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On the cover: Darning loom from Alexon Ver (see page 16) and Kromski Polish Merino fiber and handspun. Photo by Matt Graves

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For me, sitting down to mend a small hole in a sweater or reinforce the heel of a sock feels like a breath of fresh air. A hot cup of tea. A good laugh on a dreary day. The few moments of focus and care and creativity might be fleeting, but the results are tangible and lasting. And mending with my handspun makes me feel like I've stitched a bit of myself into the textiles that surround me.

This isn't to say that I always found darning and patching to be fast or fun. There was a time when I loved the idea of mending, but it felt complicated and fussy. Once I realized that much of my reluctance was worry that I would "do it wrong," I had to laugh. An unwearable sweater will not be devalued by an imperfect mend! These skills take practice, like everything else. I encour-



age you to use a bit of time, a few loose ends of handspun, and a little patience with the learning process as you leave your maker's marks.

There are myriad ways that spinners can repair and improve the world around us, be it through tools and textiles or environment and mental health. In this issue, our amazing authors have highlighted some of the ways they are digging in and using spinning to improve the world around them. Art therapist and fiber farmer **Lisa Mitchell** discusses "textile coping" and how spinning can be used for mood repair. **Emily Wohlscheid** shares the fine points of blending recycled fibers, and **Amy Tyler** tackles the whys and hows of drive-band replacement. From antique wheels to darning-loom mends, we have so much to share with you this summer!

Wishing you peace and perfectly filled bobbins,

Kate Larson, editor



SpinOff.

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Spin Off * (print ISSN 0198-8239; online ISSN 2770-6117) is published quarterly by Long Thread Media LLG, 1300 Riverside Ave, Ste 206, Fort Collins, CO 8024; phone (880) 480-5464. Prioridicals postage paid at Fort Collins, CO, and additional mailing offices. All contents of this issue of *Spin Off* * are copyrighted by Long Thread Media LLC, 2023. All rights reserved. Projects and information are for inspiration and personal use only. *Spin Off* * does not recommend, approve, or endorse any of the advertisers, products, services, or views advertised in *Spin Off* * nor does *Spin Off* * evaluate the advertisers' claims in any way. You should, therefore, use your own judgment in evaluating the advertisers, products, services, and views advertised in *Spin Off**. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited, except by permission of the publisher. Subscription rate is \$29.99/one year in the U.S., \$39.99/one year in Canada, and \$49.99/one year in international countries (surface delivery). U.S. funds only.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to 1300 Riverside Ave, Ste 206, Fort Collins, CO 80524.

Subscribers: For subscription information, call (888) 480-5464, email support@longthreadmedia.com, or visit spinoffmagazine.com. Please allow six weeks for processing address changes.

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Introduction to Dyeing Kit Dye your own yarn, it's so easy and fun to do!

Kit includes - Four ¼oz (10gm) pottles of dye (enough to dye up to 8.8lbs (4kg) of yarn or fibre), two skeins of natural white 4 ply yarn to get you started on your dyeing journey, a color wheel and instructions.



Ashford Protein Dyes Brilliant, clear and permanent dyes that are simple to use. 1/40z (10gm) dyes 2.2lbs (1kg) of fiber or yarn. Available in 14 vibrant individual colors or sets.







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ON OUR BOOKSHELF

We've curated a group of great resources focused on caretaking. Celia Pym shares stories of healing, Amy Tyler helps you better understand your wheel and its needs, and four great how-to books will send you searching for more to mend!



On Mending: Stories of Damage and Repair Celia Pym Stroud, UK: Quickthorn Books, 2022.



Darning: Repair, Make, Mend Hikaru Noguchi Stroud, UK: Quickthorn Books, 2019.



The Mending Directory: Over 50 Modern Stitch Patterns for Visible Repairs Erin Eggenburg Tunbridge Wells, UK: Search Press, 2021.



Modern Mending: How to Minimize Waste and Maximize Style Erin Lewis-Fitzgerald Tunbridge Wells, UK: Search Press, 2021.



Make Thrift Mend: Stitch, Patch, Darn, Plant-Dye, & Love Your Wardrobe Katrina Rodabaugh New York: Abrams Books, 2021.



Spinning Wheel Mechanics Video course Amy Tyler learn.longthreadmedia.com, 2023.



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Envelope-Style Pillow Cover

TERRIL.WATSON

Fiber and materials Frabjous Fibers Bluefaced Leicester, Chipotle colorway; 16" pillow insert. Fiber/preparation Combed top organized into strips for a fractal variation. Wheel Schacht Ladybug, single drive, scotch tension. Drafting method Short-forward draw. Singles direction Z-twist. Ply wraps per inch 13. Total yardage About 480 yards. Yarn classification/weight DK/worsted. Yardage used 440 yards. Loom Schacht Flip 24" with an 8-dent heddle. Finished size Woven fabric finished at 16¼" × 40" plus short fringe.



Handspun, handwoven pillow cover

Throw-pillow covers are quick and easy projects to weave up and complete with very simple sewing. The envelope style means the cover is easily removable for washing or to change with the seasons. I am a new spinner, and the yarn I spin ranges from a thin DK to worsted weight as a two-ply. This shift in weight isn't a problem for a project of this type.

I spun this yarn very early in my spinning adventure. To start, I split the braid in half and then split one of the halves multiple times to create what I understand is a fractal spin. I used a short-forward draw and spun the thin strips end to end on one bobbin and the unstripped half onto another. My biggest challenge as a new spinner was spinning the undivided half into a singles that was the same weight as the singles on the first bobbin. This helped me learn to control my drafting more consistently. I was wholly focused on the process of creating a usable and somewhat consistent yarn.

This yarn was not spun with a project in mind. As a beginner, I really didn't know how much yarn I would end up with. I was just enjoying the process and hoping a project would eventually present itself. Now when I spin, I have a vague idea of how much yarn I will end up with and start to entertain project ideas while I am spinning. That's not to say that I don't just grab a braid from my stash and start spinning simply because it's pretty!

To create this pillow cover, I Googled "envelope style pillow covers" and found several results with

I started my spinning adventure in the best possible way—I attended a weeklong class with Abby Franquemont. We started by spinning using just our fingers, and by the end of the week, my head was filled with history and my hands had used nearly every tool available for spinning. great instructions, but none were a good fit for my handwoven fabric. So, I adapted the general style to my needs. Both ends of the fabric are hemstitched, with short fringe remaining on one end and a zigzag stitch securing the other. I removed the fringe on that end to tuck it under smoothly for the envelopestyle cover.

I started weaving a few years ago and became interested in yarn structure and how different yarns behave. As I began to attend fiber events, I was drawn to the spinning demos and fiber booths. A short time later, my husband and I were making vacation plans and a catalog for the John C. Campbell Folk School came in the mail. I started my spinning adventure in the best possible way—I attended a weeklong class with Abby Franquemont at the school. We started by spinning using just our fingers, and by the end of the week, my head was filled with history and my hands had used nearly every tool available for spinning.

That Christmas, my husband bought me a Schacht Ladybug. By February, I was weaving with my own very imperfect, handspun yarn. I still spin imperfect yarn, and that's the way I like it. I can buy commercial yarns that are "perfect," but my handspun yarn adds texture and depth to my handwoven fabric. Now, except for the cotton I use to weave kitchen towels, I weave with my handspun yarns almost exclusively.

My favorite part of this project was watching the colors come together during the plying process and then again in the weaving. In quilting—my day job—color and pattern are placed next to each other. With spinning and weaving, the colors behave differently as they blend in different ways. It always surprises me to watch the yarn I have spun develop pattern in my weaving.

Terri L. Watson has been a professional quilter for 18 years and spent many years quilting for herself prior to that. She and her husband love road trips, hiking in the wilderness, museums in big cities, and exploring small towns. There are few back roads or seasonal roads in Michigan that they haven't traveled. Terri also enjoys cooking, baking, reading, and an afternoon nap when she can squeeze one in.

Have a finished object to share? Tell us about it! Contact **spinoff@longthreadmedia.com** to submit your project.



Terri L. Watson with one of her handmade quilts

STITCH 'N MEND

GET THIS

• Heels aren't the only spot where fabrics can wear thin. Silvan Woodturning makes getting into tight spaces simple with the glove darner, handcrafted from beechwood. silvanwoodturning.etsy.com

Tackling misplaced stitches is easy with this seam ripper from Papa Jack's Woodworks. Hand-turned and available in a variety of woods, this tool's slim design makes it comfortable to hold, and the working end fits into the handle for safe travel. papajackswoodworks.etsy.com

Photo by Matt Grav

• Needles are essential to any stitching project. **Tulip's** tapestry needles are available in a variety of sizes (assorted set is shown here). These needles have a smooth finish, from the golden eyes to the rounded, blunt tips, allowing them to glide through knitted fabric. **needlepointjoint.com**

This vibrant batt from Chameleon Fiber is made from a blend of recycled fibers—Merino, soy, sari silk, and silk waste. Spin a small amount for textured mends or spin the whole thing for a sunny skein. chameleonfiberco.etsy.com

Is there a great product you would suggest for Get This? Contact us at **spinoff@longthreadmedia.com**.



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Heddles from left: Seven of Hearts 25-thread Scandinavian heddle for the backstrap loom in maple; 39-thread Double-Hole Pick-Up Scandinavian heddle in cherry plywood; bandweaving heddle in holly (based on an artifact from the Roman era in Britain); and 13-thread heddle in holly (based on a Roman-era French artifact). Shuttle: Kilic, a short-form shuttle with Jellinge Gripping Beasties Knotwork in black walnut.

Robin Goatey Toolmaker at The Dancing Goats

How did you get into your craft?

I started making and selling my Art while in high school. As a neurodivergent, I have a lifelong love of learning and have spent my happiest hours learning a variety of Heritage Arts Skills at the John C. Campbell Folk School. My interest in anthropology and archaeology is experiential—making and practicing with tools the way they were meant to be built and used.

Reproducing the techniques and methods used during the Bronze and Iron Ages in Great Britain and by the proto-Viking cultures has driven the technical development of my artisan's practice during the last 30 years. Celtic knotwork design, woodturning, ceramics, stonework, and Bronze Age metallurgy are all elements used in my re-creation of some of the most ancient tool forms. Some of the most important tools ever created and that date back to the Ice Age 12,000 years ago are Robin Goatey

MAKERS SPACE

the tools used in the production of textiles. I'm endlessly fascinated by spinning and weaving tools in all their ancient and mostly forgotten variety.

How did you shift from hobby to business?

My career as a tradesperson in the industrial electric sector led to IT and eventually management of an industrial IT shop. Thirty years of that was quite enough, and I walked away from the corporate world in 2010. My wife and I created The Dancing Goats in 1987 as an outlet for my Artwork. The early years involved a variety of art shows and craft fairs in the St. Louis region. My wife and I joined the Artisan Guild of Southern Illinois around 2008, and some of the spinners asked me to try my hand at making spindles. I opened an Etsy shop in 2010... that was 10,000 or so spindles and fiber-arts tools ago. Photo by Matt Graves

The Dancing Goats has always been a business and was intended to run as my primary focus.

The craft folk I know that were online in some form before the pandemic hit have largely benefited from the change in culture and vast increase in online sales. Instagram has been a major force multiplier for the online trade, and followers of The Dancing Goats get to see the adventures of our handspinners' flock and our English shepherds and Maremma sheepdogs; and I regularly post process videos of how things get made.

What is your favorite part of the process?

Our tagline is "The Maker of Odd and Forgotten Tools," and getting lost in what might be called a neurodivergent flow is a regular occurrence when finding another forgotten tool in archaeology and anthropology texts. I enjoy conceptualizing, experimenting with, iterating, and refining tools for use in the fiber arts. I start with the guessed ancient techniques, then adapt the forms for manufacture with modern tools and methods, finishes, and materials.

What would you like customers to know about your work?

I spin and weave, so all of our tools go through rigorous testing by myself and others prior to rolling them out as products. Etsy feedback acts as a forum to let me know I'm doing the right thing with the ancient tool forms. In the vast amount of time that fiber arts tools have existed, there is much that has been forgotten. My goal is never to re-create an artifact because, to me, the strict forms of artifact reconstruction are a form of Artistic Death. My goal is to re-imagine the tools in this context: "What would the ancient craftfolk make if they had access to our Tools and Technologies?"

Almost all of the wood that is used in the construction of the tools I make is locally sourced from tree service companies-all native hardwoods and many of them quite unusual. All of my copper items are made from copper scrap.

What are your plans for the future?

I plan to continue making and improving upon the heirloom-quality fiber arts tools I create and continue to expand our community's knowledge of ancient tools with the help of my customers, students, and social media contacts.

Visit thedancinggoats.com or thedancinggoats.etsy.com to see more of Robin's work.

We love the makers in our community! Is there a dyer, toolmaker, fiber producer, or mill we should feature? Tell us about your favorite makers—large or small at spinoff@longthreadmedia.com.





Courtesy of Robin Goatey

MENDING LOOMS

3

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With hooks that are mounted to a strip of fabric, Lemon Loom's unique design allows you to secure the mending loom directly to your surface, regardless of the shape, size, or thickness of the textile. lemonloom.com

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REPRISER

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Prom moth damage to worn elbows, holes come in all shapes and sizes. Katrinkles offers three sizes of darning looms: Tiny, Smaller, and Bigger (shown here). The Bigger measures a generous 4 inches across to tackle large areas in need of repair or decoration. katrinkles.com The original darning loom known as the Speedweve has seen a recent revival, but vintage originals can be hard to locate. Alexonver's take on this vintage design is a lasting addition to any crafter's toolbox. alexonver.etsy.com

mmillin

100000000000

Obtain the set of styles and sizes. The darning needles shown offers a wide range of styles and sizes. The darning needles shown here feature large, polished eyes and sharp points to let them glide through woven fabrics with ease. anitalittlestitches.com



Fresh Bands, Smooth Spin When to Replace Drive and Brake Bands and What to Use

Amy keeps a variety of cotton bands on hand.

Drive bands and brake bands are integral parts of many types of spinning wheels. Whether cotton, synthetic, or leather, these bands tend to wear out faster than other parts of a spinning wheel, so they need to be replaced now and then. Sometimes a fresh band can transform a cantankerous wheel into a dream spinner. I would like to share some characteristics of several types of band materials, my strategies for replacing bands, and ways you can be kind to your bands so they last as long as possible.

DRIVE BANDS

On many wheels, there is a band that connects the drive wheel with the flyer or bobbin or both. This is called the drive band. The most important functional aspect of the drive band is that there should be no slippage between the band and the groove on the drive wheel. This requires sufficient friction between the band and the groove. That friction depends on the surface characteristics of the drivewheel groove, the surface characteristics of the drive band, and the tension on the drive band.

Over time, drive bands can stretch out and lose their "grip." It's tempting to continue to use an old drive band and just live with the challenges. The benefit of a new band is increased friction between drivewheel groove and drive band, resulting in decreased slippage; this allows you to reduce the tension on the drive band to make it easier to treadle—a much happier condition. For wheels with scotch tension (flyer lead), the drive band goes around the drive wheel and a whorl/pulley of the flyer. The tension on the band needs to be tight enough to prevent slippage of the band on the drive wheel and on the flyer.

Irish-tension wheels (bobbin lead) have drive bands that go around the drive wheel and a whorl/pulley of the bobbin. The tension on the band needs to be tight enough to prevent slippage of the band on the drive wheel and on the bobbin.

However, double-drive wheels are different, with what appears to be two drive bands. Typically, this is one long drive band looped twice so that one loop goes around the drive wheel and a whorl/pulley on the flyer, and the other loop goes around the drive wheel and the bobbin. For this drive system to work, tension on the drive band needs to be tight enough to prevent slippage between the drive wheel and the flyer, while allowing some slippage between the band and the bobbin.

The manner in which tension is adjusted varies from wheel to wheel. Regardless of the wheel structure or the material used for the drive band, if the tension on the drive band can no longer be adjusted to prevent slippage, then the drive band should be replaced. If the band must be tightened so much that treadling becomes difficult, that is also a sign the drive band should be replaced.

BRAKE BANDS

For wheels with a single drive band, there is also a brake band so that take-up tension can be adjusted. This band slows the bobbin or flyer so that yarn winds onto the bobbin. These bands need to allow some slippage, which can be adjusted depending on how your wheel was designed.

Scotch-tension wheels have a brake band on the bobbin. Irish-tension wheels have a brake band on the flyer.

WHAT BAND MATERIAL SHOULD YOU USE?

Modern wheels use a range of bands in different combinations. An Ashford Traditional hums happily along with a cotton drive band and a brake band of nylon monofilament. By comparison, a Lendrum folding

The most important functional aspect of the drive band is that there should be no slippage between the band and the groove on the drive wheel.

wheel has a stretchy, poly drive band and a cotton brake band, and a Schacht Matchless can be set up with cotton drive and brake bands.

