

Introduction to Tapestry Weaving

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Introduction to Weaving

Weaving is the process of creating fabric by interlacing two sets of threads, almost always at a right angle. The two sets of threads are referred to as the warp and weft; the warp threads are typically attached to the loom, while the weft threads are threaded through by the weaver and pressed down firmly to create the cloth.

Many different effects can be created depending on the way that the weft threads are woven and manipulated across the warp.

In this booklet, we'll cover some of the basics of starting to weave on a small frame loom and some of the core techniques used in tapestry weaving.



Tools and Supplies

The basic supplies that you'll want to get started is a weaving loom, a heddle bar (optional), warp thread, a small pair of scissors, a weaving comb or another tool to push down your threads, a weaving needle, shuttles, and weft yarns.

Warping your Loom

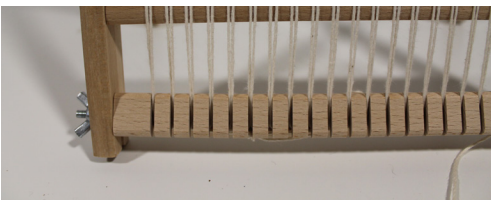
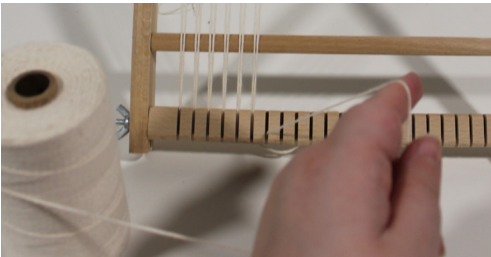
The first step of weaving is warping your loom! I prefer to use a dense, “toothy” (this is a term sometimes used to describe the roughness of a yarn - a slightly rougher/scratchy yarn is a toothier yarn) cotton, similar to butcher’s twine. I find this has a nice weight, is durable, and my weft threads stay nicely in place with this type of yarn.

To start warping, I straighten the bars on my loop and firmly tighten the nuts - I want them to be snug and the bars to be set in place.

Next, I’ll tie the end of my string to the bottom bar and up through the notch farthest to the left, bringing it up and around the first tab of my loom and then back into the first notch - the thread will go around each tooth and you’ll see two threads in all of the notches except for the top two.

Be mindful of keeping an even tension throughout the warping process. When you reach the last notch (or your desired width if you’d like to do a weave that is narrower than your loom), make sure you end at the bottom and tie your warp thread to the bar and trim it.

Adjust the bottom and top bars to make the tension firm but not tight.

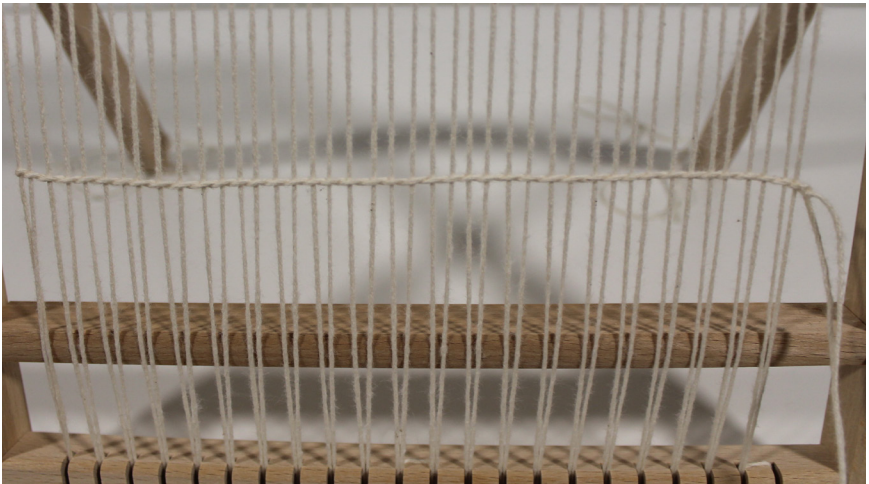


Twining your warp

Twining the warp has two primary purposes - spacing out the warp threads evenly and to help create a solid foundation for your weave to keep all of your weft threads in place.

To start, take a length of yarn/thread (I almost always use a length of my warp thread) that is about 3.5 times the width of my loom and fold it around the the first warp thread, keeping one length slightly longer.

