

Spinning 101 - Learning to spin

These are general hints for spinning an even smooth yarn. As you become more experienced there are many ways to achieve a great variety of yarns. When learning to spin, the first step is to master the treading action, which is a heel and toe rocking movement.

1. Learning to treadle.

A Majacraft wheel will start without having to touch the drive wheel and you will soon learn the technique for this. Turn the wheel in a clockwise direction, if it starts to go the wrong way, give a little "flick" with the feet and it will change direction. A general rule of thumb is this, "assuming that the wheel has been spinning in a clockwise direction, pushing the pedal on the downward stroke pedal will start the spinning in the correct direction". Don't attempt to handle any wool until you can keep the wheel turning slowly and always in the same direction automatically. It is not necessary to treadle quickly.



2. Choosing fibre

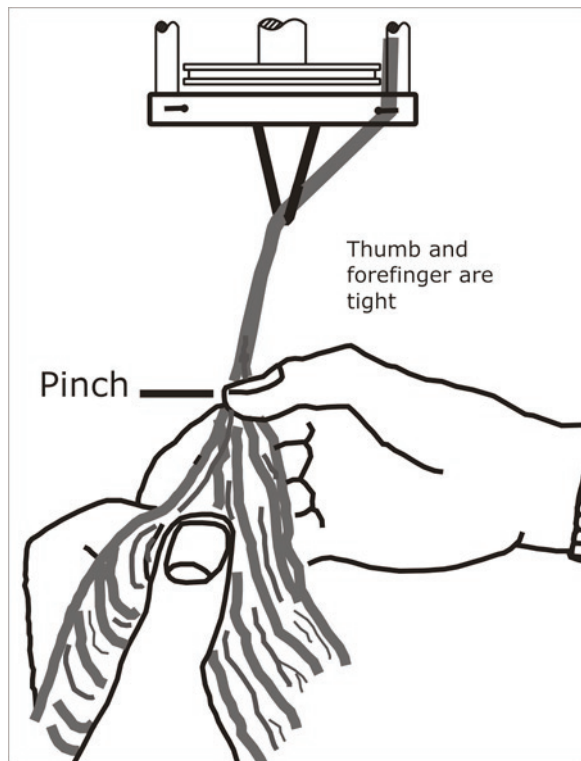
Now you need to choose your fibre. It is as well at first to seek help in selecting something suitable. Carded sliver is easiest when you are just beginning. Look for a good quality sound fibre, probably with a micron count that is not too fine. A Romney fleece with a count of around 30 to 38 would be suitable. New Zealand Perendale is particularly good.



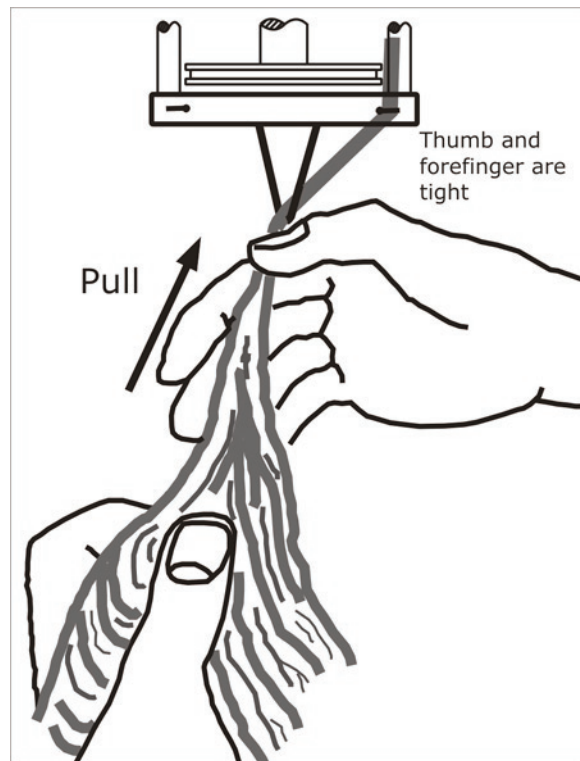
3. Joining to leader

Take a short length of sliver and pull the end until it is just a few fibres thick. Lay the fibres against the spinning thread of the leader (the piece of yarn left permanently on each bobbin) treadling slowly until you see it twist and join.

