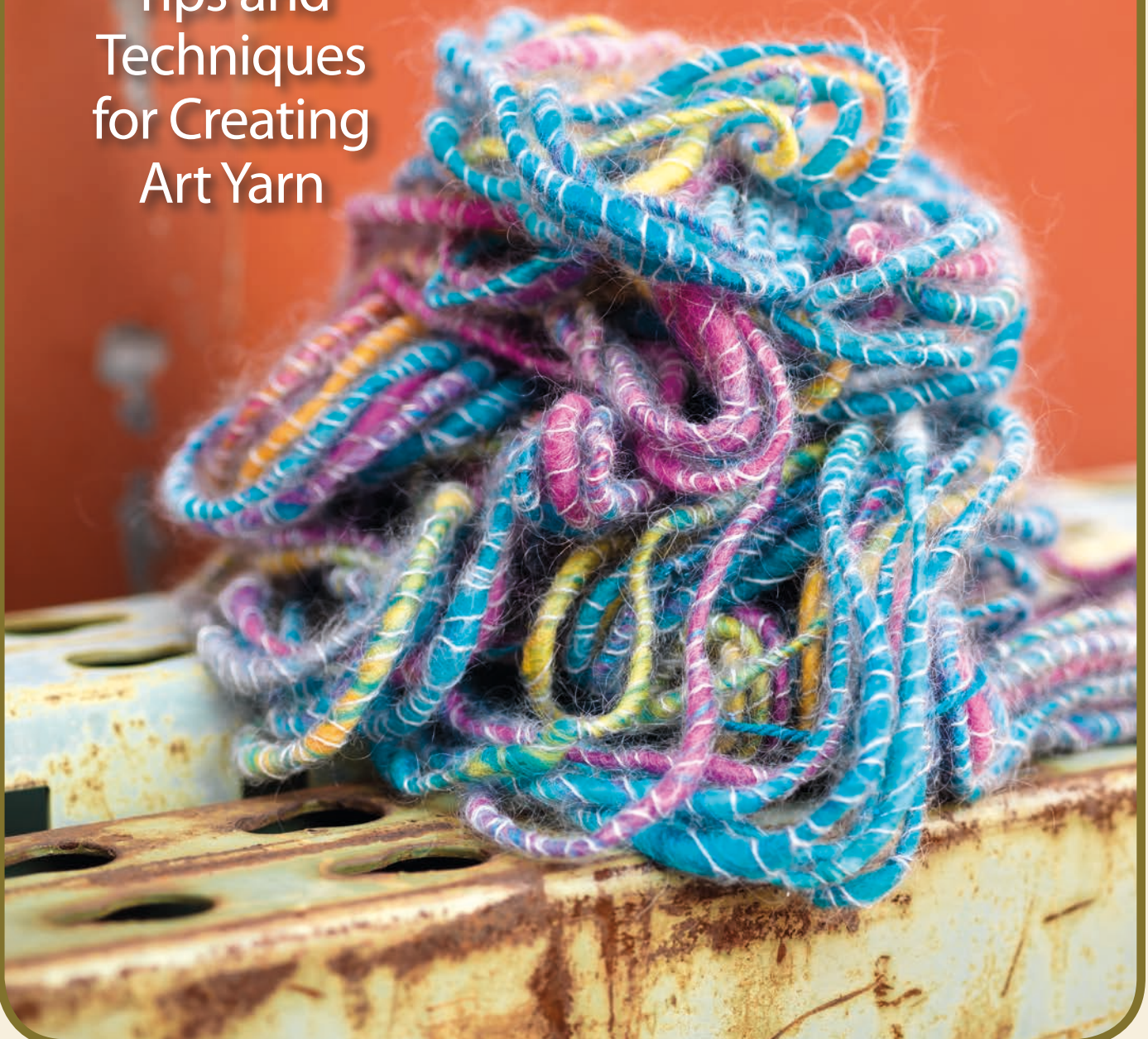


spinning daily  presents

Spinning Novelty Yarn:

Tips and
Techniques
for Creating
Art Yarn





There are as many definitions of “art yarn” as spinners who make it. The older terms “designer yarn” and “novelty yarn” have their own connotations. “Novelty” in particular might sound frivolous, like a temporary fad without serious merit or historical roots. Yet ancient textile finds from various places and eras include feathers spun into yarns, precursors to today’s art yarns.

Whether you’re more wild or traditional in your tastes, spinning art yarns requires practice and skill in the spinning fundamentals as much as creativity. In this collection of articles from *Interweave* you’ll find a number of techniques to add to your repertoire for spinning designer yarns—or any yarns.

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

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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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Spinning Prepared and Unprepared Fibers

BY SYMEON NORTH

You can alternate using combed or carded wool with locks to make the untamed fibers really “pop.” Prepared fibers are generally easier to work with than locks are; depending on the preparation method, the fibers are all loosened or going in the same direction. Using unprepared fibers will create more texture and provide a unique look to the yarn.

