

# Some Interesting Facts About The Drop Spindle

For centuries, the handspindle played a role in producing thread and yarn. It is still a tool used in parts of the world today. The form and function of the spindle is basically the same everywhere. It has a very simple design consisting of a shaft and a weight. The materials used to make the spindle in the past consisted of whatever was readily available at the time. The majority of the spindles available today, have wooden shafts with a wooden disc as the whorl (weight). Choosing the type of spindle to use, will be determined by the type of yarn you want to produce, and the type of fiber being used. There are basically two types of spindles; suspended and supported.

## **Bottom / Low Whorl Spindle:**

This type of spindle is commonly referred to as the drop spindle. It is widely used in Europe and easily found in the United States. The whorl is located at the bottom of the shaft and there is either a hook or a notch at the top of the shaft to catch the yarn. The spun yarn is wound onto the shaft directly above the whorl.

The bottom-whorl spindle is a suspended spindle and is best suited for spinning thicker yarns and heavier fibers. With the weight at the bottom of the shaft, the spindle will spin slower (low-whorl spindle). Therefore, a bottom-whorl spindle is too heavy and too slow for spinning thin yarn and soft fiber.

The spindle rotates freely suspended from the yarn leaving both hands free to hold and draft the fiber. The spun yarn is released from the hook of the spindle and wound onto the staff directly above the whorl.

## **Top / High Whorl Spindle:**

A top-whorl spindle is also a suspended spindle and has the whorl at the top of the shaft and is usually lightweight. There is a hook on top of the spindle just above the whorl for catching the yarn. Top-whorl spindles rotate at a higher speed (high-whorl spindle), which makes them ideal for spinning thin yarn and fine fibers. It is believed that the top-whorl spindle originated in the Middle East.