Twist the two threads, taking the one on top and threading it under the bottom and then twisting again on the other side of the thread. Continue this pattern of twist, under, twist, under until you've created this twist across all of your warp threads.



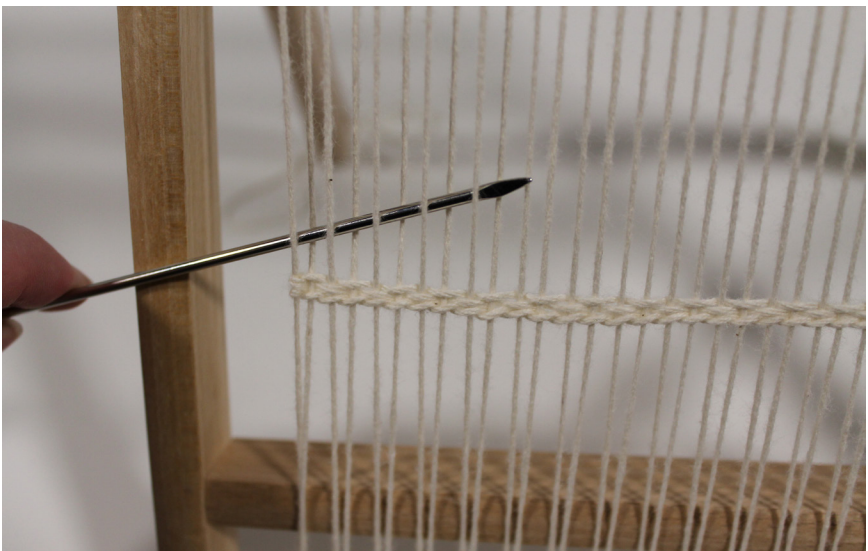
Once you've reached the end, gently knot the two ends of the string around the last warp thread. You'll want to pull it tight enough that it just lightly hugs the thread without pulling it inward. Gently use your weaving comb to straighten out the twining and create even spacing.

Take the longer string end and thread it through your needle; you'll weave the remaining length back and forth through your tapestry in a plain tabby weave.

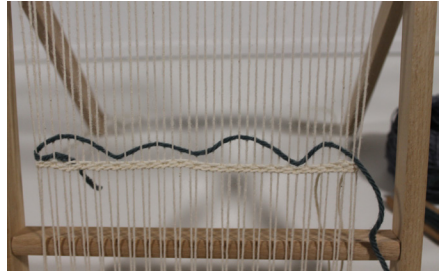
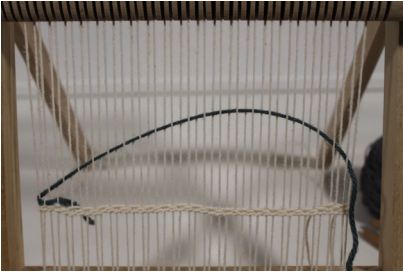
Plain/Tabby Weave

This technique is the core of weaving - a simple basket weave that is a direct "under, over, under, over" pattern. In addition to being a classic look, it is also great for adding a couple rows of structural stability intermittently while using more delicate techniques and weave structures.

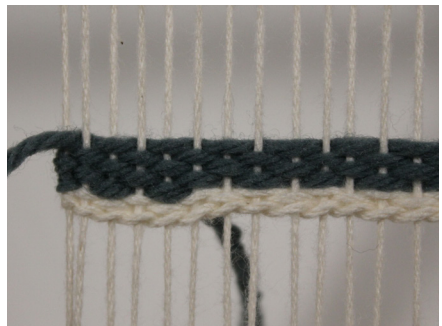
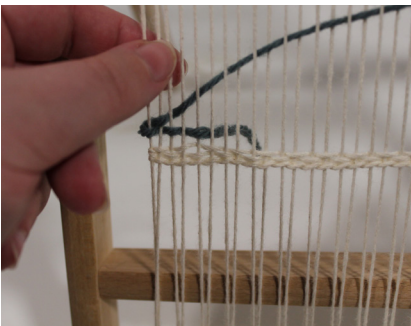
A simple tabby weave is created by weaving the weft under and over in an even, repeating pattern. If you're using a heddle bar, this can be done by passing your shuttle/needle through the shed (the open space between alternating threads created by turning the heddle), patting down the threads, and then turning the heddle and passing the thread back through.



