



Tips and Tricks
from
Us to Ewe

by: Portland Handweavers Guild





(Elaine Pretz) Fleece dryer: Use a child (or dog) gate to dry a freshly washed fleece, by laying it between two chairs for good air circulation.

(Jan Chamberlin-Lea) If you get a tangled warp (especially mohair), use an Afro comb to help smooth it out.

(Elaine Pretz) As weight for broken warp thread, use a regular wood or plastic clothespin; clip to thread, and add more clothespins to the first one for more weight.

(Jan Chamberlin-Lea) In order that knots from tying onto front apron do not distort fabric, roll a terry cloth towel around front beam as you advance your first round of cloth. Also: I use my lettuce dryer/spinner for spinning out excess water from small amounts of wet fleece or for skeins of yarn.

(Ruth Dabritz) Do you want to save warp when you've finished a piece on a long warp and want to cut the woven cloth off? Weave a short heading, about 1/2 inch, in tabby. Use a fabric glue or Elmer's will do, to stabilize the 1/2 inch, being careful to glue edge warps well. While warp is still under tension, open the tabby shed and put in a strong stick or dowel. Now cut your woven cloth off, leaving the glued heading and stick on the loom. After the glue is dry, you can tie the stick to the front apron and continue weaving without the wasted inches for tying on again!

Note from Susan Lazear: My apologies to anyone whose tip may have been lost to posterity by my dog's insatiable appetite. Please resubmit for next year!

(Katy Turner) To wind on a mohair warp or any other sticky warp, prop open a tabby shed by any device that occurs to you. This will greatly facilitate beaming. Of course this can only pertain when slewing and threading before winding on the warp.

(Gorel Kinersley) If linen weft acts up on the bobbin, wind the bobbins or quills a few hours or a day in advance. Wrap them in a damp towel, put all in plastic bag to absorb a little of the moisture. Weave. NEVER LEAVE the weft in the plastic bag so long that it might make the yarn mold. (In hot weather, a few hours will do that) Moist, unused and full bobbins can be put in the freezer. The freezer also does wonders for your finished but unironed linen pieces. Dampen pieces thoroughly, put in plastic bag, stick in freezer until ready to iron. Take out of freezer, let thaw; iron. The freezing process seems to open up the fiber and allow a high gloss to be ironed into the fabric. Caution: Don't try to break open a bundle of frozen cloth, the threads might be damaged. Linen yarns with a high twist need to be kept under tension at all times. Fine 2-ply Finnish transparency linens should be wound on spinning-wheel bobbins and then made into a warp. The warp-chain needs to be held under tension while wound onto the warp beam.

(Katy Turner) To envision your weave when finished while it is still on the loom: 1) Take off your glasses! That melded look of the background and the emergence of pattern blocks (though misty) is close to the finished weave. If your eyesight is very good, squint and look at the weave from an angle. Trust me!



(Gorel Kinersley) If you use the Scandinavian method of warping where the thrum is twice as long as in the American, the remains can be used for band-weaving, book marks, hangers for guest towels, finishes for garments.

If you have a long warp on the loom and are making runners, placemats, etc., and find yourself needing a gift suddenly, and just the right one is in the middle of the web, don't despair! Put a tiny bit of water-soluble glue on the pieces staying on the loom. Cut away the piece you want. Sew the two pieces still on the loom together, carefully, roll back onto the cloth beam and resume weaving. The glue is to keep the woven cloth from unravelling at the cut edges. The stitching should start as close to the selvedge as possible, so that no tension problem will occur during the rest of the weaving.

When taking yarn from a cheese (yarn wound on a mechanical ball-winder) make sure that you take it from the outside. Otherwise the cheese becomes very floppy and tangled. A tiny bit of tape may be used to secure the inside end so that it does not get mixed up with the outside one, during use. A core from a roll of toilet paper can be put on the winder, the starting end of the yarn to be wound taped to that, and the cheese then has a firm core. The paper may have to be trimmed when the yarn is wound off, so that it does not catch, or the yarn can be gently taken off the toilet paper core and pressed down on a cone, and then wound off.

When making a lot of placemats, etc., and you are unsure of how much warp you are using up, sew a marker of fine, bright sewing thread into one of the outside warp threads to show that, for instance, there are 4 yards of warp left, or 2, or whatever. This is good for clothing yardage, too, especially for "Sherpa-coat" type garments where pieces are individually woven, rather than cut out.



1) When doing a wide double-weave, use a mirror to make sure you have no skips underneath.

2) When using mohair or another delicate yarn as warp, do not use your metal heddles. Making string heddles prevents agonizing fraying.