Most wheel makers offer tune-up kits with band materials. Some wheel designs require or function best with one type of band material or another, but most allow us to experiment to some extent. Exploring different band materials can help you learn about your wheel and fine-tune it for your needs.

Drive-Band Materials

A drive band can consist of string or twine that is made of cotton or linen; both of these fibers have very little stretch. There are also drive bands that are synthetic and stretch considerably more than cotton or linen.

It is easy to get cotton string or twine at a hardware store, and it comes in a variety of thicknesses. I usually have a couple of thicknesses on hand so that I can make decisions about which to use depending on the wheel in question.

Do drive systems have you in knots?

Amy Tyler walks you through how different spinning wheels work and the adjustments that can help you spin a wider range of yarns more comfortably in her online course *Spinning Wheel Mechanics*.

Find it here: LT.Media/Wheel-Mechanics.



Spinning

Wheel Mechanics

Tuning Your Wheel o Work with Your Body



My choice of thickness depends on the depth of the groove on the drive wheel and whatever the band drives: bobbin, flyer, or both. If the wheel has shallow grooves, then a too-thick drive band may easily pop out of the grooves. If the drive band is too thin, it makes it difficult to provide sufficient friction between the drive wheel and the drive band. To maximize friction between the drive wheel and a cotton band, it is helpful to have a band material that is not too smooth and a groove on the drive wheel that is also not too smooth.

Cotton and linen drive bands have been used for centuries. I will admit that wheels with cotton or other nonstretch drive bands require a bit more fuss to change from one whorl/pulley size to another: it is necessary to adjust the tension on the drive band by moving the flyer apparatus away from (to tighten) or toward (to loosen) the drive wheel. These bands need to be refreshed frequently, but exactly how often depends on the wheel, band material, and your preferences.

Wheels with synthetic drive bands are now quite common. Synthetic drive bands vary in how much they stretch depending on the content of the band and the cross-sectional area of the band. Most wheels with synthetic drive bands allow the spinner to quickly change from one whorl/pulley size to another without having to make any tension adjustments to the drive band.

Some scotch-tension wheels, such as many Majacraft wheels and the Ashford Joy, have multiple grooves of various diameters on the drive wheel as well as multiple grooves of various diameters on the flyer. The grooves on the drive wheel allow for aligning the drive band with the grooves on the flyer so that the drive band is less likely to pop out of place. These drive-wheel grooves also help to maintain sufficient tension on the drive band so that it won't slip.

On some wheels, there is no way to adjust the tension on the drive band by moving the flyer/bobbin away from (to tighten) or toward (to loosen) the drive wheel. Included in this category are the Ashford Joy and Kiwi, and the Louet S10. Most spinners will find that these bands don't need to be replaced often, but when the band on one of these wheels stretches so much that you cannot avoid slippage, it's time for a new drive band.

Brake-Band Materials

The tension on the brake band needs to be adjustable so that you can increase take-up tension as the bobbin fills with yarn. To accomplish this, brake bands on scotch-tension wheels often consist of a stiff string (cotton or even fishing line) with an elastic element—such as a not-too-stiff extension spring or



a rubber or silicone band—in series with the string. The compliant element is what expands or contracts, allowing for adjustment.

Sometimes, these springs or rubber bands need to be replaced. Rubber or silicone will lose elasticity over time, and springs might need to be replaced if accidentally stretched beyond their recoil point. Wheel makers often supply replacement parts, or you can find similar supplies at a hardware store.

Brake-band material can have a tremendous impact on how a scotch-tension wheel feels during spinning. The size, shape, and texture of the bobbin's groove will interact with different band materials to produce different effects.

Irish-tension wheels typically have brake bands that can be made of string or leather with some sort of knob to allow for loosening or tightening the band as necessary.

HOW TO REPLACE DRIVE AND BRAKE BANDS

There are different approaches to replacing bands. I'll share my go-to methods that have worked well for me over the years.

How to Tie a Reef Knot

Also known as a square knot, a reef knot is easy to remember and provides a firm, flat join for spinning-wheel bands. After working Step 1 and Step 2, tighten the knot and trim the ends.

• Step 1 Tie right over left and then under.



I use this saying to help me tie the knot properly: "Right over left then under. Left over right then under." Then you can tighten the knot.

Replacing a Cotton Drive Band

My first step is to remove the old band and use it as a template for the length of string you will need for a new band. I add an extra 6 to 10 inches so I have something to hold onto while tying the knot and just in case my measurement is off.

Make sure that the bobbin/flyer mechanism is situated in its midrange so that there is room for adjustment. I take the new band and wrap it around the drive wheel and the part(s) of the flyer/bobbin mechanism that are involved.

Hold the string under tension and cross the two ends. Use a marker pen to mark the joining point of the two ends of the string. This is where you will tie the knot. You can then take the string off tension to make it easier to tie a knot.

I tie a simple reef knot, also known as a square knot. I like this knot because it is easy to tie and it is relatively flat. If the knot is not flat, it will tend to cause the drive band to jump out of its groove.

I use this saying to help me tie the knot properly: "Right over left then under. Left over right then under." Then you can tighten the knot. I typically trim the excess string to about ½ inch longer than necessary. After using the wheel for an hour or two, when I feel confident the knot will hold, I trim the ends to about ½ inch.

Replacing a Synthetic Drive Band

I know there are strategies for purchasing synthetic band material and then gluing or melting the ends together to make a new band. My personal preference is to purchase a new band from the wheel maker or distributor of your brand of wheel and accessories; it is so much easier and more reliable.

Replacing a Brake Band

For brake bands that are string plus an elastic element,

it is usually the elastic element that needs replacing first. That's as easy as tying on a new rubber band or extension spring. You just want to make sure that the spring or rubber band connections don't physically interfere with the bobbin.

When replacing cotton or monofilament bands in the brake-tension series, it is usually easiest to start by removing the old series or the section of the series you wish to replace. Measure this section and add a few extra inches of length so you have something to hold onto while securing it in place.

MAINTENANCE OF BANDS

There are strategies you can use to make bands last longer so you don't have to replace them as frequently:

• Regardless of the band material, take the tension off the bands when the wheel is not in use by loosening the tension on the drive and brake bands or by taking the bands off altogether. Leaving the bands under tension all the time will make them stretch out faster. (As I walk by my not-in-use wheels, I will often tap on the bands just to make sure they are loose.)

- For cotton or linen drive bands, try to avoid touching or handling them. The bands will stay cleaner and less slippery.
- For synthetic bands, avoid leaving the band in direct sunlight. Sunlight tends to cause more rapid disintegration of the bands. (The same goes for synthetic bands on a drumcarder or bobbin winder.)

Resources

- Irwin, Bobbie. *The Spinner's Companion*. Loveland, CO: Interweave, 2001.
- Raven, Lee. Hands On Spinning. Loveland, CO: Interweave, 1987.

Amy Tyler gets to do what she loves: create with fiber and yarn. And she gets to live where she wants to live: in the northwest corner of the lower peninsula of Michigan. She tries to be nice to the bands on her three spinning wheels and her drumcarder and her bobbin winder, with the hope that they will be nice to her in return.

If the tension on the drive band can no longer be adjusted to prevent slippage, then it should be replaced. If the band must be tightened so much that treadling becomes difficult, that is also a sign the drive band should be replaced.



Knotted or Sewn Drive Bands Which is Better?

Learn how to sew a drive band and tie several knots in a video on our website. Mastering several techniques will help you find the right knot for you and your wheel.

Find it at LT.Media/Drive-Bands

Casey, Maggie. Start Spinning: Everything You Need to Know to Make Great Yarn. Loveland, CO: Interweave, 2008.



Spin your summer with The Woolery





Revive Fixing Compacted Spinning Fibers

LAUREN MCELROY

Compacted combed top can spring to life with just a bit of steam. Organic Polwarth combed top dyed by Lauren McElroy at their home studio There are many ways fiber can get sticky, compacted, entangled, or even felted before it is spun into yarn. If you're washing or dyeing your own fibers, the dyepot might have boiled, too much citric acid could have been used, or maybe you accidentally agitated the fiber a little too vigorously when rinsing—these are all things I've learned from experience. Whether you buy wool from an indie dyer, dye it yourself, send fiber off to the mill, or shear it right off the sheep, it can get felted somewhere along the line before you're ready to spin it.

This kind of damage happens even when the fiber just sits around our homes. Fibers in our stashes may be moved from one place to another, and they can get jostled around and begin to entangle and stick together. We often call this fulling, and if the process progresses to the point that the fiber becomes firmly and forever entangled, it's called felting. How easily a fiber fulls or felts depends on how much heat and moisture are present during the jostling and on the fiber's character—from nearly impossible-to-felt wools such as Suffolk to easily felted Lincoln.

One of the main ways that wool gets fulled or felted is during washing and dyeing. The heat combined with agitation is the dynamic duo that makes our precious wool fibers, yarns, and knits shrink. Add a little detergent to wet the fibers, and you've created an environment perfect for felting.

Compaction can also occur, which we often see in handpainted tops. Fibers can become compacted during the dyeing process and look compressed. Compacted fibers are not felted, and learning the difference will help you know how best to revive your fiber for spinning.

I'll share three approaches for dealing with fibers that range from compacted, to fulled, to lightly felted. I hope that these techniques encourage you to give some stash fiber new life—there is hope! Probably....

SPECIAL WOOL IN NEED OF HELP

I truly believe wool is one of the most wonderful substances on earth, and I want to do right by all the wool that comes into my life, whether I'm rescuing it in the form of a thrift-store coat, or I have been entrusted with the precious wool from a friend's small flock of sheep. I would venture to guess that a number of us have fiber SOMEWHERE in the stash that is waiting for its day to shine, but today is looking a little lackluster.

I have inherited stash from a number of special people, and I keep it squirreled away in my craft room, in my laundry room, in my garage. . . . Some of the fiber I'm sharing here is one of those: it was waiting for a special day but needed some help. I knew exactly what bin it was stashed in, and when I pulled it out, it was not easily spinnable. But could be—she has potential!

This wool was passed down to me from a neighbor's small flock of Shetland sheep. It had been processed at a local fiber mill, and the bags of roving were carefully labeled with the names of the sheep and their breed. It sat around at the neighbor's farm for a while before safely waiting in my stash for its special day, and now it's in a magazine! (We made it!) I'm proud to give honor to this gift.

I selected a bag of Shetland wool from Juniper the sheep, and the fibers on the surface of the roving had become entangled as it had been moved and jostled in its plastic bag over time. I soaked the roving in water to wet the fibers before dyeing with acid dyes, some in blue, some in green. After rinsing and drying, the roving was somewhere between entangled and somewhat felted.



Lauren started with three fibers in need of a refresh.

I also hand-dyed some commercially prepared organic Polwarth combed top in orange and blue for this project. Once rinsed and dried, it was compacted but not entangled.

THREE WAYS TO REVIVE YOUR FIBERS

The wools described here have different preparations. During washing or dyeing, roving is more prone to entangling and felting than combed top. As expected, the two Shetland rovings and the Polwarth top used here ranged from compacted to slightly felted. I'll share three ways I revived my fibers: steaming, combing, and carding. Each step builds on the previous step, so when working with your own wool, you can stop at whatever level of preparation results in a fiber that is easy to spin.

Start with Steaming

First, I steamed the rovings and top to hydrate and loosen the fibers. Sometimes, after dyeing or an aggressive scour, the fiber can feel a little crunchy and could use a refresh; steaming is kind of like a spa



treatment. Crimp is refreshed when exposed to heat and moisture, and as the fibers regain their natural shape, the combed top expands and regains elasticity.

My handheld steamer was a great investment. I use it to set the twist in my more delicate handspun yarns, to block knitted swatches, to iron a crease in my pants, to lightly steam my clothes before I leave the house, and, of course, steam my dyed combed tops before spinning them or mailing them to their new homes.

I drape the roving or top around the neck of my dress form, turn on my handheld steamer, and use my hands to place every inch of it directly in the steam as I gently open the fibers. If you use a steamer, don't get your hands too close to the steam, but other than that, it's a pretty simple process. This technique is likely all you need to do with wool that hasn't gone through too much agitation and just needs some touch-ups. Steaming cannot fix felted fibers, but it does help to hydrate and refresh fibers for the next level of processing.

It's also important to mention that, of the three methods discussed here, this one leaves the fibers as close to their original position as possible, which means a dyed top will maintain its color progression. One of the reasons for spinning directly from the braid is to control color placement.

After steaming, I let the wool dry for about 15 minutes, and then it's ready to go. If the wool is still looking raggedy, I move on to the next level. After steaming the examples shown here, the Polwarth top was ready to spin. The rovings, however, needed additional processing.

Combing

You've now opened the cuticle of the fiber with heat and moisture during steaming. Wool is similar to the hair on our heads in that now would be the time to comb it. If the air is dry or it has been a few days since you did the steam treatment, fill a little spray bottle with water and just a couple drops of hair conditioner to use during the combing process. A few sprays of the liquid gets rid of static electricity and tames the frizz while moisturizing the wool.

Depending on how felted the fiber is and what type of preparation you're working with, combing will vary



in difficulty. For instance, if you are combing commercially dyed top, you will have little waste on your combs after you diz the fiber off, and it will likely diz easily. If you are working with carded roving, you will have more waste, and combing and dizzing might be more challenging. (Note: If you have a way to card fiber, this "waste" can be repurposed later.)

Mini wool combs with one or two rows of tines work well for this purpose. As you begin, don't overload the comb. Start out with a little fiber loaded on the comb to get a feel for the motions and how much strength you will need to move the fiber from one comb to the other successfully. Add more fiber on the next pass if you are up to it.

Always start combing from the tips of the fiber and use the spray bottle when your wool is frizzy. When the fibers are sufficiently opened after a combing pass or two, you can use your hands to pull the roving off the comb, but if it is easier for you to control the width of your sliver by using a diz, by all means use one.

When ready to begin dizzing or pulling off a sliver by hand, you can first gently raise the fiber from the base of the comb so the fibers are more spread out along the tines. Move from side to side on the comb in a diagonal path to get an even pull when dizzing. Combing can be a workout, so go slow, have fun, and don't stab yourself!

Handcombing sliver mixes colors as the fibers are realigned, so handpainted effects will be impacted. However, the fibers in the final sliver will be aligned for a smooth spin. This method will work with compacted and somewhat entangled fibers. If you begin combing and find that there is excessive fiber breakage or waste, or combing is too hard due to felting, try carding next.

I truly believe wool is one of the most wonderful substances on earth, and I want to do right by all the wool that comes into my life, whether I'm rescuing it in the form of a thriftstore coat or I have been entrusted with the precious wool from a friend's small flock of sheep.

Carding

You can use handcards or a drumcarder for this method. You can also use a combination of both depending on how felted your wool is. I recommend handcarding the most stubborn tangles. I also suggest using your handcards to give your fiber a trial run. If you begin to see excessive breakage, hear fibers tearing, or just generally don't end up with something you want to spin, it might be time to consider a different use for your fiber. Sometimes, fibers are too felted to be returned to a spinnable form, but it doesn't hurt to give carding a try first!

Begin by steaming the fiber if you have not already done so and try to loosen the fibers by hand along the length of the roving or top. Pull off small amounts to either load onto your handcards or feed into a drumcarder. I feed the fibers tip first in thin layers.

Carded preparations are woolen, but how the fibers are aligned when you begin spinning will depend on how you roll the rolags or prepare the carded batt. If you are working with multicolored fiber, carding will blend and mix colors the more times you put it through the carder.

RESULTS

As you know, each of these preparations—steamed top, handcombed top, batts, and rolags—will spin up into different types of yarn. The methods listed here start from the most aligned, worsted preparation to the most woolen preparation. The point is to refresh and revive wool you already have lying around and try something new!

If you tried all three methods and your fiber is still not spinnable, consider a different hobby. Have you tried needlefelting or weaving a tapestry with big-time texture? Maybe you could try cutting the roving and use it as stuffing for a pillow or door-draft stopper. Get creative, because if these three methods don't get you there, there has to be something you can do with it. It is wool, so it's useful!

Lauren McElroy is a wool lover and multidisciplinary fiber artist currently working in fashion design, in an at-home dye studio, at their spinning wheel, and on themselves. They can be found on Instagram @motherofpurll1 and on Ravelry as motherofpurlknits. Learn more at motherofpurl.net.





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Swiss Darning Tutorial and Tips for Spinning Mending Yarns



hotos by Matt Graves

Swiss darning is one of the easiest mending techniques to learn and one that you'll use often if your life is full of knitted fabrics—handmade or otherwise. The technique is essentially working a new yarn over the top of a row of knitted stitches, which is how it earned its other name: duplicate stitch. However, I will use the term Swiss darning here because I turn the rows in a way that greatly aids in creating a smooth, strong mend.