When bringing your weft thread through your warp threads, ensure that you always pull it through on an angle - this will help you keep your tension even and not pulling the sides of your weaving (the selvages) in. Once your weft is all the way through, use your comb to pull it down into little bubbles and then eventually pushing the weft down. Do this for every pass of weft thread in your weave.

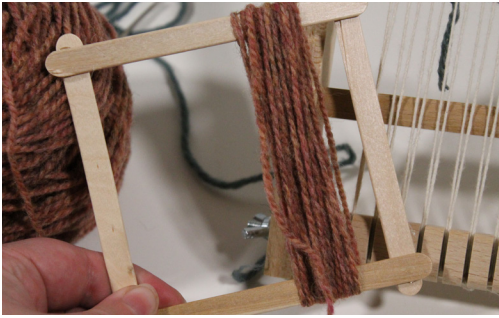


When starting and ending any new warp thread, weave the end in about 3-4 warp threads and pull the tail through to the back.



Creating a fringe

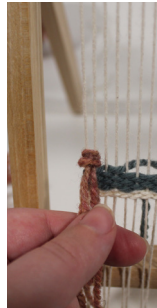
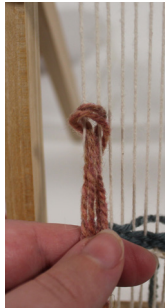
The trick to creating a painless and even fringe is finding a book, frame or other firm object that is approximately the size of the fringe you'd like to create. Wrap your yarn around it many times and once you have a bunch, take your scissors and cut along one edge. You'll now have a pile of equal lengths of yarn.



I like to cut multiple bundles because I'd rather repeat this step than cut too much yarn and waste it.

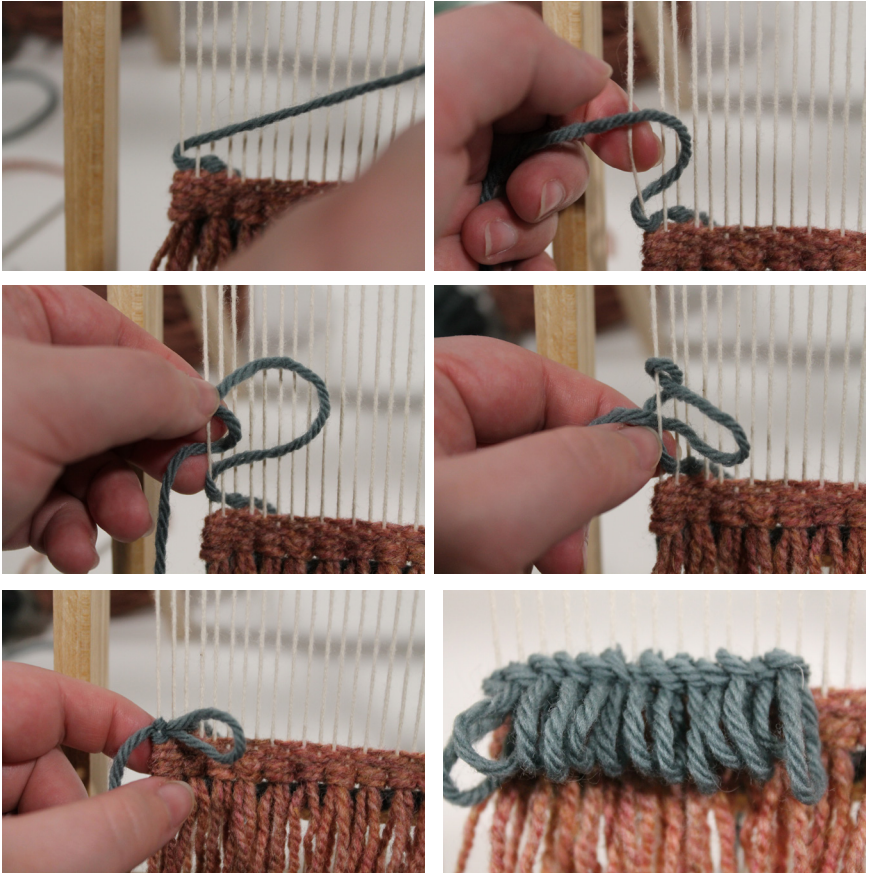
Now that you have some yarn prepped, decide how many strands you want to use per section/how dense you want my fringe to be. I typically use four strands per section (two warp threads).