3) Spray a sticky wool warp with water to make shedding easier.

4) The plastic "cone winder" now available comes with two plastic cones. Standard yarns do not fit. You can cut part way up a toilet paper roll and use this with the winder.
(from Ruth Dabritz)

5) To distribute bodily wear and tear as you weave, tie up your treadles so that you treadle left foot, right foot, left, right, etc.

6) Do not expect to be able to wash fabrics in which you have included any single filament metallics. The metal does not shrink at all, whereas all fibers do at least a little. Yarns made with both a metallic and a synthetic yarn may, conversely, be washable.
(Georgia Wier)

(Maureen McNulty) A good method for setting up a floating warp: Sley the warp. (It won't be threaded); hang it over the back beam on a weight. This is better than beaming the warp as it is easy to lift the floater when exiting a shed.

When using a jack loom with a warp that fuzzes or frays, if you will beat with an open shed or step on both tabby treadles slightly to raise all warps slightly (while beating) there will be less rubbing of the warp on the bottom of the reed and consequently less fuzzing.

(Katy Turner) To finish with fringe (placemats, scarves, shawls), tie small groups of warp ends, sometimes only two. Many ties makes a richer fringe. Use the simple overhand knot: that means the first half of a square knot. Leave the loop open and loose. Separate the warp ends in halves, however many that may be, and tug on each half until the knot tightens up against the woven cloth. Following this procedure, each and every knot will lie in a precise line across your weaving, and you will have a straight, knotted edge instead of the exasperating upsy-downsy fringe. Should you plan further knotting as for what I call Spanish knotting, follow the above instructions for ongoing rows of knots, but tie against a dowel or slender stick to maintain straight lines.



Never weave with poorly-wound bobbins: give them to a kitten!

The shed behind the heddles at the back of the loom clears or tangles the shed at the front of the loom where you weave. Always be aware of how your warp is behaving at the back of your loom.

(Gorel Kinersly) When weaving with single linens in dry climates, put a bucket of hot water under the thin warp. The natural "glue" in the fiber helps to keep the yarn from fraying. If that is not enough, spray the warp with spray-starch. This trick also helps with fuzzy warps. (Don't use water here.) If you have a real problem with the selvedge threads, make a little pouch of linseeds, wet it, and stroke that on the warp, let dry a minute or two. Keep that little pouch in the refrigerator or freezer between uses or it will start to smell and sprout! The flax seeds to use may be ones you buy in healthfood stores or the ones you use for fibers.

(Susan Lazear) An inexpensive, yet desirable way to store fleece---Purchase Knit-fabric on sale that has been constructed in a tube. (Cotton is ideal) Cut a length (e.g. 1 yard) and knot one end. The fleece is easily stored in this. You can knot the upper end as well and hang the bundle. The wool is kept clean and still is able to breathe.

If you ply handspun from rolled balls of yarn, to avoid tangling, put each ball into a coffee can. Arrange the cans around your wheel and commence the plying.

GOOD RECORD-KEEPING sometimes comes in handy. Use an old recipe box and file cards. When you purchase yarn or fleece, record the price, pounds, breed, fiber-content, care and any other pertinent information. This will prevent uncertainties arising later. Index cards can be used to divide the box into sections; i.e. fleece, yarns, weaving accessories, books, etc. This information could also be handy at tax time!

(Linda Davis) To hold butterflies and create tension on floating selvages, supplementary threads, or replacement threads, use plastic-capped medicine or film containers (snap-on type) and lead fishing weights. Make a butterfly of thread or yarn, stuff into container, snap on lid. The fishing weight can be put inside with the thread or hung on the outside by a paper clip, safety pin, or other device. When you need to release more thread, unsnap lid, release thread, and resnap!

To keep and/or transfer heddles, put them on knitting-stitch holders. Put one through the bottom holes, one through the top ones. It's easy to slip the heddle bar through the holes with the stitch holder in a closed position. Once you have as many as you want on the heddle bar, unsnap the stitch holder and slide off the needed number. (Hint: slide back the unwanted number of heddles from the stitch holder around and away from the opening before sliding onto heddle bar.)

(Gorel Kinersley) When making a warp with a limited amount of an accent yarn, either color or texture, and you don't know how far the yarn will go, and you want a balanced look to your piece: Make the warp twice as long as it needs to be, but with half the amount of ends. IMPORTANT: Make a cross at both ends. Then fold the warp in half, and voilà, you have a warp with matched stripes!

(Katy Turner) Mist linen warps and wefts while you weave. If a mister, sprayer, or atomizer is not handy, use a wet sponge and dampen warp and weft. For the warp, stroke it. For the weft, pat the wet sponge on the wound bobbin. Moisture will penetrate. The linen will become pliant and behave well, especially on selvages.

