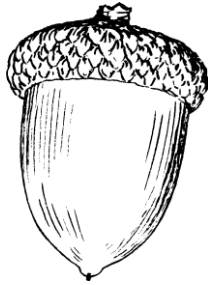


Spinning Tops History

There is no one point in time where the top can be said to have been invented or created. It was discovered, or invented almost simultaneously and independently in many different areas of the world. Tops have been found on all continents, except Antarctica—its shape most likely noticed in nature. The most natural found top is the simple acorn. The turban seashell is also a natural found top.



The Japanese game “bai” used a shell for the top where the physics of spinning objects was explored by filling the shell with sand and then sealing it off with molten wax in order to increase the tops weight. The generic name for the turban shell is turbo which is also Latin for *spinning top*.

Archeological Findings

Clay tops were found in the ancient city of Ur in the Middle East dating from 3,500 B.C. (Ur is modern day Muqayyer which lies 187 miles southeast of Baghdad, Iraq). Ceramic spinning tops made of terra cotta were found at Troy (Turkey) dating from 3,000 B.C. In Egypt wooden tops date from 2,000 B.C. In China tops found date from 1,250 B.C. In Thebes, Greece fired clay tops found date from 1,250 B.C.



Roman tops found made of bone date from 27 B.C.

In the Medieval period of European history there existed a parish top, frequently in the town square, for all to use for exercise, amusement and in competitions between other towns. This top was often 8 inches tall and at least 2 pounds in weight.



16th century tops from England made of wood and clay.

Spinning Tops History (continued)

Some 18th century European tops were made of iron with intent of using them on the ice of frozen ponds and lakes; others were hollow with a hole in the side used to produce a whistling sound.

Some 19th century European tops were made of ivory.



Top Uses

Most primitive tops were likely to have been a seed, fruit or nut with a thorn or stick spiked through them and used for amusement. This toy turned into a magical instrument in some cultures. Pacific Islanders attached spiritual meanings to their shell tops. In primitive Borneo and Java, top spinning developed into an organized adult sport with tops weighing up to 15 pounds.



The Dreidel, is a four sided spinning top used to play a traditional game of chance during the eight days of Hanukkah that has Hebrew letters on each side that represent *nothing, everything, half* and *pay*.

Though tops were originally used as a form of amusement they developed into objects used for prophecy and gambling. They have been used as gifts to honor gods and have been viewed as items to take into afterlife.



Modern day spinning tops from Japan.