Making a Spool Knitter
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Traditionally, spool knitters were made by hammering nails into the end of a spool and having the finished cord coming through the centre hole of the spool. I personally find the nails hard to work with and wooden spools difficult to obtain. After experimenting with various combinations of containers and pegs, I found that for me, the best spool knitters had pegs made from opened up paperclips that had their tops bent at an angle. You can use any shape container, the distance of the pegs are what matters, not the shape. Circular containers are more sturdy than square containers made of the same material.

The gauge of the cord, or the tightness of the stitching, is determined by the distance between the pegs on a spool knitter. Therefore, the smaller the diameter of your container, the closer the pegs and the tighter the knit cord will be. On the same container and using the same yarn, the more pegs you have, the tighter the stitching, the fewer pegs you have, the looser the stitching.

A 30 mm (1 ¼") diameter container (for example, a 35 mm film canister) is just right for medium (4) or worsted weight yarn on four pegs.

In this tutorial I will show you how to make a spool knitter from such a container.

The supplies you will need:
- a tube or a small plastic container (different size tubes make different size cords from the same yarn as you can see in the picture at right)
- fine tip permanent marker (such as Sharpie® Ultra Fine Point)
- paper
- pencil
- paper scissors
- four paper clips (three of one colour and one of another colour)
- small pliers (preferably square nose)
- hot glue gun and hot glue or strong tape

If you need to make your container into a tube, you also need:
- glass or metal bowl
- very hot water
- craft knife
- sandpaper (optional)

If you are using tube, go directly to step 1 in the main instructions. If you need to make your container into a tube, ask an adult to help you and follow the instructions in the sidebar on the next page.

Prepare the paperclips

1. Using your fingers or pliers open the paperclips out so that they are flat and have a u-shape at each end.
2. Using pliers, hold the paperclip right near the wide end of the paperclip with the cut end of the clip to the left (it does not matter which side, but be consistent). Hold the pliers so that you are just able to see the paperclip edge. Hold the paperclip with your hand and turn the pliers toward the paperclip until the end has a 90 degree turn. This will be the stopper that will prevent the wrong stitch from slipping off your peg.
3. You want to make sure that each paperclip is really anchored to your container.
4. Repeat for each paperclip.

Prepare the tube

5. Trace around your container onto a piece of scrap paper and cut the circle out. Turn the paper rather than the scissors when cutting for a smoother curve.
6. Fold the paper circle in half and then fold it in half again (to make a ¼ circle wedge). Make a mark on each of the fold marks.
7. T

Make the container into a tube

(THIS STEP REQUIRES ADULT SUPERVISION!!!)

1. Mark the cut line for the bottom of the container. To make the cut nice and straight, lay your marker on a surface and hold it down. Press the container against the marker tip and turn the container while holding the marker in place. This will be your cutting line. Let the ink dry.

2. Fill your bowl with very hot water and place your container in the bowl. This will help soften the plastic for cutting.

3. After a minute or two, carefully remove the container from the hot water. Using a craft knife (pull your blade out quite far – it works much better than trying to cut with only a bit of blade out) carefully cut away the line you drew.

4. (Optional) If you like, you can sand the cut edges of your container. Do this in a very well ventilated area, preferably outside and wear a mask. You do not want to be breathing in tiny particles of plastic. Place a piece of sandpaper on a flat surface and put the cut edge of the container on the sandpaper. Move the container in a circles to sand the edges down and make the edge flat.

the marks to the container with a permanent marker. [*]
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Assemble

You can either assemble the knitter using hot glue or tape.

Using hot glue

8. Apply a blob of hot glue a few millimetres (or about 1/8") from the top of the container and just to the left of one of the marks you make earlier. Place the paperclip into the blob of glue, making sure that the uncut straight part is covering the mark you made earlier and the cut end of the paperclip is embedded in the glue. MAKE SURE THAT THE STOPPER IS GOING OUT FOR ALL THE PEGS!!!
9. Repeat for each paperclip.
10. Then, go back and cover the part of paperclip below the blob with hot glue, especially the other cut end. Also make sure the original blob covers that part of the paperclip.

Using tape

11. Use a small piece of tape, and position the uncut side of each of the paperclips over one of the marks you made. MAKE SURE THAT THE STOPPER IS GOING OUT FOR ALL THE PEGS!!!
12. When all the paperclips are held down, wrap the whole container with tape, pushing the tape into the crevices between the container and the paperclip. Burnishing the tape down. You can also cover the cut edge of your container with tape to make it more comfortable.

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[*] If you are making more than one spool from the same size containers and the containers have a lid, place the paper circle on a lid and mark the sides of the lid at the four fold marks with your permanent marker.

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