(Gorel Kinersley) When tie-ing on a warp to an existing one and you want to have an accent thread at specific intervals: Make a warp of the accent-thread alone, then prop up (for example) shaft No. 1, put a stick under the then-raised threads (in front of reed, natch) and tie on your warp. If your threading was a point twill, the accent thread will be on every 6th end. Throw the warp over the castle to get it out of the way and tie on the rest of the warp. You can then add another separate color onto shaft No. 2, another to No. 3, and yet another to No. 4. I find this an easier way to handle a planned random warp than to warp it with the many colors, making one chain. (Exception: if you use a sectional beam.)





Keep a file card for rag wefts! By keeping a record of your successful rag wefts, you have a ready reference for the future. Knot short strips on a coded card, as you would dyed yarn samples. (R+M)

(Phyllis Colvin) Save your linen thrums from rug weaving, and use these for warp threads for small baskets. (Taught by Mary Schlich)

(Juli Sampson) If you don't have a bobbin winder, you can put a round file in an electric drill and hold bobbins onto the file, and fill.

(June Phillips) When washing fleece or finished items, I always add a half-cup of vinegar to the rinse and soak 20 minutes. Acetic acid separates fibers. It is especially good for carded fleece, because with the acetic acid it is much easier to card or comb; fabrics are softer.

(Richard H. McBee) When sectional warping and pulling warp threads through the heddles from the front of the loom, place a board across the loom behind the heddles to which each warp section can be fastened with masking tape. Comb the warp threads and lay them down in an orderly manner. They can then be picked up one at a time without crossing and pulled through the appropriate heddles (sleyed). Double-surfaced scotch tape can be used to stick down the masking tape, sticky side up.



(Maureen McNulty) For excellent tension (self-adjusting) and to save warp, use the lashing method of typing onto the front of the loom. Tie 1 and 1 and 1/2 inches worth of warps into overhand knots. Lash these to apron rod with a doubled cord. A doubled cord makes it easier to tie at the other end. For a wide warp, use 2 sets of cords which start from the center of the warp and work to each side. Cords need to be very long to allow 2-3" between knots and apron rod so that tension may "self-adjust.")



A floating selvage works very easily if weighted over the back beam with a C-clamp (of appropriate weight for the warp yarn you're using). Make a slip knot for hanging the clamp.

Two ways to repair a broken warp: a) Pull broken end forward. Attach with a pin to the cloth, a "mender" warp about 2 yards long. Thread it through and at the back beam tie it to the broken warp with a large bow. When this bow reaches the heddles, as you weave, untie it and bring the mender warp forward and out and the original warp threaded in its place. Secure both to the cloth with a straight pin. Needle-weave the join later.

After pulling the initial broken end forward, attach and thread in its place a "mender" warp that is as long as the remaining warp on the beam. Roll it on a small tube or square of cardboard, secure it with a clothespin or bobby pin, and weight it over the back beam for the duration of the weaving.

Be sure to allow any weighted warps to hang free of the back beam. (Adjust as you advance the warp.)

Many things make good weights for broken or loose warps: large washers, fishing weights, spoons (or other kitchen utensils) For heavy weights (for rug warps) use water-filled plastic jugs or bottles. One pint = 1 pound of weight.

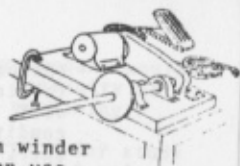
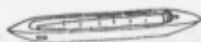
When making a fabric sample, try 2 or 3 different setts. You'll be surprised at the difference in the cloth.

Don't beat a small sample as hard as you would a wider fabric.

When warping with stretchy yarn (i.e. like knitting yarns) measure the amount of stretch in one yard first and then plan your warp length accordingly, or your project may end up too short!

Mix different fibers very well in the warp. A band of one kind of fiber next to a band of another kind of fiber will produce a seersucker effect. Only do that intentionally!

You can find quick stripe designs in the bar codes on food boxes in your kitchen cupboards!



(Paula Stewart) If you use an electric bobbin winder and boat shuttles that have thin metal rods, then use plastic drinking straws for bobbins. This accomplishes maximum use of space for maximum amounts of yarn.

(Lorraine McGalliard) Save your Christmas cards, and if you make your own cards, you can get good ideas from them. Also, you can cut the verse out of them and paste it in your hand-made cards.

(Gail Zielesch) An inexpensive weight to hold down un-beamed floating selvages and give the exact tension desired: Plastic bleach bottles (with loop-handle) filled with some water and capped. Attach bottle to warp by slip-knotting warp through handle and let hang at back of loom over warp beam.

