

13 Tips, Hints & Secrets

for more successful knitting

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make time for yarn every day™

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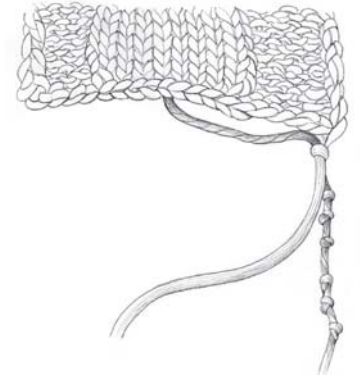
Tip1

Tracking Needle Size and Cable Rows

Adina Klein's quick-and-easy tips are instant tracking reminder when you resume your knitting.

Tracking Your Project Needle Size

Take a very long piece of contrasting scrap yarn and tie the exact number of knots to represent the size of your knitting needle. That way, if you remove your needle for use on another project, you will always know what size needle you were working with on the unfinished project.



Tracking Your Cable Rows

Tie some scrap yarn with the cast-on yarn tail when working a cable. Take the scrap yarn and flip it over the needle every four rows—it looks like a running stitch up the project. You will always know what row of the cable you're on as you only have to count four rows. Why do it every four rows? Because so many cables are based on a multiple of four rows.



Tip2

Shaping Basics: Decreases and Increases

When knitting for babies and children, knit the project without seams as seams bother their tender skin. Eunny Jang offers shaping guidelines that can be used for simple projects, whether for small or tall people.

Ssk Decreasse

Slip two stitches knitwise one at a time (Figure 1). Insert point of left needle into front of two slipped stitches and knit them together through back loops with right needle (Figure 2).

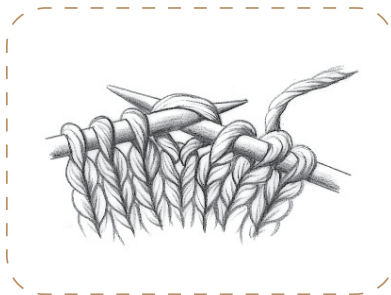


Figure 1

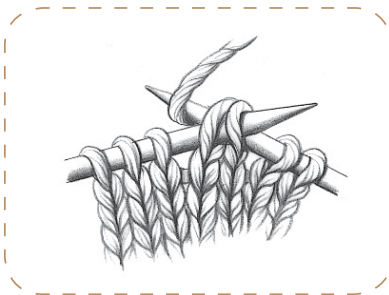


Figure 2

Right Slant (M1R): With left needle tip, lift the strand between the needles from back to front (Figure 1). Knit the lifted loop through the front (Figure 2).

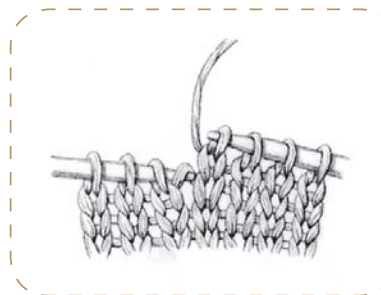


Figure 1

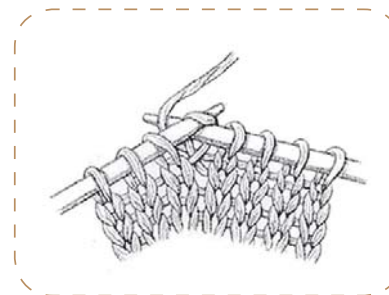


Figure 2

Raised (M1) Increase

Left Slant (M1L): With left needle tip, lift the strand between last knitted stitch and first stitch on left needle from front to back (Figure 1), then knit the lifted loop through the back (Figure 2).



Figure 1

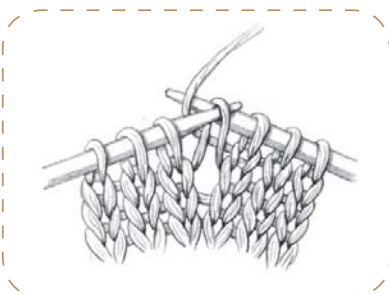


Figure 2

Tip3

Casting On for Ribbing

Eunny Jang shares how to create a reversible edge cast-on. The beginning row alternates between a knit and purl stitch for a 1x1 rib. Follow the same principles for setting up any combination of ribs: 2x2, 2x1, etc.

1x1 Rib Cast-On

Make a slipknot and place it on the right-hand needle, leaving a long tail. Place the thumb and index finger of your left hand between the two threads. Secure the long ends with your other three fingers. Hold your hand palm up and spread your thumb and index finger apart to make a V of the yarn around them. You have four strands of yarn: 1, 2, 3, and 4 (Figure 1).

Place the needle under strand 1, from front to back. Place the needle over the top of strand 3 (Figure 2) and bring the needle down through the loop around your thumb (Figure 3). Drop the loop off your thumb and, placing your thumb back in the V configuration, tighten up the resulting stitch on the needle.

Place the needle under strand 4, from back to front. Place the needle over the top of strand 2 (Figure 4) and bring the needle back through the loop around your index finger. Drop the loop off your index finger (Figure 5) and, placing your index finger back in the V configuration, tighten up the resulting stitch on the needle.