There are many mending and darning techniques, but what makes Swiss darning special is that the new knitted stitches stretch in the same directions as the knitted base. Adding a woven darn to a knitted fabric creates an area with less elasticity. Choosing the right mending method depends on what you need the mend to do, and Swiss darning can allow our beloved sweaters, mittens, and socks to move and give as they did previously.

One of the most important pieces of advice I can offer is to mend knitted fabrics before they develop holes from wear (such as on sweater elbows) or as soon as you find a hole (such as from moth damage). The same technique can certainly be worked over gaps in the fabric, but it is more difficult. Mending while the fabric is still intact and unstretched is faster, easier, and leads to neater mends. "A stitch in time saves nine," right?

TOOLS AND SPINNING NOTES

Only a few basic tools are needed: tapestry (blunt) needle; mending yarn; and a form of some type, such as a darning egg or mushroom. Having a beautiful, handcrafted mending mushroom is a delight, but a plastic lid destined for recycling or even an apple can work equally well. The shape needed—from flat to convex, large to small—depends on the fabric you are mending. Select a shape rounded like an egg for sock heels or one only slightly curved like a mushroom for the front of a sweater.

One of the biggest challenges for mending can be finding the right yarns and threads, so we spinners have a huge advantage! We can create the yarns that have the right balance of strength and surface coverage as needed. Low- to medium-twist two-ply yarns offer great surface coverage, since they lie flat and allow the fibers to spread and cover the stitch. However, these

I think it is helpful to look at the row you are "duplicating" and see that you are inserting your needle into the rows above and below.

yarns are not as durable as higher-twist yarns. Hightwist and very round yarns don't lie as flat on the surface of the work. What this means is that you should take the function of the mend into account—does it need to stand up to hard wear, just embellish a moth hole, or do a balance of both?

When I begin a mending project like this, I spin short lengths of several yarns with varying amounts of twist and plies in several sizes. I really like for my Swiss darning yarns to cover the surface of the original stitches, so I work a short row of stitches in several yarns on an undamaged area of the textiles before deciding which I like best. This is akin to knitting a swatch, and the stitches are easily unpicked and removed. I tried two yarns before beginning the mend shown here. In the photo below, the first yarn was a close match to the original sweater yarn in size and twist, but it didn't fill the stitches as well as I wanted. The second yarn was also a two-ply but with less twist, so it covered the stitches well and, due to the quality of the fiber, will be more durable than the original millspun sweater.




For the mend shown here, I've used Polish Merino wool from Kromski. I love this fiber for mending because it comes in great colors and it isn't as fine as most commercial Merino fibers. It has character and crimp and strength and allows me to create firm, hightwist yarns for strong mending yarns or soft two-ply yarns that balance strength and surface coverage. The felting packs contain small amounts of four colors of combed tops. Just one pack or two creates a mending palette. Here, I've used colors from the Blues and Yellow Mix colorways.

Any fiber can work well for mending, but not all fibers will be the right fit for every mend. A safe approach is to mend like with like—wool with wool, cotton with cotton. However, there are no rules. With some practice, you'll learn what you like and repair your textiles in the process. Mend boldly!

SWISS DARNING-GIVE IT A GO!

Begin by securing your knitted fabric over a darning form. I'm using a darning mushroom that is fairly flat on top, but you could use an apple or something similar. Secure with a ribbon or elastic so the fabric is stable but not stretched.

Step 1 Insert the needle a few inches from where you intend to begin your mend. Bring the needle point to

Kate's Tips

- Keep the mending yarn snug to the base fabric but take care not to pull too tightly and pucker the fabric.
- Untidy mend? Pull and stretch the base fabric a bit to settle the new stitches before deciding if you need to redo any sections.
- Steaming the work will open the yarns and help them settle into place.
- If you are ambidextrous and can easily work back and forth, go for it! If not, don't hesitate to try turning the work upside down to continue working from right to left (or left to right).
- Swiss darns do not need to be square or all worked in one yarn. Look to intarsia and colorstranding patterns for inspiration!

Choosing the right mending method depends on what you need the mend to do, and Swiss darning can allow our beloved sweaters, mittens, and socks to move and give as they did previously.

the right side (RS) in the center of the stitch below the one you want to duplicate; pull the yarn through, leaving the tail on the wrong side (WS).

Step 2 Insert the needle behind both legs of the stitch above the one you wish to duplicate; pull the yarn through.

Step 3 Insert the needle at the base of the stitch you are duplicating, pass it behind one leg of the stitch below and one leg of the adjacent stitch below; pull the yarn through.

Repeat Steps 2 and 3 until you have duplicated the final stitch. The working yarn will be one stitch beyond the end of your mend.

Step 4 Now insert the needle from left to right, catching the bar on the WS of the fabric beside the mend. Bring the needle tip to the RS in the center of the stitch below the one you wish to duplicate; pull the yarn through.

Step 5 The working yarn is now secured below the next stitch to be duplicated, which is in the row above the one just worked. Insert the needle from left to right behind the two legs of the stitch above the one you will be duplicating; pull the yarn through.

Continue creating duplicated stitches in this way until you have completed your mend. Turn to the wrong side to weave in the yarn tails, further stabilizing the mended area.

Resources

Kromski Polish Merino felting packs, kromskina.com /felting-packs-6.

Kate Larson, editor of *Spin Off,* teaches handspinning around the country and spends as many hours as life allows in the barn with her beloved flock of Border Leicesters.

The Handspun Patch A Spinner Explores Darning Looms

MADELINE KELLER-KING

Madeline mended her sister's beloved cardigan with two different mending looms: pocket patch woven with an Alexon Ver Speedweve-style loom (shown) and sleeve patch woven with a Katrinkles Bioner daming loom

If you're interested in yarn and textiles (I'm guessing you are) and spend time on social media, you've probably seen a darning loom recently. These helpful little tools have taken the internet by storm as menders share the charm of a palm-sized loom that creates colorful patches. Considering some of the creative mending results, it's easy to see why they are so popular! A colorful plaid patch on a beloved item of clothing is beautiful, not only aesthetically but also because visible mends often represent a joyful moment of quiet creativity on the part of the mender. I love seeing an

increasing number of people make the choice to repair and lengthen the lives of their clothes!

Woven patches can be created without a loom, but like most tasks, having the right tool makes a job go more smoothly and can even make it fun. While many varieties of vintage mending looms occasionally pop up as coveted collectables, the Speedweve model has become almost synonymous with a whole class of small mending looms. Several makers are creating Speedweve-inspired looms, allowing more modern makers to access this style of tool. Other designers have created very different mending looms in a variety of materials and sizes based on the mending loom idea. I decided to pair two looms—a small Speedweve-style loom and a large wooden mending loom—with handspun yarns to see what kinds of repairs I could tackle.

A SPINNER'S MENDS

It might seem counterintuitive to spin yarn for this kind of work, but it was once commonplace for many people to spend their evenings engaged in such tasks. It is a luxury of modern convenience that we are now able to do this mostly by choice rather than necessity—something I often spend time contemplating while working at my wheel. Our time and our handspun are precious but so, too, is any item worth the effort of mending.

The cardigan shown here is a prime example. As you can see by the number of patches, it was loved so much that it nearly fell to pieces! With this





mend-worthy garment and some denim scraps in hand, I spun up yarns in wool, silk, and cotton for mending.

Pairing Looms and Purposes

Both looms I worked with were wonderful to use, and each had its own range of purposes. The two together allowed me to experiment with different shapes and types of mends. The Speedweve-style loom is for weaving patches. The hooks for securing the warp threads at the top of the loom flip left or right, forming a heddle mechanism that pushes every other thread up or down. Flip the hooks the other way to change the shed. This is a convenient feature and fun to use. The vintage design was created to accommodate fine yarns, so the hooks are small and close together. Place a loop on each hook when using fine yarns or creating dense patches, or try warping every other hook to accommodate medium-gauge yarns or when creating a loosely woven patch (see page 40). Maker Alex Ver is based in Ukraine and makes a range of sizes and styles of mending loom. The loom I worked with is the smallest currently offered and fits easily in my hand.

The Katrinkles loom I used is the largest in the company's growing line of mending looms and accessories. The Bigger loom, with its much larger, flat mending disk, is excellent when creating stitched patches and big woven patches. I did find that it took a mend or two for me to get used to the larger loom design. The extra heddle bars that come in the kit allow use of a range of yarns and woven densities (sett). Most of the mending I did on the sweater was with the Speedwevestyle loom and on the denim with the Katrinkles Bigger darning loom, with one exception for each. I made the small woven patch on the denim using the Speedweve-style loom, just to see how it would turn out, and the long patch on the sleeve of the sweater was done with the Katrinkles loom, since the hole was large and required the larger loom.

Best Darning Yarns? It Depends.

One of the great joys and challenges of being a handspinner is learning to make the perfect yarn needed for any project. I planned to make two different kinds of mends on two different textiles. My stitched mends would be worked on denim, so the yarn would pass through the dense fabric many times. The woven mends would pass through the base fabric fewer times but needed to stand up to wear as a woven patch that floats on the surface of the base fabric and is only secured at the edges.

Considering the unique needs in stitching versus weaving, I spun yarns in three materials, all roughly the same weight after finishing, measuring about 27 wraps per inch (wpi). I think of this as a light fingering-weight yarn, but most wpi charts call this laceweight. As I was spinning, I thought often of one common challenge for all three fibers: abrasion.

Learn to Weave on a Darning Loom

Find a tutorial for warping and weaving patches with a darning loom at LT.Media/Darning-Looms.

Usually, when we need to mend something, whatever we mend it with will need to stand up to the same type of wear pattern over time. Whether it's the pockets of the cardigan stretched from carrying this and that or the knees of my denim jeans, the most common holes come from abrasion—fabric rubbing against itself or something else. Over time, the friction causes the breakage of individual fibers.

My approach to creating yarns that will combat abrasion is through twist and yarn handling. I used silk for one of the yarns in the denim patches, spun fine with a short-forward draft and fairly high twist for the singles, which I plied to about a 45-degree twist



angle. Silk is an inherently strong fiber on its own, and its smooth texture allows it to glide through the fabric with minimal resistance during stitching.

Thinking of matching the fiber of the yarn to the cotton denim, as well as of the traditional cotton thread of sashiko artisans from Japan, I chose cotton sliver as my next fiber. Although not a long-staple fiber like most silk, the amount of twist cotton can hold is amazing. I am still getting to know cotton as a spinner, so to help ensure the strength and stability of my yarn, I spun my long-draw singles and my plies with very high twist and created a three-ply yarn. I smoothed the singles intentionally at the point of twist during plying, and the result was well suited to my stitched mending, easily drawn through the dense weave of denim. The weight of the yarns was just about perfect for what I wanted visually.

I chose Polish Merino wool for the patches on the knitted cardigan. This toothier Merino spins fine and (as I discovered in a workshop with Kate Larson) works well for stitchwork. I chose three colors to make the patches visually interesting and add a pop of contrast. Like the cotton, I spun higher-twist singles and plied the three-ply yarn more tightly than I would for a knitting yarn.

When spinning all these yarns, I wound my singles from the bobbin to a storage bobbin and then plied from the first-spun end. Always smoothing your fiber in the same direction as you work makes a smoother and more compact yarn. I found that this approach makes my yarn less likely to catch on the hooks of the Speedweve loom or to split and catch on the needle while weaving patches compared to weaving with woolen-style or low-twist yarns.

Of course, there are myriad considerations we face when deciding how to mend our clothes, and each choice can create a different outcome. Do we want to match the weight of the yarns used in the sweater or the fiber content or both? A woven patch added to a knitted fabric will alter its stretch; while this can help stabilize a tear, it may affect the drape of the piece. Will you pop it in the washer? If so, will the new material shrink at the same rate as the rest? Would that be potentially really cool if it doesn't? Don't be afraid to experiment!



My mending examples here are fairly straightforward and somewhat utilitarian, as I focused more on yarn structure than on creating a lot of extra texture. You might try using a heavier-weight yarn to make patches that are more three-dimensional. The endless potential in these little pieces for each to be a tiny work of art makes it easy to get excited about the possibilities; I've already started searching for my next wellworn, mend-worthy sweater.

Resources

Alexon Ver, smallloom.com. Katrinkles, katrinkles.com. Kromski North America, kromskina.com.

Madeline Keller-King is a natural dyer and fiber artist living in the woods of northwest Montana with her spouse and pets. When she's not in the wool, she spends as much time outside as possible. You can find her work and adorable canine companions on social media @woolywitchofthewest.

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Gallery of Handspun Mends

Whether you remake, renew, recycle, or reuse, mending is as important as ever, and spinners have it covered. Visible mending can add a pop of color and a good dose of character to any wardrobe staple or stilluseful object. Whether visible or invisible, we love seeing your mends using handspun!

We asked you, our readers, to show us your mends, and here are two of our favorites. Go to LT.Media /Mend-Gallery to see more!

Show Your Sweater a Little TLC MIRIAM FELTON

I have a favorite sweater that I toss on when I'm a little chilly. I putter around the house in it; I throw it on under a jacket for an extra layer. I shove it in my bag when I'm not sure if my top-floor studio will be cold or warm. The thing is, I'm *not* precious with my handknits—I treat them like any other piece of clothing. As a result, they sometimes get a little beat up.

My favorite sweater was ready for a refresh. It's an Ondulée Cardigan by Julie Hoover knitted in a discontinued fingering-weight yarn. I started by reworking all the snags into the fabric. I grabbed a double-pointed needle and used the tip to begin pulling the excess yarn back through the fabric, working until all the pulled stitches evened out. Then I assessed the damage. There were a couple of spots that needed to be mended. In one spot, I had done a quick mend about a year ago, but it was finally coming undone, so I decided to patch the holes using a Speedweve-type darning loom and some beautiful handspun yarn gifted to me by Hannah Thiessen, author of *Slow Knitting* and *Seasonal Slow Knitting*.

My darning loom has lots of hooks for a very fine mend, but the handspun was about a light DK weight, so I skipped every other hook as I warped the loom. This allowed me to create a nice, sturdy patch that wasn't too stiff, which would have impacted the drape of the sweater. After using a Gleener to remove the pills that had built up, and a quick wash and re-block, my favorite sweater was back in the rotation.

The result is spectacular. The slow color shift of the handspun makes each patch unique, but the garment is still cohesive as a whole, with each mend giving it a little more personality and a little more life.



Renew a Broken Basket A. SABINE SCHRÖDER-GRAVENDYCK

When I first started spinning, I was looking for a way to put my freshly made yarns to use. In our household, we've always had baskets, big and small: for onions and apples, toys and crafts, laundry and linen, and many other things. When baskets are used frequently, the rim is often the first part to break. If you happen to be a basket maker, you might repair it with willow, reed, or sweetgrass. As spinners, we have unorthodox methods and materials at hand to renew a broken basket. Small amounts of uneven yarns are often sufficient to knit, crochet, or weave a rectangle or triangle (or other shape) to cover the broken area of the basket. Using the ends or other yarns, I sewed pieces that resembled extended swatches on the baskets. This secured the damaged or missing areas and stabilized the whole basket. These baskets have been used in our house and garden ever since.

The first basket repairs were so successful that I've tried other methods over the years. A basket, in an early stage of damage, as it starts to lose its shape and stability, can be mended with handspun yarn. I've had great results weaving loose parts together with simple techniques that are a bit like sewing: over-and-under, figure-eight, and many others. Pin-loom squares can also provide the perfect patch in some cases.

Show Us Your Mends!

Thank you to everyone who shared their beautiful and useful mends for this issue. Find more mends in our online gallery: LT.Media/Mend-Gallery.

But we don't want it to end there! Tell us about your mends, send a few pictures, and you might be featured in *Spin Off.* We love to see mending of all kinds, but preference will be given to those that incorporate handspun yarns. Contact us at spinoff@longthreadmedia.com.

—Kate Larson, editor

Have a finished object to share? Tell us about it! Contact **spinoff@longthreadmedia.com** to submit your project.





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Textile Coping Spinning for Mood Repair and Self-Care

LISA MITCHELL

When I finally had room in my life to learn to spin, I wasn't surprised at how much I loved it. What did surprise me is how much I would come to *rely* on it. Since I retired from my work as an art therapist, spinning has become my go-to self-care activity for all kinds of challenges. When I spin, I feel better. Grief lightens, worry calms, and loneliness subsides.

My spinning experience has been so profound that I decided to talk to others who spin to cope, collecting many touching stories in the process. I also decided to turn to my therapy profession to find research that explains what is happening in our bodies and our brains while we spin. With these insights, the possibilities for managing life challenges and growing resilience through spinning becomes compelling. I'll tell you how, but first I'd like to share two beautiful spin-to-cope stories.

Alysia

Spinning for Peace and Connection

Alysia's husband was undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer. At the beginning, when his illness necessitated a hospital stay, Alysia began taking her spinning wheel to the hospital. She says, "The whir of the wheel helped him sleep, and since there were many times that was the only thing I could do to help him, I sat and spun." Later, when his needs became more demanding, she decided to forgo the wheel and take her spindle instead. She tucked it into her bag and made it her constant and ready companion. She could whip out her spindle and start to spin, even just a few yards, to bring herself some peace in between the demands of taking care of her husband.