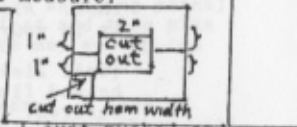
(Sue Tellock) If you plan to weave with cotton, like placemats, wind off amounts of yardage, tie so it won't tangle, and hang outside to dry on hot summer days, after rinsing in super-hot water. Saves worrying about amounts of shrinkage, hanging yarn on hangers, and hangers on clotheslines. It works great!

(Kaino Leethem) When using yarns that shed a lot of lint or woody material (like Tow linen), place a piece of cloth below your newly-woven fabric that goes onto the cloth beam, and it will collect it, instead of the woven fabric. Move this cloth up as you advance your warp.

(Barbara McClanathan) For an extra soft and luxurious feel to fleece, handspun, woven fabrics, almost anything made of wool, rinse after washing by adding small amounts of hair conditioner to the last rinse water, instead of fabric softener. What's good enough for your hair should be good enough for your sheep's hair! Personally I have used "Swiss Formula, St. Ives" and it works!

(Ladella Williams) 1) On coverlet draft, use gauge card, 2-inch cutout, so you don't have to use a tape measure.

2) Use sewing thread in matching color at beginning and ending of placemats, 3 shots or picks to secure weaving. My idea when doing the coverlet squares was to put the actual spool of thread onto a shuttle that the spool would slip onto. All these years, I just pushed and prodded the spool through the shed or wound the thread onto a paper quill!



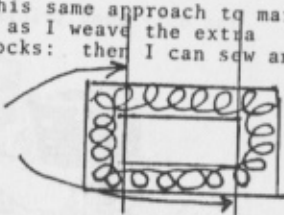
3) Credit for this to Jayne Koehler! Jayne purchased an electric winder. She uses shuttles with plastic 4" bobbins, they have a tapered hole. Some of the hand-operated winders have a small diameter shaft which she could not use. The new one I have works o.k. with these bobbins, as shaft is larger. I myself did not realize that until we purchased one for my Mom! Problem: Electric winder is for bobbins that have aluminum tube; no way to put the plastic bobbins in the winder. My husband was going to make a tapered metal shaft for use, and then Lorraine McGalliard said Jayne solved the problem--a wooden chopstick! Perfect, easily accessible and easily replaced! My husband said, "Ingenious"; the taper is about perfect.

As a machinist/tool maker working in metal, my husband would be very conscious of the ease, simplicity and ingenuity of the solution. He was going to spend the time machining a special adapter! Ha!

Re: the new techniques in free-form design. Our study group was discussing ways to mark where to begin and end the design, especially with a border. LaVerne Ridley's idea (which we haven't yet tested) is to use a contrasting color sewing thread as a floating warp marker; then it could be pulled out after weaving is completed!

I just had the idea to use this same approach to marking the line for lengthwise strips as I weave the extra fabric for binding the coverlet blocks: then I can sew and cut on the line.

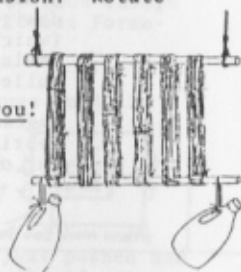
(contrasting color sewing thread, floating marker)



Fringes on all 4 sides (Heidi Waber)

Last time I needed fringes on all 4 sides of a piece, I threaded about 3" additionally on each side of the warp with a scrap yarn of the same size as the main warp. Nothing to worry about the outer edges while you are weaving, and a back-saving device, too, since all finishing could be done on the table. Our table has rounded edges which is not too easy for cutting good fringes, so now I pull the leaves apart slightly, lay out the woven piece, measure, weight it down, and cut! Very easy, very straight!

(Mary Torrey) How to block handspun: Thread your skeins through a dowel and hang it on two nails. Thread a second dowel through the bottom of the skeins and hang a plastic milk container filled with water on each end of the bottom dowel. The amount of water determines the tension. Rotate the skeins occasionally.



The only good tricks are the ones that work for you!



My Tip for Washing Fleeces (Peggy Lundquist)

Purchase fiberglass screening material in a roll (30-36" width). Cut and sew a pillowcase shape. Use thick twine to make closure. Separate fleece into 1-2 lb. bundles and place screen pillowcase into water to soak. When rinsed, I put at least two bags into spin cycle of washing machine. (Two for balance) To dry, I lay pillowcase (with fleece in it) on branches of fir trees, turn occasionally.

The results of our time saving tips:



Sheep on Vacation

