

Spin-tastic Adventures: Mastering the Drop Spindle!

Welcome, Future Fiber Artist! (Introduction - 10 minutes)

Have you ever wondered how fluffy wool or cotton turns into the yarn used for knitting or weaving? It's through a magical process called spinning! For thousands of years, people have been spinning fibers by hand to create thread for clothing, blankets, and more. Today, you're going to learn this ancient craft using a simple but amazing tool: the drop spindle. It's like a spinning top that helps twist fibers together. Get ready to transform fluff into something fantastic!

Meet Your Magical Tool: The Drop Spindle (5 minutes)

Let's look at your drop spindle. It has a few main parts:

- **Whorl:** This is the weighted disc. It gives the spindle momentum to spin. It can be at the top or bottom of the shaft.
- **Shaft:** The stick part that the whorl is attached to. You'll wind your finished yarn onto this.
- **Hook (usually on top whorl spindles) or Notch:** This helps guide the yarn as you spin.

Practice giving it a gentle spin like a top. See how long it can go!

Preparing Your Fluff: Fiber Power! (10 minutes)

We'll be using fiber that's already been cleaned and carded (combed) into a form called 'roving' or 'sliver'. This makes it easier to spin.

1. **Attaching a Leader:** Your spindle needs a 'leader' – a piece of existing yarn. Tie one end of your leader yarn securely to the shaft of your spindle, just above the whorl (for bottom whorl) or below the whorl (for top whorl). Bring the other end up and loop it around the hook or through the notch. Let about 6-8 inches hang down.
2. **Drafting Practice:** 'Drafting' is gently pulling out a small, consistent amount of fiber from your main supply. Take a piece of your roving. Hold it lightly in one hand (your fiber hand). With your other hand (your drafting hand), gently pinch and pull a small tuft of fibers away from the main mass. You want to stretch the fibers out so they become thinner, but not so much that they break apart. Practice this a few times until you get a feel for it. The goal is to create a thin, even stream of fibers.

Let's Spin! The "Park and Draft" Method (30-40 minutes)

This is a great way for beginners to learn because you can take it step-by-step.

1. **Join Fiber to Leader:** Take the end of your drafted fibers and overlap them with the end of your leader yarn by about an inch or two. Pinch them together firmly.
2. **PARK:** Let the spindle hang.
3. **DRAFT:** With one hand holding the joined leader/fiber, use your other hand to draft out a short length (maybe 6-10 inches) of fiber from your supply, making it the thickness you want your yarn to be. Keep this drafted section smooth and even.
4. **SPIN:** Now, give the spindle a good twirl in one direction (usually clockwise is easiest to start with – stick to one direction for now!). As it spins, it will twist the drafted fibers and the leader together. Let the twist travel up into the drafted section. You'll see it turning into yarn!
5. **WIND ON:** Once your drafted section is twisted, stop the spindle. Unhook the yarn from the hook/notch. Wind your newly spun yarn neatly onto the shaft, building up a little 'cop' (a beautiful bundle of yarn!). Wind it on smoothly, crisscrossing a bit to make it secure.
6. **Repeat:** Re-hook the yarn, let the spindle hang, draft out another section, spin to add twist, and wind on. That's it! You're spinning!

Troubleshooting Tips:

- **Yarn too thick?** Draft out thinner fibers.
- **Yarn too thin and breaks?** Draft out slightly more fiber, or make sure you're letting enough twist travel up before winding on. Sometimes, briefly twisting the broken ends together with a little moisture from your fingers and re-spinning can fix it.
- **Losing spin?** Give the spindle a more energetic flick.

Don't worry if your first yarn is lumpy or bumpy – that's called "character" in handspun yarn! Every spinner's first yarn is unique. The key is practice and having fun with the process.

Creative Exploration & Practice (15-20 minutes)

Continue spinning, focusing on getting a consistent thickness and an even twist. How does it feel? What happens if you draft a little thicker or thinner? What if you try to make some yarn intentionally bumpy (this is called 'slub' yarn!)? Try to spin enough yarn to make a small friendship bracelet or a sample to keep and admire.

If you have different types or colors of fiber, this is a great time to experiment. Notice how different fibers feel and behave. Does one spin more easily than another?

What's Next & Show Off Your Work! (5-10 minutes)

Wow, you've spun your own yarn! That's amazing! Once you have a good amount of yarn on your spindle, you can learn to make it even stronger and more balanced by 'plying' – twisting two strands of your handspun yarn together. But that's a lesson for another day!

For now, carefully unwind some of your yarn. How does it look? How does it feel? You could:

- Wrap it around a piece of cardboard to admire its unique qualities.
- Try finger knitting a small piece with it.
- Simply keep it as a sample of your first spinning adventure and label it with the date!

Reflection & Creative Thinking:

- What was your favorite part of spinning today?
- What was the most challenging part, and how did you try to solve it?
- If you could spin yarn from any magical material (like clouds, or rainbows, or spider silk like in stories), what would it be and what would you make?
- What real-world project would you like to make with handspun yarn someday?

Clean Up

Put away your fiber and spindle carefully. Collect any stray bits of fluff. It's important to respect our tools and materials.

Great job today, spinner! You've learned a skill that connects you to centuries of tradition and creativity. Keep practicing and exploring your new talent!