In waiting rooms and chemo-infusion rooms, her spindle gave her idle hands something to do to pass time. She also had a sense that as she breathed and enjoyed the colors passing through her hands, things came into focus. The fears and worries and dreads were still there, but she could also notice clarity.

The fiber she was using was a mix of leftovers from her teaching. Her third graders had learned to finger spin with fiber that was full of kid-friendly colors. She had two pounds left over from teaching that she affectionately named "unicorn vomit." As she spun through bubble-gum pink and glittered chartreuse, strangers at the hospital would come up to her and ask what she was making. Alysia would respond by telling them that she was just spinning to find some peace. Spinning became an icebreaker and gave everyone permission to

As she breathed and enjoyed the colors passing through her hands, things came into focus. The fears and worries and dreads were still there, but she could also notice clarity. reach out. Stories got shared, connections were made, and Alysia felt less alone.

That last year of her husband's life, Alysia's spinning kept her going. She spun the unicorn vomit only while they were at the hospital, and those leftover fibers eventually yielded nearly two miles of yarn and many moments of peace.

Sandra

Spinning Past Her "Shoulds"

When Sandra retired from her career as a production weaver, she was sapped of excitement for her craft. She had dreamed about settling into long days of spinning and weaving beautiful scarves for herself and her family, but once retirement came, she found that she didn't want to stick with any project. She didn't even want to start one. The voice in her head was too much like her old boss nagging her to hurry up and complete the designs she no longer loved. She was ready to just give it all up when a fiber braid arrived in the mail. Her delight pierced through her doldrums as she squished the Merino/bamboo braid splashed with vibrant yellows and greens, aptly named Daffodil Dream.

Sandra rushed to her wheel with anticipation. She decided to just play around and sample a few yards. Without a plan, Sandra's mood brightened as she fed slubs of shiny bamboo thick-and-thin yarn onto the bobbin. Spontaneity dared her to switch her hands to a more delicate rhythm. The laceweight singles practically spun itself. Every time she started to feel that bossy voice tell her she had to stop the playing and commit to a project, Sandra defied it by trying another spinning experiment. At the end of that day, she had sampled her way through half of the braid. She felt freedom and contentment. She hadn't been bored for a second.

She says, "Spinning a new sample is like blowing out candles at a special birthday party. There's the wide-eyed wish, then the deep breath, and finally, when the candles are all blown out, there's the cheer of celebration. It all happens in a matter of minutes." Sandra tells me that she might one day make a few scarves, but for now, she wants to hold onto the sense of fun and anticipation that her sample practice has brought her. These handcrafters, called "textile copers," are basically people who create textiles to experience a sense of mood repair and rejuvenation when engaging in their craft.

TEXTILE COPERS

These stories are just two of many that tell how spinning helps us cope. Ann Futterman Collier, author of Using Textile Arts and Handcrafts in Therapy with Women, provides interesting research to back these anecdotal experiences. She found that spinners, weavers, knitters, and crocheters are better equipped to recover from difficult emotions than people who use other forms of leisure, such as exercise or reading. These handcrafters, called "textile copers," are basically people who create textiles to experience a sense of mood repair and rejuvenation when engaging in their craft.

I've been an art therapist for decades, and in my opinion, textile copers have mastered a universal challenge. Every client I've ever worked with has either needed to learn or relearn how to self-soothe. In the face of conflict or stress or really bad news, if you have a way of calming or soothing yourself, you've basically got it made. Things might feel hard or scary, but the ability to self-soothe will get you through.

The reason that spinning is such a great self-care activity is that it literally requires the necessary elements for self-soothing to happen. First, there's repetitive movement for both sides of your body. Your feet treadle up and down while your hands work the fiber back and forth through your fingers. Second, there's a soft focus for your eyes and your brain state. This is different from a problem-solving, linear way of thinking. Your attention can be on your spinning in a gentle way while your mind can wander. Third, there's lovely sensory input. The fiber feels good, colors are a treat for your eyes, and the whir of the wheel is gentle white noise. All of these conditions calm and soothe the nervous system. Jeri Lyn Cornish described it this way during one of my retreats, "I find spinning to be very meditative, especially my short-forward draw. When big feelings like overwhelm or anxiety or grief gnaw, I find it helpful to focus hard on the fiber flowing through my fingers. My world can narrow down to just the wheel, the wool, and my drafting triangle. Spinning also gives me a rhythm to breathe to, and that rhythmic breathing also helps calm the big feelings down."

BRINGING INTENTION TO TEXTILE COPING

In my own spinning practice, and with clients, I've found that our textile coping can be further enhanced when we bring an intention to the activity. That is, if we pointedly bring a specific emotional challenge to our spinning, we can experience relief and/or healing. For example, in the two years since her husband died, Alysia spins herself through grief insomnia and negative thoughts, especially at night when she can't sleep. Sandra pulls out a new braid to sample when

Spin-to-Cope Activity Inviting All Spinners

You are probably familiar with the sense of calm that comes when you spin. But the next time life gives you stress or your emotions are difficult, try bringing a mood-repair intention to your spinning.

Here are a few steps and suggestions to help you use spinning for mood repair:

1. Identify what emotion or challenge you would like to soothe.

2. Identify how you want to feel after you spin.

3. Choose fiber that feels appropriate for your spin-to-cope activity. This could emphasize color, texture, where it comes from, spinning technique, or yarn structure.

4. Spin your fiber with intention and presence. Relax into the activity. Focus on the rhythm of your hands, your feet, and the wheel using all of your senses.

Gallery

Members of the Whidbey Weavers Firehouse Spinners shared some of their yarns and stories to inspire your self-care spinning.



Donna Johnson was feeling unglued. She chose a fiber braid that had luster for brightening and colors that brought her joy. She felt brought back into the present moment just like when she meditates. She was so enthralled by the experience that she spun the entire braid and forgot to leave some out to show us!

Gladys's routine had become ho-hum. She wanted to spark some joy and feel a sense of magic, so she dove into her stash and chose a bunch of fiber in green gradations. Spinning the greens was fun, but the magic came when she twisted the singles into a mini skein. She felt delighted.

Joelle S. was missing her family who live far away. She wanted to feel more connected with them, so she chose fiber colors that represented the pastures and rolling hills of her childhood. As she spun, she remembered her favorite stories of growing up there. The experience of spinning with this intention was healing for her, and the missing didn't seem so painful.

Ann Smith coped with harsh weather conditions, power outages, and political turmoil by choosing rustic Jacob fleece to spin. She plied the "messy and unpredictable" fiber with some white Romney to help calm it a bit and "hold it all together." As a result, she felt calmer and more content.

Linda York chose colors of the ocean and some silk noil for texture (waves) to bring her peace and calm in spinning, just like the ocean does when she walks on the beach.

Janis Witkins wanted to feel like she was on a minivacation—life challenges had her stressed and overscheduled. She chose to card fun colors without a plan or expectation. The spin was full of surprise and delight.

Donna S. needed to bring mood repair to the stress she experiences as a caregiver. Her cotton long-draw spin helped her let go of control, worry, and stress.

she feels overwhelmed with doubt about her future. This potential for "mood rejuvenation," as Collier has named it, offers hope and excitement for handcrafters and our well-being.

My Textile Coping with Intention

Yesterday, we had to put one of our beloved male guanacos down. He was very sick, and we had no other humane choice. After the vet left and we buried him in the pasture, I turned to my spinning to cope with the grief. Rather than just continue a project I'd already started, I decided to bring an intention to my spinning. I wanted to connect with Kooper and feel his fiber in my hands. I wanted to allow the sadness but also find a sense of calm.

I decided to make a rolag that blended his softerthan-a-cloud guanaco fiber, some superfine Merino, and some glowing gold eri silk. I sat myself in front of the woodstove with my Majacraft Little Gem cross laced and on its smallest whorl. I wanted to honor my grief and, at the same time, delight in the way the soft fiber slipped through my fingers. As the thin singles passed through my fingers, tears flowed. My breathing Our textile coping can be further enhanced when we bring an intention to the activity...we can experience relief and/or healing.

slowed as I thought about beautiful Kooper. After an hour, I felt rejuvenated enough to go on with my day and felt grateful that I now have spinning to help me cope with difficult times.

Resources

Collier, Ann Futterman. Using Textile Arts and Handcrafts in Therapy with Women: Weaving Lives Back Together. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2011.

Lisa Mitchell is an art therapist turned textile coper. She and her husband raise guanacos for their exquisite fiber on Whidbey Island in the Pacific Northwest. Lisa's retreats and podcast, *A Fiber Life*, focus on ways in which caring for wild animals and making things with fiber by hand teaches universal life lessons. Her farm page can be found at afiberlife.com.

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The Wheel That Keeps on Giving

SARA C. BIXLER

A collection of antiqueheel parts can help with future wh -mending projects

As the owner of a fiber arts school and supply center, Red Stone Glen, I see many used spinning wheels pass through our studio. Some have been well loved by a single owner for many decades, earning a patina that speaks of love and commitment. Others are just starting their journey with a new owner; they are perhaps wheels that have stood the test of time and survived potentially hundreds of years of use or disuse. Antique spinning wheels are common here in south-central

Pennsylvania and, in fact, the whole mid-Atlantic region, where spinning wheels were first recorded in the American colonies about four hundred years ago.¹

Each time a student arrives at one of my beginning spinning classes with an eager face and enthusiastic presentation of a used wheel, I try to join in the enthusiasm without getting the student's hopes up until I have an opportunity to get a closer look.

The journey of a wheel is one that I am intrigued by, and if you love history, you cannot help but get caught up in the romantic notion that the wheel can tell a story. We have the idea that the wheel at one time was paired with a spinner in a unique relationship, and many hours were spent together. Was the spinner engaging with the wheel as an act of production or for pleasure, or possibly both? After years of treadling and wearing grooves into the treadle, they melded into one unified, working machine, with thousands of yards of yarn produced, and then one day, the relationship was severed. Insert your own idea of how the dance ended, but the journey continues, off to an attic, to a guild sale, or perhaps to eBay.

EVALUATING AN ANTIQUE OR USED WHEEL

Now it's time to assess this new-to-us wheel, to give it the once-over and determine how fast this phase of the wheel's journey can begin with its new owner. As my eye scans the wheel from top to bottom, there is a list of parts that I am ticking off in my head to see if they are present and in good working order. Depending on what type of wheel we're dealing with, any missing or damaged pieces may either present a big problem or a small bump in the road. Not everyone has a local resource like Red Stone Glen to help in the diagnostic process, so here are wheel repairs to think about.

Major Repairs

At first glance, I identify if this is a wheel that was made by a manufacturer I am familiar with, and if so, are the wheels still being made? If parts are needed, are

Working Wheel Checklist

We've all seen a wheel sitting in the back corner of an antique mall or the front window of a secondhand shop. What comes next is a quick evaluation. Tip: if you are hunting for antique wheels, keep a small bundle of drive-band material in your bag to test wheels on the spot.

1. Does it have a bobbin, whorl, and flyer? (The whorl might be connected to the bobbin or flyer in some cases.) If it is a great wheel, does it have a spindle?

2. Does there seem to be a tensioning knob or device to move the flyer closer to or farther away from the main wheel?

3. Does a groove on the bobbin/spindle, flyer, or whorl align with main wheel?

4. Does the wheel hub look true or is it warped or damaged? Does it rotate freely?

5. If it is a treadle wheel, is there a footman that connects to each treadle?

we able to obtain them? If so, rehabilitation becomes much easier.

I look over the flyer assembly and the entire mother-of-all. When giving the initial assessment, I'm looking to be sure there are intact whorls and a bobbin that are original to the wheel. I can't tell you how many times I've found wheels that were an unhappy mixture of parts that really will never work together harmoniously. To a new spinner, none of this would be glaringly obvious in most cases. Again, if the pieces can easily be replaced, the road to having the wheel up and operational is short.

In the case of an antique wheel or one that's no longer in production that turns up with missing or broken pieces, we need to seek a qualified woodworker who can reproduce or repair what is broken. For something that seems simple, such as an antique wheel that is fully intact but missing a bobbin, creating a replacement for this integral piece can be complicated. The only information to go by is the area inside the flyer arms and the diameter of the shaft. With the aid of an experienced woodturner who understands the anatomy of the spinning wheel and its workings, you may be able to reproduce a working bobbin, or even better, three. Only the wheel's owner can decide how much time, money, and resources to spend to get the wheel going again. If you are not within driving distance of a facility such as ours, where wheel repairs are commonplace in the woodshop, you could contact a local spinning wheel dealer or local woodworking guild to start the search process. Shop around—this is a unique project, and you want to be sure that your prized wheel is in good hands.

Minor Repairs

There is a whole group of spinning wheel repairs that are common but not something a spinner is likely to do more than once or twice over the life of a wheel. For both modern and antique wheels, these include replacing footman connectors, maiden bearings, and more. Most wheels have parts that are prone to breakage, distortion, or stiffness. They are meant to be flexible yet durable enough to handle the repetitive motion, functioning as "joints." However, like many things left to the test of time, if unused, they they may crack or lose their flexibility. Look closely, and although the part may still be attached and moving, it may no longer be working to the best of its ability or the way it was intended to operate. Especially when I'm working on a wheel for a new spinner, I usually prefer to just replace these parts. This gives the spinner the advantage of learning the mechanics of spinning on a machine that is up to snuff. Most new spinners will assume they are

just bad spinners; very rarely will they be able to identify that there is a mechanical issue with the wheel.

Normal Maintenance

The little things, such as replacing drive bands, are typical maintenance tasks that all spinners will experience during their spinning journey. But have no fear! Most wheels that need the right-sized nylon, cotton, or waxed-linen drive band can be up and running in mere minutes, provided the right parts are on hand. Luckily for me, we have a small retail store that stocks all major manufacturers' parts, and it's a zip over to the store to grab a replacement. For anyone else in our modern age, it's a quick call or online order to a spinning-wheel dealer, and delivery will be in short order.

Other routine upkeep might be tightening maidens and wheel supports, lubricating a treadle bar, cleaning and oiling a flyer shaft, and more. So, it is now time for me to pull out the proverbial soapbox, hop up on it, and begin my speech about the importance of lubrication! Many new spinners arrive in class and begin treadling, only to reveal a repetitive, clickity-clackity rhythm of annoyance. Or worse yet, the silent but heavy signs as the spinner treadles with so much effort that the wheel is walking away from them. As a teacher, this is my favorite obstacle to encounter because, quite frankly, it is comically easy to fix with a little bit of spinning oil in all the right places. I find that a new wheel or one that has been dormant for any extended period will need to be oiled each time you sit down to spin for the first week or so. My rule of thumb is "If it's metal and it's moving, you gotta oil it!" Of course, I need to sprinkle in some reminders of the exceptions, such as

enclosed ball bearings on modern wheels that should not be oiled, but generally this holds true.²

THE WHEEL ENDURES

The truth is that spinning wheels may come in all shapes and sizes, but their basic anatomy is so similar from one manufacturer to another that a spinner with a bit more experience should be able to sit down and operate any spinning wheel, quickly identifying how to adjust the speed of twist insertion and take-up tension, which are really the only two things you need to do—how wonderfully uncomplicated. For this simple reason, the legacy of the spinning wheel can pass from one owner to another, from one century to the other, without a single word spoken between one spinner and the next.

Technology for the home spinner remains, in some ways, suspended in time with very little change in its design. Yes, I too, like many of you, have a variety of wheels in my studio—from nineteenth-century great wheels to tabletop electrified versions made of plastic printed from a computer. Someday, the wheels I own and have imprinted with my use will go on to new spinners, continuing their journey. For now, I am thrilled to have acquired the knowledge to help new spinners learn more about their "new-to-them" wheels and to help them continue on this amazing journey to becoming confident spinners.

Notes

- 1. *The Pilgrim Story* museum exhibit at the Pilgrim Hall Museum discusses established lore surrounding spinning wheels and indicates that they were not recorded in the colonies until the late 1630s. pilgrimhall.org.
- 2. Most current wheel makers provide information about what parts of their wheels should be lubricated and what lubricants work best. Antique wheel forums on social media are good sources of information about maintaining older wheels.

Sara C. Bixler is owner of and resident instructor at Red Stone Glen Fiber Arts Center. Many of Sara's students praise her ability to guide students through the challenging world of color theory, specifically relating to weaving. Sara has spent many years experimenting with color in weaving and spinning, focusing her studies on how color relationships are affected by yarn size, luster, and plied structure. She loves giving students core principles to follow so they become more confident in their design process and execution in each medium they tackle.

