

HAND CARDING: SPECIALTY ROLAGS

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To a hand spinner, the process of creating a beautiful fiber preparation can be just as joyful as spinning the yarn that results from that fiber. Schacht hand carders are great for making truly special fiber combinations for gorgeous yarns.

Let's bring out our hand carders and learn how to create three different rolags: tweed, gradient, and art. You can use these techniques to make your own unique rolags.

If you need a refresher on how to hand card, please see [“How to make a Rolag on Hand Carders”](#) for more information.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: TWEED ROLAG IN BLUE AND WHITE; RIGHT; ART ROLAG IN PURPLE AND GOLD; GRADIENT ROLAG IN PURPLE, PINK, GRAY, AND WHITE

EQUIPMENT & MATERIALS

- Schacht hand carders—I used 72 psi
- Two crafter's dowels or chopsticks, knitting needles, or crochet hooks to remove rolags from the carders
- Fiber—will be listed for each technique. I worked with small amounts of fiber for these samples. For larger spin projects, increase the amounts of fiber accordingly.



Find out more at schachtspindle.com
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TWEED ROLAGS

Tweed rolags are characterized by little flecks of color strewn throughout the fibers. The flecks come from bits of scrap yarn that we will rough up with the carders. Be sure your scrap yarn add-ins and the base color are different enough to allow the colors to pop.

Materials: 1 oz of merino top and 1/4 to 1/2 oz of 1" scrap yarn pieces

1. Lightly cover the entire face of the hand carder with a small amount of merino top.
2. Sprinkle in a few pieces of scrap yarn across the merino.
3. Cover the yarn pieces with a thin layer of merino.
4. Once you have fibers layered on the points, card the fibers until you reach the desired level of blend. I aim for a total of 3 passes of the hand carders to preserve the tweed effect. The scrap yarn bits should break down until they're blobs, rather than streaks, of color.

NOTES:

- I like to use the analogy of making a grilled cheese sandwich when setting up my tweed rolags; the merino top acts as the bread slices, while the yarn pieces make up the cheese in the middle.
- Bear in mind that the tweed will lose its definition if over-carded.
- The yarn pieces in a tweed rolag can be of various sizes, from tiny dots of yarn to 2 inches. Be aware that the smaller the yarn piece, the higher the risk that it will eventually fall out of the yarn that is spun from that rolag. I like to keep the twist on the high side when spinning my tweed rolags; this locks in yarn add-ins that are under an inch in length.

TAKE YOUR ROLAG OFF THE CARDERS

1. Firmly pinch the tips of your blended fibers between the two dowels.
2. Roll the dowels towards you so that the fibers are rolling onto the dowels and off the carders.
3. Gently remove one dowel at a time.
4. Enjoy your rolag!



MERINO TOP AND SCRAP YARN PIECES FOR TWEED.



START YOUR TWEED ROLAGS WITH A THIN LAYER OF MERINO TOP.



ADD YOUR SCRAP YARN PIECES ACROSS THE POINTS.



LOCK IN YOUR SCRAP YARN PIECES WITH ANOTHER LAYER OF MERINO TOP.



NOW YOU ARE READY TO CARD!



CARD UNTIL YOU REACH YOUR DESIRED BLEND. YOU CAN STILL SEE DISTINCT BLOBS OF COLOR ON THIS CARD.



FIRMLY PINCH THE TIPS OF YOUR BLENDED FIBERS BETWEEN TWO DOWELS.



START TO ROLL THE FIBERS TOWARDS YOU, OFF THE HAND CARDER, AND ONTO THE DOWELS.



LIFT THE ROLAG OFF THE CARD, THEN REMOVE ONE DOWEL AT A TIME.



FRESH OFF THE HAND CARDERS, A FINISHED TWEED ROLAG.

GRADIENT ROLAGS

Gradient rolags feature two or more colors that fade into each other. These are one of the easiest specialty rolags you can make. The key element is the consistent placement of colors onto the carders.

Materials: 1/2 oz each of merino top in 4 colors. I used purple, pink, gray, and white.

1. Layer merino top on one carder in the order you'd like your gradient: I did purple, pink, gray, then white. Make sure the colors overlap slightly to encourage cohesion and gentle color sharing between the fibers.
2. Take the empty hand carder and gently push and pack the fibers down. This is done across the packed carder, from top down, with one pass. There should be little to no fiber transference between the hand carders.

NOTE:

- When creating gradients, there are so many color combinations that you may want to try, but are hesitant because it may turn out to be a color catastrophe. You can make and spin several color combinations to see if you like the yarn. If you are still unsure, weave or knit a small piece of fabric out of your yarn to double check the color combination. These extra steps can save you from making a large quantity of a gradient you do not prefer in the final yarn or fabric.



FOUR COLORS OF MERINO TOP FOR A GRADIENT ROLAG.



PLACE THE COLORS OF YOUR GRADIENT ROLAGS IN THE SAME ORDER, OVERLAPPING SLIGHTLY.



PLACE THE COLORS OF YOUR GRADIENT ROLAGS IN THE SAME ORDER, OVERLAPPING SLIGHTLY.



PLACE THE COLORS OF YOUR GRADIENT ROLAGS IN THE SAME ORDER, OVERLAPPING SLIGHTLY.



WITH ONE PASS OF THE EMPTY CARDER, GENTLY PUSH AND PACK THE FIBERS DOWN.



A GRADIENT ROLAG IS SO PRETTY OFF THE HAND CARDERS.

ART ROLAGS

An art rolag tends to defy definition and is limited only by your imagination. You can mix in sparkly fibers or anything else you can think of.

Materials: 1 oz of purple merino top and 1/4 oz fine gold Angelina.

1. Fill the hand carder with a generous layer of merino top.
2. Place a small pinch of Angelina across the merino.
3. Card the fibers until you achieve your desired blend.

NOTE:

- Try not to overdo the Angelina. When used sparingly, it feels very soft. If too much is used, there can be more sparkle than color and the final yarn can feel like paper or plastic. I use my eyes to estimate how much to add to a rolag, handling the Angelina as if I were adding a pinch of salt to a recipe.



MERINO TOP AND FINE GOLD ANGELINA.



BEGIN BY LAYERING A GENEROUS AMOUNT OF MERINO TOP ACROSS THE HAND CARDER.



CAREFULLY SPRINKLE ANGELINA ON TOP OF THE MERINO TOP.



COVER THE ENTIRE SURFACE WITH A VERY THIN LAYER OF ANGELINA.



ONCE THE TWO FIBERS ARE ON YOUR HAND CARDER, CARD UNTIL YOU ACHIEVE A WELL-BLENDED MIX.



A GLOSSY AND GLAMOROUS ART ROLAG READY FOR SPINNING.

CARDING TIPS

- Keep a small (virtual or physical) notebook to record your rolag recipes. Note the date, fiber content, dye lot, and anything else you wish to remember so you can easily look back and recreate great rolags. After you spin, store a sample of the yarn with these notes.
- Don't forget to take plenty of breaks between hand carding sessions to avoid fatigue. Be mindful of your posture; keep your back straight and your shoulders relaxed when carding.

CONCLUSION

The rolags demonstrated here are a way for you to expand your fiber preparation tool box. If you give it a chance, there are so many fancy rolags waiting for you. Grab some colorful fibers, a great pair of hand carders, and let your next batch of rolags amaze you!