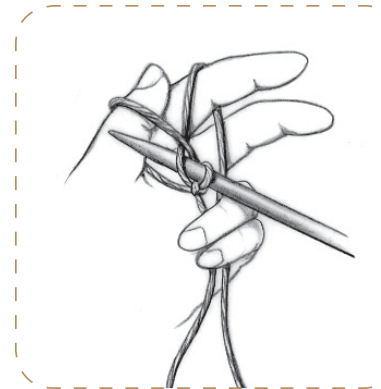


Figure 3

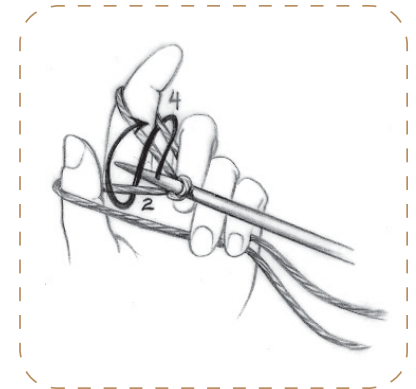


Figure 4

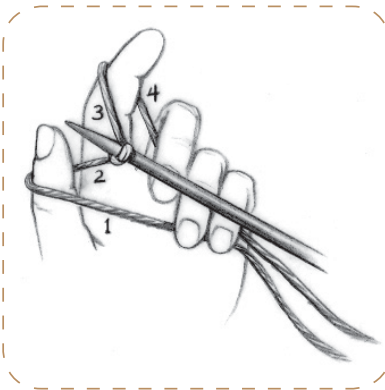


Figure 1

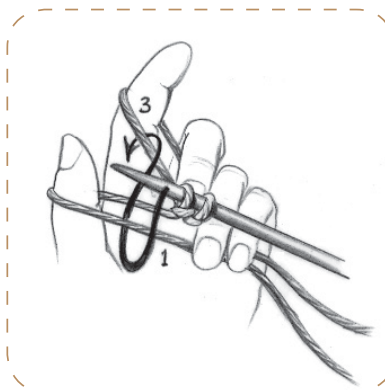


Figure 2

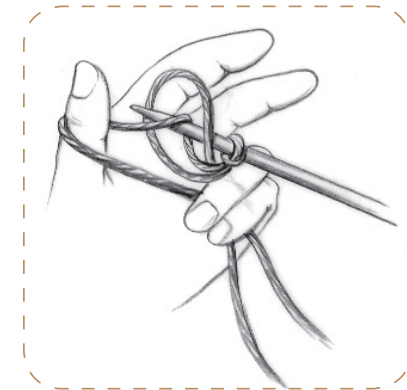


Figure 5

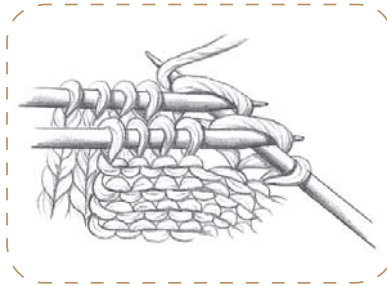
Tip4

I-Cords: Applied and Mock

Making a welt looks like a mock I-cord, but it's really just rows of knitting knit stitches together—just like binding off shoulder seams together. Use the applied I-cord when you want a piping effect on the edge of your project. Follow these tips from Eunny Jang.

I-Cord

With double-pointed needle, cast on desired number of stitches. *Without turning the needle, slide the stitches to other end of the needle, pull the yarn around the back, and knit the stitches as usual; repeat from * for desired length.

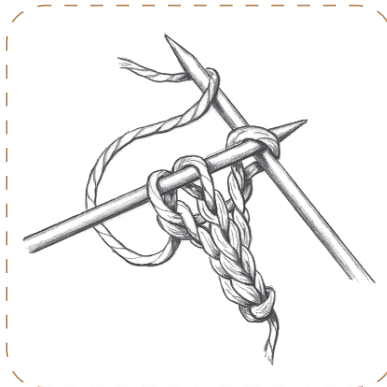


Binding off stitches together.

Applied I-Cord

As I-cord is knitted, attach it to the garment as follows: With garment RS facing and using a separate ball of yarn and circular needle, pick up the desired number of stitches along the garment edge. Slide these stitches down the needle so that the first picked-up stitch is near the opposite needle point. With double-pointed needle, cast on desired number of I-cord stitches. Knit across the I-cord to the last stitch, then knit the last stitch together with the first picked-up stitch on the garment, and pull the yarn behind the cord. Knit to the last I-cord stitch, then knit the last I-cord stitch together with the next picked-up stitch. Continue in this manner until all picked-up stitches have been used.

Note: When working attached I-cord, do not pick up every stitch. Work the edging for about 2" (5 cm), then lay the piece flat to make sure that the cord lies flat along the edge—if it doesn't, pull out the necessary stitches and rework, picking up more or fewer stitches along the garment edge, as needed.

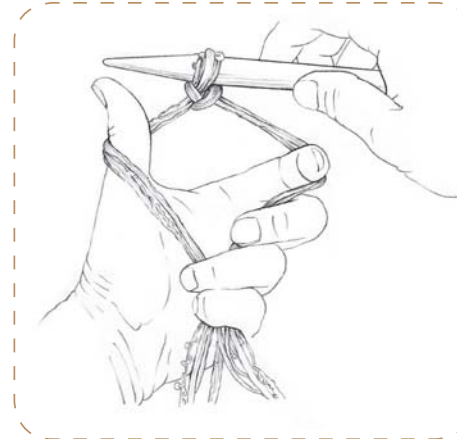


I-cord

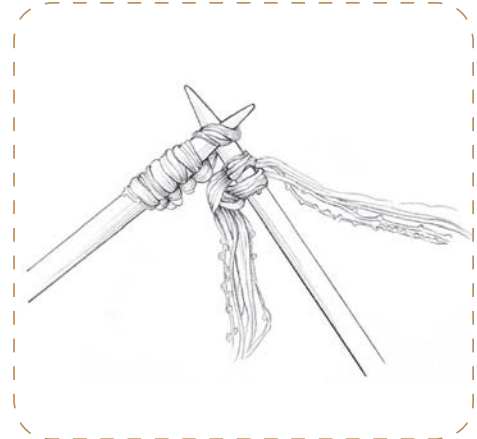
Knitting with Many Strands of Yarn

Tip5

Want to knit chunky and use multi-yarns all at one time? Have a bunch of single skeins, when combined, would knit up into a quick scarf? Eunny Jang recommends placing all your yarns in a bowl together so they don't roll around on the floor. Or put each yarn in an individual bowl so they don't get tangled around each other. Here's a few more.



Cast-on using all five yarns at one time, just like a single-stranded yarn.



When knitting, be careful not to split the yarns. And knit using all five at one time.

Tip 6

Stranding and Knitting Multi-Colors

There are numerous ways to hold your yarns when stranded knitting or Fair Isle knitting. Lisa Myers and Eunny Jang both agree that the most common way is holding a yarn in each hand. It's fast and efficient. Hold one yarn in the right hand and one in the left hand: pick a stitch with your left hand, throw a stitch with your right hand.

Stranding

When working with two colors in the same row, a background color and a pattern color, the color not in use will be carried or "stranded" loosely across the back of the knitting—Fair Isle patterns are always worked this way. Stranding leaves no sign of the carried colors on the right side of the work.