Four Restored and Antique Spinning Wheels

HEAVENLY BRESSER

In the fall of 2022, Heavenly Bresser filmed a new Spin Off video course: Color Control in Fractal Spinning. While the video crew was on hand, we asked Heavenly if she would show us a few of her lovingly restored antique wheels. The result was a great video short, which you can find on the Long Thread Media YouTube channel. She also wrote more about each wheel shown in the video, and we wanted to share it with you in this mending and renewal issue of Spin Off. See each of the wheels discussed here in action at youtu.be/IMMSbOshkvo.

—Editors

As a handspinner, my passion is undoubtedly connected to the spinning wheel. My journey began with two used spinning wheels: a charming saxony wheel and a small, upright wheel. The first was acquired through an eBay auction and the other was a local thrift-store find. Each wheel had its own set of challenges but repairing them and researching historic information gave me so much joy. From that point on, my curiosity and desire to understand how different spinning wheels work grew. So did my herd of wheels, which is over 40, currently. Some of the wheels I was collecting required significant repairs, and I wanted to learn to do this myself. In 2020, I made the decision to invest in woodworking equipment—including a wood lathe, drill press, and bandsaw—for restoration projects with a long-term goal of bringing all my antique and vintage wheels back to life to function once again.

The wheels I have in my collection take the form of varying sizes and styles and many of them are used regularly. I have chosen four wheels to highlight because of their uniqueness and function. Read on to learn more about them.

TYROLEAN WHEEL

A true workhorse of a wheel, my blue Tyrolean spinning wheel is quite a treasure in my eyes. I acquired this wheel in 2018 from a local flea market. Unfortunately, this wheel has no visible maker marks, but it closely resembles Tyrolean wheels from the earlier 1800s. Some of the qualities that make this wheel My curiosity and desire to understand how different spinning wheels work grew. So did my herd of wheels, which is over 40, currently.

stand out from the crowd are its brass, fluted orifice, a large flyer and bobbin, as well as a large drive wheel, which is just over 23½ inches in diameter. The bobbin whorl on this wheel measures approximately 2¾ inches in diameter.

Observing the drive wheel for the first time, I noticed there was a large split in the hub indicating some form of trauma. A previous owner managed to bring stability to the center hub by using strips of metal and irregular-shaped nails. There is nothing charming about these repairs, but the repairs give insight to

the tools available at the time and points to a utilitarian precedence, which I can deeply appreciate. Although the repairs on the hub are not pretty, they are quite clever and ultimately allow the spinner to continue to produce lovely yarn.

Since acquiring the wheel, I have temporarily replaced a rusted carriage bolt with a new one. The purpose of the bolt is to adjust the distance of the flyer assembly and drive wheel, similar in function to a tension knob on many other older wheels. One thing I found unusual was the use of an octagonal nut on the crankshaft near the footman. I believe the hardware used may give a little more insight to the age of the wheel.

Being a single-drive, bobbin-lead wheel with a large orifice, I am most inclined to spin two-ply lofty, Aranand bulky-weight yarns on it. I like spinning for large projects on this wheel because the bobbin can hold a large quantity of singles.

One of my favorite features of this wheel includes the flyer design. It has large holes alongside the arms into which a wire loop or wood peg is used to guide the yarn onto the bobbin. The holes allow for the spinner to move the yarn to a desired peg hole to fill the bobbin evenly.

FINNISH WHEEL

This glorious, blue Finnish wheel joined the herd in January 2021. I purchased this beauty in an online auction, and I am so glad I did. The paint on the wheel appears to be original, except for a lighter layer of paleblue paint on the distaff; the absence of paint on the worn treadle, front edge of the table, and where moving parts are frequently handled by the spinner is ideal for antique wheels. This wheel has had its share of a workout in its lifetime.

The orifice on this spinning wheel is fluted, the drive wheel is approximately 27 inches in diameter, and the tension system is double drive. The ratios on this wheel range between 11:1 and 12:1. Sometimes similar wheels will showcase a year in a contrasting paint color on the table. Although there isn't a definitive year for my individual wheel, these wheels aren't rare in Finland, and many of them have markings from mid- to late-1800s. It is important to note that Scandinavian spinning wheels with doublearch drive-wheel supports are often characterized as Finnish wheels, but there are some Swedish wheels with similar features.

One of my favorite features about this wheel is the truncheon distaff. It appears to be original to the wheel, and it serves a great purpose when spinning flax stricks. I enjoy spinning flax on this wheel, but I also enjoy spinning fine, woolen yarns from rolags.

CONNECTICUT CHAIR WHEEL

My Connecticut chair wheel is unique and not nearly as common as other older wheels. This type of wheel is an accelerator wheel, and because of a winning bid in September 2019, this lovely chair wheel joined my collection. My research suggests it is from the early 1800s. The parts on my wheel are not completely original; the flyer, distaff, and some of the wooden nuts were restored previously.

This spinning wheel, unlike other similar chair wheels, has the larger drive wheel positioned on top, and the position of the drive wheel can be fine-tuned by adjusting the vertical posts in the center of the chair frame. This is similar in function and design to accelerator wheels that have been found in different parts of Massachusetts.

To adjust the drive-band tension, the wooden nut in front of the mother-of-all can be loosened. The spinner can then move the flyer assembly farther away or closer to the drive wheel. I wrote an article for *Spin Off* Summer 2020 that covers more detail about accelerator wheels (see Resources). The ratios on this double-drive wheel are approximately 17:1 and 18:1. My favorite yarns to spin on it are fine and laceweight singles, mainly for socks and shawls.

BAVARIAN WHEEL

Last but not least is my Bavarian wheel, which is sweet in every way. It became part of my collection on March 22, 2021, through an online auction. It is an ornate and petite wheel, measuring approximately 27 inches in height. The length is only 22½ inches, excluding the tension knob.

This wheel is quite similar in structure to Tyrolean wheels, but this wheel features more intricate, decorative elements. For example, handmade wooden appliqués in the shape of flower petals embellish various parts of the wheel. The centers of the "flowers" are often part of the joinery, especially at the bottom frame of the wheel.

My favorite thing about this wheel is the front maiden. Most spinning wheels have matching or similar maidens; however, this wheel has a round maiden in back and a flat maiden in front. The maidens house (or support) the flyer assembly. Instead of using leather bearings, the flyer rests in the maidens, which is also helpful for transportation.

To remove the flyer assembly, the spinner removes a wooden nut located at the bottom of the front maiden and slides the maiden forward. It is not an easy task to find other wheels with this feature, but the most recent ones I have seen through online auctions were in Nurenberg and Eichenau, Bavaria. While researching online, I found a silver metalwork collection through the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The collection, which features an ornate miniature spinning wheel like this one, is believed to have origins in southern Germany between 1675 and 1700.

This sweet, little double-drive wheel is a delight to use. With ratios of 4.5:1 and 5:1, I prefer to spin worsted weight singles, and its compact size makes it easy to transport.

Resources

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Heavenly Bresser is the owner of Heavenly Knitchet. She is an award-winning handspinner and teacher at major fiber events all over the United States. Aside from spinning and teaching, she can be found dyeing fibers and making jewelry. Her goal is to inspire, encourage, and uplift other fiber artists. Visit her online at heavenlyknitchet.com.

Learn to use a drumcarder

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Woolgathering on Dartmoor

Surprised sheep on Dartmoor, with a view of farmland beyond

A. ALCORN

Dartmoor National Park stretches over 590 square miles (950 square kilometers) of southwest England, an area about the size of London. Dramatic open vistas are dotted by huge, up-thrusting granite tors. While it appears wild and empty, it's a landscape that has been shaped for millennia by humans—and their sheep. Many thousands still graze Dartmoor's unenclosed common land, enduring the weather and the tourists.

Over time, the Whiteface Dartmoor and the Greyface Dartmoor with its lustrous longwool have both become rare breeds, and the hardy Scotch Blackface now dominates. However, products in local and online shops attest that farmers raise an amazing variety of breeds, including Welsh Mountain, Jacob, Shetland, and Icelandic (and crosses of these breeds).

Hiking at the western edge of Dartmoor while on holiday, I spotted tufts of wool everywhere—even in the absence of snagging hedges and fences. On a whim, I decided to start collecting them as we walked.

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By lunchtime, I had a bag full of very dirty, twiggy wool. A surprising quantity was dark brown, often in large pieces that appeared to have been shed or rooed, rather than snagged. I'd never processed a fleece but was keen to try it out on a small scale. This seemed like the perfect, low-stakes opportunity; the wool was literally lying in the dirt! So what if I felted it in a tragic washing accident? I had nothing to lose!

Back at home, I couldn't wait to get started with my experiment. Armed with a bucket, a flick carder, and the audiobook of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (for more Dartmoor atmosphere), I shook out my prize and got to work. After picking out the biggest mats and twigs, I gave the fiber several successive baths in a bucket with wool soap. Overnight soaking was highly effective in dissolving the finer dirt. Once dry, it was time to sort and card. Given the squashed and semi-matted condition of the wool, the flick carder was extremely effective and helped to disentangle, Hiking at the western edge of Dartmoor while on holiday, I spotted tufts of wool everywhere—even in the absence of snagging hedges and fences. On a whim, I decided to start collecting them as we walked. By lunchtime, I had a bag full of very dirty, twiggy wool.

open up, and continue removing vegetation from the fiber. It was slow going to make the wool clean and spinnable (i.e., I needed a second audiobook). By the end of the carding step, I estimate that I threw out about 40 percent of what I collected—next time I will be more selective!

After carding, my gleaned wool now looked far more appealing, like a fluffy brown cloud. But what kind of wool was it? The dark color, staple length (10–13 centimeters), texture, and the fact that it had apparently been shed naturally all narrowed down the options. My best guess is Jacob or Shetland, as both *can* shed their wool and are currently raised on Dartmoor. I'll never know for sure—the downside of using mystery wool!

I spun and plied my wool into a two-ply yarn using a top-whorl drop spindle. Considering its sorry starting state, it spun smoothly and evenly, and the finished product is reasonably soft with an appealing halo. My final result was 20 grams of yarn, on the borderline between DK and sportweight. I plan to use it for colorwork in a special hat or pair of gloves.

This was by far my most satisfying project of the year. It's always exciting to feel like you got something for nothing! From wool in the dirt, I created a unique, memorable, and fun souvenir of my Dartmoor visit.

A. Alcorn is a self-taught spindle enthusiast and knitter. She works in scientific research and lives in England.

Inspired by Poppies Dyeing for Kaffe Fassett–Style Colorwork

Jane turned to her stash as she created this color library and the colorwork samples. All samples for this article were created from recycled and repurposed yarns and fiber.

JANE WOODHOUSE

If you were part of the fiber community in the mid to late 1980s, you most likely owned or were aware of Kaffe Fassett's first book, *Glorious Knits*. About that time, I had just landed in San Francisco and worked part-time at San Francisco Fiber, a retail store catering to knitters, weavers, and spinners. Although my primary work was production weaving, many of us did it all on some level. This book was a hot commodity, and everyone I knew was talking about it. What Fassett offered was a relaxed and joyful approach to colorwork that inspired, regardless of which medium you were working in.

I have never been a dyer of highly variegated yarns, but that said, I usually find a solid, levelly dyed yarn boring. I think this preference was informed to some extent by my early days as a weaver exploring tapestry. I have always been intrigued by the way tapestry weavers can create shading when working with several yarns held together. These yarns might be several related colors, which are wound onto the bobbin together to be worked as one color. Sometimes one color may be dropped and another added to build a gradual color gradation in the space of an image. The color technique presented in *Glorious Knits*, in my opinion, works in much the same manner.

Specifically, Fassett encouraged us to build solid pattern blocks or shapes from many shades of a single hue, thus adding a rich depth and complexity to an otherwise plain knitted image. He encouraged us to use as many colors as we possibly could in his motto, "When in doubt, add twenty more colours." And while many of the patterns in *Glorious Knits* were available in kit form, I sensed his real mission was to encourage us to find our own paths and blaze new trails.

To further the creative cause he initiated at that time, Fassett collected and encouraged others to collect small scraps of yarn: 2- and 3-foot lengths that, practically speaking, reduce the tangling issue that discourages many knitters when working with many colors at the same time. This practice also allows for frequent changes in color to build a multi-shaded image. He sorted and stored them by color family as they waited for the next project, thus giving some well-deserved status to leftovers. Fassett encouraged us to build solid pattern blocks or shapes from many shades of a single hue, thus adding a rich depth and complexity to an otherwise plain knitted image. He encouraged us to use as many colors as we possibly could in his motto, "When in doubt, add twenty more colours."

We are in a time when textile waste is a big deal. Sources and content of fiber are evaluated from the standpoint of ecological impact. Disposing of worn garments or waste yarn adds to landfills. And currently, many of us are looking for all ways possible to use and reuse every ounce of fiber we have. As spinners, there are always extras lurking in our process: extra fleece, extra roving, or extra yarn that was not needed for a project. Most of us would never think of tossing it in the trash even though most of us have bags, baskets, and other containers full of these scraps. Often, the only thing that will send these bits and bobs to a disposal site is a wool moth. But even moths don't discourage me; that wool is used for mulch or added to the compost pile.

What Kaffe Fassett offered us in *Glorious Knits* is a creative plan for recycling, which now we might call upcycling. Since our scraps take several forms, we have choices to make in how we apply his color practices in our fiber, yarn, and finished projects. They can be applied at any time—to raw fleece, carded fiber, yarn, or finished product. I'd like to share several possibilities for applying some of his methods to our own fiber work.

A SPINNER'S UPCYCLED COLORWORK

The place to begin is in gathering those small dabs (or large lots) of leftover fibers and yarns. As a natural dyer, I mordant all these scraps so they are ready to

A Library of Natural Color

When creating sample sets, I tend to use five or six basic colors for mixing and indigo for dipping one or two times. To expand the resulting palette, I usually add base yarns in both white and natural gray to each dye vessel. Here, I used cochineal, madder, weld, osage orange, and logwood natural dye extracts. Some samples are also dipped in indigo. This means that if I add four yarns (two white, two gray) to one dye jar in a gradation series, I can get four colors: dyed white and gray and their duplicates that go on to be overdyed in indigo.

R. V. M.

dye at any time. I'll discuss using natural dye extracts here, but you could use acid dyes instead, which do not require a mordant process.

The goal is to build a library of colors, but it is up to you if you want to keep careful notes and samples or jump into carefree color mixing. You can also decide if you are dyeing large amounts of fiber or yarn, or if you prefer to dye smaller amounts of fiber in a greater number of colors at one time. For the latter approach, it is easy to work with a canning kettle and quart jars (used only for dyeing). Most canning kettles will hold seven quart-size canning jars, which means that you can create seven small dyepots at a time. I teach natural-dye classes, and we do our sampling in canning jars, working through color values and color gradations.

Building a palette of gradations is a straightforward process. When mixing for reds, I might choose cochineal (for dark magenta pink or scarlet) and madder root (for corals to brick reds) to create a range that could include reds that lean into purples and reds that lean into oranges. I would suggest starting a set of colors that gradate from one dye to another with

Poppy swatch with reds worked in intarsia, front and back

With this sort of knitting, levelly dyed, reproducible colors are not necessary. Consider reusing exhaust baths for the next round of jars or the next dyepot.

100% of the first dye, cochineal in this example, in a jar and then subsequent jars in a progression of 90% cochineal/10% madder, 80% cochineal/20% madder, and so on. You can make the percentage jumps as big or as small as you wish. Starting at 100% and going to 75%/25% is fine; it's your choice. Then you could repeat the same series of dye ratios but only add half as much total dye to each jar to create samples with a different depth of shade.

Small skeins of handspun or commercial yarn can be dyed with this process as well. The short lengths prevent tangling and offer an opportunity to change to another color or similar color when working across a row. I usually dye larger skeins, however, to use heating fuel and time more efficiently. The yarn I do not use in a given project helps build the color library for the next one.

The idea is to get a range of colors and color values that are related yet different. It follows that when dyeing fiber, the results of various small dyebaths could be spun separately, or they could be combined into a single yarn whose color shifts across a hue. The colors might also shift from light to dark color values if you spin the fiber from one jar after another. To spin in this way, the colors do not need to follow a rigid progression from one sample to the next. I like to lay out the individually dyed fibers and prepare each batch separately. This allows for spinning one color and then moving to the next in one yarn, which also makes for easy knitting. An added option is mixing some of the colors in various proportions in the carding process.

For further instructions on dyeing color samples as both progressive gradations and color values, I recommend *Synthetic Dyes for Natural Fibers*. For more on creating gradations using natural dye extracts, see

Old Knits, New Life

Consider recycled yarns for your colorwork projects. I recently had the opportunity to ravel a pullover that I knitted almost 40 years ago. It had some moth damage over the years and just seemed to need a new life. The yarn was spun from some New Zealand wool that most likely was Romney, Border Leicester, or Coopworth. It was a beautiful gray fleece with multiple shades of dark to silver gray. I just grabbed from different fiber piles without carding to spin into a simple singles yarn. I have begun raveling, rewinding skeins, and rejuvenating the yarn by scouring and blocking on a niddy-noddy. To date, I have used it to knit two hats, one pair of socks, and a pair of mittens. This yarn dyes beautifully, and the sample dyed with cochineal provides a deep rich red. The mittens needed some spark and were overdyed in a pot of cutch. my *Spin Off* Spring 2014 article, "Making Dyestock Solutions from Natural Dyes" (see Resources).

