



Kurrajong Handcrafts



Spin-a-Long #5: Colour Ways

If you're a spinner, you know full well the lure of a gorgeous, hand-dyed colourful roving. I have a few (dozen) in my stash at the moment. Although I keep buying multi-coloured roving, however, I've never been a fan of the barber-pole effect in hand-spun yarn and I hate it when my beautiful roving ends up being a mish-mash of all the colours once spun, sometimes simply collapsing into grey or murky brown.

In this Spin-a-Long we look at a few different ways of tackling a space-dyed roving, all of which will produce different effects in the finished yarn.

First, inspect your colours

First up, take a good look at the roving. Is it predominantly green? Mixed up like a chewed clown? Subtly toned in a few colours that blend into one another? The way colours work together in a roving can vary greatly and will affect your decision on how to spin the fibre.

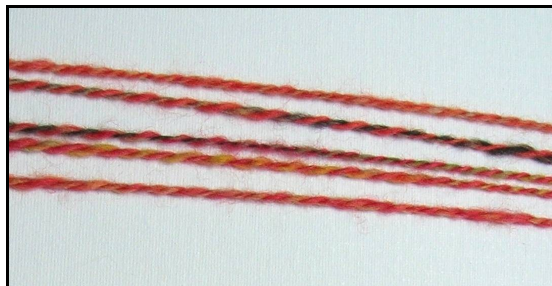
Method 1: Random 2-ply

This is the easiest method of course. Spin half your roving on one bobbin, half on the other, and ply them together. Done. I love the way this looks when the colours subtly tone together, as in the 'Deep Sea' yarn. When the colours in the roving are in striking contrast, however, this will give you an unbalanced barber-pole effect as you have little control over the placement of colours.



Method 2: One-sided 2-ply

This is great if your roving has a dominant colour. The roving I used for some of these samples is called 'Tulip' and it's predominantly red with bits of black, yellow and white. I separated all the red from the other colours and spun one red single and one multi-coloured.



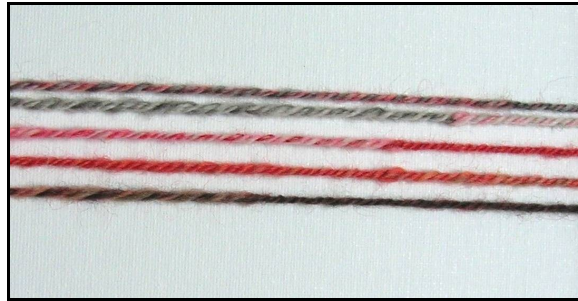
When plied together the red gives uniformity to the yarn, while the other colours change and blend creating a subtle striping effect.





Method 3: Navajo Ply

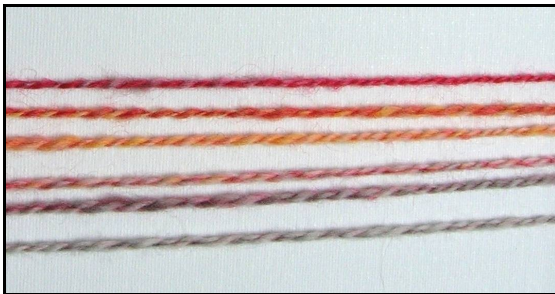
This method gives you the most control over you placement of colours but there will be very little subtlety. By chaining one singles each colour section is essentially plied with itself and is solid and separate to the others.



As you can see in the sample, the colour changes are quite strong and obvious. I'm not sure I really like the solid black sections which stand out quite harshly from the red and orange.

Method 4: Split Roving

Splitting the roving down the centre has many advantages. With careful splitting and spinning the colours will match up, but without the harshness of the Navajo-ply. This method works well with the 'chewed clown' variety of roving. You can even make matching yarns for socks or mittens by splitting the roving into four before you begin. Make sure you start each section at the same end!



I prefer to use this method on short lengths of roving. It is practically impossible to split the fibre exactly in half, although weighing helps. Working with short sections means that the colours can't creep further and further apart over a whole bobbin length. There are more ends to darn in later, but I figure this is small price to pay for matching colours!

Well, you know the deal: find some pretty roving in your stash (or by all means, buy some more – but I take no responsibility). Have a play, send your photos to dianemulholland [AT] gmail [DOT] com by August 27th.

Happy Spinning!