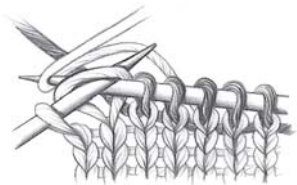
Stranding is easiest if you knit with both right and left forefingers, working the background color in the right hand and the pattern color in the left hand. While carrying the yarn not in use along the wrong side, be careful not to catch it in with the working yarn and draw it through to the right side where it can be seen. The stranded yarn should lie flat across the back of the fabric. If you strand too tightly, the fabric will pucker. To avoid this, stretch out the group of stitches on the right needle at every color change. This will ensure that the stranded yarn is long enough to accommodate the "give" of the knitted fabric. Blocking the garment after it is finished will allow the strands and stitches to bond. Gently stretch the knitted fabric until it is smooth.

Stranding Methods

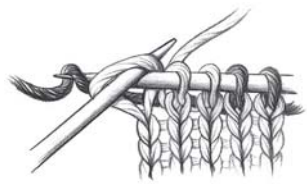
Knit rows

Use your left hand to keep the pattern color below the tip of the left needle while your right forefinger brings the background color around the tip of the right needle to knit the stitch. Repeat this until the colors change.

Use your left forefinger to bring the pattern yarn around the needle and use the tip of the needle to draw the new stitch through while your right hand keeps the background color away from the needle tip and above the other stitches.



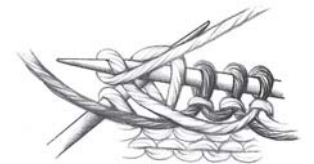
Right hand knits with background color, left hand carries pattern color.



Right finger keeps background color above pattern color.

Purl rows

The purl row, although a little more difficult to learn, is worked the same way. Use your left hand to keep the pattern yarn below the purled stitches when it is not being worked.



Left hand holds pattern color under stitch being purled.



Right hand holds background color away from needle tips. Right hand holds background color away from needle tips.

Tip 7

Durable Cast-Ons

There are many instances where you want very durable cast-on edges—socks, slippers, cuff edges. Stretch yourself and move beyond the standard long-tail cast-on. Eunny Jang offers two lesser-known edges from international knitters—both provide stretch and durability.

Twisted German Cast-On aka Old Norwegian Cast-On

Leaving a long tail, make a slipknot and place on right needle. Place thumb and index finger between yarn ends so that the working yarn is around your index finger and the tail is around your thumb. Secure the ends with your other fingers and hold your palm upward, making a V of yarn (Figure 1). *Bring needle in front of thumb, under both yarns around thumb, down into center of thumb loop, forward again, and over top of yarn around index finger (Figure 2), catch this yarn, and bring needle back down through thumb loop (Figure 3), turning thumb slightly to make room for needle to pass through. Drop loop off thumb (Figure 4) and place thumb back in V configuration while tightening up resulting stitch on needle. Repeat from * for desired number of stitches.

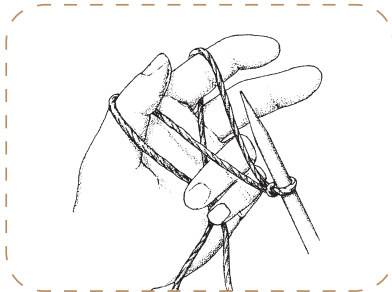


Figure 1

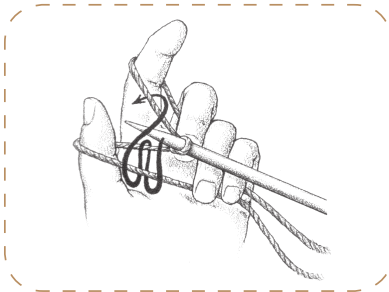


Figure 2

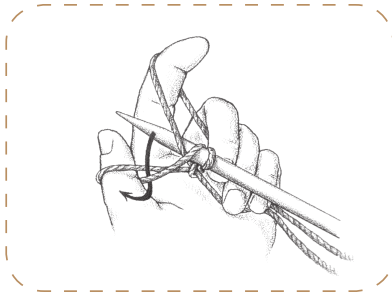


Figure 3

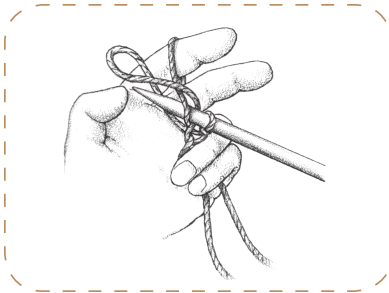


Figure 4

Channel Island Cast-On

This edge was traditionally used for Gansey sweaters—fishermen needed that durable edge on their garments!

Make a slipknot with two balls of yarn, leaving long tails (about 1" per stitch). The slipknot counts as one stitch. Cut one of the strands connected to a ball of yarn. Place the single strand over your left index finger and wrap the double strands counterclockwise around your thumb. *Make a yarnover on the needle with the single strand (Figure 1). Insert needle up through both loops on thumb, grab the single strand, and bring it back through the two thumb loops (Figure 2). Drop the thumb loops and tighten all three yarns to form two more stitches. Repeat from *.

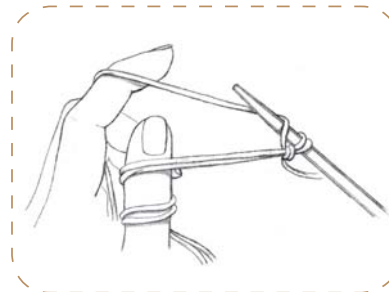


Figure 1

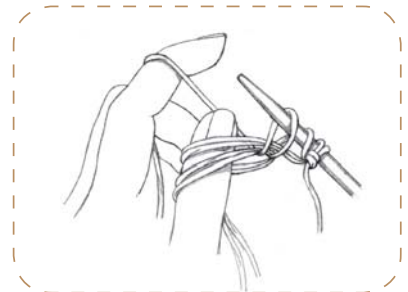


Figure 2

Tips

Blocking

Add the finishing touches at the very end of your knitting using these wet-blocking techniques.

Wet Blocking

By definition wet-blocking uses more moisture than steam-blocking, and can be used to stretch and enlarge a knitted piece (although loosely knitted pieces stretch more easily than tightly knitted ones, and any extra inches you gain in width, you may lose in length). There are three degrees of wet-blocking, depending on the amount of moisture added to the knitted fabric.