ON THE NEEDLES: COLORWORK AND INTARSIA

I had to start out with the Persian Poppies Fassett wrote about in *Glorious Knits*. This motif always seemed to be what people remember about that book. The color moves within each poppy, providing a more interesting image through knitted color variation. You'll notice in my sample that each poppy in the row is unique, and the colors are not carried across the row from one poppy to the next. This piece is knitted flat with an intarsia method, and each poppy motif had its own working yarn. Depending on the size of the motif, background colors might strand behind the work. If not, each knitted section will have its own working yarn. These can become tangled, which is why short lengths of color work well.

Stranded-colorwork knitting, often generally referred to as Fair Isle, is easier to do in the round using all knit stitches when working in stockinette stitch, and the working yarns move together across

Starmore swatch worked in color stranding, front and back

entire rows. To experiment with this stranded colorwork and my library of color scraps, I tried a corrugated ribbing next because it also seemed like a perfect use of this color-building technique. I selected two contrasting hues and then selected dyed samples that developed color movement within each one.

Finally, I also tried a small motif I found in *Alice Starmore's Book of Fair Isle Knitting*. You can see how the colors move in stripes across the entire swatch rather than in solid blocks like the poppies.

FRESH INSPIRATION

I encourage you to read or reread the introduction to *Glorious Knits* for Fassett's philosophy, inspiration, and good technical info for handling multiple yarns at one time. His words are fresh and undated almost 40 years after the book was published in 1985. It is available online as a new or very reasonably priced used book. I see it included in the collections of libraries. Check with guilds or a friend—it is likely someone you know has a copy. Read it for its philosophy and inspiration. Then make it your own. This process is not about careful planning, calculating, or color layout. Rather, it is a practice in the joy, surprise, and spontaneity of choosing the next color in the moment. We all interpret his work in the context of our own art and craft making.

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Jane Woodhouse has spent many years working as a production weaver. In 1991, she earned an MFA from San Francisco State University with a concentration in textiles, and she now lives in Peacham, Vermont, on Brigid's Farm. Jane's interests also include spinning, knitting, ethnic textiles, and surface design on handwoven fabrics.

Upcycled Textural **Blends** Nepps, Noils, Threads & More

Dyed wool nepps ready to blend

EMILY WOHLSCHEID

Textile production around the world has a long history of upcycling, and today, the drumcarder provides a perfect vehicle for the handspinner to experiment with many materials. When I encounter textile "waste," I see texture, and I am often thinking of how I can make or incorporate it into yarn. The long, skinny fabric strips my serger cuts when seaming or the small cast-off ball of handspun from my last weaving project are fair game. My most recent exciting opportunity to upcycle fiber came when a friend discovered that, in addition to dry ice, smoked fish came packed with compressed shredded denim as insulation.

While upcycling with what you have on hand is likely going to have the most positive environmental impact, there are many products marketed by specialty fiber suppliers for blending effects. Sari silk waste; bits from large-scale fiber processing, such as nepps and noils; and even upholstery salvage are just a few examples of materials that otherwise would be cast off if not for the ingenuity of spinners (and other textile artists) creating a market for them.

Many types of media can be blended on the drumcarder, but in my experience, each one has its own set of guidelines for application and to prevent damage to the carder's teeth/cloth and injury to the user. I prefer a medium-cloth carder to achieve the most texture while still having a well-blended batt. To create the sample batts shown here, I defaulted to

Upcycle: to recycle (something) in such a way that the resulting product is of a higher value than the original item : to create an object of greater value from (a discarded object of lesser value).

-Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary

my Clemes & Clemes Elite Convertible with cloth at 72 teeth per inch (tpi).

MATERIALS & METHODS

To observe differences between fiber types, I chose to work with three: silk, cotton, and wool. I also wanted to explore how those fibers reacted when the same fiber was prepared differently. The silks were two types of sari silk waste, threads and pulled, as well as some silk noils. Cottons came in the form of dyed nepps, upholstery salvage threads, shredded denim, and batik cotton serger strips. Finally, the wool bits I used were nepps, burrs, and some handspun yarn scraps. To keep as consistent as possible between samples, I chose to blend in an 80/20, wool/effect fiber ratio for each batt.

I wanted this set of samples to have the same base wool, and just as I was getting ready to begin sampling, someone reached out asking if I'd like some wool they overbought for a project. That wool turned out to be some washed white Corriedale fleece from the Woolery. What better base to use for upcycling than someone else's de-stash of wool?

Method 1: Direct Application, In Motion

For this method, I alternated between applying three layers of Corriedale fleece with two layers of effect fibers before removing the batt and carding it a second time for a more even blend. Direct application is best suited for fibers that are easily incorporated into a blend but would get caught up in the cloth of the intake drum if passed through it first. Carefully holding a healthy amount of effect fiber, I allowed it to catch onto the main drum while it was in motion, taking care to keep my fingertips clear of the teeth.

The effect fibers I used for this blending method included silk noils, pulled sari waste, and shredded

denim. These fibers, while short stapled, are long enough and have enough "tooth" that they easily blend into any base with very little loss to the intake drum. This method will also work for the wool burrs, as they are less felted than wool nepps. Wool burrs more easily catch and streak, becoming incorporated into the base fibers, but I have found this also depends on the type of cloth your drumcarder has. A finer cloth (higher tpi) may require moving on to the cobweb sandwich method.

Short fibers applied directly to the drum in motion

Method 2: Cobweb Sandwich or Hand Mixed

For fibers that tend to want to fly away or almost entirely stick in the intake drum, I recommend a very light version of what many call the sandwich method. I do not recommend trying to put more than a few very thin layers through the intake drum at a time.

Starting with wool for this sample, I spread a thin layer out until it began to resemble a cobweb. Then, I sprinkled whatever effect fiber I wanted to "trap" and then topped it off with a second equally thin cobweb layer. Finally, I ran this through my intake drum and using a burnishing brush, coaxed any stubborn bits onto the main drum before continuing to layer in an alternating fashion as I did with the direct application.

Upholstery salvage threads pulled from their warp, wool burrs, and wool nepps are all good candidates for these superthin sandwiches on the carder. Alternately, you could mix the fibers by hand, pulling them apart and opening up the wool to lightly blend before carding in the case of the burrs and salvage. The wool nepps are especially stubborn, and I always experience some loss of material underneath the carder or to the intake drum. A good thing to keep in mind is that if there is a lot of loss at the carder, there will likely be loss in the spinning process. Wool burrs and upholstery salvage both seem to have enough grab and length to incorporate well into a spun yarn, but the wool nepps may require some extra help.



Wool samples with 80/20 blend of Corriedale and effect fiber. Batts (*from top left*): Method 1 batt with wool nepps; Method 1 batt with wool burrs; and Method 3 batt with wool burrs, wool nepps, and handspun scraps. Yarns (*from top*): Sport- and chunky-weight two-ply yarns spun from the batts listed above, including Emily's silk glazed yarn (*bottom*).



Method 3: Direct Application, Stop & Go

This method is best suited for long fibers, threads, and fabric strips that need a little extra care upon application. I used it for sari silk waste threads, cotton fabric strips, and long pieces of scrap yarn. For each of these three blends, I combined portions of each of the original batts as my base and alternated it with the longer materials. For example, I carded a small bit of the silk noil batt and the pulled silk batt, then applied sari waste threads using the method below, and repeated this three times.

With the carder stationary, I started where the carding cloth splits for removal and gently caught the materials in the teeth. I then slowly turned the drum and began to press the materials down with a soft bristle

Since most of these blends are fine textures that yield a tweed-like result, they can be spun in the widest range of gauges with relative ease and consistency. They also would be great candidates for textural techniques, such as core spinning. brush until they were tucked safely onto the cloth. I always make sure that I do not allow anything to go completely around the cloth as this would require scissors to remove. This method is slower, but a little bit goes a long way with these materials, and your carding cloth will thank you for taking your time.

SPINNING THE BLENDS

One of my favorite things to do with a textured batt is to attempt to spin a variety of gauges. How fine am I able to spin this texture without large inconsistencies? Is it easy to draft for a relatively consistent The wool nepps are especially stubborn, and I always experience some loss of material underneath the carder or to the intake drum. A good thing to keep in mind is that if there is a lot of loss at the carder, there will likely be loss in the spinning process.





bulky yarn, too? Does changing the gauge help emphasize the texture or cause loss of material if it isn't tightly spun?

Since most of these blends are fine textures that yield a tweed-like result, they can be spun in the widest range of gauges with relative ease and consistency. They also would be great candidates for textural techniques, such as core spinning. Personally, I prefer two or more plies to emphasize the flecked texture of these blends.

The fibers that had to be sandwiched spin pretty easily no matter what the method, but wool nepps are an exception. I was lulled by these adorable little nuggets early in my blending practice and had since sworn off carding them until I began working on these samples. My finished batts with colorful nepps were fun, but so many flew out during spinning that my carpet resembled confetti cake.

Later, I was so taken with a batt I had purchased that incorporated nepps that I became determined to find a way to salvage more of them in the spinning process. I saw a technique that Suzy Brown of Fiberygoodness and *tinyStudio Creative Life Magazine* shared that she refers to as silk glazing. In her YouTube tutorial (see Resources), Suzy guides a thin layer of silk hankie fibers around the surface of a textured yarn to create a hint of colorful cocoon.

I experimented with Suzy's method, adapting it for use in a singles yarn. The result was an ethereal cocoon-like yarn of tiny nests and cellular-looking globules that secured a much higher percentage of the nepps than any other method I had found. I began by drafting my main batt filled with nepps while holding the silk open at about a 90-degree angle to it. This allows it to be spun while simultaneously being "glazed" with the silk.

Despite my best efforts with the long fibers and fabric strips, it was difficult to stop them from clumping together if I simply tore the batt into strips for spinning. To prevent this, I took some time to predraft the fibers, rearranging the longer fibers so that they were more evenly dispersed prior to spinning. This worked wonderfully and allowed me to get relatively even intervals between each strip.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

I have done my best to cover a variety of media, including what effects they create and how to best apply them, but this is by no means an exhaustive list of upcycled materials that can be blended. Try using a rotary cutter to make your own nepps from chunky chenille yarn or cut up smaller yarn pieces to make a super-scrappy batt. The sky really is the limit as long as the material will go on your carder without damage and stays put through the spinning process. I've even seen finely shredded paper money carded and spun!

Resources

Brown, Suzy, and Fiberygoodness *tinyStudio Magazine*. "Silk Glaze Yarn." June 19, 2018. YouTube video. youtube.com/watch?v=kHJoMuElv7k.

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Colorways at the Wheel Designing Stripes and

Other Repeatable Patterns

Use solid tops to create color effects without blending tools or a dyepot.

Can solid tops be used to create variegated color effects without blending tools or a dyepot? Yes! In fact, even those "too-good-to-toss" odds and ends of solid-colored top lurking in the back of your stash can be spun into eye-catching yarns with swirling stripes and bright pops of color. All you have to do is select your colors, split the fibers, spin, and repeat. I'd like to show you how to take your top fibers to the next level with this approach.

Choosing Fibers

JACQUELINE HARP

I find combed top ideal for this approach to color blending. The main reason is that the alignment and consistency of the fibers found in combed top make it easy to split into sections by hand. No matter the status of the tops—old or new—all are welcomed here. It is worth mentioning, however, that any fiber preparation is amenable to this method. When substituting a fiber preparation, you should always take note of its effect in the final yarn. For instance, if you use roving instead of top, it may mean a change in your spinning technique from worsted to woolen.

Choosing Colors

While this toolless fiber preparation method can be used to combine any range or number of colors, I like organizing my colors into curated palettes. Here, I created samples I've identified as cool (blue, sea green, and light blue), warm (red, yellow, and white), and bright (purple, pink, and bright green). Both the cool and I find combed top ideal for this approach to color blending. The main reason is that the alignment and consistency of the fibers found in combed top make it easy to split into sections by hand.

warm samples contain analogous colors, which means that the colors are near one another on a color wheel. The bright sample contains red and green families, which are complements. This means they are located on opposite sides of the color wheel. Although these color relationships are very different, both approaches can create pleasing palettes.

Splitting and Tidying

For my three sample sets, I started with leftover pieces of solid-color top from my stash. Each sample would contain three colors, so I weighed and prepared nine colors of dyed top, each weighing about an ounce (28 grams).

The next step was to split each color into smaller strips. Splitting each top into very thin strips results in short, quick color changes in the final yarn. Larger strips create longer color repeats. Another way to put it is that a bigger strip results in a bigger stripe, and smaller strips, smaller stripes. Before beginning a project, small samples help you plan for the look you want. For this sample set, I split each top into thin slivers of equal length, resulting in approximately 20 slivers of each color of fiber.

I gently wrapped each sliver around two fingers to form lovely little nests of fiber for ease of handling. I repeated these steps for each color, which resulted in about the same number of fiber nests from each color.

Tracking the Color Order (or Not)

Now we come to a critical phase in the process deciding on a repeating or an irregular color order. Colors can be spun in any order you decide, based on taste or whim. If you select an order of colors to be spun and then repeat that color order until all your fibers are spun, the color interactions will be more regular. That's what I've done in these samples, but you can also explore less predictable color sequences.

If you would like to create a repeating pattern, you'll need to settle on a color order. For example, I spun the singles for my cool sample by spinning one blue strip, one sea-green strip, and then one light-blue strip. I repeated this sequence over and over. When choosing a color order—simple or complex—the key is to carefully document that order. This can be done with pen and paper or on a computer or smartphone. If you fail to



track the color order going into the spinning phase, you lose predictability and repeatability.

The Spin and Ply

Thanks to the time spent splitting and organizing the strips, you can easily create repetition (or not) once you are ready to spin. I used a short-forward draft (worsted), in my chosen color order. Once I had spun all the fibers, I made a center-pull plying ball for that sample. I think that a center-pull plying ball is a great way to create a balanced, two-ply yarn. I personally find the effect of color sharing (also called "barber pole") to be tasteful in two-ply yarns, but you can always increase the number of plies to better suit your needs.

After spinning and plying all my samples, I set the twist with a cold, soapy water bath and rinsed them in water of the same temperature. I like to keep the water cold throughout the twist-setting process to minimize the risk of color bleed. Then, I gave the samples the "whack" treatment against my sink and hung them to dry.

I knitted each skein into swatches to view the repeats. The swatches in all three cases displayed



When choosing a color order—simple or complex the key is to carefully document that order. If you fail to track the color order going into the spinning phase, you lose predictability and repeatability.

distinct patterning, bold and beautiful stripes, and fabulous interspersed color sharing. It is important to note that how striping will behave in the final textile is determined by the length of the rows in relation to the length of the color stripes. For example, the color repeats that appear as narrow stripes in these samples would need to be much longer to create strong stripes in a sweater knitted in the round with longer rows. Therefore, experiment with the length and width of your sample swatches to get a better idea of your striping pattern before investing the time to prepare and spin more yarn.

Scaling Up

These techniques prove that you don't need fancy blending tools or handpainted fibers to achieve colorful, variegated yarns that delight and inspire. Do you want to create a fractal pattern without using mathematics? Use the same color order but play with the lengths of the repeats from one ply to the next.

I hope you will give pieces of top from your stash a second chance. Take notes and sample often to keep your spins repeatable. Lastly, try not to underestimate the power of solid-colored top to create complex blends. Spinning is all about experimentation, and you will never regret letting your fibers surprise you.

Jacqueline Harp is a freelance writer and multimedia fiber artist who spins, felts, weaves, crochets, and knits in every spare moment possible. She is also a certified Master Sorter of Wool Fibers through the State University of New York (SUNY Cobleskill) Sorting-Grading-Classing (SGC) program. Find her on Instagram @foreverfiberarts.



Scrappy socks with remarkable replaceable soles!

Sing

Make-Do & Mend Socks with Replaceable Sole

MARCIA WEINERT

Most sock knitters—especially those who spin to knit—accumulate a stash of tiny balls of precious sock yarn, kept on hand in case an old pair springs a leak. If you're like me, you may find that these bits and bobs of fiber not only tend to share a similar grist but even feature harmonious colorways! So why not mingle your collection of sock-weight handspun yarn snippets in one project? As little as 4 yards of yarn of any number of plies can create an adorable diamond in the ultimate "make-do" socks.

Gather up all your tiny balls and miniskeins and work a leg's worth of memories together, along with a flat instep. Then you'll be ready to work a fully replaceable sole: simply pick up stitches on all sides of the instep and heel using a long circular needle, then begin working back and forth using mostly familiar techniques to join the sole to the instep as you knit!

