Introduction to Fibers and Yarns

Fibers
A fiber is a threadlike or hair-like material that has a length at least 100 times its width. Fibers are the basic materials from which fabrics are made.

Until the early 1900s, all fabrics were made only from natural fibers, such as cotton, flax (linen), wool, and silk. The first man-made fiber was rayon. The second was nylon. Since the late 1940’s scientists have produced dozens of new man-made fibers, along with many variations of each type.

Yarns
Most fabrics are made from yarns that are formed by twisting or spinning many fibers together. The more the fibers are twisted, the stronger the yarn will be.

Two lengths of fibers may be used to make yarns – staple fibers or filament fibers. Staple fibers are short enough to be measured in inches or centimeters. Filament fibers are long and are measured in yards or meters. Fabrics made from filament yarns are usually smooth and lustrous, and staple yarns are softer and fuzzier.

When two or more kinds of fibers are mixed before the yarn is spun or twisted, the combination is called a blend. Fibers are usually blended to get the best qualities of each fiber into one fabric.