Spray-blocking is the mildest form of wet-blocking. It works equally well for all fibers—although silks and synthetics require more wetness than wool—and it allows for total control over temperature, dampness, and finished texture because you are not restricted to the temperature and amount of steam that comes out of your iron, and you can gently pat and shape the piece with your hands while you work. Pin the handknit to shape right side up on a padded surface placed away from direct sun or heat. Fill a spray bottle with cool tap water and spritz a fine, even mist over the piece. Use your hands to gently pat the moisture into the handknit, if desired, but be careful not to flatten any textured stitches.

Wet-wrapping imparts moisture deeper into the fibers and is appropriate for all types of yarn, especially cotton and acrylic, which are less resilient than wool and require more moisture penetration to reshape stitches. To wet-wrap, thoroughly soak a large bath towel in water, then put it through the spin cycle of a washing machine to remove excess moisture. Place the handknit on top of the towel, then roll the two together jelly-roll fashion. Let the bundle sit until the handknit is completely damp, overnight if necessary. Unroll the towel, remove the handknit, and pin it out to measurements on a padded surface away from direct sun or heat.

Immersion imparts moisture thoroughly through the fibers and allows complete re-shaping. It is appropriate for all fiber types, and particularly ideal for heavily ribbed or cabled fabrics, or fabrics that have taken on a biased slant during knitting. It is also the method to use after washing a handknit. To immerse a handknit, turn it inside out and soak it in a basin of lukewarm water for about twenty minutes, or until thoroughly wet, gently squeezing water through the piece if necessary. Drain the water, carry the wet handknit in a bundle to the washing machine, and put it through the spin cycle (or roll it in dry towels) to remove excess moisture. Do not twist or wring the handknit. Shape the piece right side up on a padded surface, using pins (and blocking wires) as necessary.

Blocking Tips

- Experiment with blocking your gauge swatch before you block an actual knitted piece.
- Do not rub, twist, or wring a handknit. Doing so may distort the stitches beyond correction.
- Before blocking, weave in all loose ends—the blocking process will help secure the ends in place.
- It is preferable to block individual pieces before sewing them together. Blocking makes the sewing process easier and the results of blocking are more consistent when you work with a single layer of fabric. You can block a garment that has been sewed together, but the results may not be as good.
- Many experts warn against blocking ribbing, which will lose its natural elasticity if blocked while stretched open. However, ribbing can be successfully blocked if you squeeze it into its most contracted state (so that all the purl stitches recede behind the knit stitches) before you apply moisture.
- Allow the blocked handknit to air-dry completely before moving it.



Tip 9

Swatching

How many times have you heard: “Make a swatch before you start.” “Check your gauge to guarantee fit.” Eunny Jang and our knitting experts share tips with you.

Why Swatch?

To Guarantee Fit.

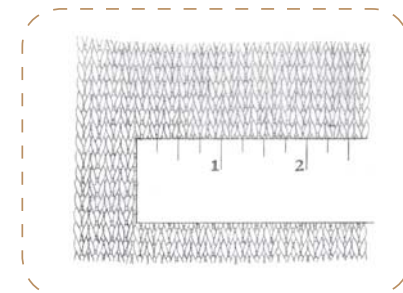
Regardless of how lucky you’ve been in the past, and no matter how tedious it is to put off the real knitting, if you want to ensure that a project will work up to the measurements specified in the pattern, you must work a sample of knitting and compare the gauge you get with the gauge specified. Gauge is simply the number of stitches and rows in a given number of inches of knitting. If your gauge is fewer stitches per inch than the pattern calls for, the finished garment will be too large; if your gauge is more stitches per inch, the finished garment will be too small.

To measure gauge: Cast on 30 to 40 stitches, or an equivalent multiple of the pattern stitch given, using the recommended needle size. Work in the specified pattern stitch until the piece measures a little more than 4” (10 cm) from the cast-on edge. (In general, knitting patterns measure gauge over 4 inches [10 cm].) Bind off the stitches loosely. Wash or block the swatch as you would the finished project. Lay the swatch on a flat surface. Place a ruler over the swatch and measure out 4” (10 cm) in width and length; then count the number of stitches and the number of rows (including fractions of stitches and rows—a half-stitch can make a big difference when multiplied by the finished width of the piece!) in the measured 4 inches. Repeat this process two or three times on different areas of the swatch to confirm your initial measurement. If you have more stitches and rows than called for in the instructions, your stitches are too small and you should try again with larger needles; if you have fewer stitches or rows, your stitches are too large and you should try again with smaller needles. Repeat the process until you get the gauge you’re after. Remember that the most important thing is to match the gauge specified in the pattern. You can change needle size, substitute yarns, play around with stitch patterns to your heart’s content—as long as your gauge matches the one specified in the pattern for your project, the dimensions of the finished project will match those of the pattern.

Note: Even the most carefully worked swatch can differ in gauge from a large piece of knitting. The cardinal rule is: The larger the swatch, the more accurate it is. Always check the measurements of a project after you’ve worked the first few inches to make sure the gauge of the project is consistent with the gauge of the swatch.

Tips for Making a Gauge Swatch

- Always work the gauge swatch with the needles you intend to use for the final project. Even needles in the same size, if made from different materials or by different companies, can yield different gauges.
- The gauge in most published patterns is measured after blocking, so be sure to block your swatch (using the same method you will use to block the finished garment) before measuring.
- Use the exact same techniques in a swatch as you will use in the project. For example, if you are working a Fair Isle pattern, and always float the yarns across the back of your work, be sure to float the yarns in the swatch.
- For lace, cable, and color work patterns, try to work a gauge swatch that is at least two full repeats of the pattern both in width and in length. Doing so results in a more accurate measurement of the overall gauge: You will see beforehand how the pattern repeats fit together and whether one part of the pattern draws in (or spreads out) more than the rest.



Tip10

Getting Started Spinning

There's store-bought yarn then there's *handmade* yarn. Learning how to make yarn is not hard, you just need a few solid directions to get started. Liz Gipson shared her basic steps with you and here's even more spinning using simple tools.

Handspindles provide a great introduction to spinning for the novice. At the same time, the most experienced spinners we know find this simple tool endlessly satisfying. A good spindle can be an excellent traveling companion, tucked into a briefcase, purse, or backpack to help you fill odd moments at meetings or soccer games, or while watching television. If you haven't discovered the joy of using a fine handspindle, you have a treat ahead of you.