Best of all, should the day come when patching ordinary holes at the toe or heel won't suffice, simply rip back to the point where you began the original sole and work an entirely new one without sacrificing any of the precious yardage that made up your original leg! At last—magic socks that will live forever!

SPINNING NOTES

The tops I received from Quillin Fiber Arts in New Mexico were dyed in luscious, long lengths of individual colors, which made it an easy decision to separate them into distinct shades before stripping the tops for spinning. Because my intention was to mimic the supplies that spinners might typically already have on hand for such a project, I chose to spin fingeringweight yarns as singles, two-ply, and three-ply yarns on my Bosworth Journey Wheel. I washed each yarn to set the twist before knitting. As I knitted, I arranged all singles yarns above the ankle bone on the legs, to minimize their exposure to abrasion. Of course, everyone who spins for socks is hoping for the Holy Grail of shrink resistance matched with comfort and durability in their finished yarns. Crimpy longwools, such as Romney and Bluefaced Leicester, can add to the durability of a sole. Many fibers from Down breeds really shine for their combination of crimp, bounce, elasticity, and disinclination to felt. I used Targhee—strengthened, in some cases, by the addition of silk and bamboo—for my socks. This breed is known for its useful balance of crimp, strength, and fineness.

At the wheel, we can also highlight the characteristics we want in our final yarn. Ample twist in both the singles and plied yarns adds to durability, as does a worsted spinning technique, which smooths the fibers into the twist with each short draft. As Sarah Anderson so wonderfully showed in her *Spinner's Book of Yarn Designs*, more plies generally also mean better durability, so I aimed to place my three-ply yarns underfoot where possible.

Resources

 Anderson, Sarah. The Spinner's Book of Yarn Designs. North Adams, MA: Storey Publishing, 2012.
 Galley, Sara. "Put It in Reverse." Knitty, Summer 2006. knitty.com/ISSUEsummer06/FEATreverse.html.

MATERIALS

Fiber 100% Heathered BFL (Quillin Fiber Arts), Autumn Canyon, 2 oz (57 g). 80% Targhee/10% bamboo/10% silk (Quillin Fiber Arts), Autumn's Daughter, 2 oz (57 g). 100% Heathered BFL (Quillin Fiber Arts), Toad, 1 oz (28.4 g).

Yarn Singles, 2-ply, and 3-ply fingering weight (1,620 ypp; 15 wpi), 470 yd.

Needles Size 1 (2.25 mm): 36" or longer circular (cir) (see Notes) and set of double-pointed (dpn). Adjust needle size if necessary to obtain the correct gauge.



Other Supplies Markers (m); stitch holder or spare circ needle; coil-less safety pins (to be used as small stitch holders); woolly nylon serger thread, #9169 Light Olive, or other reinforcing thread for heel and sole (optional), 200 yd; tapestry needle.

Gauge 33 sts and 53 rows = 4" in St st. One mitered square measures 2" across and 1⁵/₈" from top to bottom. **Finished Size** 7³/₄" foot circumference and 8³/₄" long from back of heel to tip of toe (see Notes); foot length is adjustable.

Visit **spinoffmagazine.com/spin-off-abbreviations** for terms you don't know.

Notes

• These socks are worked from the top down in a modular fashion. The leg and instep are mitered squares, four per round on the leg. The instep is worked flat, then stitches are picked up around the

instep and across the back of the heel to knit a fully replaceable sole. Each full mitered square requires approximately 4 yards of yarn. Each mitered square or round of mitered squares can be worked in a different color. The sole can be worked in one or more contrasting colors. There are no directions for breaking and joining yarns in the instructions; choose colors and placement depending on what you have on hand.

- Only the toe is worked in the round. The mitered squares are worked back and forth and could be worked on two double-pointed needles or straight needles. The sole is worked back and forth, but because of the way it is joined to the instep, it is easier to work this portion on a long circular needle.
- The first stitch of each row is slipped purlwise to create a chained edge, which makes it easier to pick up stitches for future mitered squares. Slip these stitches loosely so they can stretch to permit the leg

to pass over the heel circumference. Always pick up stitches for new mitered squares under both legs of the chained edge stitches to avoid holes.

- While picking up stitches for each mitered square, hold any stray tails alternately above and below the picked-up stitches to weave in these ends as you go.
- Woolly nylon is a very elastic synthetic thread, available in many colors and made for use in serger-type sewing machines. When held together with the working yarn, it can tremendously increase the durability of heels, toes, and the entire sole of a sock. Even if your handspun yarn wears away entirely, it is possible to repair holes by working duplicate stitch over the areas where the nylon thread remains (see page 30). The trade-off, however, is that nylon breaks down over time into microplastics.
- To change the leg circumference, change needle size and work all leg rows at a different gauge. To change the foot circumference, increase or decrease the stitch count of the sole.
- Learning to work wrong-side purled rows by "knitting back backwards" will significantly speed the working of this sock; see Resources.

STITCH GUIDE Cuff Mitered Square

Using the long-tail method, CO 22 sts.

Row 1 (WS; ridge row) K11, place marker (pm), knit to end.

Row 2 (RS) Sl 1 pwise wyf (see Notes), knit to 2 sts before m, k2tog, sl m, ssk, knit to end—2 sts dec'd.

Row 3 Sl 1 pwise wyf, purl to end.

Row 4 Sl 1 pwise wyb, knit to 2 sts before m, k2tog, sl m, ssk, knit to end—2 sts dec'd.

Row 5 (ridge row) Sl 1 pwise wyf, knit to end.

Rep Rows 2–5 three more times—6 sts rem. Work Rows 2 and 3 once more—4 sts rem.

Next row (RS) K2tog, remove m, ssk—2 sts rem. Place sts on coil-less safety pin. Break yarn.

Regular Mitered Square

With RS facing, pick up and knit 10 sts down left edge of a mitered square (or triangle), k1 from holder, pm,

k1 from holder, pick up and knit 10 sts up right edge of next mitered square (or triangle)—22 sts.

Row 1 (WS; ridge row) Sl 1 pwise wyf, knit to end.

Row 2 (RS) Sl 1 pwise wyf, knit to 2 sts before m, k2tog, sl m, ssk, knit to end—2 sts dec'd.

Row 3 Sl 1 pwise wyf, purl to end.

Row 4 Sl 1 pwise wyb, knit to 2 sts before m, k2tog, sl m, ssk, knit to end—2 sts dec'd.

Rep Rows 1–4 three more times—6 sts rem. Work Rows 1–3 once more—4 sts rem.

Next row (RS) K2tog, remove m, ssk—2 sts rem. Place sts on coil-less safety pin.

Half Mitered Square

With RS facing, pick up and knit 10 sts down left edge of mitered square (or triangle) in rnd (or row) below, k1 from holder, pm, k1 from holder, pick up and knit 10 sts up right edge of next mitered square (or triangle)—22 sts.

Row 1 (WS; ridge row) Sl 1 pwise wyf, k21.

Row 2 (RS) Sl 1 pwise wyf, knit to 2 sts before m, k2tog, sl m, ssk, k8, turn—20 sts rem.





Row 3 Sl 1 pwise wyf, p17, turn.

Row 4 Sl 1 pwise wyb, knit to 2 sts before m, k2tog, sl m, ssk, k6, turn—18 sts rem.

Row 5 (WS; ridge row) Sl 1 pwise wyf, k13, turn.

Row 6 Sl 1 pwise wyf, knit to 2 sts before m, k2tog, sl m, ssk, k4, turn—16 sts rem.

Row 7 Sl 1 pwise wyf, p9, turn.

Row 8 Sl 1 pwise wyb, knit to 2 sts before m, k2tog, sl m, ssk, k2, turn—14 sts rem.

Row 9 (WS; ridge row) Sl 1 pwise wyf, k5, turn.

Row 10 Sl 1 pwise wyf, k2tog, remove m, ssk, do not turn; [lift st hanging from neck of next st onto left needle, then work these 2 sts tog as for ssk] 4 times, k1—12 sts rem.

Right Instep Triangle

Row 1 (WS; ridge row) Sl 1 pwise wyf, knit to end.
Row 2 (RS) Sl 1 pwise wyf, ssk, knit to end—
1 st dec'd.

Row 3 Sl 1 pwise wyf, purl to end.

Row 4 Sl 1 pwise wyb, ssk, knit to end—1 st dec'd.

Rep Rows 1–4 three more times—4 sts rem. Work Rows 1–3 once more—3 sts rem.

Next row (RS) K1, ssk—2 sts rem. Place sts on coilless safety pin.

Kate's Gradient au Naturel

I was smitten with Marcia's scrappy socks, so I decided to see if I could use up odds and ends of prepared fiber rather than leftover yarns. I gathered three shades of roving—ranging from medium sheep gray to white—and started spinning singles. Each time I moved the slider hook on my Lendrum Fast Flyer, I changed to a new color of roving, shifting from darkest to lightest and back again. Then, I chain-plied the singles into a three-ply fingeringweight yarn. Such a fun way to use up leftover fiber!

-Kate Larson

Socks in progress: the leg stitches that will form the heel are on hold while the instep is worked flat.

Left Instep Triangle

Row 1 (WS; ridge row) Sl 1 pwise wyf, knit to end. Row 2 (RS) Sl 1 pwise wyf, knit to last 3 sts, k2tog,

k1—1 st dec'd.

Row 3 Sl 1 pwise wyf, purl to end.

Row 4 Sl 1 pwise wyb, knit to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1—1 st dec'd.

Rep Rows 1–4 three more times—4 sts rem. Work Rows 1–3 once more—3 sts rem.

Next row (RS) K2tog, k1—2 sts rem. Place sts on coil-less safety pin.

SOCKS

Leg

Round A Work four cuff mitered squares (see Stitch Guide).

Round B (connect squares to form leg) *With RS facing and beg just to left of a coil-less safety pin, pick up and knit (see Notes) 10 sts down left edge of one cuff mitered square to CO edge; turn work and, using the knitted method, CO 1 st, pm, CO 1 st, turn work; with RS facing and beg at CO edge of another cuff mitered square, pick up and knit 10 sts up right edge, ending to right of coil-less safety pin—22 sts. Beg with Row 1, work a regular mitered square (see Stitch Guide).

Rep from * 3 more times to join all four cuff mitered squares in the rnd.

Rounds C-G Create 5 additional rnds of mitered squares by working four regular mitered squares for each rnd—7 mitered square rnds in entire leg.

Round H (set up heel) Work one half mitered square (see Stitch Guide), k2 from foll coil-less safety pin, work another half mitered square—26 sts. Place sts on cir needle for heel flap to be worked later, then work two regular mitered squares to complete Rnd H—2 sts rem on each coil-less safety pin at beg and end of instep.

Instep

Row I With RS facing and beg with coil-less safety pin at right edge of instep, k2 from coil-less safety pin, then pick up and knit 10 sts up right edge of next mitered square—12 sts. Work right instep triangle (see Stitch Guide).

Work regular mitered square at center of instep.

With RS facing and beg to left of coil-less safety pin, pick up and knit 10 sts down left edge of mitered square, then k2 from coil-less safety pin at left edge of instep—12 sts. Work left instep triangle (see Stitch Guide).

Row J Work two regular mitered squares.

Rows K and L Rep Rows I and J.

Row M Rep Row I.

Row N (end of instep) With RS facing, k2 from coil-less safety pin at right edge of instep, *work one half mitered square, k2 from next coil-less safety pin; rep from * once more—30 sts. Place sts on holder for instep. Break yarn.

Replaceable Sole

Set-up rnd With RS facing and using a long cir needle, join yarn at beg of heel sts, adding reinforcing thread or woolly nylon if desired (see Notes), then work 26 heel sts as foll: *[lift st hanging from neck of st on left needle and place this st onto left needle, then work these 2 sts tog as for ssk] 5 times*, k9; rep from * to *, k7, pm for right instep, pick up and knit 36 sts along right edge of instep, pm for right toe, work 30 instep sts at toe as foll: k2, *[lift st hanging from neck of st on left needle and place this st onto left needle, then work these 2 sts tog as for ssk] 5 times, k9; rep from * once more, pm for left toe, pick up and knit 36 sts along left edge of instep, pm for left instep—128 sts: 26 sts for heel, 36 sts for each side of instep, 30 sts for toe.

Heel Flap

Note: Work back and forth across 26 heel sts.

Row 1 (RS) [Sl 1 pwise wyb, k1] 13 times; turn.

Row 2 (WS) Sl 1 pwise wyf, p25; turn.

Rep Rows 1 and 2 fifteen more times, then work Row 1 once more.

Turn Heel

Row 1 (WS) Sl 1 pwise wyf, p14, p2tog, p1, turn.Row 2 (RS) Sl 1 pwise wyb, k5, ssk, k1, turn.Row 3 Sl 1 pwise wyf, purl to 1 st before gap, p2tog,

p1, turn.

Row 4 Sl 1 pwise wyb, knit to 1 st before gap, ssk, k1, turn.

Rep Rows 3 and 4 three more times, but do not turn at end of last row—16 heel sts rem.

Gusset & Sole

Row 1 (RS) Pick up and knit 16 sts along side of heel flap to right instep m, sl m, ssk, turn—1 instep st dec'd.

Row 2 (WS) Sl 1 pwise wyf, sl m, p32, pick up and purl 16 sts along side of heel flap to left instep m, sl m, p2tog, turn—1 instep st dec'd; 148 sts rem: 48 sts for sole, 35 sts for each side of instep, 30 sts for toe.

Row 3 Sl 1 pwise wyb, sl m, k1, ssk, knit to 3 sts before m, k2tog, k1, sl m, ssk, turn—3 sts dec'd: 2 sole sts and 1 instep st.

Modular Socks with Replaceable Sole (not to scale)





Row 4 Sl 1 pwise wyf, sl m, purl to m, sl m, p2tog, turn—1 instep st dec'd.

Rep Rows 3 and 4 nine more times—108 sts rem: 28 sts for sole, 25 sts for each side of instep, 30 sts for toe.

Row 5 Sl 1 pwise wyb, sl m, knit to m, sl m, ssk, turn—1 instep st dec'd.

Row 6 Sl 1 pwise wyf, sl m, purl to m, sl m, p2tog, turn—1 instep st dec'd.

Rep Rows 5 and 6 twenty-two more times—62 sts rem: 28 sts for sole, 2 sts for each side of instep, 30 sts for toe.

Toe

Set-up rnd Sl 1 pwise wyb, sl m, knit to right instep m, remove m, ssk, sl right toe m, k30 toe sts, sl left toe m, k2tog, remove left instep m—60 sts rem: 30 sts each for sole and toe/instep. Left toe m is new beg of rnd.

Work even in St st until piece measures 7" from back of heel, or 1¾" less than desired finished length.

Shape Toe

Rnd 1 [K1, ssk, knit to 3 sts before m, k2tog, k1] 2 times—4 sts dec'd.

Rnds 2 and 3 Knit.

Rep Rnds 1-3 six more times-32 sts rem: 16 sts

each for sole and instep. Work Rnd 1 once more—28 sts rem: 14 sts each for sole and instep.

FINISHING

Break yarn, leaving an 18" tail. With tail threaded on a tapestry needle, graft toe using Kitchener st. Weave in ends. Wash to block.

TO REPLACE ENTIRE SOLE

Cut yarn close to toe of sock and ravel all sts to toeend of instep, placing 30 toe sts from set-up rnd onto cir needle, and pm at each side of instep flap. Cont to ravel sole sts, placing each of the 36 sts from each side of instep flap onto cir needle as you work. Pm on each side of 26 heel flap sts, and place heel flap sts onto cir needle, or if the heel is also worn, ravel it and place the heel set-up row sts onto the cir needle. Place sts with beg of rnd at the left side of the heel. Rep all directions above, beg at Gusset or Heel Flap as needed.

Marcia Weinert (undeniablyloopy.com) teaches spinning, knitting, felting, and crochet across the northeastern United States, especially at the Weaving & Fiber Arts Center in Rochester, New York. Her handspun skeins and original knitwear designs have taken top honors at some of America's largest festivals, and her patterns appear in print and online. She's been addicted to turning fluff into stuff ever since sneakily using her nine-year-old daughter's spindle and fiber after their first class together a quarter century ago!

Renew an Unloved Sweater Spin, Weave, Cut & Sew

Despite one's best intentions as a maker, there is always at least one sweater, shawl, or top that simply doesn't work for whatever reason(s). An unusually large nemesis for me was an intricately patterned, turquoise alpaca sweater. It was my first sweater that used complicated stitch patterns. You know the type: all cables and lace. I was so proud of that sweater, and yet it looked terrible on me!

What went wrong with my sweater? To begin with, it was too big. When I started knitting the sweater, I didn't realize my substituted alpaca yarn would stretch more during knitting than the pattern yarn. My first learning point was that when planning projects, make swatches that cover several pattern repeats to evaluate how the yarn works. Another problem was that the first time (which was the last time) I wore it indoors, I was sweating within minutes. Secondly, when working with a new fiber for a large project, research its characteristics. *The Fleece and Fiber Sourcebook* is a great place to start.