To create the fringe, lift up the warp threads you'd like to include in the section. Place the trimmed weft thread on top and tuck the ends around the back and through the centre, gently pulling them through and snugly down. Repeat for the width of the weave. Weave a couple of rows of plain tabby in matching weft.



Looped Rya

This technique can be used in a variety of ways, from adding a fun fringe-y element to creating a rug-like pile texture. It might take a bit to pick this technique up - it's easy but a bit of a puzzle to figure out to start. Have patience and fun with it!



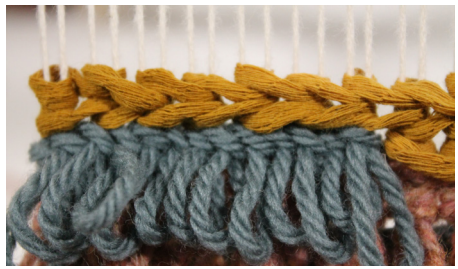
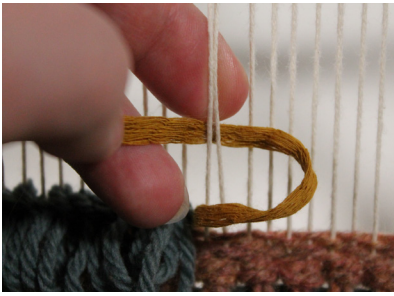
This technique can use a continuous length of thread - you don't need to cut a length until the end. Start by tucking in your ends how you usually would, ideally so your weft is beginning under the first warp. Create an arrow in the direction that you're weaving in and gently lift up the first warp thread. Bend the yarn under so you create a second, smaller arrow passing under the warp thread. Pull it through and gently ease the loop and the tail of your weft

and warp back and forth + down so you achieve a snug loop of your desired length. Continue by repeating these steps on the next warp thread.

Soumak

This technique creates a lovely braided effect when you stack multiple rows of it.

When creating soumak, decide on the number of strands you'll loop around based on the effect you want - a thick yarn + more warp threads per loop will give a lovely braid,



while a thin weft and fewer warps will give a tight chain.

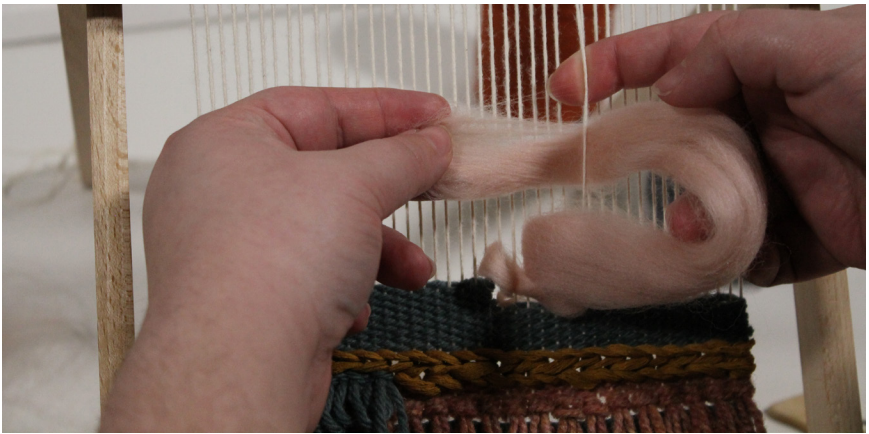
Start with your weft above your warps and lightly lift the warp threads and wrap the weft around them. You'll end

up back where you started - that's alright! Lift the next set of warp threads and repeat the process. When you reach the end and want to turn around, do the loop around the last set of warps and then do two additional loops. Proceed in the opposite direction by do the same process.

Using roving

Roving is a fun material to experiment with - there are no limits to how you can use it!

My favourite way to use roving takes advantage of the fibre's natural loftiness and body to create volume instead of using large amounts. This allows me to be more efficient with my materials and gives me increased control of the variation of bubbling.