Supply list

- 1 handspindle, well-balanced and not too heavy
- About 1/2 ounce of prepared fiber, preferably medium-grade wool, in a color you like
- Tiny piece of masking tape, with an arrow drawn on it
- A piece of wool starter yarn, about 24-30 inches long

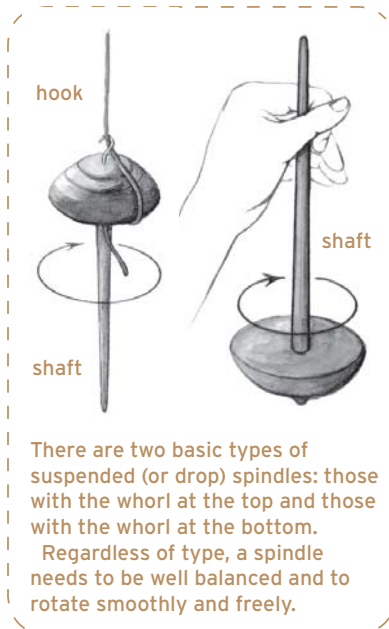
A Good Spindle

This is critical. The wrong spindle will not let you discover the true pleasure of spinning, whereas the right one will do at least half the teaching. Some simple spindles work well, and some fancy ones don't. And vice versa.

There are many kinds of spindles, in all sizes, weights, and forms.

The basic spindle elements include hook or groove, whorl, shaft.

We're going to concentrate here on **drop spindles**. Their shafts normally fall between 9 and 15 inches in length, and their whorls average between 2 and 3 inches across (although their whorls may be as small as 1½ inches or as large as 5 inches). Drop spindles twirl in midair as you spin, and are often made of wood. Some have the whorl at the top of the shaft and some have it at the bottom.¹ Either arrangement will do.



What makes a good spindle? You'll discover that in spinning there are no rules, but we can offer guidelines. (If you fall in love with a spindle that doesn't exactly fit our description, it's probably perfect for you anyway.)

Spindle **weight** depends on the type of yarn you want to spin—heavy yarn, heavy spindle. A drop spindle that weighs more than 4 ounces (the weight of a medium-sized apple) is too heavy for general use. And hold off on the 1/2-ounce spindle (with a whole walnut's amount of gravity) until you have some experience. Look for a weight between 1½ and 2½ ounces (with the heft of an apricot or a plum).

Balance is essential. The location of the whorl on the shaft affects the spindle's balance, as does the shape of the whorl itself. Check a bottom-whorl spindle by resting its tip on a non-abrasive surface (like your leg) and giving it a twirl; let your fingers flick the shaft so it spins, and then make a circle of your fingers so the spindle can rotate freely but remains upright. To check a top-whorl spindle, attach a short length of yarn to the hook at the top, give the shaft a quick roll between your fingers, and watch the spindle rotate. (The drawings to the left show this process).

Spin the spindle a few times. Then note your impressions. Does the spindle rotate freely (does it feel like it wants to spin), or does it wobble?

Does it keep going for a while, or feel sluggish? Is the shaft easy to grasp and twirl? Do you like this spindle? If you have hesitations, keep looking; there are more spindles out there. Basically okay? Go for it!

Take the piece of tape with the arrow and put it on the whorl to remind you which way to turn it.

Some puff

Fiber, raw material, wool . . . you need something to spin. "Puff" is not the official name, but it does describe the quality you want your first fiber to have.

There are lots of reasons to prepare your own fiber, but there are also wonderful bags of ready-to-spin stuff out there that you can start on . . . or work with forever. With prepared fiber, you can spin now.

You want a medium-grade wool in batt or roving/sliver/top form (a batt is pancake-like, and roving, sliver, and top are rope-like). The fiber should hang together well when you

¹The other principal types of spindles you'll see are supported spindles. Their tips rest on the ground (or another surface) during spinning. The very large ones, with shafts 24-36" long, are Navajo spindles. Other supported spindles tend to be smaller than drop spindles, with more delicate shafts and lighter whorls. They may be made of a variety of materials, including metal. These can be perfectly wonderful spindles, although the spinning techniques are slightly different.

Tip10

Getting Started Spinning (continued)

hold it gently, but should have some air in it—like puff. (A slick, smooth preparation will be hard to work with until you're proficient.) Pick a color you like, either natural or dyed.

Separate a piece of your fiber from the mass by gently pulling it free. You want a segment about 4-6 inches long and 1/2 inch wide.

What makes yarn

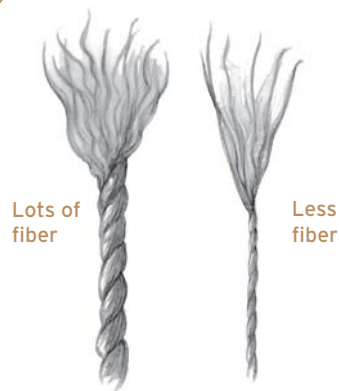
Fiber is turned into yarn by twist. Completely untwisted fiber pulls apart easily. Twisted fiber, or yarn, is strong and won't pull apart. The twist comes from the spindle, and the transformation takes place between your hands. What your hands do is called drafting—letting the fibers slide past each other and then letting the twist catch them.

The size of your yarn is determined by how much fiber is caught by the twist. When you're spinning, your goal is to pay attention to the fiber between your hands—the fiber that is about to become yarn. Everything else can take care of itself!

The first twist

Tie your starter yarn around the long portion of the spindle's shaft, next to the whorl. Turn the spindle a few times in the direction of the arrow, so the yarn wraps around the shaft. Take the starter yarn through the hook or notch at the top of the spindle (on a bottom-whorl spindle which doesn't have a hook or groove, make a half-hitch about 1/2 inch below the tip of the shaft).

A top-whorl spindle can hang from the starter yarn. Ultimately a bottom-whorl spindle will do the same, but while you're learning, rest it on a table so it doesn't fall. Your lower hand will rotate the spindle and release the twist.



The size of your yarn is determined by how much fiber is caught by the twist at any given point.

Bottom whorl Top whorl



Half-hitch (if needed)



Tie a starter yarn around the long portion of the spindle's shaft and take it through the hook or notch at the top of the spindle.

Your upper hand will hold the unspun fiber, gently prepare it to become yarn, and then keep the twist from moving into the fiber before you want it to. Spin the spindle in the direction of the arrow; hold the loose end of the starter yarn with your upper hand, and watch the twist collect in the yarn. Feather out one end of your fiber and overlap it onto the starter yarn. Pinch the fiber and yarn together with your lower hand, and pinch just above that point with your upper hand.