I stored the sweater away, hoping I would sooner or later discover a way to wear it. Several years later, at a Greater Vancouver Weavers and Spinners Guild

My first learning point was that when planning projects, make swatches that cover several pattern repeats to evaluate how the yarn works. meeting, I talked to a member about her gorgeous sweater. She told me she had re-created her sweater by inserting supplementary pieces. Light bulb! That's what I could do to my turquoise alpaca sweater.

Here is the process I undertook to make a wearable outer garment from my original sweater. Not only did I reuse the sweater, I also used yarns from my handspun stash, which is definitely a bonus. I hope this inspires you to look in the back of your own closet for unloved garments that simply need a refresh.

THE ALPACA SWEATER REFRESH

I started out with a fuzzy idea for transforming my sweater into a wearable outer garment for spring/fall and using handspun yarn from my ever-growing stash to accomplish it. With these two factors in mind I started searching for an image that would inspire my creative urge.



Step 1: Choosing the New Design

I spent a lot of time looking at pictures and patterns in magazines, on Pinterest, in clothing stores, and on people. Finally, I saw a ruana with strong color accents and thought I would loosely base my outer-garment design on it. Ruanas, much like ponchos, don't typically





During this planning process, I talked to people. I wanted input from others to help avoid pitfalls and problems that were likely to occur. Suggestions by fellow weavers saved me countless hours of after-the-fact problem solving.

include shaped armholes or necklines, but my garment would. For colors, I planned to support the strong turquoise accents from my sweater with lighter blues and warm light browns from my stash. Suddenly, this new garment was turning into more than a slight makeover as I would need to use sweater pieces and woven fabric using my handspun stash. This was definitely going to be challenging!

Step 2: Planning the Project

Deciding to make a short ruana-ish garment with some side seams to provide a more jacket-like garment, I used my Bolivian poncho for approximate finished dimensions. I measured it three times just to make sure I was correct.

The sweater was knitted with vertical lace motif panels and narrower cable columns. I decided to incorporate the lace panels and cables separately, which meant cutting them into strips that could be alternated with the new accent fabric. I drew numerous rectangular drafts in order to arrange the knitting inserts. From my drawings, I saw I needed to weave eight strips to alternate with the knitted strips. I also needed an extra woven strip for the back to form a flattened neck opening to achieve a better fit for my body than the traditional V-neck edge found on ruanas. So, I needed nine strips in total.

Step 3: Creating New Components

Choosing the weaving yarn required selecting appropriately colored woolen yarn from my stash. All the yarns I chose were either Merino or Corriedale or a



combination of both yarns, worsted spun from combed top, following a Z-spun singles, S-plied form. The yarns were all finished in the same manner: soaked in warm water with a small dash of Sunlight dish detergent, then rinsed and hung to dry.

I found a variety of yarns in my handspun wool stash, but, as I spun them without a project in mind, they were of varying wraps per inch (wpi). I measured their lengths using the Electric Eel Wheel yarn counter to make sure I would have enough yardage for the weaving. With these measurements in hand and using a standard weaving preparation sheet, I established the yarn quantity for the warp and the weft and was pleased to find I had enough yarn to complete the project.

I chose a twill structure so the finished garment would have good drape. But given the textured nature of the knitting, I didn't want a twill with a strong diagonal line, so I picked the pebble twill from Marguerite Porter Davison's book (see Resources) and chose the second treadling scheme.

After establishing the wpi for all the yarns I wanted to use, and given their variability, I decided to try a sett of 10 ends per inch (epi). I knew I could weave with two yarns, if necessary, to acquire adequate thickness for a stable weave, and this sett would be good for the thicker yarns I planned to use. I wove a swatch with a light beat and saw I could use the 10 epi sett, particularly as I knew there would be shrinkage in the completed woven material.

During this planning process, I talked to people. This project was new to me, and I wanted input from others as much as possible to help me avoid pitfalls and problems that were likely to occur. Indeed, suggestions by fellow weavers Toby Smith and Myrna Lindstrom

Ruanas don't typically include shaped armholes or necklines, but my garment would. I planned to support the strong turquoise accents from my sweater with lighter blues and warm light browns. and my partner, Gord Slade, saved me countless hours of after-the-fact problem solving. So, talk about what you are doing to anyone who will listen. (You might even get the listener interested in re-creating!)

Then it was time to warp my loom. The nine strips needed to be 50 inches (127 centimeters) long and 6 inches (15 centimeters) wide, so I prepared a 12½ yard (11.5 meter) warp. During the weaving, I strove to create a pleasing color wash on each strip knowing that I couldn't establish the same yarn pattern on each of the nine strips. At the beginning and end of each strip, I wove an 8-pick, plain-weave header for reinforcement and left 1 inch between each strip as I worked.

When I took the entire strip off the loom, I zigzag stitched each piece (using the widest stitch) before cutting it off the yardage. I then handwashed the strips in warm water using a small amount of Sunlight dish detergent, rinsed them, and laid them out to dry.





Step 4: Constructing the New Garment

I gathered my courage, took up my sewing scissors, and cut into my sweater, clipping out the panels I needed for my new garment. I placed the panels alongside the woven strips in an order I found satisfying. Carefully pinning the edges together before stitching, I sewed them together using a large zigzag stitch. After finishing the two sections of the ruana, I steam-pressed them using the wool setting and a damp cloth. The pressing helped to both flatten the seams and "settle" the yarns in place.

The large "hems" were the next component of the garment. I used the horizontal "hems" to stabilize the alternating woven and knitted strips in the garment. I didn't want the knitted strips to stretch over time, and without the influence of the hems, this could readily happen. I then draped the ruana pieces until they overlapped to form the sides of my garment.

After the pieces were assembled, I sewed short side seams to give the garment a jacket look that still allowed me to wear a variety of layers underneath depending on the weather. I spent time handfinishing the front hems and the knitted pieces. The final step was to place the buttons and sew them through the overlapping fronts. It's done, and I'm pleased with it!



REFLECTIONS

This was a very challenging project, but once I had a firm idea about the end garment, I enjoyed it. I've learned a lot from doing this project, and it has given me confidence to tackle something like this again. It has made me aware that re-creating garments is a satisfying way to use clothes that may no longer, if ever, have been used. I do have a few pieces of the sweater left over and will store them away to use in other items I make. Now that I know I can re-create using pieces from other items, I'm currently thinking about designing something from those wonderful linen tablecloths my grandmother gave me. Now what could I make with them and the linen I'm currently spinning?

Resources

Davison, Marguerite Porter. A Handweaver's Pattern Book. Rev. ed. Swarthmore, PA: self-published, 1951, 29.

Robson, Deborah, and Carol Ekarius. *The Fleece & Fiber Sourcebook: More Than 200 Fibers from Animal to Spun Yarn.* North Adams, MA: Storey Publishing, 2011.

When **Joanne Nakonechny**'s father was a boy, he used to spin for the Sifton Spinning Mills in Manitoba, Canada. It's a family trait, and one she intends to follow no matter where it takes her, especially if it's to a fiber shop.

Renewing Spindle Hooks

HELEN BARBARA MAWDSLEY

²hotos by Matt Graves, illustrations by Angela K. Schneider

Some suspended spindles (often called drop spindles) have hooks to assist with making handspun yarn, while others might have notches or nothing at all. Hooked spindles are very common today, and spinners often find that a well-made hook is a quick and easy way to secure the yarn during spinning. Whether you're a novice or an experienced spinner, suspended spindles will fall to the floor from time to time as we spin. Our trusty spindles often travel with us, too, so they might get smashed in the bottom of a tote or jostled in a suitcase. As both a spinner and a woodturner, I know how important it is for our spindles to be in alignment. Even a slightly bent hook can lead to an irritating spindle wobble.

Hooked spindles may need some special maintenance when damage occurs. In some cases, a complete hook replacement may be necessary. Some spindle makers offer repair services for the spindles they create, and you can reach out to them for advice in the case of spindle mishap. However, contacting the maker is often not an option for many of our beloved spindles. Over the years, I've made, used, and mended many spindles, and I'd like to show you some methods for repairing your spindle hooks.

Tools and Mending Materials

Some of the basic tools used in spindle repair and maintenance include:

- Pliers (round-nose and flat-nose), often found in the jewelry section of a craft store or at a hardware store
- Heavy-duty wire cutters (some pliers have a builtin cutting feature)
- Wire or premade hooks
- Adhesive, necessary when reinserting a spindle hook. Select a glue such as carpenter's glue, which is well-suited for use on wood or metal. A white craft glue will have a very short life span.
- Hair dryer (optional) for adding heat to make some metals more malleable
- Drill and small drill bit (optional)

Wire is available in a variety of sizes and materials. Hardware stores often carry brass, copper, steel, and galvanized steel in a range of sizes. Each material has a unique strength and aesthetic. The wire sizing is referred



to as gauge—the smaller the number, the larger the wire. The difference between steel and galvanized steel is that galvanized steel has been coated in zinc to make it resistant to corrosion, whereas steel will rust when exposed to moisture. After working with several different materials at various sizes, I have found that working with 18-gauge galvanized steel wire balances malleability with durability rather well. That being said, there are many options in wire, and I encourage you to experiment and explore to find one that suits you and your context. Also, explore how the gauge of the wire will impact your approach to replacing a hook. For example, if you prefer a stiffer hook, working with 16-gauge wire instead of 18-gauge wire may work better for you.

An alternative to making your own spindle hooks is to use cup hooks, which are sold at hardware stores in various finishes and sizes. Cup hooks offer great convenience because they are ready-made; however, cup hooks are rarely able to be modified in shape without breaking.

HELP MY SPINDLE HOOK!

I will share five scenarios here with some tips to help prevent further damage. First, identify exactly what is wrong. Is the hook just bent to one side, or is it leaning to the left and also misshapen? Or has it fallen out of its hole in the spindle? Before you start working on your actual spindle hook, I highly recommend practicing on comparable wire first. This will help you get a sense of how your pliers work, how much pressure is needed to change the shape of the spindle hook, and how any additional heat will influence the movement of the metal.

Case 1: Bent Hook, Shape Maintained

If the spindle hook is bent, an attempt at realigning the bent spindle hook with the spindle shaft is a great place to start.

To begin, use a hair dryer to gently warm up the bent spindle hook. Alternatively, you can hold the hook in your fingers for several minutes to bring some gentle warmth to it. Warming up the metal makes it less likely to break and easier to move. Using flat-nose pliers, grasp the hook on either side and straighten the hook by bending it back to align with the spindle shaft. Reheat the hook if it cools as you work.

Sometimes, repairing a bent spindle hook may dislodge the spindle hook entirely. This is likely due to shrinkage in the adhesive over time, along with the strain of regular wear and tear. If this happens, it's okay—new adhesive can be applied. We'll cover that in Case 4.

Case 2: Bent Hook, Shape Has Shifted

While it may be tempting to straighten the hook entirely and then remake the curve, please resist this temptation as the more the metal is worked, the more likely it is to break.

To begin, use a hair dryer to gently warm the bent hook or warm it between your fingers. Use roundnose pliers to slowly work the cup section of the hook back to the desired shape. If this is taking some time, reheat the hook to continue working. Once the shape has been reconfigured, use flat-nose pliers to bring the hook back into alignment with the spindle shaft, as in Case 1. The flat-nose pliers will help reduce any sideways misalignment of the hook.

Case 3: Hook with Tarnished or Damaged Finish Spindle makers use a wide range of materials to make hooks, and it's possible that the original hook could



change in appearance over time. This is a common occurrence when spindle makers use premade hooks, such as hooks sold at the hardware store for hanging teacups. Lacquer or other similar coating may offer a short-term solution; however, if the finish is coming off, any coating will likely eventually come off as well. There are a few options in this case.

First, if the finish is coming off and you are satisfied with the metal underneath, it's possible to try to remove all of the finish so that no metallic or paint pieces come off in your handspun yarn or to prevent the uneven texture of the hook from interfering with your spinning. However, once the finish is removed, your hook may be prone to tarnishing. A metal cleaner may be needed from time to time to help keep your hook in good shape.

Another approach, for cases in which the damage is severe or inhibiting your use of the spindle, is to attempt to remove the original hook using pliers and proceed with the suggestions in Cases 4 or 5, depending on whether or not you wish to reuse the spindle hook.

Case 4: Hook Fell Out, Can Be Reused

If the spindle hook has fallen out or has been removed and you'd like to reuse the same hook, it can be reinserted. First, remove any adhesive from the hook by rubbing it with a cloth until the adhesive comes off. The adhesive will also need to be removed from the hole in the spindle shaft where the hook once was. To do this, select a drill bit that is just slightly larger than the diameter of the spindle hook, or just use the threaded end of the cup hook, if using one. In the case of 18-gauge galvanized steel wire (1.2 millimeters [mm] in diameter), I have found that a ¼16-inch (1.6 mm) drill bit works well. By choosing a drill bit just



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Case 4

Cross section of two spindle shafts. The drilling position begins correctly centered for both shafts. However, the example on the right shows what happens when the angle is incorrect and the drill veers off-center as it goes deeper into the shaft. The example on the left is straight, so the hook placement will be true and balanced.



slightly larger than the wire, it will allow some space for adhesive to surround your wire in the hole of the spindle shaft, but it will not create so much space that your hook will be crooked in the hole.

Be sure to properly clamp your spindle before drilling. While a drill press is ideal for this task, it can be done with a hand drill as well. With either method, it is important to ensure that the drilled hole is parallel to the outside of the spindle shaft.

If you are using wire for the spindle hook, drill the full depth of the drill bit. If you are using a cup hook, drill the depth of the threaded portion of the cup hook only. Remove any debris from the hole due to drilling. Dip the spindle hook in adhesive and insert it into the hole, wiping away any excess adhesive.

Case 5: Hook Fell Out, New Hook Needed

If the spindle hook has fallen out or has been removed and you do not want to use a premade hook, you can make a new spindle hook in a few short steps. While it is not difficult to make a hook, it can take some practice. If you are new to making hooks, finish several hooks and then select the best one to use for the repair. To prepare the spindle, excess adhesive must be removed from the hole in the spindle shaft as described in Case 4.

Using wire cutters, cut a length of wire that fills the depth of the hole that has been drilled, plus an additional 1 to 2 inches (2.5–5 centimeters), depending on how large a spindle hook you would like.

Step A Use flat-nose pliers to bend the wire so it is slightly less than a 90-degree angle, leaving the right amount of wire to fit into the hole.

Step B Place the round-nose pliers above the bend. Use your thumb or index finger to start wrapping the wire around the largest part of the pliers to begin the loop. Move the pliers along the wire to continue forming the loop into the desired size and shape. This step can be tricky, and you may need to repeat the process a few times until you get the exact hook shape and size you desire.

Step C Use wire cutters to trim any excess length of wire.

Step D Use the round-nose pliers to finish rounding out the hook shape.

Step E Finally, dip the straight end of the wire in adhesive and insert it into the hole, wiping away excess adhesive from the spindle. Congratulations! You have just made your very own spindle hook!

SPRUCE UP YOUR SPINDLES

These are just some of the common issues facing spindle hooks, but there are always other scenarios. A maker in your area may be able to offer additional advice or support based on your unique context.

I've learned to make and repair spindles and other textile tools through years of practice, and not everyone has easy access to a woodworker when in need of a repair. It can be empowering to have the skills and materials needed to keep our favorite tools in good working order, so I encourage you to give these methods a try should you find yourself in need.

Helen Barbara Mawdsley is a fiber artist and woodturner. She enjoys being curious and exploring history, traditions, and new forms of craft. Learn more at mawdsleyfibrearts.ca.



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Darning Looms How-To & Tips

Modern darning looms are available in an increasing number of shapes and sizes as their popularity grows. You can find modern designs inspired by vintage looms, like the one shown here, or in very different materials, such as wood or cloth. (See several looms on page 16.)

These handy devices tension warp threads as you weave a small patch. Some looms have a mechanism that flips hooks left or right to change the shed to make weaving faster. The warp threads can be continuous or separate, as they are here. Using separate threads allows more colors to be used during warping, and it also allows the warp-thread tension to be adjusted during weaving. Spinning for darning looms is great fun. Only a small amount of yarn is needed, allowing you to use scraps of fiber or leftover yarn as easily as a small dash of something that's coveted. Not ready to spin that fabulous one-of-a-kind braid? Pull off a tiny chunk and weave a patch!

The best way to learn to warp and weave with these looms is to see one in action, so we've added a video to our website. Find the video and extra tips and hacks at LT.Media/Darning-Looms. Learn how to use a darning loom, including two ways of warping and two ways of finishing the top edge.

Learn to Use a Darning Loom On the Web at LT.Media/ Darning-Looms.