

Button Spin Tops

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If you've been following my project posts, you'll already know how much I enjoy finding new things I can make with my button machines. I use them in part to create little trinkets to round out my stocking stuffer offerings each year, and this time I think I've got a winner.

In the process of making button ornaments for a friend, I came across some 2.25" button backs with a pre-punched hole in the centre, and inspiration struck: Spintops!



I figured that the existing hole in the button back would make it easier to centre a matching hole in the shell using my heavy-duty punch. These would accommodate a spindle, which I could make from a 1/4" dowel.



To try out the idea, I printed up some designs, then assembled the components and made up the first button. I intended to use the hole in the back to help me line up the finished button for punching, and Ta-da! It worked: a perfectly centred hole for attaching the spindle.



I thought I might need to glue the spindle in place, but no need: as it turns out, my punch is just a tick smaller than 1/4", so the spindle stays in place without it.

Ideally you'd use a good straight hardwood dowel, but I used these ones from the dollar store that I had on hand (I'm pretty sure they're not hardwood). I sharpened the end of the dowel to a point before cutting it to 1 3/4" length, then lightly sanded



ded the cut end of the dowel before inserting it into the button to complete the project.

To do that, I centred the button on top of a wooden spool, inserted the point of the dowel into the hole, and pounded it home with a couple of light blows with a hammer. Because the hole is just a touch smaller than the dowel, it stays in place without glue.



I painted the dowel/spindle to match the design; you can do this before you insert it, as I did on the one shown above, or you can insert the spindle first and then paint and varnish it, which is what I did for the remainder of these.



For the spintop to work properly, the spindle needs to be perfectly centred and straight – that is, exactly perpendicular to the surface of the button. My first one turned out perfectly, and wow, do these things spin. I was tickled pink!

BUT. Maybe it's just me, but even with the pre-punched hole to guide me, I find it difficult to line up the button in the punch: it's really hard to see exactly where the punch die will land, and I ended up with some spoiled spintops, with the hole just slightly off-centre. That means the top will wobble rather than spin: a fail.



Although I did manage to make several successful spintops using this method, the failure rate was higher than I like, so I wanted to see if I could figure out a better way. I decided in the end to punch the shell *before* making up the button. To do this, I placed the pre-punched

back piece *face down* into the empty shell, taping it to hold it in position. Because this arrangement creates a gap between the back and the shell, it's easier to locate the existing hole and line up the die to punch the shell. This method has worked consistently for subsequent spintops, so as long as I



had the punch set up, I punched a few extra shells, so I've got some ready to go whenever I want to make another spintop.



And I just might, since all the folks on my list will be getting spintops in their Christmas

stockings. It's always fun to be able to add something personalized to the stocking gifts, especially if it's also cute and playable! It's also a treat to find something new to make with my button machine (I've not seen this idea anywhere else, though I've searched). Even Santa's happy, since he's got something unique and personalized to pop into the stockings on Christmas Eve.

