

# Wool — From Fleece to Usable Yarn

Process raw fleece into spinnable, usable wool

**DIFFICULTY** Moderate  
**TYPE** Seasonal batch technique  
**TIME** Many hours per fleece, spread over sessions

|                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                            |
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| <br><b>DIFFICULTY</b><br>Moderate | <br><b>TIME</b><br>Many hours total | <br><b>COST</b><br>Low–moderate (tools) | <br><b>BEST SEASON</b><br>After shearing | <br><b>FREQUENCY</b><br>Once or twice a year per animal |
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## 01 Skirt, wash, card, spin

Raw fleece goes through several distinct stages before it's usable — skirting out unusable edges, washing out grease and dirt, carding to align fibres, and finally spinning into yarn.



## 02 What you'll need

- Raw fleece from shearing
- A skirting table or clean flat surface
- Wool wash/scour and warm water for washing
- Hand cards or a drum carder
- A spinning wheel or drop spindle

## 03 Method

1. Skirt the fleece, removing heavily soiled, matted, or short edge sections that won't process well.
2. Wash in warm (not hot, to avoid felting) water with a wool-specific scour, handling gently to avoid felting.
3. Dry thoroughly before further processing.
4. Card the wool (by hand or with a drum carder) to align fibres into a workable, even form.
5. Spin into yarn using a spinning wheel or drop spindle, then set the twist before use.

## 04 Troubleshooting

- **Wool felting during washing** — water too hot or too much agitation; use warm water and handle gently, minimising movement.
- **Difficulty carding** — fleece not clean enough, or has too much remaining vegetable matter; wash more thoroughly and pick out debris beforehand.
- **Uneven spun yarn** — normal while learning; consistency in drafting (drawing out fibre) comes with practice.
- **Fleece quality poor overall** — quality varies significantly by breed, nutrition, and health of the animal; consider this when selecting or breeding for fibre production.

## 05 Timing & maintenance

|                  |                                                                                                                         |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BEST TIME        | Process fleece reasonably soon after shearing, before it accumulates more contamination in storage.                     |
| DURATION         | A full fleece can take many hours across skirting, washing, carding, and spinning, often spread over multiple sessions. |
| MAINTENANCE      | Not applicable per event; ongoing skill development improves speed and consistency over time.                           |
| SIGNS OF SUCCESS | Clean, aligned fibre that spins evenly into a consistent, usable yarn.                                                  |

## 06 Tips & variations

### PAIRS WELL WITH

[Sheep \(animal guide\)](#)

### COMMON MISTAKES

Using water too hot during washing, causing the fleece to felt

Rushing the carding step, leading to a difficult, uneven spin

### PRO TIP

A drop spindle is a good, low-cost way to learn spinning before investing in a spinning wheel — the fundamental technique transfers directly.