

9. Continue to let the yarn unwind from the swift while you wind into a ball. Take care that the yarn is coming off the swift smoothly and without a lot of drag, so that the ball you make is wound loosely. The advantage of skeined yarn is that the natural elasticity is retained when prepared in loose skeins rather than tightly wound balls. You have control over making your ball, so keep it loose!

10. When your skein is completely wound into ball(s), attach the label you have saved for later reference.

Tip - Which end of the skein you choose to unwind from *might* make a difference. If you have multiple skeins of the same yarn that has a color sequence (e.g. hand-painted variegated yarn), or nap (e.g. sometimes with chenille yarns), remember to wind consistently from one skein to the next. Likewise, if your skein has so much yarn that your ball winder cannot accommodate all of it, you may need to start another ball. Remember to wind from the same direction so that color sequence and/or nap is consistent from one ball to the next.

Wow! That ended up being a long article. Hope you are still with me, and that the article helps make using your skeins of yarn even more enjoyable.

Cheers!



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Using a Swift
(a.k.a. yarn swift or
umbrella swift)

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A swift is a revolving device that holds a yarn skein under tension while the yarn is being wound into balls.

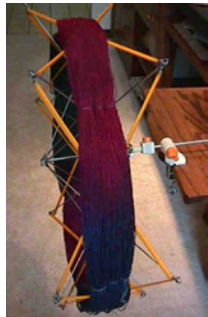
Sometimes people will use the terms "skein" and "ball" interchangeably. For purposes of this article, they are two different forms of yarn put-up. A skein is yarn wound in a loose coil and secured at intervals with loose temporary ties to avoid tangling. Many of the beautiful yarns that are available today come in skeins rather than balls. When you get ready to use your skeins, you will first want to wind it into balls.

It is best to have a yarn swift that can hold the skein under tension, and control the unreeling of the yarn while you are winding a ball. If you don't have a yarn swift, you can get by with something makeshift to provide a similar function, but please use additional care and patience to avoid hopeless tangles! I have heard some inventive substitutes such as a large enough lampshade with a loosened finial, or two chair backs spaced at appropriate distance apart, or even someone's patient, untiring outstretched arms.

Steps in unwinding a skein of yarn into a ball using a swift:

1. Clamp your swift to a table, drawer, shelf - - any place where the clamp is secure, and there is clearance for when the swift is later opened up. You can choose to set up your swift to use in either the horizontal or vertical position. Leave the swift in its folded/closed position for now.

Pictures usually depict the swift mounted so that the skein is held horizontally. →



← I find better results by mounting the swift so that the skein is held vertically, i.e. the swift revolves like a "ferris wheel". You don't have the possibility of the skein sliding down and off the ribs of the swift (a likelihood for slippery or large heavy skeins), and the yarn tends to reel off more smoothly with less tension.

2. Remove the label from the skein. Save the label so you can later refer to information contained on it, or remember what you have! If there is a tie at one end holding the skein into a twist, cut that tie so that the skein opens out into a coil. **DO NOT CUT ANY OF THE OTHER TIES YET** that are securing the skein at intervals, otherwise you will have a tangle rather than a skein!

3. Locate the place where the yarn ends are tied together *before* the skein goes on the yarn swift. Sometimes the skein will have a separate long contrast color string attached to this place as a "courtesy tie" to easily identify the location.

4. Holding the area with the yarn ends in one hand, loop or hang the skein around the swift. Then push the swift into the unfolded position, bringing the swift up to meet the circumference of the skein and thus holding the skein open under tension. Insure the skein is not twisted when it goes on the swift, and keep the yarn ends to the outside of skein.

5. *Then* (and only then) remove the temporary ties. Carefully cut through the ties without actually cutting the yarn itself. I like to leave the ties on each side of the courtesy tie to the last.

6. If you have a ball winder, set it up a distance away from the swift to provide adequate room for a smooth feed. You may also wind manually. I won't go into particular methods in this article on winding balls - maybe more on this in a later issue if there is interest.

7. Choose which end of the yarn you are going to designate as the "beginning". Yes, it can make a difference (see tips below).

8. Unreel a couple of yards from the swift to see if the yarn is going to feed evenly. Occasionally I will have one that is tricky for the first couple of revolutions of the swift. Be patient and just gently separate the strands to loosen up any strands still lying at cross-wise purposes. Even though it might be tempting, *do not* take the end and feed under or over other strands - - this is a sure way to get a tangle, as now you have inserted a permanent cross-over of the strands. Believe me I know, as I've made this mistake before and learned the hard way.