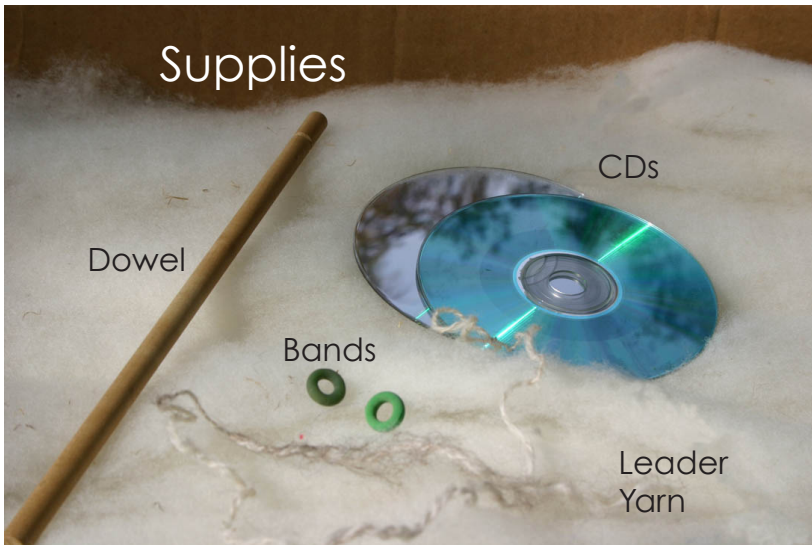


Making a Drop Spindle and Making Yarn Using your Drop Spindle



Use one or two CDs. (Two give greater weight and improve the spin). You can use a hook on the top, as illustrated in the manual, or carve a shallow notch into the dowel about an inch from the top.

In this photo you see two sheep tail docking bands. You can use regular rubberbands as well. These hold the CDs in place.

Also shown here is a hand-made leader. These are made by spinning loose threads on the knee and between the fingers.

You can also use a short piece of store-bought yarn and wrap the new wool into that "leader" yarn.



There are many kinds of spindles. They are an ancient technology, and have been used around the world. Some have the wheel or whorl on top, some at the bottom.

Do not be confused by the different styles. This is a bottom, or low-whorl spindle. Also known as a drop spindle.

There are also many styles of spinning (possible as many styles as there are spinners!) Again, do not worry about right or wrong. As Laura Young says, "If you are making yarn, you are spinning!"



Slide the first rubberband or tail docking band onto the dowel.

The purpose of the top band is to hold the CD from slipping up the dowel, or "shaft".



Slide the CDs (we suggest using two) onto the dowel and snug them up against the band.

The CD will act as the weight which helps the spindle spin, and also helps gather the yarn. It is called the whorl.



Next, add a second band under the CDs to hold them firmly in place.



Tie the yarn onto the dowel with a slip knot.

This is basically an overhand knot, or, a half-hitch.



The purpose of the slip knot is so that you can remove it each time you wrap on newly created yarn.

You will remove it to wrap the new yarn onto the dowel and tie a new knot to begin spinning again.



Each time you drop the dowel to spin, you will be twisting against a new slip-knot.

The purpose of the knot is to hold the yarn already on the dowel from unwinding as you twist together the new fibers and create more yarn.



Pull the knot gently into the notch you have carved.

Do not pull it too snug or it will be difficult to loosen and unwrap when the time comes to wind on your new yarn.

You are now ready to spin!

Gather a section of washed and carded wool into your hands.

You can explore the wool a bit to become familiar with the staple length. The "staple" length is the length of hair of the sheep.

Students can feel the wool and pull apart a small section to discover the staple length. This will help them learn how far apart they can allow their hands to get when feeding fibers into the new yarn.

If they hold their hands too close together, the wool won't slide; it will be too tight. As students pull the wool apart, or, "draft" it, they pull it apart, and come to realize that this is the motion they will be doing when using the drop spindle.

In this photo you see washed and carded wool. For more wool, you can order on-line from several sources, or through American Livestock Breeds Conservancy.

This wool demonstration was provided by Laura Young of Dew Dance Farm. She sells wool from her sheep. Her contact is: dewdance@alltel.net.



Leader yarn tied on with a slip knot.





All the twist to travel up the yarn into the fibers.

