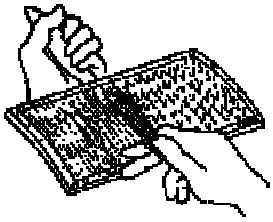
# EARTH
# GUILD


## 33 Haywood Street
## Asheville NC 28801

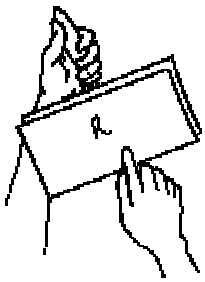

## CARE AND FEEDING OF HANDCARDS

There are many kinds of hand cards available; curved and flat back, different teeth settings, different sizes. People who use them usually come to prefer one kind over another, but they all work about the same and require the same care and handling.
Store hand cards with fleece in the teeth to prevent rust and keep the backing supple. New cards may turn the wool slightly grey. Don't worry—this will stop after the first few ounces, and washes out of the wool.
Hand cards are not made to brush out heavily-matted, dirt-caked fleece. Prepare the fleece: pick and pull and fluff out. Don't over-load the cards, and DO NOT drag them across each other or mesh the teeth. They'll live longer well treated.
Tradition asks that you mark one cards left, the other right, and never after use them wrong handed. There may be a good reasons—suit yourself.

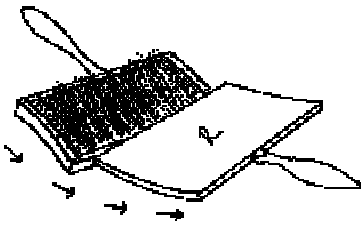
To start: get some fleece two to four inches long. Choose a clean clump (lock). Hold it in your left hand, shorn end towards your palm (the shorn end, skin end, is cleaner and more even). Loosen the fleece gently without pulling the lock totally apart.



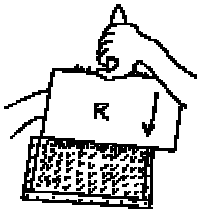
Work the wool from left to right. Hold the card as shown. Lay on a small amount of fiber by catching it in the hand card's teeth and pulling down: shorn end towards the handle. The more venely you lay on the fiber, the less work you will have to do later.



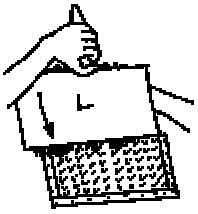

Hold the cards as shown.



With a sweeping motion draw right card down over left card. DO NOT MESH THE TEETH. A gentle rolling, brushing motion, repeated three or four times. Complete each stroke before you start the next. Never drag the right card through the left. You will bend the teeth, break the wool fiber and wear our your biceps.

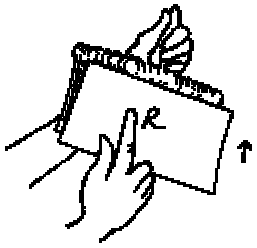



Most of the wool should be on the right card by now. It must be transferred back to the left for another session. Turn the right card around, its bottom at the top of the left card. Push the right against the left. Magically, the wool has jumped to the left card. Turn the right card back to the carding position, and brush again (see figure just above).

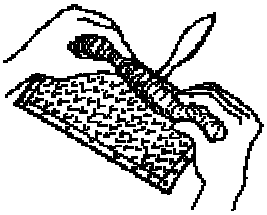


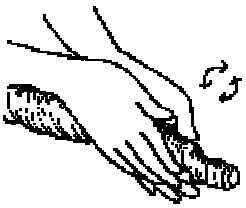

Now, the wool remaining on the left card must be transferred to the right card to get to the underside of the wool. Turn the left card around, its bottom at the top of the right card. Push. All the wool will end up on the right card.

Return to carding position and brush again. But this time fleece moves from the full right card to the empty left one. Repeat the whole cycle three or four times. First right card gets top fibers from left card, then left card gets bottom fibers from the right card. Stop when the fleece is clean and all the fibers are straight up and down. Transfer everything to the left card.




With the cards again in the carding position, push the right card up against the left . This pushes the wool to the top of the left card.

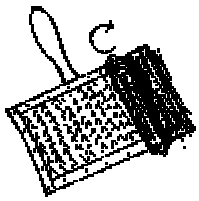




Pull off the rolag (that's what you call the long roll of fleece). Roll it out between your palms. It's ready now for spinning.

Yarn spun from rolags is known as woolen yarn. You're spinning across the fiber, which makes a soft, fuzzy yarn. This is the best way to prepare short fiber fleece, from 2 to 5 inches long.

Longer staple fleece is usually spun by the worsted method: with the fibers instead of across. This will produce a stronger, smoother yarn.



For worsted, card as above but lift the fiber off the card and roll as shown.

Long fiber fleece can be difficult to card by hand. Teasing will usually prepare long wool adequately for spinning. When teasing is not quite enough, and carding seems too much labor, combing the tips out may suffice. A flick carder or a sturdy dog-comb helps here. Hold the wool firmly by the shorn end; pull the tips through the comb till they are separated and smooth. Then, reversing, hold the tips and comb out the shorn end. And spin, using the worsted method. The same thing may be done with your hand cards but it uses only a few teeth and is a life shortener.

When fleece is too dirty to tease into shape, it must be washed before it is carded. Wash by hand, gently, as you would a wool sweater, being careful not to felt it. Allow it to air dry completely, then card as above.

NOTE TO LEFTIES: We do understand. But it's easier to reverse all the above "lefts" to "rights" one time, than to stumble over fifty parenthetical disclaimers. Unlike scissors, screws, and shoes, hand cards have no built in left or right. Work as well with either one in either hand.

Always card up a good lot of fleece before sitting down to spin, so that you have enough to get into and enjoy the rhythm of spinning. Spinning, as everyone knows, is magic.

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