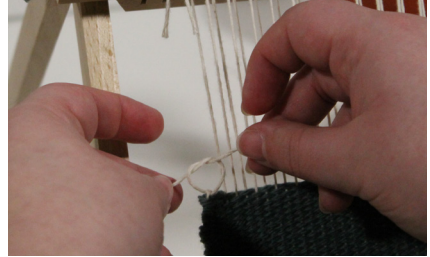
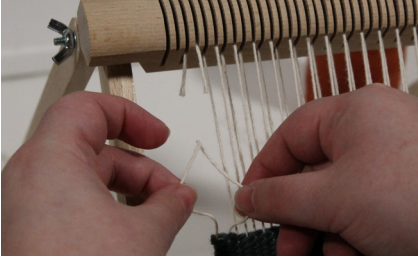
To start, separate a small section of roving and lightly pull on the ends to taper them. From there, have fun! Wrap and twist the roving around your warp threads and experiment - skip threads, leave extra roving and fluff it, see what feels good to you. Try to minimize how much the roving rubs against the warps as you pull it through.

Finishing your weave

Once you're finished weaving, add a few rows of plain tabby weave. This will give a nice finish to the piece and extra stability if you've been working in a lot of sections.

In small section, 4-6 warps at a time, snip your top warp threads, leaving about 2-3" of length. Gently tie knots in each pair of threads - pulling the knot down tight enough to snugly kiss the top row of weft without pulling it down. Double knot. Repeat for all of the warp threads.

Gently pull your weave off the loom and then snip the loops of the warp threads at the bottom - repeat the same process of tying the pairs of warp threads.

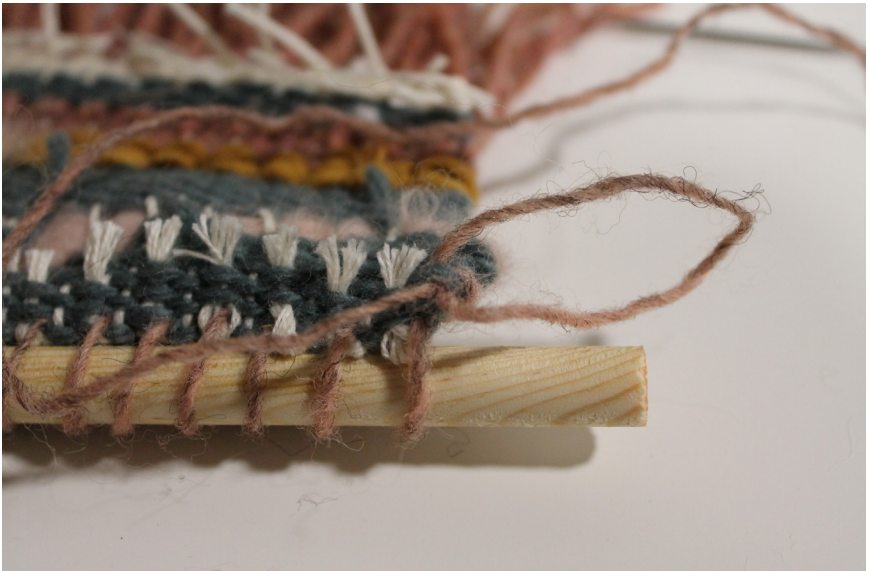
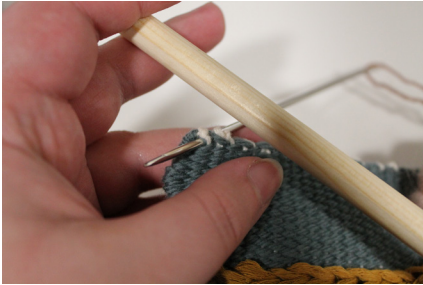


Sew in all of the warp threads by using your needle to gently pull them through the weft threads on the back side. Pull only until the threads are tucked in - allow the knot to sit at the top of the weave. Do the same process with the tails of your weft threads.



Adding a dowel

To add a dowel for hanging your weave, take your prepped dowel and a length of yarn that's about 2.5-3 times the width of your weave. Thread it into your needle and start sewing your dowel to the weave; leave a tail about 3" long at the back of the weave and make a stitch under every knot of the warp threads (or more if you'd prefer the look). Knot the final stitch and then sew in the end. Return to the tail on the other end and knot and sew that in as well!



Hang and enjoy your finished weaving!



Notes:

