

How to Use Your **RAKESTRAW SPINNER**



From

Down In The Country Fibers

THE RAKESTRAW SPINNER

PREPARING THE FIBRE

Roving is processed fiber, ready to spin, from any fiber source, such as wool, Alpaca, silk, soy silk, banana silk, or various other exotic fiber forms. The most commonly used fiber is sheep's wool because it is easy to spin and versatile. Research a few of the breeds of sheep to find the fibers you most prefer spinning, such as Lincoln, Romney, Corriedale, Suffolk, and Merino. Each breed produces a unique type of wool. One of the benefits of making your own yarn from your own

choice of fiber is that you can choose the qualities you want to emphasize in your finished product, whether it is a lacy shawl, a warm sweater, or a cozy scarf.



The roving is created from the sheared sheep after the wool has been processed, that is, the wool has been cleaned and carded to cause the fibers to run smoothly in the same general direction.



Most roving comes in a bundle with strips wrapped around one another. When you have purchased some roving, take an end and pull it gently. Feel the fibers slide against one another. Pull off a piece approximately 12 to 18 inches in

length. Draft your fibers by stripping smaller pieces from the piece approximately the thickness of a pencil.

With one strip, fan the end into a small triangle. Pull on a few strands from the triangle. Roll the strands against your thigh to make a “leader,” which you will attach to your Spinner.



SPINNING YOUR YARN

Slip the shaft of your Spinner onto the handle so it rests gently against the knob on the end. Take it for a test spin! Grasp the handle with your thumb and forefinger close to, but not touching, the shaft. Jiggle your arm a bit to get the shaft rotating, as you would with a noisemaker on New Year’s Eve. Keep your wrist as still as possible and use the barely perceptible movement of your arm to move the shaft. This will decrease any stress on the wrist area, preventing carpal tunnel problems, and minimizing arthritic aches. Your hand and arm should remain relaxed as you rotate the Spinner, and you should be able to create a nice, smooth rotation with little effort. If it is difficult to rotate, you may be holding

too close to the shaft or pushing it against the knob. If your spinning arm gets tired, you may not be relaxing your wrist/arm enough. Practice the spin for a few minutes until you are comfortable with it.



Fiber is turned into yarn by **TWIST**. Completely untwisted fiber will pull apart with ease. Twisted fiber, or yarn, is strong and will not pull apart. The twist takes place between your hands. In order to make your yarn, you must let the fibers slip past each other and watch the twist catch them. The size of your yarn is determined by

how much fiber is caught by the twist.

Tie your leader, approximately 4-6 inches of twisted roving, in a loose square knot around the anchor at the tip of the shaft. Hold your roving horizontally with your fingers pinching the area on your leader

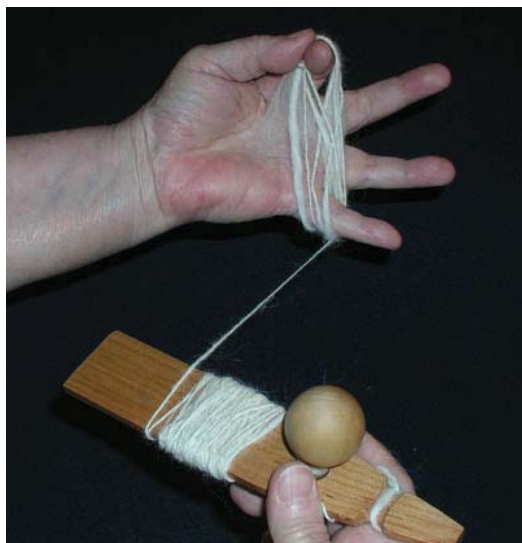


where the

twist ends, directly before the drafting zone. The drafting zone is where your loose fiber waits to be twisted into yarn. Try not to let the twist travel past your pinch and into this zone. If that happens, simply let the yarn untwist back to the Spinner, and start again.



Start spinning the shaft counterclockwise (the shaft will come towards you and then over the top of the handle) to add twist. When you feel you have enough twist, park the Spinner shaft between your knees and gently allow the twist to travel into your unspun roving. Guide the twist



with your fingers, pinching a bit away from the twist until it no longer travels up the thread.

When you feel your arms aren't long enough to hold the yarn out to the side any further, it's time to wind on. Make a "butterfly" with your finished yarn by winding it over your fingers in a figure eight. This will

keep the tension in the yarn and prevent it from unspinning. Then, wind your yarn around the middle of the Spinner shaft.

To continue, bring a length of yarn up



and around the anchor tip, and start spinning again. Each time you decide to wind finished yarn onto the shaft, unwrap the half-hitch from the anchor, wind on, then rewrap the half-hitch to begin once more.





Yarn spun and wrapped around the Spinner shaft.

The yarn is wound, then brought up to the anchor and wrapped twice to begin again.



Draft and spin again.

When you run out of fiber in your left hand, take a new piece and feather out one of its ends. Feather out the end of the piece on the Spinner as well. Overlap the two ends and let them twist together to join.

SETTING THE TWIST

When your Spinner feels full, or you've run out of roving, it's time to wind off into a skein or a ball. There are many different methods of winding on with various different spinning tools available. A simple method is to wind from your Spinner, under your elbow, then



around your hand. You can also use the back of a chair, or various devices such as a Kniddy-Knoddy, a Nostepinne, or a ball winder. Tie your skein in at least three places before removing it from whatever you have used to form it. To set the twist in your single-spun yarn, fill your sink with comfortably warm water and add a squirt or two of dishwashing liquid or shampoo. Set the

skein on top of the water and press it down gently to get it wet. Let it soak for a few minutes. Lift the skein out of the water, drain the basin, and run in rinse water of the same temperature. Do not let the water run onto the skein. Again, set the skein in the water and press down gently. Repeat the rinse. Squeeze the skein (DO NOT wring it) to remove excess water, then let it dry on a towel or rack.

You have now made your yarn, the best yarn in the world because it's yours, made by you from scratch! Congratulations! You're a spinner! There are many more things to learn about spinning, like how to make plied yarns, designer yarns, dyed yarns, and what to do with your finished product. Whether you knit, crochet, weave, or just admire your yarn, you have crossed the threshold into the wonderful world of fiber!