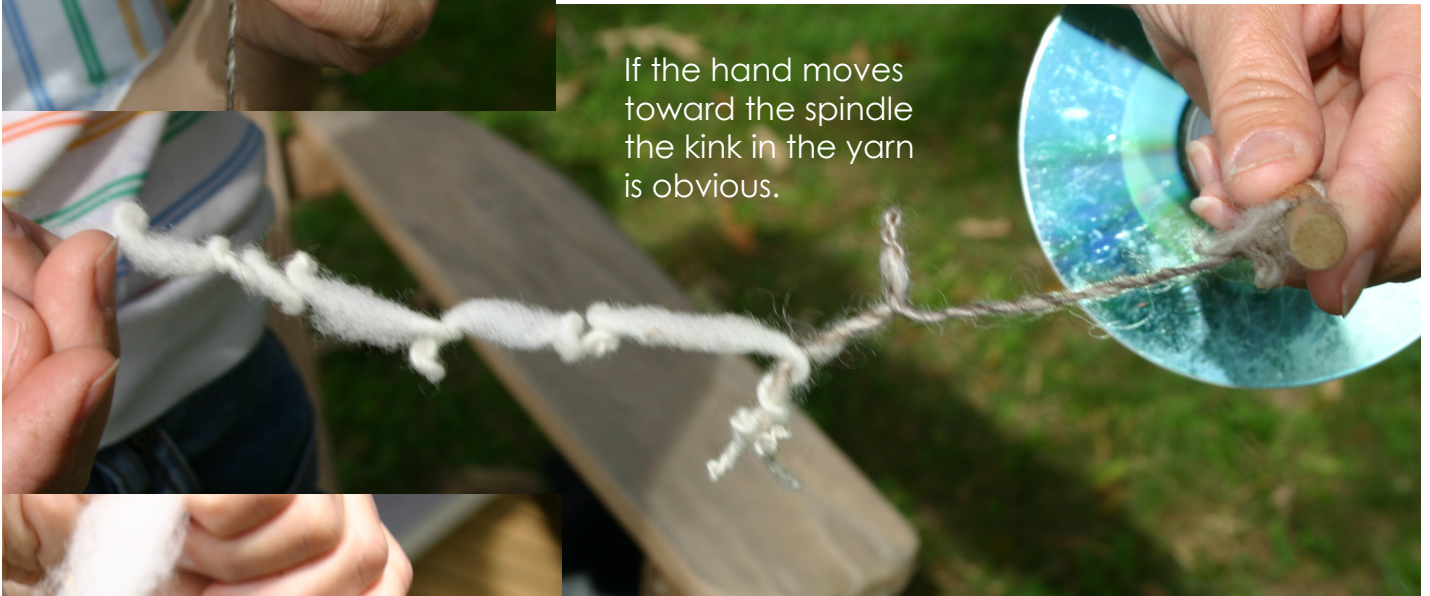
You can learn to work with the drop spindle in stages.

First, work with the wool, as suggested on the previous page.

Next, become familiar with the staple length and the distance apart necessary for your hands.

Next, practice gently pulling the wool apart since this is what you will do to feed it into the spinning yarn.

Become familiar with the twist and kink of spun yarn. If you move your hand toward the dowel, the twisted yarn will fill with kinks. This is the force of the twist that will travel up the yarn into the new fibers.



If the hand moves toward the spindle the kink in the yarn is obvious.



Release the kink by feeding loose fibers into the untwisting yarn until it stops.

Then, instead of trying to spin the spindle and wind on the yarn all in the air (which you will be able to do eventually) begin by placing the spindle on the ground and letting the kink travel up into the fiber.

Once you have spun the wool into yarn, and there is enough tension so that it begins to kink even when pulled at full arm's length, set down the spindle, placing it between your feet and hold it there firmly.

The yarn will want to come unwound. This is the force you work with to create each new section of yarn.

By holding the spindle rigid, you force the twist to travel up into the unspun wool.

The Drop Spindle in use:



Spin the dowel from the bottom or top as the yarn lengthens.

Once you have spun an arms length worth of new yarn, you will remove the half-hitch from the top of the spindle, and wrap the new yarn around the dowel (or shaft).



Tie on a new half-hitch and spin again!



Have Fun!

Don't forget to try the fiber guild in your area for a fiber artist who might be willing to visit the classroom to help out.