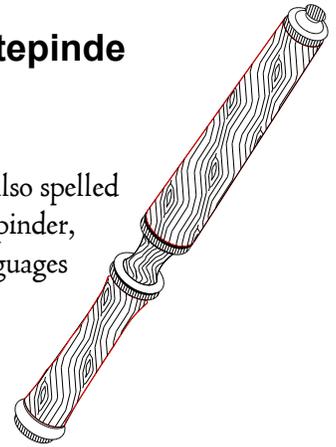


Nøsting..or..Zen and the Art of Ballwinding with a Nøstepinde

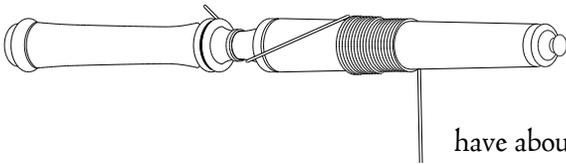
Scandinavia is credited with the invention of this simple tool. We had seen nøstepinde also spelled as nystepinne and nostepinne. This was perplexing until Robin Hansen, an expert nøstepinder, quickly explained that the spellings varied depending on which of the Scandinavian languages was being translated.

Unlike one of those handcranked, mechanical ballwinders, a nøsty is virtually unbreakable, completely portable, does not require clamping to a table, needs no batteries and will not frizz merino yarns. With practice you'll be winding yarnballs that look much better than birds' nests!



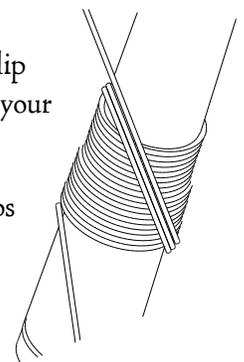
In the Beginning: Wrap the end of the yarn a few times around the neck of the nøsty between the handle and the tapered top section. You can tie a loose half-hitch, but I usually just lay the yarn end on the handle, securing it with the palm of my hand against the handle.

Wrapping the Core: Hold the handle in your less coordinated hand (Note: this will be the left hand for most; lefthanders just reverse any right/left references). Starting somewhere below center on the tapered section, but not all the way down at the widest point, begin winding the yarn straight around. Lay the wraps next to one another, stopping after you have about 1.5" (3.8 cm) of parallel wraps. With experience, you will vary the size of this area depending on the size of the ball you intend to wind.

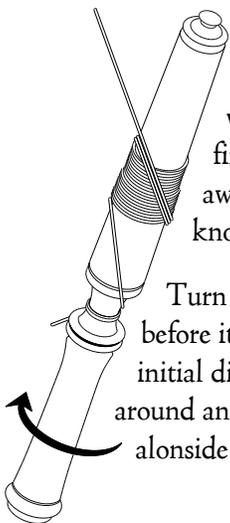


Determined by the thickness of the yarn your core may benefit from additional wraps — continue wrapping going back up and down, laying more wraps on top of the first ones.

Some thought should be given to tension as you begin. The yarn should be tight enough not to slip around on the nøsty but not stretched. When correctly tensioned you will be pleased to find that your handwound ball will not collapse when removed from the nøstepinde.



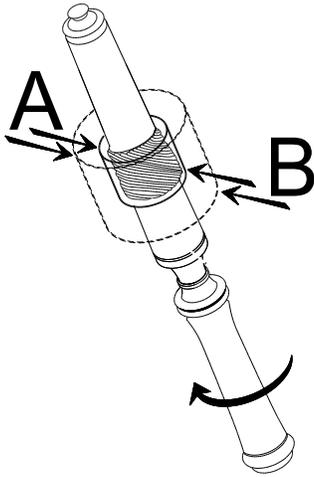
Build Your Nest: Now, bring the yarn diagonally down to the beginning of the parallel wraps and wind diagonally back up to the top. Looking down at the nøstepinde, you're winding from the lower righthand "corner" of your core wraps, up across the core to the upper lefthand "corner". The yarn usually fights this process — not wanting to follow the diagonal path. Proceed slowly and be somewhat insistent. I find it easiest to hold the nøsty right in front of me at a 45° angle to my body, winding the yarn straight away from and toward my body. No matter how roughly things go you can take comfort in the knowledge that this area will be way down inside the final ball of yarn where no one will see it.



Turn the nøsty slightly in your hand after each wrap so that every diagonal lays down next to the one before it. Keep winding diagonally while slowly turning the nøstepinde. When you come around to your initial diagonal wraps, continue, wrapping right over them. With practice, your winding hand will just fly around and around, your other hand intuitively turning at just the right speed to lay the wraps down neatly alongside one another.

Shaping the Ball: If you place each diagonal wrap right up against the side of the nøstepinde as you proceed, the height of your ball will increase as does its diameter. Your ball will end up looking something like a football standing on end. There's nothing wrong with football-shaped balls of yarn — they work fine!!

But, if you want a ball with a flat top and bottom — they do stack nicely and aren't as likely to roll under your chair when you're plying — you will have to do some imagining. While you're winding diagonally, you must visualize where the top left and bottom right “corners” of the ball are going to be. Place your wraps out at these “corners”. Imagine you're sort of building shoulders out at “A” and “B” in the drawing.



When your ball is done, or you run out of yarn, untie the knot at the neck, if you tied one, and slide the ball off the top. If you're going to be plying from the ball, some spinning teachers suggest using the nøsty to hold the yarn — plying right off the nøstepinde.

Practice – Practice – Practice: Yeah, yeah, you knew that. But really! At the Rhinebeck festival I grabbed a skein of yarn and just started winding. When a ball was done, I grabbed an end, dropped the ball on the floor, and began another. Within half an hour (maybe my fifth or sixth ball), I was actually deciding what the shape of my ball was going to be! You want to make those squat, low, wide yarnballs that look so professional stacked on shop shelves? Believe me, if I can, you can!

Robin Hansen's Technique: Robin winds yarnballs faster than those mechanical thingies — answering intricate knitting questions at the same time. Her left hand actually holds the nøstepinde right “under” the forming ball. The tip of her index finger is at the upper lefthand corner of the forming ball, and her thumb-tip is at the lower righthand corner (again, “A” and “B” in the drawing, respectively). Her finger and thumb tips guide the placement of the diagonal wraps of yarn — keeping them out at the “corners”.

Something else that Robin does — I'd maybe consider this an advanced technique — is that she winds her ball way out at the very end of the nøstepinde's tapered section — she wraps the core at the very tip. As the yarnball builds, it actually hides the tip of the nøstepinde. I think she's adopted this approach so she doesn't have to worry about her right hand “clearing” the nøstepinde's tip as she winds the yarn close to the speed of light.