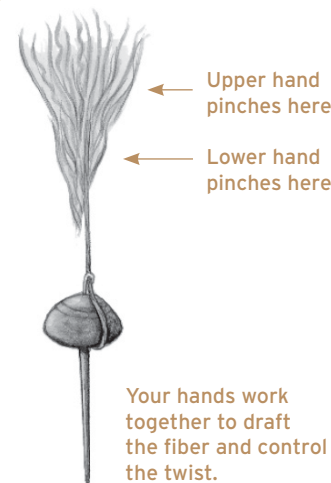
Rotate the spindle with your lower hand, then move that hand back up to its "pinch" position. Don't worry much about what the spindle's doing; the only thing you don't want it to do right now is to turn backwards, away from the arrow, and "untwist" your work. It's okay if the spindle flops over to one side after it has rotated, or when you stop it. As long as there's twist in the starter yarn for you to work with, that's fine.

Move your upper hand a little way up the fiber, pulling gently to loosen the fiber between your hands. Then pinch the fiber with your upper hand and slide the lower hand up next to it. The twist will glide up behind your lower hand. You've just made yarn!

Continuing to spin

That's it. Your hands repeat the pinch, pull, slide movements, while your lower hand occasionally reaches down to rotate the spindle. As you practice, you'll feel at first like too much is going on at once. Then you'll find that yarn is strong and your hands know what they're doing, so you won't have to stop the spindle while you draft.

Soon after that you'll think that you're reaching a long way down to rotate the spindle, and you'll find yourself with between 2 and 3 feet of yarn that you have made. It's time to wind on.



Tip 10

Getting Started Spinning (continued)

Winding on

To keep your yarn from tangling while you wind on, catch it behind your elbow. Release the end from the hook or half-hitch and turn the spindle (always in the same direction) so that the new yarn wraps around the spindle shaft, over the initial wraps of the starter yarn. Leave enough new yarn free to catch the hook or to make a new half-hitch. That's it—back to spinning!

When you run out of fiber in your hand, take a new piece and feather out one of its ends. Feather out the end of the old piece as well, overlap the two ends, and let them twist together in a join.

Bumps and breaks

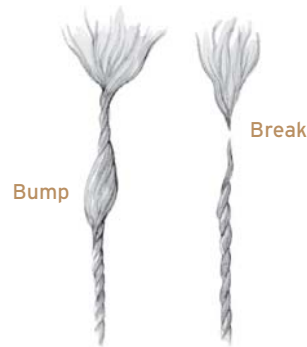
Lumps happen in yarn when there's too much fiber between your fingers at the time that the twist comes along and turns it into yarn. Make sure your lower hand is pinching back the twist until your upper hand has pulled out the fiber and gotten it ready.

Breaks occur when there's too little fiber in that spot between your fingers. Fix a break by feathering the end of the yarn and the end of your fiber and making a new join.

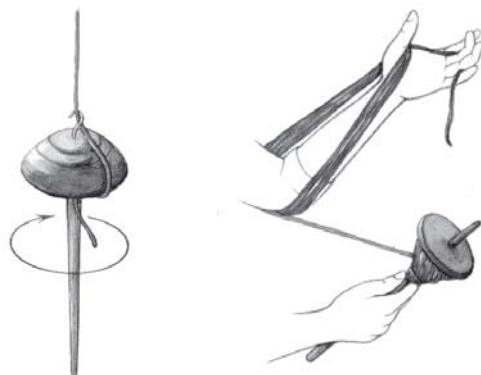
Thick-and-thin can be a design element in fancy yarns. While you're learning, experiment a bit with these extremes so you can see how they occur and can later produce them when you want to.

Winding off

After a while, you'll have a mass of yarn that fills the spindle—the spindle feels heavy to work with, and



Bumps or lumps occur when a clump of fiber gets caught by the twist. Breaks often happen when there's too little fiber to maintain the yarn's integrity.



When your yarn gets long, you need to wind on. To keep the strand from tangling while you wind on, catch it behind your elbow. Release the end nearest the spindle and wind the yarn around the spindle shaft.

When your spindle's full, you can wind a skein around your forearm.

the yarn begins to get in your way when you rotate the shaft. It's time to wind your yarn off into a skein. See the drawing on page 6 for a handy way to do this.

Tie the skein with small pieces of yarn (the two ends of your spinning will do; a third tie is helpful).

Set the twist by running some lukewarm water in a sink, setting your skein on the water, and gently pressing the skein so that it is submerged. Leave it for a few minutes, lift it out, squeeze gently to remove some of the water, and hang it over a faucet or doorknob to drip dry.

Congratulations! You're a spinner. There are many more things to learn about spinning—like how to make plied yarns and designer yarns, how to spin all sorts of different fibers, and what to do with your yarn (if you want to do more than pat and admire it).

But you've just crossed the threshold.

Welcome!

Don't discard your old cds. Use them to make a cd spindle.

You can find out how by going to:

<http://spinoffmagazine.com/media/p/58.aspx>

Tip11

Knitted Cast-On

It's hard to estimate how long the "tail" should be when you have hundreds of stitches to cast-on, and not run out of your "tail" yarn part way through casting on. Eunny Jang's tip is to use the knitted cast-on.

Knitted Cast-On

Make a slipknot of working yarn and place it on the left needle if there are no stitches already there. *Use the right needle to knit the first stitch (or slipknot) on left needle (Figure 1) and place new loop onto left needle to form a new stitch (Figure 2). Repeat from * for the desired number of stitches, always knitting into the last stitch made.

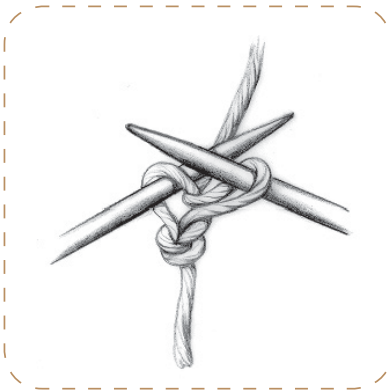


Figure 1

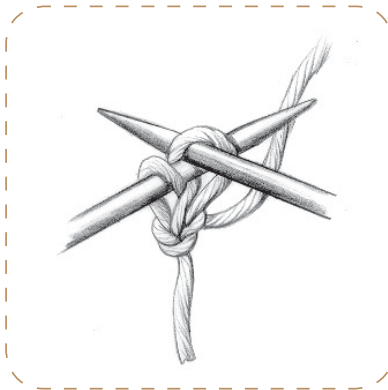


Figure 2

Special Trims

Tip12

Whether it's gift-giving time and you want to trim a package with a yarn embellishment, or you're looking for an accessory trim, Eunny Jang shares two simple ideas that just take yarn, cardboard, and a scissor.