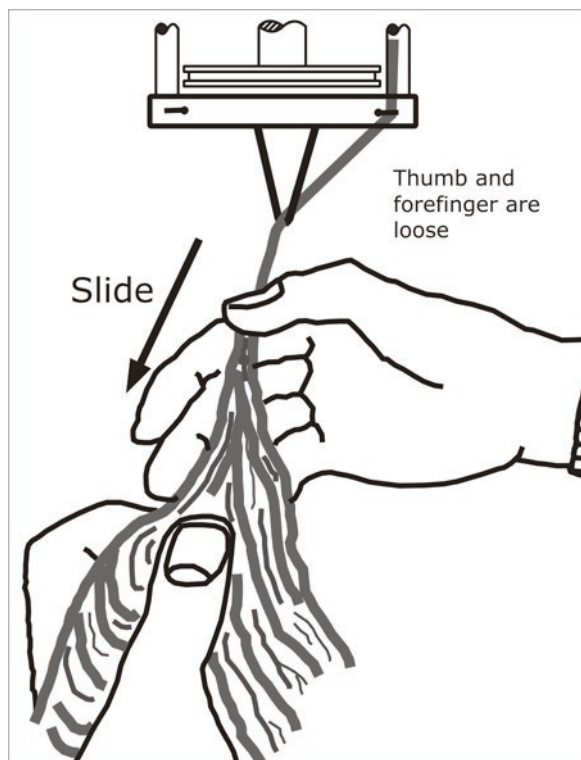
The wool sliver should be lying loosely in the palm of the left hand, controlled lightly by the left thumb and using no grip at all. Now with the right thumb and forefinger tips, PINCH the emerging fan of fibres near your left hand and...



PULL it towards the orifice in the flyer and, without lifting your right thumb at all, keeping a firm and constant pressure on it then...



SLIDE your thumb and forefinger steadily down again to your left hand.



Continue in that pattern pinch, pull, slide. Don't rush, stop, snatch or grab; just easy and smooth and flowing. The twist goes from the orifice in the flyer to your carefully closed right thumb and should not be allowed to pass it. You should feel the twist forming between your thumb and fingers, following closely behind them as they slide. The place you must watch is between your two thumbs, where the fibres should lie smooth, free and even. Your attention should be focused on arranging the same number of fibres there so that the finished yarn comes out even throughout its whole length. The fingertips should be directly under the thumb.

It is at the tips that the sensitivity develops. You will see that the right thumb is in complete control of the twist, the left thumb is spreading the fibres, eliminating bumps. The left hand does most of the skilled work it holds the wool; very lightly. As you spin, the thumb and fingers roll against the sliver and spread it out; if a lump appears between the two hands use the left hand to pull it back.

4. Spin with both hands

You spin with both hands, working together as a team. It is worth trying the whole procedure using your hands in the opposite positions as this is more comfortable for some people. Get into the habit of always moving your hook along as you join on a new piece. The bobbin will fill more evenly, hold quite a bit more and look neater and more professional. As bobbins fill, both in spinning and plying they get appreciably heavier, so that you have to tighten the brake cord tension before the bobbin will fill properly.

5. Faults to watch for in spinning

Letting the twist pass your right thumb.

Jumping in big leaps down the yarn instead of sliding so that you have lumps and patches of hairiness instead of a smooth yarn with every end tucked neatly away into the spin.

Clutching with your left hand so that the yarn can't flow.

Hanging on to the yarn with both hands while treadling busily until it all kinks up into "barbed wire". The opposite is feeding it in at such a pace that it isn't spun at all and falls apart. The STRENGTH is in the spin.

