



What's In My Yarn? – Different Types of Fibers Found in Yarn

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There are 3 main categories of Fibers found in a skein of yarn:

Natural – derived from Plants or Animals

Synthetic – these are Man-Made materials

Blended – these can be any combination of the Natural and Synthetic

Examples

Natural (Plant) – Cotton, Bamboo, Linen, Soy, even Corn!

Natural (Animal) – Wool, Alpaca, Angora, Cashmere, Llama, Mohair, Silk

Synthetic – Acrylic, Polyester, Rayon, Nylon

A Little Definition Please!

Cotton: From the cotton plant. Cotton is a soft, breathable fiber which is great for baby blankets and clothes. Cotton washes well, and is very durable which also makes it great for dishcloths, wash cloths, pillow cases, place mats, coasters and hot pads! It also won't melt when exposed to high heat, which is another great reason to use it in the kitchen!

Bamboo: From the Bamboo Tree. Bamboo is an amazing plant: you can purchase crochet hooks made from bamboo wood and amazingly soft and silky yarn made from the tree's fibers! Bamboo is also great for baby blankets and baby clothes because of its softness.

Linen: From the Flax plant. Known for its amazing breathability and absorption, Linen isn't a terribly common yarn, and it can be quite pricy, but it is durable and is great for use in clothing.

Soy: From Soy Bean Hulls. Soy yarn is soft and has a light feel. It can be used for nearly any project!

Corn: From Corn Husks. Corn yarn has a similar look and feel to Cotton or Soy but is more light weight than cotton making it a very agreeable yarn for making clothes.

Wool: From Sheep Fleece. Wool is a dense, often scratchy, fiber that has been used for making clothing for centuries. Wool is VERY warm, keeps the cold and dampness out and is one of the more affordable natural fibers. Wool can be used to make any project BUT! Be warned! Wool fibers are very 'grabby' and if machine washed, will felt and shrink! It is generally recommended that you HAND WASH in cool water and lay to dry!

Alpaca: From Alpaca Fleece. Alpaca has all the warmth of wool, the softness of bamboo and luster of silk making it one of the most sought after fibers for garment making.

Angora: From Angora Rabbit Fur. These rabbits do not need to be sheered like sheep, instead they are brushed regularly! Their fur makes up one of the softest, most luxurious fibers in the textile market. Angora is particularly prized for making sweaters!



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Cashmere: From Cashmere Goats. Another luxurious fiber, cashmere is soft, warm and has a beautiful luster. It makes for expensive yarn! Cashmere has long been prized by fashion houses around the world.

Llama: A distant cousin of the sheep and direct relative of the Alpaca, Llama wool can be little more expensive than regular wool, but is suitable for sweaters, blankets and other winter wear.

Mohair: From the Angora Goat. Mohair fiber has a high luster and sheen and is delightfully silky. Great for sweaters and special blankets but not especially recommended for babies.

Silk: From the Silk Worm. Silk is an ancient fiber as highly prized today as it was over a thousand years ago. Literally where we get the descriptor “Silky”, silk yarn is gorgeous, lustrous and richly coloured. It can also be expensive, but in small amounts will make a fabulous and highly prized scarf or shawl!

Acrylic: From man-made polymers (like Vinyl Acetate). Acrylic yarn is affordable, washable, evenly dyed in every colour of the rainbow and is an excellent choice for blankets, toys, & clothes! It's a good choice for people who have allergies to natural fibers like wool and can come in many different finishes (levels of softness). However, acrylic is much like plastic and as such is not a good choice for making pot holders or anything else that might come into contact with high heat.

Polyester: From man-made or natural polymers (like Petroleum and some Plant Cuticles). Polyester is largely stretch and shrink resistant, and provides excellent protection against wind and rain. It will however melt or even ignite when exposed to a heat source! Polyester yarns are good for outer wear, outdoor projects, and slippers.

Rayon: From Wood-pulp. Rayon is not made from synthetic fibers, but naturally occurring cellulous. Rayon yarn is slippery, smooth and often shiny. Good for use in clothing and toys.

Nylon: From Nylon Polymers (essentially Plastic). Nylon is tough, hard-wearing, and slightly stretchy yarn and is very affordable. It can generally be used in most crochet or knitting projects but is not recommended for any projects that will be subjected to high heat (like dish cloths, hot pads or oven mitts!).

Blends: Blended yarns can be any combination of Natural / Natural, Natural / Synthetic or Synthetic / Synthetic. Manufacturers blend different fibers together to help strengthen or smooth fibers which may not naturally be that way. This always helps to create a more affordable product (in most cases) often with easier care instructions.

Whatever yarn you use, it's a good idea to follow the recommended wash and care instructions on your Yarn Labels!