Pom-Pom

Cut two circles of cardboard, each 1/2" (1.3 cm) larger than desired finished pom-pom width. Cut a small circle out of the center and a small edge out of the side of each circle (Figure 1). Tie a strand of yarn between the circles, hold circles together and wrap with yarn—the more wraps, the thicker the pom-pom. Cut between the circles and knot the tie strand tightly (Figure 2). Place pom-pom between two smaller cardboard circles held together with a needle and trim the edges (Figure 3). This technique comes from *Nicky Epstein's Knitted Embellishments*, Interweave Press, 1999.



Figure 1

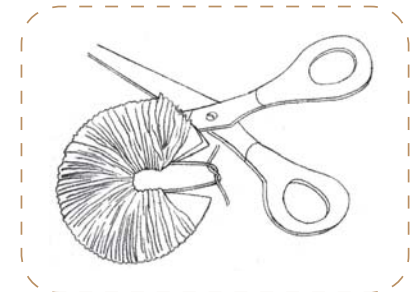


Figure 2

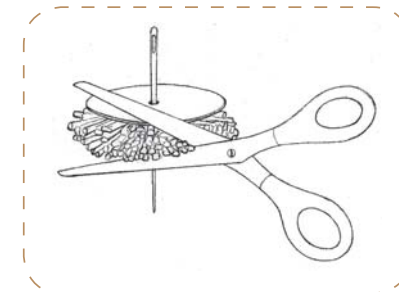


Figure 3

Tip12

Special Trims (continued)

Tassel

Cut a piece of cardboard 4" (10 cm) wide by the desired length of the tassel plus 1" (2.5 cm). Wrap yarn to desired thickness around cardboard. Cut a short length of yarn and tie tightly around one end of wrapped yarn (Figure 1). Cut yarn loops at other end. Cut another piece of yarn and wrap tightly around loops a short distance below top knot to form tassel neck. Knot securely, thread ends onto tapestry needle, and pull to center of tassel (Figure 2). Trim ends.

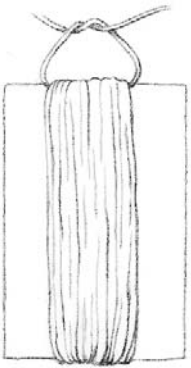


Figure 1



Figure 2

Lace Primer: Increasing and Decreasing

Tip13

Making a project in lace takes less yarn than one made using cables, plus it stretches your knitting enjoyment. Learn the basic increases and decreases, as shown by Eunny Jang, and you'll enjoy knitting lace for years to come.

Ways to Knit Lace

To make lace, you simply need to know how to make yarnovers and decreases and how to count the stitches in between the two. But before you can begin to design with lace, you need to understand the structures of these yarnovers and decreases.

Yarnover Increases

Yarnovers are made in slightly different ways depending on what kind of stitches—knit or purl—precede or follow them. When working right-side rows of stockinette or garter stitch, a yarnover is made between two knit stitches. Simply wrap the yarn around the needle from front to back (Figure 1). To work a yarnover after a knit stitch and before a purl stitch, bring the yarn to the front under the needle, around the top of the needle to the back, then under the needle again to the front (Figure 2). Between two purl stitches, work the yarnover by bringing the yarn over the top of the needle (front to back), then around the bottom of the needle to the front again (Figure 3). Work a yarnover after a purl stitch and before a knit stitch by bringing the yarn over the top of the needle from front to back (Figure 4).

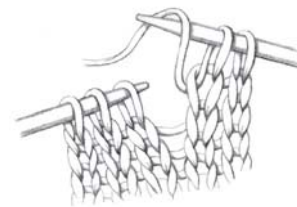


Figure 1

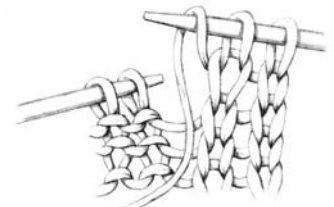


Figure 2

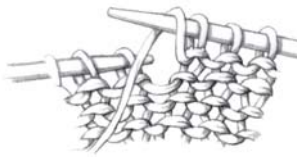


Figure 3

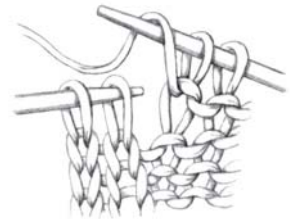


Figure 4

Tip13

Lace Primer: Increasing and Decreasing (continued)

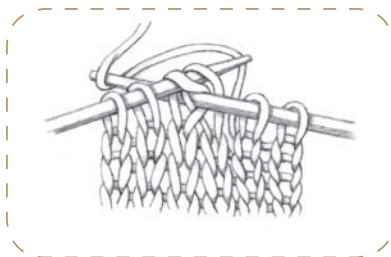
Decreases

The way stitches are worked together to make a decrease causes the resulting stitch to slant to the left or to the right, or to remain vertically aligned. This distinction, although subtle between individual stitches, is important because it's fundamental to creating the prominent, "defining" lines in lace patterns. (All of the examples shown here are for stitches mounted on the needle in the conventional manner—leading leg in front—when knitting off the left needle onto the right needle.)

Right Slant

Knit 2 Together (k2tog)

The simplest decrease, k2tog, is made by knitting two stitches together as if they were a single stitch. The second stitch (the one on the left) lies on top of the first, causing the decrease to slant to the right.



k2tog

Left Slant

Slip 1, Knit 1, Pass Slipped Stitch Over (sl 1, k1, psso)

A near mirror image of the k2tog decrease, the sl 1, k1, psso decrease is made so that the first stitch (the one on the right) lies on top of the second, causing the decrease to slant to the left. To work this type of decrease, slip one stitch knitwise, knit the next stitch (Figure 1), then use the left needle tip to lift the slipped stitch up and over the knitted stitch (Figure 2) and off the right needle.

