

Spinning to Spec

What makes a good spinner is being able to spin the thread you want for the project at hand.

To do that you need to know what your spindle is capable of – how thin of a thread can it make, or how thick? What amount of twist does it naturally give to the thread it produces?

What is it you want to make? Will you use the thread as a single, or will you ply it? Will you be knitting or weaving with your thread? Do you want to make a particular pattern with handspun instead of commercial yarn? What qualities does your thread need to have to be right for your intended project?

A single has a lot of energy. Even after you set the twist, the yarn wants to move. Plying redistributes the twist and creates a balanced yarn. Plying adds strength, stability and consistency to the yarn.

Plying also increases the space the yarn takes up. A 2-ply yarn takes up more room than the two individual threads it is made up of. As the thread is plied the individual threads untwist against each other and “puff up” as they support each other.

A 2-ply yarn is a good choice for lace knitting. When the stitches are made the threads move away from the center of the stitch, accentuating the spaces.

When knitting with a 3-ply yarn, the threads move toward the center of the stitch, filling up the spaces. This makes for a denser fabric.

A 3-ply yarn is also smoother than a 2-ply yarn. When weaving with a 2-ply yarn, the warp and weft will stay in place. When weaving with a 3-ply yarn, the threads will tend to slip past each other.

When you are spinning for a particular project, it helps to make a sample card. This will help you keep a consistent draft and twist over the course of one or multiple spindles.

When you plan ahead for your finished product you will be able to get a consistent result, whether you are using one spindle or several.

Happy spinning!