



The History of the Top

The precise origin of the spinning top is disputed among experts. Archaeologists have recovered clay toys from many ancient cultures, but believe even earlier civilizations may have played with wooden tops which would decayed with time. What is known reveals that Egyptian children played with tops as far back as 2000-1400 B.C. The ancient Greeks had tops by 579 B.C. Homer in the *Iliad* spoke of tops and Plato's writings contain a technical description of top spinning. The Romans played tops in 27 B.C. and spread the game throughout Europe.

When or how they arrived in America is also unknown; however, a version was played by American Indian children prior to colonization. By the 18th and 19th centuries the top was a popular toy found in most homes in America. Humming tops were imported into the U.S. as early as 1774. The first U.S. patent on a whistling top was issued in 1854.

Tops have been made from wood, ivory, iron, glass, cardboard and plastic. Some tops were simple in design; others elaborately carved. Some were whipped with a string on a stick; on some the string was wound round the top itself. As technology advanced, many hummed or whistled, by 1959 tops even played songs like "O Sala Mia" and "Happy Birthday". Today we offer the older wooden style spinning top to test your skill.

So, spin your troubles away with tops by
Toby & Ginger



This is a cone-shaped lathe-turned toy, which is caused to spin by wrapping a string around it and casting the top toward the ground. This top is difficult to spin, but in the hands of a child it can be done almost every time after some experimentation.

The top often has a steel spike in its end to avoid wear and to make it spin longer. A group of children spinning their tops may take turns trying intentionally to spike or split the other children's tops while they are spinning.

Traditionally, the top has a colorful striped line at the point of greatest diameter, which is applied while the top is still in the lathe.

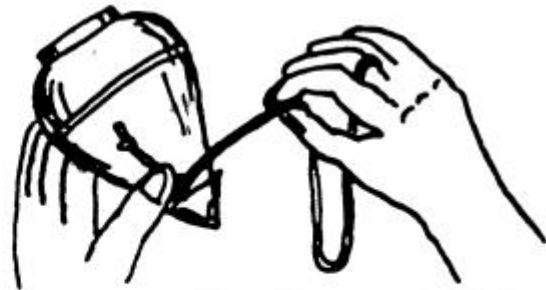
This top is turned on a lathe between centers, including the processes of shaping, grooving and sanding, and then after removal from the machine the point is carved by hand with a knife. Leave about $\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter stock at the point for this purpose. There is no metal spike on this top, so it is not as likely to damage floors.

The purpose of the grooves around the top is to keep the string from sliding off. Before removing the top from the lathe, slow the machine down and apply the traditional stripe by touching a small paintbrush to the point of greatest diameter.

Tie a knot in each end of the string to prevent it from fraying. Tie another overhand knot to form a loop in the string. Then the fixed knot can act as a loop for a slipknot to go over the finger.

To spin the top, make a slipknot of the loop end of the string, and slip it over the middle finger of the right hand. Hold the top in the left hand, start the knotted end as shown, binding it and wrapping the string tightly with clockwise motion of the right hand until the string is entirely wrapped. Transfer the top to the right hand.

Now throw the top down onto the floor, pulling back your hand to give a whipping motion to the top and causing it to spin. Some repeated trials with varied angles of handholds will be needed before spinning can be mastered. Try all angles of holding, even with the top upside down.



WINDING THE TOP



READY TO CAST