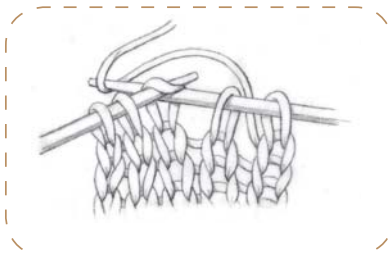


Figure 1

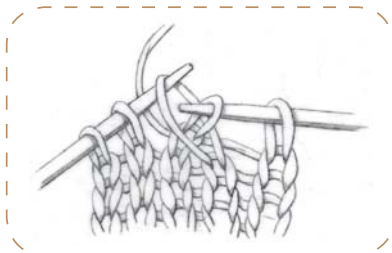


Figure 2

Slip, Slip, Knit (ssk)

The ssk decrease looks much the same as sl 1, k1, psso, but it is done in fewer movements, and is favored by many knitters. To make this left-leaning decrease, slip two stitches individually knitwise (Figure 1), insert the left needle through the front of the two slipped stitches, and knit them together through their back loops (Figure 2).

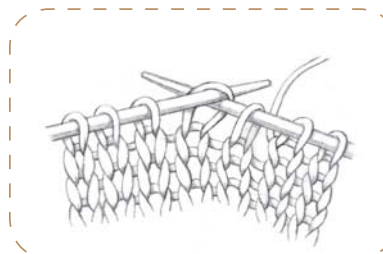


Figure 1

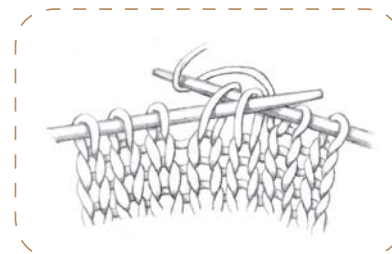


Figure 2

Double Decreases

Sometimes you'll want to decrease two stitches at the same time. Again, the way the decrease is made will result in a stitch that slants to the right, to the left, or doesn't slant at all.

Right Slant

To make a right-slanting double decrease, slip one stitch knitwise to the right needle, knit one stitch, pass the slipped stitch over the knitted stitch (Figure 1), return the decreased stitch to the left needle, then pass the second stitch on the left needle over the decreased stitch (Figure 2) and return the decreased stitch to the right needle.

An alternate method that is much simpler to execute is to knit three stitches together (k3tog).

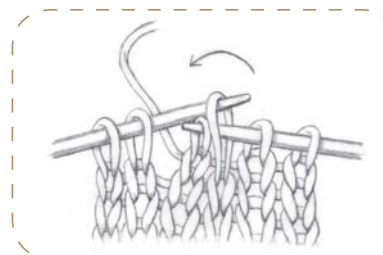


Figure 1

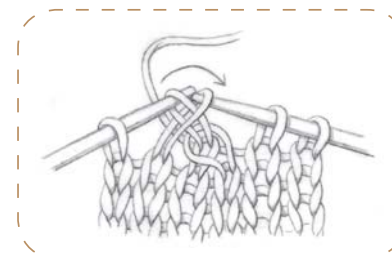


Figure 2

Tip 13

Lace Primer: Increasing and Decreasing (continued)

Left Slant

For a left-slanting decrease, slip one stitch knitwise to the right needle, knit the next two stitches together (Figure 1), then use the tip of the left needle to lift the slipped stitch up and over the knitted stitches (Figure 2) and off the needle.

An alternate method that has a more pronounced left slant is a modification of the ssk decrease, abbreviated sssk: slip three stitches individually knitwise, then knit them together through their back loops.

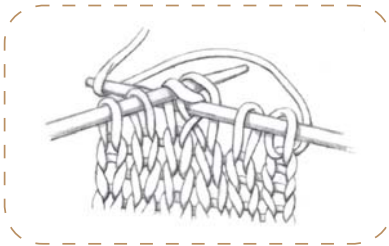


Figure 1

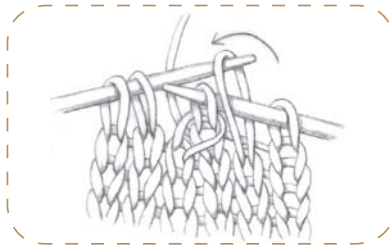


Figure 2

Centered

For a double decrease that is vertically aligned, slip two stitches together knitwise to the right needle (Figure 1), knit the next stitch (Figure 2), then use the tip of the left needle to lift the two slipped stitches up and over the knitted stitch (Figure 3) and off the needle.

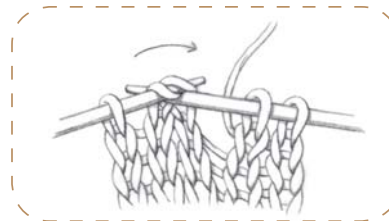


Figure 1

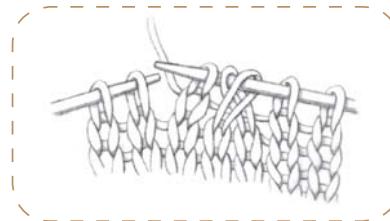


Figure 2

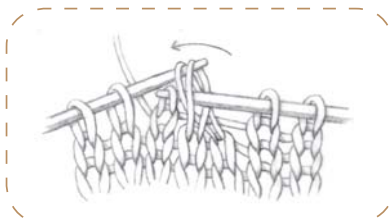


Figure 3

Common mistakes and getting back on track

If you discover a mistake, take a breath and stay calm. Even expert knitters make mistakes. The most common mistakes in lace knitting are fairly easy to fix.

If you forgot to make a yarnover, identify where you omitted the yarnover and temporarily mark that spot with a removable marker or safety pin. On the return row, insert the right-hand needle from back to front under the running thread (the strand directly between and below the two needles), pick it up and place it on the left-hand needle ready to take the place of the missing yarnover.

If you make an extra yarnover, on the return row drop the extra loop and continue on. At first that area will look a bit looser, but blocking will even out any irregularities.

Credits

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Interweave Press publications:

Book: Lace Style (Tip 302, 307, 311, 313)

Magazines:

Interweave Knits Fall 1996 (Tip 306)

Interweave Knits Winter 02/03 (Tip 307)

Interweave Knits Summer 2001 (Tip 309)

Interweave Knits Summer 2005 (Tip 308)

Interweave Knits Winter 2005 (Tip 303)

www.SpinOffmagazine.com (Tip 310)

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