

# Linens Information and Resources

Compiled by - *Tracy Kaestner*

## Linens Facts :

- **Strong \* crisp \* inelastic \* stiff \* absorbent \* high sheen\* wrinkles**
- Line Linen – considered best quality, smooth and shiny, spun from the longest, most lustrous fibers.
- Tow Linen – spun from short fibers that are a by-product of scutching and hackling. Consequently the end product is hairier and has less sheen than line linen. It is also more absorbent. Higher twist used to keep fibers together.
- Wetspun – linen spun using water, less hairy fibers sticking out, more sheen. Recommended for warp yarns.
- Dryspun – no water used in the spinning process, coarser yarn.
- Linen is stronger when wet.

**Common Sizes:** setts are suggestions only, best to sample ☺ Variations in setts shown in chart are due to information found varied.

Linen has a count of 300, multiply the first number by 300, divide by # of plies for yards per pound. Ex. 16/2  $300 \times 16 = 4,800/2 = 2,400$  yards per pound

Linens Count	Yd/pound	Plain weave sett	Twill sett
8/5 (rug)	480	6-10	6-10
6/1 (tow)	1,800	12-15	20
14/2	2,100	14- 16	22
8/1	2,400	18-20	24
16/2	2,400	18-20	24
20/2	3,000	16-20	26
14/1	4,200	18-22	28-30
28/2	4,200	20-24	28-36
16/1	4,800	20-24	30-36
35/2	5,250	22-35	35-40
20/1	6,000	24-30	36
40/2	6,000	24-30	30-36

### Properties of linen

- Linen has a smooth surface. It tends to repel dirt and bacteria. Stains are removed easily. These properties make it ideal for handkerchiefs and table linens.
- Linen is the least elastic of the natural fibers; therefore, it is excellent for artist and embroidery canvas, draperies, wall hangings, and rug warps.
- Linen is absorbent and dries quickly. It is excellent for towels and handkerchiefs.
- Linen is vulnerable to mildew; therefore, it should never be stored damp.
- Linen is more resistant to light than cotton, which makes it ideal for draperies.
- Linen is second in strength to silk.
- Linen shrinks very little, usually less than 10% (mostly due to take-up).
- Linen conducts heat away from the body and is thus comfortable for clothing and bedding, especially in hot climates.
- Linen is not damaged by moths unless it is starched (moths love starch).
- Linen's most undesirable property is that it wrinkles easily. Consequently, it is more suitable for household furnishings than for clothing. However, when it is combined with other natural fibers or treated with wrinkle-resistant chemicals (as in industry), the tendency to crease is somewhat reduced.

From an article by Linda Heinrich

Available linen sizes have varied over the years. Most of the finer sizes only come in unbleached or half-bleached (cream). Older articles may call for a size or color no longer available.

Really fine linen is available as bobbin lace thread, some even dyed. These come on small spools that look like sewing thread and usually require special ordering. Some of the bobbin lace sizes are: 60/2, 70/2, 80/2, 90/2 and 120/2.

### Tracy's tips for weaving linen-

- ❖ Use a temple – because linen is inelastic, draw in causes abrasion to warp and breakage ☹
- ❖ If you have problems with your selvages that even a temple can't resolve wet the selvedge. Keep a damp rag in a Ziploc bag at your loom. Every time you advance dampen the edge in front of the reed.
- ❖ This is the time to do your best job beaming your warp; smooth and even. Back to front beaming helps to keep control of linen warps. Linen is not resilient, a loose thread will cause problems and will only get worse. I hang a S hook on any loose warp threads!
- ❖ Most linen comes on spools rather than cones. When you wind your warp or bobbins the spools should be horizontal, use a milk crate and dowel to rig up a way to hold the spools. If you stand them up you will be adding more twist and you'll be sorry! Linen by nature has more twist than other yarns.
- ❖ Finishing is ultra-important. Linen will look and feel like burlap when it is taken off the loom. It needs to be fulled and hard pressed or mangled. I never dry linen in the dryer, wrinkles will be set in place and over time linen is not as crisp and shiny that has been dried in the drier.
- ❖ Don't be afraid of singles for warp and weft. We have enough humidity in our air that problems with breakage are reduced here ☺ Yay Houston humidity!
- ❖ For those of you who live in a dry climate you may need to add humidity to your air or wet your bobbins/pirns before weaving. You can wrap them in a damp rag and store in a plastic bag, just the bobbins you will be using that day. If you spray your warp I suggest doing it just in the area near the fell, not the whole warp and be careful not to get your loom wet.

### Resources –

*Linen from Flax Seed to Woven Cloth* by Linda Heinrich; updated and reprinted in 2010, originally published in 1992. Through book on linen, from processing, spinning to weaving.

*Linen Handspinning and Weaving* by Patricia Baines; published in 1989 in the UK

Best of Handwoven *Weaving with Linen*; E-book available from Interweave Press, came out in 2014. Compilation of articles from *Handwoven Magazine*. Good information condensed in to one spot.