HITCHES WITH HITCHES

1. Most English lacemakers wind clockwise looking down on the head (the top of the bobbin), most
continental wind the other way. Theoretically you should wind in sympathy with the twist of the
thread and traditionally cotton and linen were spun in different directions because of the natural
twist of the fibres, we wound for cotton thread, continental for linen.

2 Look closely at your hitch and compare with my diagram, there are two ways the hitch can form,
one will hold; the other slips.

✦ Hold the bobbin vertically and see which side the thread emerges from, (need not be the
same as the diagram but it helps). This thread should double back, pass behind the bobbin
and come back to the front and continue in the same direction while passing through the
loop of the hitch. This is the correct version and pulling up past the head the thread tightens
the hitch.
✦ If you are making the incorrect version the thread will emerge from one side and continue in
the same direction as it passes round the bobbin and through the loop. When you pull the
thread up past the head is loosens the hitch and the thread unwinds.
✦ If you are not making the correct hitch look at how you make it and reverse everything.

3 Start winding thread on the bobbin close to the head and wind several layers across the first 1/4
inch below the head, then continue down the rest of the bobbin. At all times the layers should
be thickest close to the head, never the other way.

4 When lifting bobbins let them rest in your hands with the weight of the bobbins active. Try this
so you see what I mean. Wind two bobbins and tie to a pin. Hold your hands in front of you,
elbows by your sides, forearms horizontal, palms facing allowing your fingers to curl naturally.
Now pick up a bobbin in each hand and allow them to rest in the curl of your fingers without your
thumbs contacting them. The neck (the narrow part wound with thread) should start above
your first fingers. Try tilting your hands and you will feel the weight of the bobbin pulling on the
thread. It is this pull that keeps the hitch tight so allow this to work while you are moving your
bobbins. When you are working you will use your thumbs, but let most of the weight of the
bobbins work on the threads.

5 If you use Midlands bobbins (with a double or thistle head, one with a groove round it) the hitch
settles in the groove. These will slide if you use a single hitch. Instead make a hitch with two turns.
His is not a double half hitch, i.e. two hitches. It is a hitch that while you are making it you wind
the thread round twice.

6 If you have continental bobbins you will only need a single hitch that rests on the thread. Put
plenty of thread on the bobbins so that there is a pad for the hitch to bite into. However, if you
tighten the hitch too much it can get jammed into the thread. To avoid the hitch jamming one of our
Arachnids mentioned that if you wind one way--say down the bobbin--laying your threads neatly
and nicely parallel and then wind back up at a wide slant, the slanted thread keeps the hitch thread
from jamming.

Early in my lacemaking career I was given some beautiful bone bobbins and for a while worked
with half of them on the floor, being more concerned that they would break as they fell than the
inconvenience and I was using two turns. So I started making them with three turns. It cured the problem and I found out something very interesting. I kept having to lengthen the threads. I realised that using two turns still allows the thread to creep past the hitch but that three does not. Another aspect is that with time, and this is not something you have to work at - it comes naturally although you could encourage it, you will twist the bobbins slightly as you put them down, this tightening the hitch.

It is better for the weight of the bobbins to remain active while the pillow is at rest, otherwise the hitches will loosen and you will have problems when to resume lacemaking.