YOU WILL NEED:

- * Prepared fiber (batts, roving, or top)
- * Clean wool locks

To secure a lock in a yarn made from prepared fibers, separate the fiber already in the drafting triangle and place the cut ends of the locks in the center. (You may need to stop treadling or untwist the yarn slightly to open the drafting triangle.) Firmly pinch the point of twist with your fingers and resume normal treadling speed, gradually loosening your pinch on the drafting zone and allowing the twist to engulf the new fibers. This is especially effective if you are core spinning the new addition, which is an easy way to put the cut ends in the twist, because everything that needs to find its way into the twist is present.



BOOK EXCERPT from
Get Spun: The Step-by-Step Guide to Spinning Art Yarns
by Symeon North,
available from Interweave

ADDING LOCKS TO PREPARED FIBER



1. Divide the fiber in the drafting triangle and add the new fiber (cut ends first) between the halves.



2. Pinch the fibers at the point of twist.



3. After building up more twist by treadling, allow the twist into the fibers.



Plying in Locks

BY SYMEON NORTH

Instead of adding locks in singles, you can create yarn with unspun elements when plying. The twist that holds the plies together can capture additional fiber and hold it firmly; instead of locks, try sari silk, lengths of yarn, or other items.

YOU WILL NEED:

- * Two (or more) sets of singles for plying
- * Clean dyed locks, sari silk, or other loose fiber



Set up your bobbins of singles and begin to ply as usual. When you find a place where you'd like to add a lock, hold the plies apart. Pinch off the twist and open up the drafting triangle. Place the cut end of the lock between the plies and hold it in the twist zone. Allow the plying twist to grab the cut ends to secure the lock in the yarn. When the end of the lock is firmly attached, hold the remaining fiber out of the twist and let it go once the twist is well past it. Finishing the yarn with a warm wash and a good thwack will help secure the locks between the plies.



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INSERTING LOCKS WHILE PLYING



1. Hold the plies apart and place the cut end of the lock in the twist zone.



2. Once the lock is secure, hold most of the fiber out of the twist.



3. After the plying twist has moved through the lock area, let go of the lock and resume plying normally.



Autowrap

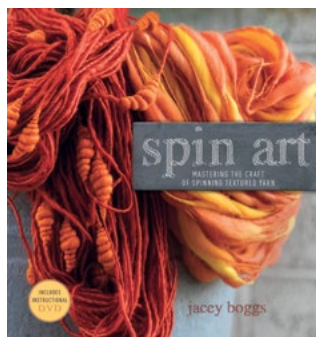
BY JACEY BOGGS

Autowrap—the name says it all. With a traditional orifice, this is a wrap that wraps itself automatically. If you have an outie orifice, a delta, or a ring, you can get similar results, but it's not quite so automatic. Unlike the racing stripe, an autowrap wraps irregularly and with a different twist angle than the underlying singles. Requiring minimal labor, this great technique gives a yarn mystery and zing with its peculiar perpendicular wrapping and just gets more impressive when combined with other techniques.

FIBER

Like all the wraps, any fiber or prep will work for the base yarn. However, this technique is one of the few where an element of the yarn (the wrap, in this case) doesn't require much tensile strength. Since the wrapping strand is more than triple the length of the base singles, there is no reasonable chance of it being stretched taut. So go ahead and grab those spools of shiny or metallic thread, Lurex, or novelties. They work and look great.

Place the autowrap strand on either side at your feet and as even with the orifice as possible. The slightest bit of tension can cause the autowrap strand to pull tight and, instead of wrapping, to disappear inside the yarn as it is being spun. If you are using handspun for the autowrap, you may find that the bobbin's weight produces too much tension. If this happens, just wind it off into a ball and pop the ball in a bowl at your feet.



BOOK EXCERPT from
*Spin Art: Mastering the Craft
of Spinning Textured Yarn*
by Jacey Boggs,
available from Interweave



WHEEL SETUP

This technique does not dictate the setup of your wheel. Set up the wheel for the singles you will be spinning. If you are using a commercially spun wrap, you can spin in either direction, but if you are using a handspun wrap, spin in the opposite direction of the wrap.

The sample yarn is spun Z, has a core spun from a textured, carded batt, and an autowrap of brushed mohair.

