

# Weaving Tips and Tricks

## Presented by Deborah Jarchow

### Planning your piece

Weaving a sample can save lots of time and yarn in the long run. Samples let you know how to plan for shrinkage, drape, and color/pattern success.

A piece of cardboard and toothpicks can make a handy sample loom.

Know how you are going to finish the ends of your weaving before beginning any project. For hemstitching or twisting fringes, know the number of warp threads so you can have even bundles. Fusible thread is a great way to begin and end the weaving if you are planning a hem.

Use different dye lots mingled together in the warp to create depth in the color of your weaving.

If planning stripes and you're not sure how the final piece will look, wrap individual cards with the yarn you plan to use, and switch the colors around until the combination looks right to you.

When deciding on colors, take a black and white photo to check the color values for contrast.

Attach a clip-on swing arm lamp to your loom or table so you will always be able to see what you're doing.

A document holder or music stand is useful for holding your pattern. If it has a metal back, you can use a magnetic strip to keep the pattern in place and mark where you are in the pattern.

### Setting up your loom

#### Floor Looms

"Hot clips", very small binder clips or large paper clips can be used on your heddle bars to keep the extra heddles from sliding around and crowding the heddles in use.

Hang a dowel off the back beam to wrap a tube of paper to use in between the layers of your warp as you wind on. Then as you weave, wrap the paper back around the dowel for easy storage.

Attach scissors to the loom with a zip cord or name tag clip so they're always easy to find.

Number the treadles using painters tape or mark with different numbers of rubber bands so your feet can feel out the pattern as you weave.

#### Rigid Heddle Looms

Have paper precut for placing between your warp layers on the back beam. Make it just as wide as the back beam, but no wider. This should be part of your tool kit.

## Warping the Loom

### Any loom

An easel is handy for holding the warping board.

Large rubber bands can be used to anchor the beater bar or warping rod while warping. Long shoelaces also work well.

A centering ruler is a useful tool for getting your warp in the center of the loom.

If you can't find your threading/sley hook, a file folder hanger works nicely.

Clothes pins are handy for holding the pattern while threading the loom.

If you are not direct warping and warping a warp chain, use a spaghetti claw as a helping hand when warping. Or a cardboard tube with cutouts. Or a large clamp. Or rubber reusable twist ties.

When tying on the front rod, make your bundles no wider than 1" so your gaps will be smaller.

If the loom is much wider than your warp, when tying on to the front apron/warping rod attach the rod to the beam only as wide as the width of the warp. This will prevent the apron rod/warping rod from bending.

Tie on to the front warping rod using bows so it is easy to adjust the tension if it is uneven. This also makes cutting off the finished piece a lot easier. Use a paper towel roll or dowels to cover the bows and even out the tension when rolling up the cloth beam.

A comb can be used to separate and hold warp threads in place so you can see to fix a specific one.

### Floor Looms

Adjustable curtain rods can be placed on the loom to hold the reed flat for sleying. Or to hold the helping hand.

When winding the warp, try using bobby pins for counting warp threads instead of choke ties. Or chip clips. Or reusable rubber twist ties. Or book rings. Or pipe cleaners. Or small pony tail holders.

Pencils, anchored with rubber bands can be attached on the back beam to keep the warp from spreading as you are winding it on. Or reusable rubber twist ties.

Make repair heddles using safety pins as the part that slides over the heddle bars. A pillow is very useful as a form to make the heddle on.

Attach an additional rod to the cloth beam apron rod so you can tie on at smaller spaced intervals.

When moving heddles, a knitting stitch holder is useful to keep all the heddles lined up in the right direction.

### Rigid Heddle Looms

If your loom is on a low table or stand, an ironing board can be used to hold the loom while warping so you don't have to bend over.

Use a warping board for direct warping when not enough space.

When warping for 2 threads in each slot and hole, just warp those when going to the peg. Then there is no need to transfer to the holes after rolling on.

### **While weaving**

Beat 3 - 4 picks of waste yarn all at one time to eliminate the gaps between the bundles by the front warping rod when weaving the header. Repeat this till the gaps are gone. Have edge warp threads come straight from the reed to avoid excess draw in.

Leave a little bit of space between waste yarn and the first row of real weft for your hemstitching needle.

When filling a bobbin with a hairy or fuzzy yarn, keep a couple of fingers on the bobbin to smooth the yarn as it winds on.

If bobbins are in short supply, use the cardboard dowel from pants hangers from the cleaners or large drinking straws.

Placing a nut on the ends of a pirn can keep the yarn from sliding off the ends.

For broken warp thread or to help with uneven tension, you can use a bobbin with a rubber band through it to wind on the replacement warp thread to hang off the back of the loom. EZ Bobs also work great for this. Also shower curtain hooks to hold weights or washers. Or 2 empty yarn cones.

Another method of repairing a warp thread or for a floating selvedge, is to use two empty cones. Wrap the warp thread around one cone, put the other cone on top of that to hold the thread in place. Then dangle both off the back of the loom. The cones are enough weight to tension the warp thread.

Use metal washers from the hardware store as weights on your broken warp thread replacements.

Metal washers can also be used to as weights to add tension to a slack area in your warp threads.

If your woven cloth is slightly wider in some areas than others and has a tendency to roll over the edges of itself on the cloth beam, you can keep a more evenly tensioned warp by inserting a dowel between the cloth on the cloth beam and the cloth coming off the breast beam.

Pin a measuring tape to the woven cloth to keep track of the amount woven. This can be made from adding machine tape, pattern paper, twill tape or grosgrain ribbon.

Use a seam gauge to count the number of picks per inch.

When weaving a dishtowel, put in a pick of thicker yarn to create a natural fold for your hemline. Remove that pick before hemming.

If using a temple - protect the ends of the temple with binder clips while not using.

Place a stick or piece of cardboard on the back beam shed with the slot threads on top to separate upper and lower layers for a cleaner shed.

## **In General**

Use binder clips instead of pins to hold the hem in place while stitching.

Make lots of samples on the ends of warps when you have extra length. Try different colors to get a sense of color play. Or try different fibers to test shrinkage.

Use the plastic tab from bread wrappers to record yarn information and attach to the cone or skein if the wrapper or label is missing. Or small tags.

Keep records of your weaving including fiber type, size, brand, color, dye lot, so you can use as reference. Notes are great if they include information on difficulties encountered, shrinkage, fiber care, etc. Sheet protectors work well for this as you can also insert samples of the woven cloth.

Try not to use an unfamiliar loom for a large or important piece unless you weave a sample first.

It's best to not try to do a complicated task when you are tired. Save correcting a threading error or figuring out a warping pattern until the next morning.

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Thank you.