

How to use a Nostepinne



Words and pictures
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A nostepinne or winding stick is the traditional method for producing a centre-pull ball of yarn. If you like to use hand-spun or hand-dyed yarns in your knitting, a nostepinne is an invaluable and very simple tool for rapidly changing a skein into a ready-to-use ball, that draws out as easily as machine-wound yarn. While mechanical ball-winders are available, I find the gentle twisting and winding of the yarn onto the nostepinne is much more pleasant than simply turning a little handle. A nostepinne is also cheaper than a ball-winder, and being basically a wooden stick, easier to store and transport.

To use a nostepinne, you'll need two hands and a skein of yarn, plus either a swift or a volunteer pair of hands to hold the skein while you wind off onto the nostepinne. It's sometimes said that nostepinne have two functions: for winding a ball of yarn and for rapping fidgeting wool-holders on the head!

(These instructions assume you are right handed, but simply swap left and right over if you're left-handed.)



1. Take the nostepinne in your left hand and the lead end of the yarn from the swift in your right. Secure the end of the yarn by winding it a couple of times round in the slot at the base of the nostepinne. This will become the centre-pull of your ball.



2. Starting an inch up from the base slot, wind the yarn up the nostepinne, laying each turn about a ¼ inch further up and making sure the yarn doesn't overlap. It should look like you're measuring wraps-per-inch very loosely! Stop about 1in below the ridged handle.



3. Take the yarn back down the nostepinne in a diagonal, to the bottom of the yarn wraps.



4. Wind it behind the nostepinne, then take it back up to the top of the wrapped section as an opposite diagonal, crossing the first diagonal to make an X. This is the basis of your ball.



5. Wind the yarn around the same X-shape again and again. As it starts to build up into a ridge, turn the nostepinne slightly and lay each wrap of yarn slightly to the side of the previous one.



6. Keep winding and turning the nostepinne until the ball [or cop] is complete.



7. Tuck the end under a few wraps on the outside of the ball to secure it.



8. Unwind the starting end from the slot at the base of the nostepinne.



9. Hold the ball of yarn gently in one hand and slide it down and off the nostepinne. Your skein has now become a neatly wound centre pull ball.