SPINNING

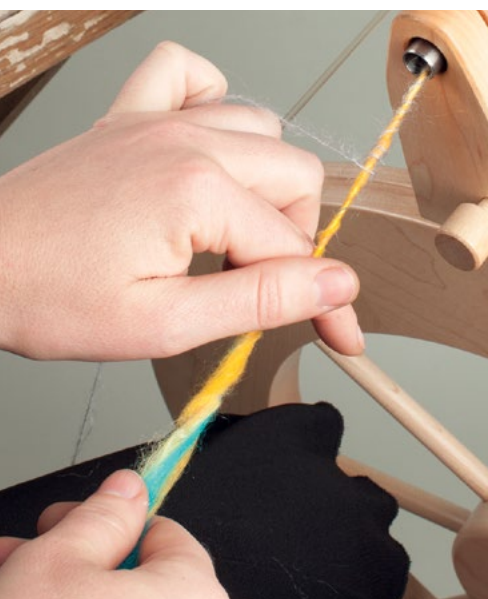
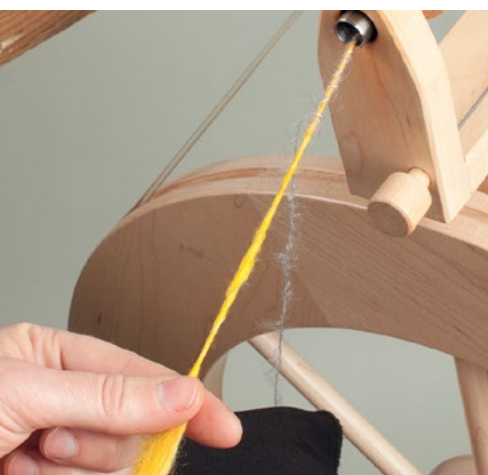
If you have what I call an innie orifice, one that is flush or almost flush with your maiden, this wrap is a breeze. Simply start spinning the singles and the autowrap together with a short forward or short backward draw, as if you are spinning a racing stripe ([STEP 1](#)), then drop the racing stripe, and it becomes the autowrap ([STEP 2](#)). That's right, just drop it and keep spinning. The autowrap will automatically wrap around the singles, creating an irregular wrap that adds a bit of mystery and intrigue to your yarn. Don't worry if the autowrap disappears into the orifice. That is exactly what is supposed to happen.

Remember to let your yarn run into your orifice at a regular pace and in short-ish intervals. If you attempt a modified long draw or even allow the singles you are spinning to get too long before you let it enter the orifice, you will end up with long sections where the autowrap is not accumulating much twist and therefore is spun alongside the core rather than wrapping around it.

If you have a delta, ring, or an orifice that extends beyond the maiden, and you try to do an autowrap in the above-described manner, you will likely spend a great deal of time unwrapping yards and yards of autowrap that automatically wrapped around the outie orifice, delta, or ring. There is a solution, but it takes a finger, some patience, and a bit more dexterity.

Everything is set up the same way, but when you're ready to release the racing stripe and start autowrapping, extend one of the fingers of your back/supply hand—I usually use my pinkie—and use it to guide the autowrap ([STEP 3](#)). You don't have to do too much; just keep the wrap from traveling into the orifice. This isn't the most comfortable position, and doing it for extended periods can cause cramping, so use caution.

Autowraps of different materials will not only give you different looks but will wrap differently as well. Some will create big, loose loops, while others will wrap tighter or with crinkles or folds. So experiment.



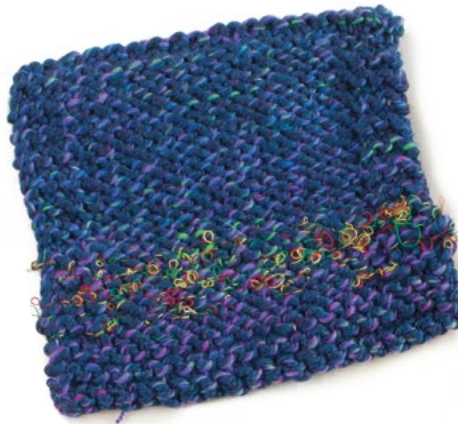




Making Fine Bouclés (Not quite from scratch!)

BY JUDIE OVERBEEK

Making bouclés is wonderful fun and results in an endless variety of bumpy textured yarns to use in knitting or weaving projects. Fine bouclés, for use as carry-alongs in knitting or as accent yarns in weaving, don't necessarily stand on their own but become textural color enhancements wherever they are used along with a background yarn. They are constructed from fine yarns, either commercial or handspun, and sewing thread.



Judie has designed these bouclés from fine yarns, either commercial or handspun, and sewing thread, for use as carry-alongs in knitting or as accent yarns in weaving.



In knitting, bouclés add texture and color interest, change the nature of the main color from plain to fancy, and make the resulting item more complex and interesting. You could carry them along throughout a piece or just use them in borders or as accents. They are not structural elements but are supplementary to the main yarn. The gauge will change a bit when a second yarn is added, so sampling should be done for areas both with and without the additional bouclé.

