

SPINNING BASICS

The Short Draw

Drafting for worsted yarn

BY CAROL HUEBSCHER RHOADES

Worsted spinning makes a smooth, dense, and lustrous yarn, with the fibers lying parallel to each other along the yarn's length. While you can use the short draw for short or long fibers, industry uses staples three inches or longer for worsted yarns. Choose a good quality fleece with long and even staples. Combing¹ yields the smoothest preparation for worsted spinning. You can comb your own top or purchase commercially prepared tops. To draft easily and quickly, elongate or strip the roving or top in proportion to the desired yarn size. Oil the wheel well and adjust it so that the tension allows you to draft without adding too much twist. Work slowly until you feel comfortable with the drafting process, and use a contrast cloth on your lap to see the drafting zone clearly.

¹ Robin Russo, "Combing: Organizing Fibers to Spin," *Spin-Off* 28, 2 (Summer 2004), 76–84.



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

Begin by deciding what grist (relation of yardage to weight) yarn you want. Focus on maintaining a consistent fiber amount in the drafting triangle and adding a consistent amount of twist. To avoid too much twist buildup, adjust the rhythm of your feet and hands by slowing down the treadling and/or speeding up hand movements. Try a larger bobbin whorl for fewer twists per wheel rotation.² There are two generally accepted methods for how much length to draft: either one inch or about one-half to three-fourths of the staple length. Try out each to see which you prefer. ☺

CAROL RHOADES *spins her knitting yarns in Austin, Texas.*

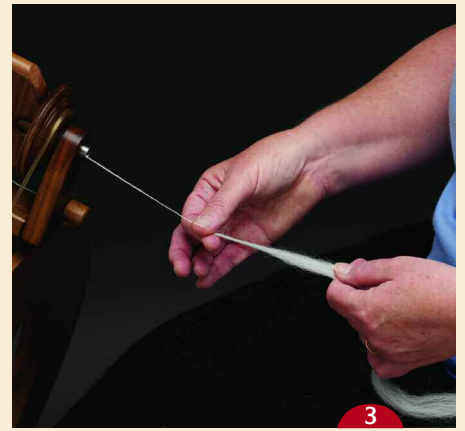
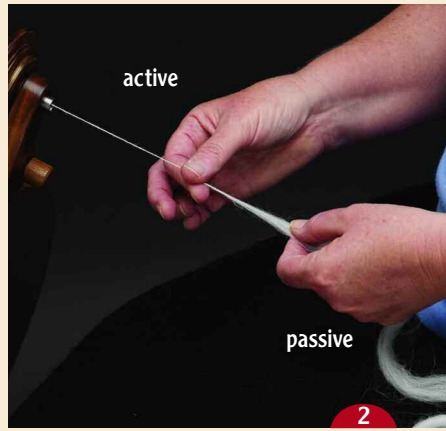
² For a thorough discussion of how to adjust the wheel and spin for worsted yarns, see Peter Teal, *Hand Woolcombing and Spinning: A Guide to Worsted from the Spinning-Wheel* (McMinnville, Oregon: Robin and Russ Handweavers, Inc., 2004).

Easing Body Movements During Spinning

SUGGESTIONS FROM ELIZABETH HENSHAW, B.A. MOVEMENT STUDIES



To spin, sit in a chair centered on your sitting bones and with your knees slightly lower than the sitting bones. Use a pillow behind your back and/or under your buttocks so that your back tilts, without curving, very slightly forward—this is the neutral position. As you draft the wool, do not hunch your back and neck. Instead, increase your flexibility by hinging forward from the hip and extending your head very slightly forward. To help move the head to look down at the fibers, curve your back slightly. You should feel a lengthening of the spine and neck. As you slide your active hand back to smooth the yarn, move your head up, straighten your back, and hinge back to the neutral position. These movements are very slight so you shouldn't feel as if you are rocking back and forth. Be aware of your breathing as you spin—imagine inhaling up the front of your body as you hinge and extend forward and then exhaling down your back as you straighten and hinge back to neutral.



(1) Start by attaching the length of top or roving to the leader thread and drawing out a few inches while you add twist to secure the join. (2) The active hand stays 5 to 6 inches away from the orifice. Its job is to pull the fibers forward and then smooth them as the twist is added. The active hand moves forward (toward the orifice) while drawing out the fiber and then back as the twist goes into the yarn. (3) The passive hand holds the fiber. Depending on the drafting length you prefer, it stays in about the same place behind the active hand: either (a) slightly more than a staple length or (b) about an inch and a half away.



(4) Begin by pulling less than a staple length or an inch of fiber from the top with the active hand. As you draft, keep the twist pinched off with the thumb and forefinger of the active hand. (5) While you prevent the twist from entering the undrafted fiber in the passive hand by pinching off at the base of the drafting triangle, release the thumb and forefinger of the active hand to allow the twist to enter the drafting zone. (6) As the twist enters and compresses the drafting zone, smooth the yarn with the active hand. The active hand follows the twist toward the passive hand and back to the starting position (about an inch and a half or just more than a fiber length in front of the passive hand).

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



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



Worsted spinning produces a smooth and lustrous yarn.