When weaving, I prefer to use fine bouclés sparingly rather than overall (the result can be too rich—like eating double-chocolate torte for breakfast). I might place one or two threads in the warp every half inch or so, either in its own heddle or in a heddle with one of the background threads. Bouclés can be used for textural interest in many weave structures including plain weave, twill, summer and winter, and crackle, to name a few. Using them only in the warp results in fine lengthwise stripes, whereas using them in both warp and weft can give subtle checks or plaids.

Sometimes when I see a particularly fun bouclé in a magazine or pattern book that I can't find in my local yarn store, I go to the spinning wheel and make a bouclé that allows me to simulate the yarn to my satisfaction. And because I am a weaver,

I have a lifetime supply of fine yarns to choose from as well as a lot of sewing thread.

The benefits of making your own bouclés are several. One, they are lightweight, optional additions that don't interfere with the basic structure of your knitted or woven fabric. Two, they allow texture and color variations without changing the background yarn. Three, they can be designed to your specifications for a particular project when finding just the right yarn out there might be next to impossible.

Whether you make the design strand yourself or find it on your shelf or at a trade show, take the luxury of playing around with these ideas for quite a while before you commit to a project. Making bouclés is so much fun that it doesn't seem to take any time at all. It takes even less time when your design strand has been made by someone else!

Here's the process for making a basic bouclé:

Step 1: Spin a fine singles yarn with a Z-twist. This will be your “design strand.” Alternately you could find a commercial yarn that would work as your design strand.

Step 2: Ply your design strand with a sewing thread using an S-twist. While plying, keep tension on the sewing thread but *not* on the design strand, allowing



Three strands of sewing thread (red, green, yellow) held together as the design strand and three navy sewing threads.



White 10/2 cotton as the design strand and three white sewing threads.

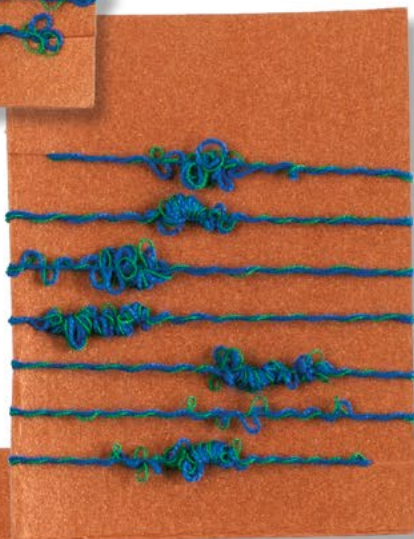


Dark green 10/2 rayon and blue sewing thread as the design strand with two dark sewing threads and one metallic thread (used for the balancing thread in Step 4).



Left: Green sewing thread and blue 10/2 cotton held together as the design strand and three blue sewing threads, with bubbles close together.

Right: Green sewing thread and blue 10/2 cotton held together as the design strand and three blue sewing threads, with bubbles far apart and evenly spaced.



Left: Variegated rayon slub as the design strand and three maroon threads, with bubbles close together.

Right: Variegated rayon slub as the design strand and three maroon threads, with bubbles far apart and evenly spaced.



it to spiral around the tightly held sewing thread. As it spirals, push it up the sewing thread toward the orifice to form bubbles and bumps. At this point there is no structural stability to the construction. It needs two more steps to stabilize it.

Step 3: Ply the yarn constructed in Step 2 with one more sewing thread, *again* with an S-twist. It will seem very kinky, and all the bubbles will be smushed. Don't worry.

Step 4: Ply the yarn constructed in Step 3 with one more sewing thread using a Z-twist. Use plenty of plying twist. The bubbles should bloom. The yarn should be balanced and is now stable and *almost* ready to use.

Step 5: Block by soaking the skein in hot soapy water, rinsing, squeezing dry in a towel, and allowing it to hang dry. This will set the twist and keep the yarn from trying to deconstruct itself when it is cut.

HINTS

- * Because there are three strands of sewing thread in your bouclé, they can significantly affect the overall color. You can choose something that will blend and disappear into the main yarn allowing the design strand to stand up alone, or you can enhance the design strand with sewing thread that will contrast with the main yarn color.
- * Try making several bouclés using the same design strand but different sewing threads for each. They will be like cousins: same noses but different hair!
- * Incorporate metallic thread in place of one or more of the sewing threads.
- * Use several bright colors of sewing thread held together as the design strand. Marry them with a dark background in your project to make them pop.
- * Sample your knitted structure in the pattern you'll be using by knitting a few rows without the bouclé and then adding it in. How does it change the appearance, the gauge, the overall feel of the fabric?

Judie Overbeek has taken refuge in spinning, weaving, and dyeing for over thirty years, incorporating the three disciplines into a single project whenever possible. A love of process and a deep desire to share her skills keep her involved in these inexhaustible crafts both as student and teacher. Judie lives in northwestern Montana and teaches spinning, weaving, and dyeing throughout the Northwest.